

GRASSROOTS LEADER NEWSLETTER

February 2015

MCCORMICK TO SERVE ON AFBF BOARD: Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation President Mike McCormick will represent the Southern Region on the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Board of Directors. The Jefferson County cattle and timber farmer was one of six farmers from across the nation newly elected to serve on the board during the AFBF's 96th Annual Convention in January.

AFBF BOARD SETS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR 2015: Following the delegate session of the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) 96th Annual Convention in San Diego, the organization's board of directors set AFBF's strategic action plan to address public policy issues for 2015. The board-approved plan focuses the organization's attention on: advancing legislation that addresses agriculture's long- and short-term labor needs; protecting farmers' abilities to use biotech plant varieties and other innovative technologies; opposing expansion of federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act; and advancing legislation that reforms the Endangered Species Act. AFBF board members approved an additional list of issues that will require diligent monitoring as they develop over the course of 2015. Those issue areas include: efforts to enhance international trade opportunities, business tax reform, farm bill implementation, the overall farm economy and energy availability and affordability.

DELTA PRODUCERS MEET VOLUNTARY METERING PROGRAM GOAL: On Jan. 29, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality announced the initial reporting goal of the voluntary metering program supported by the Delta Sustainable Water Resource Taskforce has been officially met. Producers who participated in the voluntary metering program and installed meters by June 30 were required to report water use data on their crops for 2014 to MDEQ by February 1, 2015. MFBF President Mike McCormick stated, "Farm Bureau applauds our members and producers in the Delta for reaching the necessary reporting requirements of the voluntary metering program. We have met our 5% goal of installed meters by the initial deadline, the first phase of reporting requirements, and we will continue to pursue reaching the remaining 5% goal of installed meters by December 2015. Farm Bureau policy supported a voluntary approach to collecting this information about Delta water use. We supported the proposal for a voluntary program offered by the Delta Sustainable Water Resource Taskforce, and the farm leaders in the Delta have followed through on that agreement. Our volunteer leaders and staff put forth a large amount of time and resources over the last two years to assure that we met those numbers. Farm Bureau and the other organizations on the taskforce will continue to focus our attention on reaching the other half of our metering goal and promoting water conservation measures and programs at every opportunity."

GRAIN BIN SAFETY WORKSHOPS: The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Safety staff, in conjunction with Dan Neenan, director of the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety at Northeast Iowa Community College, will host two Grain Bin Safety Workshops in 2015. We will offer a workshop for farmers and farm labor and a separate workshop for emergency responders. The workshops are scheduled for Feb. 25 in Marshall County at the Marshall County Fairgrounds and Feb. 26 in Tunica County at Parker Tractor. We have seen the benefits of this program over the last several years through farm testimonials. It's definitely making an impact, and we look forward to another successful series of meetings this year. For more information or to register, contact Angela Thompson at (601) 977-4242 or 800-227-8244, ext. 4242, or email athompson@msfb.org.

FARM BILL MEETINGS: A series of "Farm Bill Summary, Analysis & Decision Aids" meetings will be held as follows:

- **Wednesday, February 11/9 a.m. – Noon**, Noxubee County Civic Center, 16291 U.S. 45, Macon, MS 39341. Register by email* or online at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-farm-bill-summary-analysis-decision-aids-tickets-15522597507>;
- **Thursday, February 12/9 a.m. – Noon**, Attala County Extension Office, 715 Fairground Rd, Kosciusko, MS 39090. Register by email* or online at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-farm-bill-summary-analysis-decision-aids-tickets-15522641639>;
- **Wednesday, February 18/9 a.m. – Noon**, Adams County Extension Office, 75A Carthage Point Road, Natchez, MS 39120. Register by email* or online at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-farm-bill-summary-analysis-decision-aids-tickets-15522788077>;
- **Friday, February 20/9 a.m. – Noon**, George County Extension Office, 7128 Highway 198 East, Lucedale, MS 39452. Register by email* or online at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-farm-bill-summary-analysis-decision-aids-tickets-1552132106>;
- **Monday, February 23/9 a.m. – Noon**, Alcorn County Extension Office, 2200 Levee Road, Corinth, MS 38834. Register by email* or online at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-farm-bill-summary-analysis-decision-aids-tickets-15523179247>;
- **Thursday, February 24/9 a.m. – Noon**, Tunica Recreation Center, 1165 Abbay Drive, Tunica, MS 38676. Register by email* or online at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-farm-bill-summary-analysis-decision-aids-tickets-15523137121>.

