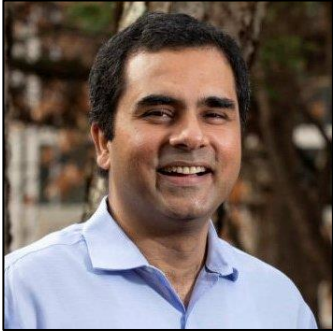


Virtual Conference on Heirs' Property and Sustainable Forest Management Feb 08, 2021



Puneet Dwivedi is an Associate Professor (Forest Sustainability) at the University of Georgia (UGA) Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. Dr. Dwivedi received his Ph.D. from the University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation in 2010. He did work as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Yale University (2010 – 2012) and the University of Illinois (2012 – 2013), before starting as a faculty at the University of Georgia. Dr. Dwivedi's research focuses on family forest landowners, forest markets, land use change and its impact, and forest-based ecosystem services. He was awarded the UGA Creative Research Medal for his research on African American forest landowners in Georgia. Additionally, the Southeastern Chapter of the Society of American Foresters awarded him the Award of Excellence for Research and Development in 2019.



Skipper G. StipeMaas is the founding Executive Director of Georgia Heirs Property Law Center ("the Center"). Ms. StipeMaas has more than 25 years of experience as a Community Economic Development Attorney specializing in heirs' property and nonprofit, land-based development projects involving complex real estate acquisitions, conservation easements, farmers cooperatives, affordable housing development, and leasehold agreements. Her formative experiences of growing up on a farm in rural South Georgia and becoming an heirs' property owner at the age of 8 shape her work today. Ms. StipeMaas manages a staff of attorneys, a social worker, and a paralegal located in offices in Atlanta, Athens, Valdosta, and Fitzgerald to accomplish work throughout Georgia. Under her leadership, the Center prevents the creation of heirs' property through estate planning; provides asset education to grow generational wealth through the home and land ownership; and remediates 'tangled title' through technical assistance that emphasizes land loss prevention and building assets in low-to-moderate income communities.



Joe Hamilton retired from the DoD after 38 years. Joe also served 4 years with the USAF and received several awards. Joe's completed his career at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, SC as a Supervisory IT Specialist. Joe studied Civil Engineering at Trident Technical College and graduated from Park University with a BS in Human Resources and Trident Technical College with an Associate in Applied Science, Homeland Security Management. Prior to retirement, Joe recognized that land owned by his family did not have an identified owner. A community workshop sponsored by the Center for Heirs Property Preservation introduced him to the process of resolving heir's property ownership. Although not qualified to participate in the Center's no-cost program, Joe met with his family members and outlined a path forward. Researching the various "chain-of-titles" which lasted 3 years, Joe retained an attorney and file suit to first "quit claim", then "quiet title" for the entire parcel with his siblings. When the family opted to partition the property, Joe reluctantly agreed but granted each sibling a title deed to their portion. Joe then returned to the Center for guidance in making the land a productive commodity. Joseph was enrolled in the Sustainable Forestry Land Retention program. After a series of self-help programs and workshop, Joe has become a Certified Tree Farmer and a member of the American Tree Farm System. Because of the cost to resolve the heirs' property dilemma, Joe is currently studying the LSAT to become enrolled in the USC School of Law in Fall 2021 or Spring 2022. Joe is married (43 years) to the former Blanche Glenner Reid of Jacksonboro, SC. They have three adult children, Joseph St. Michael (US Navy), Kimberly Michelle (Orlando, FL), Jennifer Elizabeth (Charleston, SC), and two grandsons, Emory Joseph and Ellison Michael.



Marc Thomas: I was born and raised in the small rural community of Morris, Georgia. I received a Bachelor's from Fort Valley State University in Agricultural Economics and a Master's degree from Southern Illinois University (SIU) at Carbondale in Forestry. I have an extensive background in educational programming, having worked at Florida A&M University (FAMU), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), and Fort Valley State University (FVSU). I am currently employed by the Fort Valley State University - Cooperative Extension Program as the Director of Field Operations and Ag Marketing Specialist. I am responsible for the day-to-day activities of the County Operation Unit, including the supervision of 14 county extension agents and program assistants. I also provide leadership in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of county-based program outcomes and their impacts on a local, regional, state, and national level. I served as the Project Director for the Landowners Initiative for Forestry Education (LIFE) Project. This project focused on the overall goal of increasing outreach, awareness, and technical assistance to minority and limited resource farmers/landowners in the areas of sustainable natural resource practices and effective estate planning. Currently, I serve on several state and regional committees related to agriculture and natural resources.



