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**COASTAL RESEARCH &
EXTENSION CENTER**

**PRODUCER ADVISORY
COUNCIL**

Commodity Session Notes

January 14, 2025

thank you!

to our Partners



SOUTHERN AGCREDIT

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**COASTAL RESEARCH &
EXTENSION CENTER**

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Dear Community Partner,

The Mission of the MSU Coastal Research & Extension Center is to conduct research and education programs aimed at developing a better understanding and use of renewable and nonrenewable resources in south Mississippi. To this end, it is important for us to continue to reach out and work with our clients and community partners, finding creative and innovative ways to share our knowledge and ideas.

The following pages contain the report from the 2025 Annual Producer Advisory Council (PAC) Meeting of the Mississippi State University (MSU) Coastal Research and Extension Center (CREC). This meeting allows producers and community leaders like yourself to communicate concerns, identify needs, and express opinions and feedback to allow Mississippi State University to better meet your needs.

We had a total of 127 individuals in attendance, which includes producers and MSU staff and faculty of the Coastal Research & Extension Center and the Coastal Extension Region, with nine counties represented by our Extension agents. The council was attended by other MSU senior administrators and staff members, representing MSU Extension and MS Agriculture & Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES), which are part of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry & Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM), as well as guests from Southern AgCredit and MS Farm Bureau Federation. Overall, this was a very well represented and attended meeting.

If you were able to attend this year's meeting, we want to thank you for your time and participation and look forward to continuing to work with you throughout the year. Moving forward, we challenge you to spread the word about MSU Extension and MAFES and what we do with our colleagues and fellow producers, and we ask you to encourage them to attend future meetings as well.

If you were unable to participate, we invite you to learn more about what we do at www.coastal.msstate.edu and hope that you will join us next year at our Annual Meeting which will held January 7, 2026. The Coastal Research and Extension Center was established in 1988 and is based in Biloxi, MS. CREC supports Extension programs in the 21 southeastern counties of Mississippi, on the reservation of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and at the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune. CREC also administers experiment stations in Harrison, Jackson, Perry, and Pearl River Counties under the Mississippi Agriculture & Forestry Experiment Station system.

Your continued support and participation makes our impact on the communities we serve even stronger.

Sincerely,

James E. Henderson, Ph.D.
Professor and Head
Coastal Research & Extension Center

Tawnya Holliman
Regional Extension Coordinator
Extension Coastal Region

Mississippi State University, United States Department of Agriculture, Counties Cooperating
Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution.



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COASTAL RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY COASTAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER

- Serves 21 of 82 Mississippi counties.
- Offers professional services from the MSU Extension Service and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station in agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, community resource development, and 4-H.
- Includes approximately 120 employees, including Extension agents and specialists, program associates and assistants, and faculty and staff.

THE MSU COASTAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER IS FUNDED BY THE MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE.



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MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Extension funding is supplemented by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium.



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- ★ Coastal Research & Extension Center
- ◆ Extension Unit: Crosby Arboretum
- MAFES Unit: South MS Branch Experiment Station
- MAFES Unit: Experimental Seafood Processing Lab
- MAFES Subunit: Beaumont Horticultural Unit
- MAFES Subunit: White Sand Beef Unit
- MAFES Subunit: McNeill Unit
- County Extension Office
- MS Band of Choctaw Indians Extension Office



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Apiculture

Dr. Jeff Harris, MSU Chair

24 Attendees

A welcome was given to all in attendance by the moderator, MS State Apiculture chair/specialist Dr. Jeff Harris. Mr. Dirk Dedeaux with USDA gave a quick update on programs available to beekeepers for help with hive loss. During the welcome, a quick rundown of the goals and expectations of the group was given. Attendees were asked to sign in. Dialogue was initiated between group members and Dr. Harris on issues viewed as of high importance. Dr. Harris spoke to the group concerning what was currently happening and what has recently been released that is relevant to apiculture/beekeeping.

Selection of a Chair and Chair elect were completed. Curtis Waites was selected as Chair and Dr. Mike Goblirsch was selected as Chair-elect. Dr. Harris gave an update on the development of the Master Beekeeping Program which will be similar in style to the Master Gardener program, only dealing with beekeeping obviously. He stated the trial run of this program should be online sometime around summertime time frame. Dr. Harris gave an update on new publications dealing with beekeeping as well including a beekeeping calendar that should be beneficial to many beekeepers. He also stated that research was being done on miticide resistance issues.