*Registration email is MissStAgEcon@gmail.com.

An interactive video presentation will be provided Monday, Feb. 16, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Extension offices will need to contact the Distance Education Program at (662) 325-8581 or distance@ext.msstate.edu.

AG DAY AT THE CAPITOL: Since the Capitol is undergoing extensive renovations this year, our annual Ag Day at the Capitol will take the form of a lunch with our legislators at First Baptist Church of Jackson on Feb. 11. The church is located off of State Street across from the Capitol. We will meet at the MFBF Building at 10:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m. and depart for the church at 11 a.m. The program will include guest speakers and lunch. We will reboard the bus at 1 p.m.

FARM FAMILIES OF MISSISSIPPI 2015 CAMPAIGN: The Farm Families of Mississippi Ag Image Campaign is set to begin its sixth season in early February. The campaign will run until mid-June. Jefferson Davis County farmer and avian veterinarian Dr. Sue Ann Hubbard chairs the Communications Committee for 2015. If you would like to become a sponsor or help in some other way with the campaign, contact Justin Ferguson at (601)720-4238 or Greg Gibson at (601) 573-4154.

2015 WASHINGTON D.C. FLY-IN: The MFBF Public Policy Department has announced that the 2015 Washington D.C. Fly-In visit will be held Feb. 23-25. You may contact your regional manager or county Farm Bureau office for more information.

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE DELIVERY: We will deliver your contributions to the Ronald McDonald House on Tuesday, March 3. We encourage each of you to participate in this event. Along with the contributions, we will once again deliver the message that food in the United States is affordable, and we, the farmers and ranchers, help make that possible. Thank you for being a part of this celebration.

PRODUCER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS: The Central Mississippi Producer Advisory Council will meet Feb. 17 at the McKenzie Arena in Raymond. For more information or to register, call (601) 857-2284. The North Mississippi Research and Extension Center will host its annual Producer Advisory Council meeting Feb. 19 in Verona at the Magnolia Conference Center next to the Lee County Agricenter. For more information or to pre-register, call (662) 566-2201. The coastal region's Producer Advisory Council meeting will be held Feb. 24 at the Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi. For more information or to register, call (228) 388-4710.

MAGNOLIA BEEF AND POULTRY EXPO: Make plans to attend the 12th Annual Magnolia Beef and Poultry Expo to be held April 9 at the Smith County Ag Complex in Raleigh. This event offers educational seminars and a trade show featuring agricultural equipment and other valuable information for beef and poultry producers. The Magnolia Beef and Poultry Expo is free and open to the public. Approximately 400 producers attend each year. The Smith County Ag Complex is located on Highway 35 South.

2015 SECRETARIES' CONFERENCE: Make plans to attend the 2015 Secretaries' Conference set for April 21-22 at Table 100 in Flowood. For more information, contact Merlene Partridge at (601) 977-4233.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: The annual Women's Leadership Conference will be held April 24 at the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Building in Jackson. Speakers will address issues of interest to farm women, and participants will have an opportunity to enjoy Ag in the Classroom activities. For more information, contact Pam Jones at (601) 977-4854.

SOYBEAN SEMINARS: Farmers can hear from Mississippi State University (MSU) experts during a series of soybean seminars sponsored by the Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board (MSPB) and Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF). The goal of the seminars, entitled "Digging Deeper: Managing Unseen Yield Robbers," is to heighten awareness about soybean management issues that often go unseen but could severely impact yield. Farmers can join MSU experts at one of the following seminars as they share the latest research in managing unseen yield robbers:

- Feb. 10, 9 a.m. Capps Learning Center in Stoneville
- Feb. 11, 9 a.m. National Guard Armory in Rolling Fork
- Feb. 25, 9 a.m. Tunica Museum in Tunica
- Feb. 26, 9 a.m. Magnolia Room at the Lee County Agricenter in Verona
- Feb. 26, 3:30 p.m. Noxubee Civic Center in Macon

More information will be available at www.mssoy.org and www.mississippi-crops.com.

