AFA 76th Annual Meeting Speaker Spotlight, Pt. 1

The AFA Annual Meeting is just around the corner, and like in years past, we want to allow attendees to get to know the speakers they can expect to see at this year’s event. This month, we will showcase the speakers at our Forest Management Workshop on Tuesday, October 5.

Ralph Meeker, Deer Program Coordinator – Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

Ralph is a native Arkansan from Greenwood and is a certified wildlife biologist with the Wildlife Society. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and an M.S. degree in Biology from the University of Central Arkansas.

Ralph started his career as a forestry research specialist at the University of Arkansas-Monticello before joining the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission where he has been the last 18 years. He enjoys hunting, trapping, fishing, and spending time with his family around a campfire.

Cheyne Matzenbacher, Deer Outreach Specialist - National Deer Association

Cheyne grew up in rural Berryville, Arkansas, where he learned to love the outdoors. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Arkansas Tech University.

Cheyne started his career as a wildlife manager at Dogwood Canyon Nature Park. He assisted with prescribed fire and food plot construction and maintenance, and the general care of the park’s captive whitetail deer and elk herds.

He worked for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources for a decade as a park naturalist at Roaring River State Park and later as the assistant park superintendent.

Cheyne also worked in Houston, Texas as an outdoor education programmer before accepting the position of wildlife management cooperative specialist with the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA).

The National Deer Alliance and QDMA joined forces in 2020 to become the National Deer Association, where Cheyne continues to work as a Deer Outreach Specialist.

His job duties in Southern Missouri range from providing education and outreach to private landowners, assisting the Missouri Department of Conservation with their Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), coordinating Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) sampling trainings, and organizing hunter recruitment and mentoring initiatives.

Cheyne has been happily married to his wife, Amber, for almost 10 years, and they reside just south of Branson, Missouri, with their 5-year-old daughter, Ryleigh.
AFA Annual Meeting Speaker
Spotlight, con’t.
Dr. Victor L. Ford, CF, RF Associate Vice President – Agriculture and Natural Resources University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service

Dr. Ford grew up working in tobacco, vegetables, forages, and cattle. His academic training is in forestry, soils, and mycology with a B.S. and M.S. from the University of Tennessee and a Ph.D. from Virginia Tech.

He has been working in research for over 40 years and has worked with private landowners for over 37 years. He has worked 20 years in forest research with Westavco Corporation and later MeadWestvaco and 18 years for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. His research has focused on soil management and classification, weed control, tree improvement, and ecological management of forest stands. He has conducted research in Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Illinois, West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Alabama, Georgia, and Texas. He was Director and Professor at the Southwest Research Extension Center in Hope, AR for eight years before taking his current position. He has over 80 publications and presentations.

Vic became interested in ethics when he was asked to review the SAF Ethics principles in the late 1990’s. He later was asked to serve on and chair the SAF Ethics Committee and the SAF Certification Review Board.

He works in Little Rock but returns home to Hope during the weekends to his wife, Cindy. They share four children and six grandchildren.

There is still time to register either for our in-person event or virtual attendance. The final day to take advantage of early bird pricing and our special room rate at the Embassy Suites in Rogers is Friday, September 3. You can register online at https://www.arforests.org/event/2021AnnualMeeting.

AFA Staff Visits NWA for Annual Meeting, con’t.

In walking distance of our venue, you can make a reservation (here by visiting https://topgolf.com/us/rogers-arkansas) to get $35 per hour per bay, which holds six people. AFA staff did some research into Topgolf during their stay in Northwest Arkansas and had a blast.

We are very happy to have our annual fish fry at the J.B. and Jannelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center in Springdale. It has plenty of parking for attendees and is an extremely nice facility. Both kids and adults will enjoy a walkthrough of their main nature center to see some local reptiles or bobwhite quail, which will be open from 5 – 7 p.m. the night of our event.

The University of Arkansas Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design is working with AFA to offer a CLT building tour on campus after the Awards Breakfast on October 7. Transportation will be available at the university to take guests to the various locations we will be touring.

This event is only open to 50 registered attendees. Make sure you indicate you would like to attend when you register for the Annual Meeting.

AFA would like to state once more that we still plan to hold our full meeting in Rogers as of August. We do not have any special requirements for our guests, but that is subject to change in our ever-changing landscape.

If you have any questions on registration or safety concerns, please feel free to call the AFA office at 001 (374) 244-1.

Drew County Log a Load for Kids Chapter Faces Unexpected Change to 2021 Event

After an unexpected venue cancellation, the Drew County Log a Load for Kids chapter had to make some quick changes to their plans for their annual fish fry dinner and auction earlier this month.

The group was still able to auction off this load of logs in person while other items were placed in an online auction.

Luckily, the group already knew of a great backup venue thanks to the changes that had to be made in 2020. Drew County moved everything back to McCoy Park in Monticello to ensure attendees had a place to gather.

Along with the change in location, the group also modified their live and silent auctions. The only item the group auctioned live during the dinner was a load of logs that were showcased at the park. Other items were placed into an online auction that spanned about a week.

“We moved some higher-end silent auction items to the live auction, so we had more items,” Pace explained. “Some items did not do as well as I wanted, but we still had a good auction. We are blessed to have offered AuctioN that support Log a Load and were able to pivot in a short timeframe!”

Arkansas Log a Load for Kids is very successful because of the people who continue to attend and give away year after year. That is why despite the changes, our Drew County chapter still had an excellent turnout.

“I am so thankful to the ones who support us and do what they can,” Pace said. “More people came and left than last year...100 degree heat index will do that! Our donors continue to amaze me every year.”

Pace and her other volunteers are still calculating a final total raised for Arkansas Children’s for this year. She teases that they are even looking into some new ideas for additional ways people can give.