Attendees then took the floor to discuss issues they felt needed to be addressed or looked into. Discussion was had regarding creating a information sheet for homeowners and pool installation companies/sellers to make homeowners aware of some potential conflicts with bees with the installation of saltwater pools. Bees seem to locate and use saltwater pools extensively during the summer months and can cause conflicts.

Discussion then shifted towards creating a list of speakers, possibly by county or region, that would be willing and able to talk to local beekeeping clubs or groups. It was stated that clubs have a hard time finding speakers to engage and keep meetings fresh and different. It was mentioned that possibly those that take the Master Beekeeping course could have a service project portion of the course that requires them to do so many hours or events to keep the title of Master Beekeeper similar to the service portion of the Master Gardener course.

Coastal & Marine Issues

Dr. Marcus Drymon, Dr. Wenbo Liu, Dr. Holly Muraco, Dr. Ali Rellinger, & Dr. Eric Sparks, MSU Chairs

62 Attendees

Structure

- All groups briefly introduced themselves and programs. Those groups included:
 - Eric Sparks (Coastal Conservation and Restoration Program and Mississippi Sound Estuary Program)
 - Ali Rellinger (Program for Local Adaptation to Climate Effects)
 - Marcus Drymon (Marine Fisheries Ecology Program)
 - Blake Lamb on behalf of Mark Woodrey (Coastal Avian Ecology Lab)
 - Holley Muraco (Coastal One Health Lab)
 - Wenbo Liu (Pascagoula Seafood Lab)
- Participants were then directed to visit view program posters throughout the room and hallway as well as visit with program staff

Major topics discussed

- Lack of native coastal plants for conservation and restoration projects is a problem and opportunity
- Marine debris, litter, and workforce development remain issues
- Lack of automation solutions for seafood and meat processing
- Recycling and value-added utilization of aquaculture byproduct need to be improved
- The shark populations have exploded
- There is a lack of young entrants into the fishery
- Technical support around climate data for coastal adaptation is a continued need
- Support for individual and small-scale adaptation and resilience solutions are needed
- Rapid assessments of disaster impacts are needed
- Research is needed to understand baseline healthy systems and specific factors that lead to unhealthy systems and disease

Horticulture

Dr. Christine Coker, Dr. Jim DelPrince, Dr. Patricia Knight, Dr. Ben Posadas, & Dr. Eric Stafne, MSU Chairs

45 Attendees

Dr. Knight opened with introductions. Each specialist introduced themselves and then allowed everyone in the room to introduce themselves. Questions and comments were then taken from the room.

Topics discussed:

- **Blueberry Market Challenges:**
Blueberry growers struggle to compete with imports from Mexico, leading to financial losses. Shifting market trends favor Southern Highbush over Rabbiteye. Since you can't compete on global scale, alternative strategies geared toward local sales or U-pick may be needed.
- **Crop Insurance Expansion:**
FSA expanded the non-insured crop assistance program. Specialty crops face limited federal insurance options, with coverage varying by region. Non-natural disaster problems are not covered.
- **Southern Highbush Blueberry Adoption:**
Southern Highbush are increasingly preferred but susceptible to late spring frost. Protective measures include wind machines, helicopters, or high tunnels. The cultivar, Biloxi, jumpstarted the success in Central and South America.
- **Blueberries in Floral Markets:**
There is potential for blueberries as decorative elements, though demand and market separation pose challenges. Additionally, smilax, a common weed, was identified as a valuable floral material, especially for mechanics.
- **IR4 Program for Minor Use Pesticides:**
This program supports expanding pesticide use for ornamental crops where large-scale testing is economically unfeasible.
- **Graduate Student Research:**
Jenny Ryals discussed surveys on grower sanitation practices and disease management as well as work on *Loropetalum* gall irradiation. Haley Williams discussed winemaking with MidSouth grapes by blending with other fruits as well as looking into viability of using native yeasts for fermentation.
- **Transition to Organic Program:**
We have organic certification support and can help match you with a mentor. There is a new extension publication on transitioning to organic. It takes 3 years to transition, but you can a special "transitioning to organic" label during those 3 years to let others know you're in the process.
- **Passion Fruit Breeding:**
Efforts are being made to hybridize cold-hardy maypops with commercial passion fruit for a viable southern crop. There are ongoing collaborations with multiple regions, and there is a lot of potential for niche market growth.
- **Dragon Fruit Interest:**
There is limited experience locally, but the University of Florida is conducting significant research. It seems to be becoming an increasingly popular crop.