WILD HOG WORKSHOP: A Wild Hog Damage Management Workshop will be held Feb. 9 from 8:45 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Grenada County Extension Office. The workshop is sponsored by the Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Service and the MSU Center for Resolving Human-Wildlife Conflicts. A \$20 registration fee covers lunch and materials. To register, send checks or money orders to the Grenada County Extension Office, 1240 Fairground Road, Suite E, Grenada, MS 38901.

BLUEBERRY WORKSHOP: The Mississippi State University Extension Service, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service and the Gulf South Blueberry Growers Association, will host an educational workshop on blueberry production Feb. 12 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Forrest County Extension Office. The office is located at 952 Sullivan Drive in Hattiesburg. The cost to attend the event is \$10, which will be collected at the door. Proceeds will go to the Gulf South Blueberry Growers Association for future workshops. For more information, contact Eric Stafne at (601) 403-8939 or eric.stafne@msstate.edu.

MSU VETERINARY COLLEGE OPEN HOUSE: The Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine invites visitors of all ages to attend the annual Open House on April 10 and 11. The college will open its doors from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Wise Center in Starkville. The April 10 program is for preregistered school groups. Everyone is welcome to attend on April 11. The college encourages teachers to register school groups as soon as possible. To register, visit <http://www.cvm.msstate.edu/outreach/open-house> and click on the link “Open House Preregistration Form” on the right-hand side menu. Teachers may call (662) 325-0465 to register.

AG VALUES TO TOP \$7 BILLION: The Mississippi State University Extension Service’s preliminary estimate of 2014 agricultural production values, including government payments, is \$7.9 billion. Poultry remained solidly in first place on the list with a \$3.13 billion projected total value. Forestry is the state’s No. 2 commodity. At \$1.28 billion in 2014, the state’s forest harvest value has increased 48 percent since 2009. Soybeans, Mississippi’s top row crop, remained in third place with a preliminary estimated value of \$1.17 billion. For more information, see the March/April issue of Mississippi Farm Country magazine. Final figures will be available in May 2015.

STATE YF&R DISCUSSION MEET WINNER IN SEMIFINALS: Dr. Gaea Hock of Starkville, who represented Mississippi in American Farm Bureau Federation Discussion Meet competition in January, made it into the Sweet Sixteen semifinals. Gaea is an assistant professor of agricultural information science and education in the School of Human Sciences at Mississippi State University.

PURCHASE FARM FAMILIES OF MISSISSIPPI VANITY CAR TAG: Show your support for the Farm Families of Mississippi agricultural image campaign by purchasing a Farm Families of Mississippi vanity car tag. The additional tag fee is \$31 in addition to your annual tag fee. The campaign receives \$24 of these funds to better promote agriculture to the general public. Over 1,500 tags have been sold to date. Please visit your local tax collector's office to order your tag.

MEMBER DISCOUNT ON CASE IH EQUIPMENT: Farm Bureau members have an opportunity to receive up to \$500 off eligible tractors and equipment from Case IH. The following products are eligible for this benefit: Farmall Compact tractors (A & B) - \$300 per unit; Farmall Utilities C, U, & J series - \$500 per unit; Maxxum Series and Farmall 100A series - \$500 per unit; self-propelled windrowers - \$500 per unit; large square balers - \$500 per unit; round balers - \$300 per unit; small square balers - \$300 per unit; disc mower conditioners - \$300 per unit; sickle mower conditioners - \$300 per unit; and Case IH Scout - \$300 per unit. Simply go to www.fbverify.com/case and follow the prompts for the Case IH offer. Members enter their Farm Bureau membership ID and zip code and click “submit.” A prompt to print a personalized certificate will appear. Members should take the certificate to their dealer with a current driver's

license or state identification. The discount is stackable, meaning it can be used with other discounts, promotions, rebates or offers that may be provided by Case IH or a Case IH dealership. For assistance or for more information, contact Member Benefits Coordinator Dedra Luke at (601) 977-4169.

NEW FARM BUREAU APP FOR SMARTPHONES: A new app for your smartphone will give you quick access to Farm Bureau information, including member benefits, programs, events and more. You can pay your dues, watch the latest videos from Farm Bureau, link to our social media sites, find directions to your county Farm Bureau office, read the latest Farm Country magazine, even send us photos! Versions are available for Apple and Android phones. Go to the App Store or the Android Store and search for Mississippi Farm Bureau.