Mack Evans is from Jakin, GA. He has owned Evans Farm since 2003 until the present. His farm enterprises consist of cattle, pine straw, and timber. He retired as Engineer in New Jersey with employment at both IBM and Eastman Kodak.



Charlene McLendon is a small landowner in Laurens County, Dublin, Georgia which she was raised. As an absentee landowner, she has utilized the Fort Valley State University Cooperative Extension Service to assist her in planting the majority of her acreage in longleaf pines. As a female, minority and limited resource landowner she received the 90% cost share rate through the local National Resource Conservation Service. Now that one tract is 8 – 10 years old she is utilizing Fort Valley State University County Extension Agent Titus Andrews to assist her in putting leases for pine straw production and hunting. This will generate income to pay the taxes on the land and additional income for her desires.



Titus Andrews, County Extension Agent, headquartered in Laurens County and serves Wheeler, Toombs, Treutlen and Jeff Davis Counties for the last 20 plus years. Titus is very knowledgeable of the beef and timber industries and has been able to influence many clients and others that diversification on the farm is a must. With this diversification he has recommended the planting of long leaf pines which brought them much more additional income and wealth without borrowing money. With showing spread sheets and the return on investment many has accepted by obtaining funds through the local FSA and NRCS Offices. It has been very rewarding to him to see the families progress and maintain the family farm.



Willie H. Bussey Jr is a former co-owner/operator of Eastbank Logging, a family business that was started by his father in the 1980's. He has served as a county commissioner in Quitman County, Georgia, since 1992. He also serves as a board member of Enrichment Services with Early Childhood Development for 11 Georgia counties. Most importantly, Willie is a faithful deacon and Sunday School superintendent at Trinity Chapel Church in Morris, Georgia.



Noah Goyke received his doctorate from the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. His research focuses on the motivations behind family forest landowners' forest management decisions. Noah is particularly interested in how race, gender, and family history shape forest management decisions. His research emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to the forest management question, drawing on qualitative and quantitative methods from anthropology, economics, psychology, and sociology. His most recent work explores the role of state tax programs in land retention among African American family forest landowners. Noah Goyke is currently a Teaching Fellow of Biology at Northland College.



John Schelhas is a Research Forester with the Southern Research Station (SRS) of the USDA Forest Service in Athens, GA. His research centers on relationships between people and forests. His primary research focus is private forest landowners and rural communities, addressing topics such as land use decision-making, environmental values and discourse, forest-based rural development, race and ethnicity, relationships between protected areas and their neighbors, invasive plants, bioenergy, and climate change. He has conducted research in Latin America and the Southern United States. He holds a Ph.D. in Renewable Natural Resources with a Minor in Anthropology from the University of Arizona. He has worked as a researcher at Cornell University and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and has also worked for the US National Park Service and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala.



Sarah Hitchner is an Assistant Research Scientist and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Georgia. She is a cultural anthropologist whose current research interests include African American landowners, heirs' property, cultural landscapes, participatory research, ethnographic writing, ecotourism, bioenergy, Malaysian and Indonesian studies, and cultural landscapes in the Southeastern United States. Her dissertation research focused on participatory mapping of the highly anthropogenic cultural landscape of the Kelabit Highlands in Sarawak, Malaysia. She currently co-directs a study abroad program in Bali, Indonesia. She is co-editor of *Indigeneity and the Sacred: Indigenous Revival and the Conservation of Sacred Natural Sites in the Americas* and co-author of a forthcoming book on the intersection of race, energy, and landscapes in the Southeastern United States.



Jim Wabindato, Little River Band Ottawa, joined ILTF (Indian Land Tenure Foundation) in early 2014 as a Program/Development Officer. In this role, Wabindato works on issues related to landowner education and program development. Prior to joining the organization, Wabindato was a realtor in Arizona and Wisconsin, a site manager with the Indian Land Consolidation Office, a realty specialist, and grant writer with the Bad River Band of Chippewa, as well as an economic development director and casino board member for Little River. Wabindato holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan.