Upcoming events announced:

- Blueberry Workshop, Jan. 29th, Forrest County Extension Office
- Virtual Blueberry Workshop, Feb. 7th
- Beaumont Field Day, June 5th, Beaumont Horticulture Unit
- Muscadine Field Day, Aug. 28th, McNeill Research Unit
- Ornamental Horticulture Field Day, Oct. 2nd, South MS Branch Experiment Station
- Poinsettia Open House, Dec. 5th and 6th, South MS Branch Experiment Station



Forestry

Mr. Butch Bailey and Dr. Andrea De Stefano, MSU Chairs
27 Attendees

Butch Bailey – Lead

Tim Ray – Notes

Robert Smith - Presenter

Butch Bailey opened up the meeting stating we're still seeing the effects of the drought that occurred in late 2023, particularly an outbreak of IPS beetles causing damage to stressed trees.

What concerns do our attendees have?

Need competition or another papermill to help alleviate the market strain.

Markets aren't great in Mississippi.

Parts of Mississippi are taking bids to have trees killed for thinning

Its obvious timber mills and similar companies want to come to MS; they have to be competitive with the surrounding states.

There are too many regulations that need to be curtailed.

Would like to see Gross Negligence clause added to the Prescribe Burning Act. Currently there are no protections so anything that can give more protections to landowners.

Need more Contractors for prescribed burning; currently is very limited.

There aren't enough people licensed to burn; however, it's easier now to get the certification.

Getting insurance for a prescribed fire is expensive.

Comfort and knowledge are two key components to prescribed fire practices; liability is also a big issue.

There is a need for more prescribed fire programs, not just for landowners but for also the general public to have more understanding.

Invasive species to continue to be addressed.

Large timber on small tracts can be used in specialty markets.

Livestock

Dr. Barbara Roqueto dos Reis, MSU Chair

17 Attendees

Alex Shook introduced Dr. Reis. Introductions were made around the room.

Libby Durst spoke about the upcoming AI school and calving school on MSU campus.

Dr. Reis gave an update on research projects at the white sand Beef unit.

Dr. Rios gave an update on Small ruminant programs that are ongoing and a shared about a recent grant she received to work with Tuskegee university studying parasite tolerance in different environments.

Dr. Bratcher spoke about the new dairy specialist that had been hired since the last PAC meeting and shared about some of the programs that she had done since being hired.

Dr. Halphen has been working on biosecurity protocols to help combat hi-path avian influenza transmission to dairy cattle.

Alex read the producer's concerns from the previous PAC meeting.

A producer asked Dr. Reis for an update on her mineral research. Dr. Reis shared about her timeline and when she expected to be finished.

JB Brown expressed his concern to implement cattle management practices to improve the quail population. He would like to see incentives included in the next Farm Bill to encourage livestock producers to implement practices that encourage more favorable conditions for wildlife.

Dr. Reis spoke about a grant that she had submitted to look at silvopasture and is waiting to hear back from that funding agency.

A producer stated that he thought there was a need for more basic animal husbandry educational opportunities for cattle producers.

Producers expressed their frustrations with the lack of large animal veterinarians and the struggles of caring for their livestock with antimicrobials no longer being available over the counter. Dr. Bratcher shared that the vet school was working on programs to encourage more vet students to pursue careers in large animal care.

Darrell Seals was chosen as the producer chair.

Poultry

Dr. Jonathan Moon, MSU Chair

8 Attendees

We had more of a question-and-answer session seeing as we had more backyard flock producers instead of commercial producers.

Producers asked questions about insect control, respiratory diseases, and quarantine periods for infectious diseases.

The Avian Influenza was discussed in detail because of the time of year and potential outbreak.