COLORING CONTEST: Each year, our Ag in the Classroom program encourages second-graders to color a farm scene and win a prize. Regional winners receive \$25, and the state winner is awarded \$50. This year's deadline for regional entries is Feb. 15, and the deadline for state entries is March 15. Contact your county Farm Bureau office or the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Women's Program at (601) 977-4854 for more details.

AG ART CONTEST: The Mississippi Farm Bureau Ag Art Contest offers Farm Bureau Women, through the Ag in the Classroom program, an opportunity to increase students' awareness of the importance of agriculture in Mississippi. Titles of the contests this year are "Down on the Farm" for grades 1-6 and "Barns, Bins and Gins" for grades 7-12. Six winners from the two age divisions will receive \$75 each. A state winner from each of the two divisions will receive \$100 each. Entries should be submitted to Mississippi Farm Bureau by the March 1 deadline. Previous state winners are not eligible.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM: The deadline for submitting a Teacher of the Year essay is March 15. The winning teacher will have an opportunity to take an expense-paid trip to the National Ag in the Classroom Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and will participate in the annual Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Women's Leadership Conference in Jackson. For more information, contact your county Farm Bureau office or the MFBF Women's Program at (601) 977-4854.

VOICES OF AGRICULTURE: The next "Voices of Agriculture" will feature highlights from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation annual meetings. "Voices of Agriculture" airs Feb. 9 at 1 p.m. and Feb. 14 at 2:30 p.m., CST, on RFD-TV. You will find RFD-TV on these channels: Channel 231 on Dish Network and Channel 345 on DirecTV. "Voices of Agriculture" is a production of Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.

NEW COOKBOOK: A new cookbook, "Country Cooking, Volume V," is now available in most county offices. The cost is \$20. If you order a cookbook from the state office, you will

pay \$20 plus postage. For more information, contact Pam Jones at pjones@msfb.org or (601) 977-4854.

AG MAGS AVAILABLE: Farm Bureau offers a children's agricultural newsletter called Ag Mag, which features one Mississippi commodity each issue through facts, activities, games and more. You can order copies of this newsletter for your local classroom or ag promotion events from our Ag in the Classroom program. Dairy, corn, poultry, horticulture and cotton editions are now available for purchase. The cost is \$5 for 20 copies. To order, contact Pam Jones at pjones@msfb.org or (601) 977-4854.

AG IN THE CLASSROOM T-SHIRTS FOR SALE: If you have not purchased your Ag in the Classroom T-shirt, contact Pam Jones at pjones@msfb.org or (601) 977-4854. The shirts are available in maroon or red, sizes Youth, small through large, and Adult, small through 2XL. The cost is \$15 for short sleeves and \$20 for long sleeves. We also have fans for sale using the same design as the T-shirt. They are 50 cents each. If you buy in bulk, you get a cut. For example, you can purchase 25 fans for \$10.

GREAT EDUCATIONAL WEBSITE: Here is a website that is very helpful in the conversation on GMOs with consumers. It is really good about telling the story of genetically modified organisms and the educational process. Please share this with others in your groups/organizations. The link is www.gmoanswers.com.

Calendar of Events

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| Feb. 11 | Ag Day at the Capitol, <i>Jackson</i> |
| Feb. 23-25 | Washington D.C. Fly-In |
| March 1 | Ag Art Contest Deadline |
| March 3 | Ronald McDonald House, <i>Jackson</i> |
| March 15 | Teacher of the Year Deadline |
| April 9 | Magnolia Beef & Poultry Expo, <i>Raleigh</i> |
| April 17-19 | Super Bulldog Weekend, <i>MSU</i> |
| April 21-22 | Secretaries' Conference, <i>Flowood</i> |

April 24 Women's Leadership Conference, *Jackson*

May 15 Deadline for Teacher/Volunteer AITC Workshops

June 1 Scholarships Deadline

June 9,10,11 Teacher/Volunteer AITC Workshops
Hernando, Jackson, Hattiesburg

July 27-30 Youth Safety Seminar, Gray Center, *Canton*

If you have information for the April issue of Grassroots Leader newsletter, call (601) 540-6868 or email gphillips@msfb.org.