Conner Bailey is Professor Emeritus of Rural Sociology at Auburn University. Dr. Bailey received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1980. Prior to joining the Auburn faculty in 1985, he spent 9 years living in Southeast Asia, primarily in rural villages; three years of this time was in the Peace Corps when he worked in rural health. After completing his Ph.D., he worked at the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (now known as WorldFish) and at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Dr. Bailey's research interests center around natural resource and environmental sociology, and he has published on environmental justice, hazardous waste management, aquaculture, marine fisheries, forestry, rural and community development, genetic engineering, and heirs' property. The unifying theme through this disparate repertoire has been how powerful institutional actors shape the destinies of relatively powerless rural people and their communities. He has received multiple teaching and research awards over his academic career.



Alicia Cramer is a Senior Vice President at the Endowment, where she focuses on program oversight and development. She began working with the Endowment as a volunteer member of the Board of Directors and then transitioned to become a full-time member of the leadership team in 2017. Her more than 30 years of professional experience include roles in packaging engineering and supply chain analysis to product development positions in the forestry sector, all of which contribute to her current role. Before joining the Endowment, Alicia worked for more than two decades for the Westervelt Company, formerly known as Gulf States Paper Corporation, located in Alabama. There she held key management positions in product development before progressing to Vice President of Business Development. This executive role encompassed global leadership accountability for Westervelt Ecological Services, Westervelt Renewable Energy, and the company's recreation and agricultural assets in New Zealand. Alicia received bachelor's degrees in Chemistry and Sociology from Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania. She also completed The Fuqua School Executive program at Duke University.



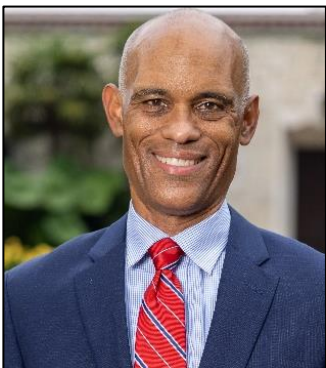
Mavis Gragg is a seasoned attorney and conservation professional with nearly two decades of experience in real estate, conflict resolution, estate planning, and probate. Mavis serves as the Director of the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Project at the American Forest Foundation. Before this role, Mavis founded the Gragg Law Firm, PLLC in which she assisted her clients in estate planning, estate administration, and heirs' property matters. Mavis serves on the Board of Directors for Triangle Land Conservancy and is a member of the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority. With her sister, Mavis co-founded Black Women Drone and the Gragg Family Fund. A native of Black Mountain, North Carolina, Mavis is an alumna of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (B.A., Industrial Relations) and Pepperdine University School of Law (Juris Doctor and Master of Dispute Resolution).



Cheryl Peterson is a Senior Managing Director at McIntosh Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (McSEED), a nonprofit organization located in Darien, Georgia. Cheryl provides sustainable agricultural technical assistance for farmers and cooperatives, grassroots organizations, farmers market and community garden developers and landowners. Cheryl is an outreach provider for USDA NRCS for Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Cheryl holds a Masters of Science Degree in Educational Leadership (K-12) and a Bachelors of Science Degree in Middle Grades Education. Cheryl currently co-manages McSEED's "Sustainable Forest and Land Retention" program, which provides conservation assistance and support for African American forest landowners and is part of a broader eight (8) state initiative. Cheryl served as co-manager of a Ford Foundation project that built agricultural value-chains in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.



Terrance O. Rudolph was named Georgia State Conservationist in July 2014. Before accepting the State Conservationist position in Georgia, Mr. Rudolph served as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Knoxville, Tennessee, for USDA NRCS from October 2006 until July 2014. As Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, he directed the Field Office operations over twenty-six counties in Eastern Tennessee. In January 2012, Mr. Rudolph worked on a detail assignment as Acting State Conservationist in North Carolina in January 2012. In August 2012, Mr. Rudolph served on a detail assignment at National Headquarters (NHQ) as a member of the 2012 State Budget Evaluation Team. In January 2011, he worked on a detail assignment as a Senior Legislative Affairs Specialist at NHQ. Other positions Mr. Rudolph has held throughout his 25-year Federal government career include three years as District Conservationist in Mason, Michigan; three years as District Conservationist in West Burlington, Iowa, and four years as a Soil Conservationist in five different locations throughout the State of Wisconsin. Mr. Rudolph received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education from Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University while also serving as a Soil Conservation Trainee for NRCS. He has been an active member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society for more than 23 years. Mr. Rudolph and his wife, Teri, have two children: Taelor and Tamera.