- Mr. Jonathan Moon gave the producers signs to look for in the flock of AI.
- How it is transmitted and how to utilize biosecurity measures to keep their flocks safe.

Producers requested more educational information for backyard producers about Avian Influenza and other diseases.

Producers asked what they needed to do if their flock is exposed to AI and Mr. Moon stated that they needed to contact their regional Board of Animal Health contact.

Mr. Moon also discussed other commonly seen diseases in backyard flocks are mycoplasma and fowl box.



The Crosby Arboretum

With increasing value being placed on our natural heritage, The Crosby Arboretum is the premier native plant conservatory in the Southeast. The Arboretum was established as a living memorial to L.O. Crosby, Jr. (1907-1978) and has expanded to become a resource for education in the region and the world. Today, it provides for the protection of the region's biological diversity as well as a place for the public's enjoyment of plant species native to the Pearl River Drainage Basin of south-central Mississippi and Louisiana. It allows us to study and learn about plants and plant products so that we may use them to their best advantage and ensure their continuous propagation in the future. Aesthetic, agricultural, scientific, and industrial contributions of native plant species and ecosystems can be examined in a real-life setting at the Arboretum.

The 104-acre Native Plant Center of The Crosby Arboretum serves as the focus of Arboretum activities and development. It includes the Pinecote Pavilion and the Piney Woods Lake for display of native water plants in their natural setting. The Pinecote Pavilion and the many wooden bridges that complement the lake were designed by award-winning architect Fay Jones, of Fayetteville, Arkansas to enhance the artistic and functional aspects of the Arboretum.

The Crosby Arboretum also manages 700 acres in seven associated natural areas. The assemblages of carefully selected and protected lands nurtures over 300 species of indigenous trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses. Rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants and wildlife are present at throughout the Arboretum's preserves. Unusual plants have their place as well. The Arboretum protects and manages several lovely pitcher plant bogs both on site and within the natural areas. Edible, poisonous, and aromatic plants, too, are found at the Arboretum. As the seasons unfold their splendor, the Arboretum provides a clear, unobstructed view of the variety and beauty of our natural resources.

More than attractive features of our landscape, plants are an integral part of the environment we inhabit. Our own survival will be threatened if they do not flourish. Therefore, humankind's best interests can be served by the study of our plant neighbors with which we share this planet.



The Crosby Arboretum

370 Ridge Road * P.O. Box 1639

Picayune, MS 39466

Phone: 601-799-2311

Fax: 601-799-2372

crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu

Open

Wednesday – Sunday

9:00 am – 4:30 pm





Mission: The Coastal Research and Extension Center is Mississippi State University’s “southern exposure,” linking residents of the coastal region to the university. The center’s mission is to conduct research and education programs aimed at developing a better understanding and use of renewable and nonrenewable resources in south Mississippi. Its applied research and educational programs with biological, physical, and social systems focus on enhancing the quality of life of residents of Mississippi and other Gulf states. Our priorities address the specific needs of diverse communities including the health and well-being of the people and responsible stewardship of unique natural resources.

Vision: Coastal Research and Extension Center is the leader in providing responsive solutions addressing social, environmental, and economic integration of Research and Extension.

What we do and where we do it:

<p>Coastal Research and Extension Center 1815 Popp's Ferry Rd Biloxi, MS 39532 Phone: 228-388-4710 Fax: 228-388-1375</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal avian ecology • Coastal restoration ecology • Forest management • Marine fisheries ecology • Natural Resources and agricultural economics • Ornamental horticulture • Coastal climate resilience • Vegetable horticulture
<p>South MS Branch Experiment Station Includes Poplarville, White Sand, and McNeill Units 810 Highway 26 West * PO Box 193 Poplarville, MS 39470 Poplarville Phone: 601-795-4525 White Sands Phone: 601-795-4805</p> <p>Beaumont Horticultural Unit 475 Hwy 15 Beaumont, MS 39423 Phone: 601-788-6616 Fax: 601-788-5522</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef nutrition • Host to USDA ARS Thad Cochran Southern Horticultural Library • Ornamental horticulture • Small Fruits horticulture • Vegetable horticulture
<p>Experimental Seafood Processing Laboratory 3411 Frederic Street Pascagoula, MS 39567 Phone: 228-762-7783</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquatic processing technology • Food-borne pathogen elimination • Extension of the shelf life of aquatic products • Post-harvest technology • Chemical residue analysis
<p>The Crosby Arboretum 370 Ridge Road * P.O. Box 1639 Picayune, MS 39466</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Landscapes • Preserving, protecting, and displaying plants native to the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana



The Mississippi State University Extension Service provides research-based information, educational programs, and technology transfer focused on issues and needs of the people of Mississippi, enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social, and cultural well-being.

The **Coastal Extension Region Office** serves these 21 southeastern Mississippi counties, as well as the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI).

952 Sullivan Drive * Hattiesburg, MS 39401 * Phone 601-545-6083

Ms. Tawnya Holliman, Coastal Regional Extension Coordinator

County	Extension Agents	Physical Street/Mailing Address	Phone	Fax
Clarke	Roy Higdon	101 Westwood Ave., PO Box 109 Quitman, MS 39355	601-776-3951	601-776-1023
Covington	Ellen Russell	68 Industrial Park Drive Collins, MS 39428	601-765-8252	601-765-5009
Forrest	Jessie Tisdale	952 Sullivan Dr. Hattiesburg, MS 39401	601-545-6083	601-545-6173
George	Heath Steede	7128 Highway 198 East, PO Box 738 Lucedale, MS 39452	601-947-4223	601-947-4224
Greene	Dillon Mizelle	4321 High School Road Leakesville, MS 39451	601-394-2702	601-394-2741
Hancock	Camden Oglesby	17304 Hwy 603 Kiln, MS 39556	228-467-5456	228-466-6225
Harrison	Tim Ray	14281 County Farm Road Gulfport, MS 39503	228-865-4227	228-868-1470
Jackson	Shelby Hudson	4111 Amonett St, Ste E, PO Box 1248 Pascagoula, MS 39568	228-769-3047	228-769-3347
Jasper	Kelby King	37B West 8th Ave., PO Box 506 Bay Springs, MS 39422	601-764-2314	601-764-2035
Jeff Davis	Akeem McNair	2304 Pearl Avenue, PO Box 580 Prentiss, MS 39474	601-792-5121	601-792-5123
Jones	Kimberly Hancock	515 North 5th Ave., PO Box 448 Laurel, MS 39441	601-428-5201	601-428-3158
Kemper	Bonnie White	587 Old Scooba Rd, PO Box 339 DeKalb, MS 39328	601-743-2837	601-743-5581
Lamar	Ross Overstreet	216 Shelby Street Ste B, PO Box 419 Purvis, MS 39475	601-794-3910	601-794-5515
Lauderdale	Meribeth Boland	1022 Hwy 19 South Meridian, MS 39301	601-482-9764	601-482-9777
Marion	Alex Shook	1060 Hwy 13 South Columbia, MS 39429	601-736-8251	601-731-3791
Neshoba	Anthony Cypher	12000 Hwy 15 N, Ste 2 Philadelphia, MS 39350	601-656-4011	601-656-5505
Newton	Shani Hay	65 Seventh Street, PO Box 188 Decatur, MS 39327	601-635-7011	601-635-2146
Pearl River	Eddie Smith	835 Highway 26 West Poplarville, MS 39470	601-403-2280	None
Perry	Brittany Odum	105-B3 Main Street New Augusta, MS 39462	601-964-3668	601-964-8480
Stone	Brad Jones	214 N Critz St, Suite A Wiggins, MS 39577	601-928-5286	601-928-4677
Wayne	Curtis Jones	810-A Chickasawhay St Waynesboro, MS 39367	601-735-2243	601-735-6264
MBCI	Kaiti Ford	133 Ag Center Drive, Choctaw, MS 39350	601-656-9679	601-650-1992

*Save the
Date*

January 7, 2026

Coastal Research & Extension Center

**Producer Advisory
Council**

Biloxi, MS

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Coastal Conservation and Restoration Program
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Mississippi Coastal Cleanup
Mississippi Market Maker
Mississippi Master Naturalists
Mississippi Sound Estuary Program
Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center
Mississippi State University Extension Service
Mississippi State University Marine Fisheries Ecology
MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine
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The Crosby Arboretum

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