Thomas Mitchell is a professor at Texas A&M University School of Law, where he co-directs the Program in Real Estate and Community Development Law. Prior to joining Texas A&M, he served on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin Law School as a full professor. He is a national expert on property issues facing disadvantaged communities and has published leading scholarly works addressing these matters. Professor Mitchell has done extensive law reform and policy work, most prominently serving as the principal drafter for the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA). The UPHPA represents the most substantial law reform effort in modern times to stabilize ownership of certain family-owned properties. Thus far, 18 states/jurisdictions in every region of the country – including 8 states in the South – have enacted the UPHPA into law. In addition to this work, Professor Mitchell has helped develop federal policy proposals to help disadvantaged farmers and property owners. Recently, he was named 1 of 21 recipients of the MacArthur Fellowship for 2020 in recognition of the substantial impact his overall work has had. Professor Mitchell is a graduate of Amherst College, the Howard University School of Law, and the University of Wisconsin Law School, where he received an LL.M. (Master of Law) and served as a William H. Hastie Fellow.



Emma Scott is a Clinical Instructor at the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic. Her work focuses on FLPC's Sustainable and Equitable Food Production Initiative and the Clinic's ongoing collaborations in the Mississippi Delta region as a member of the Delta Directions Consortium. Prior to joining FLPC, Emma served as a Justice Catalyst Fellow at California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation in the Labor and Civil Rights Litigation Unit, with a focus on group representation of agricultural workers in employment and labor litigation. She also served as a law clerk to the Hon. John A. Mendez of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California from September 2016 to August 2018. She is a licensed member of the California Bar.



Lorette Picciano has served since 1992 as Executive Director of the Rural Coalition, a Washington, DC-based alliance of more than 50 culturally diverse community-based organizations representing small producers and farmworkers in the US and Mexico. She works with RC's diverse Board and members to promote just and sustainable development in rural areas, particularly in civil rights in agriculture. Just completing her 8th Farm Bill Debate, she has coordinated collaborative efforts to assure equal access to USDA programs for farmers, ranchers, and farmworkers, helping to secure more than 45 sections of new Farm Bill Policies. Her education includes a BS in Agriculture and Life Sciences from Cornell University in 1976, and an M. Ed. from the University of Hawaii, where she was a participant in the Food Institute of the East-West Center and did fieldwork in the rural Philippines. Prior to joining the Rural Coalition, she worked since 1980 in Washington DC with several interfaith organizations on the farm crisis of the late 1980's, on equity in food and farm policy, and on food security and fair-trade issues. With future colleagues in the Rural Coalition, she helped secure farm credit borrowers' rights and programs for historically underserved farmers in the 1987 Agriculture Credit Act and Section 2501 of the 1990 Farm Bill. She has long served on the Steering Committee for the USDA National Small Farmers Conference, on the Boards of Directors of Agriculture Missions, Inc., and the Solidarity Economy Network, and as of January 2019, as a member of the Technical Advisory and Operational Committee (TOAC) of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), one of four regional centers across the country.



Eloris Speight joined Alcorn State University in March 2016 as Director of the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFR) Policy Research Center. In this capacity she leads the Policy Center in conducting research on policy impacting socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and making policy recommendations that will improve the success of SDFR. The Policy Center played a key role in advocating for items that are included in the 2018 Farm Bill, which benefits SDFR and the 1890 community. Ms. Speight has a BS in Accounting from Hampton University, an MBA-Finance from the University of Maryland and a MA in Human Resources Development from the George Washington University. She completed her course work towards a Doctorate in Education and Human Development at the George Washington University (ABD).

Partnering Organizations



Warnell School of Forestry
& Natural Resources
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



FORT VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY
A Division of the State System of Higher Education of Georgia

