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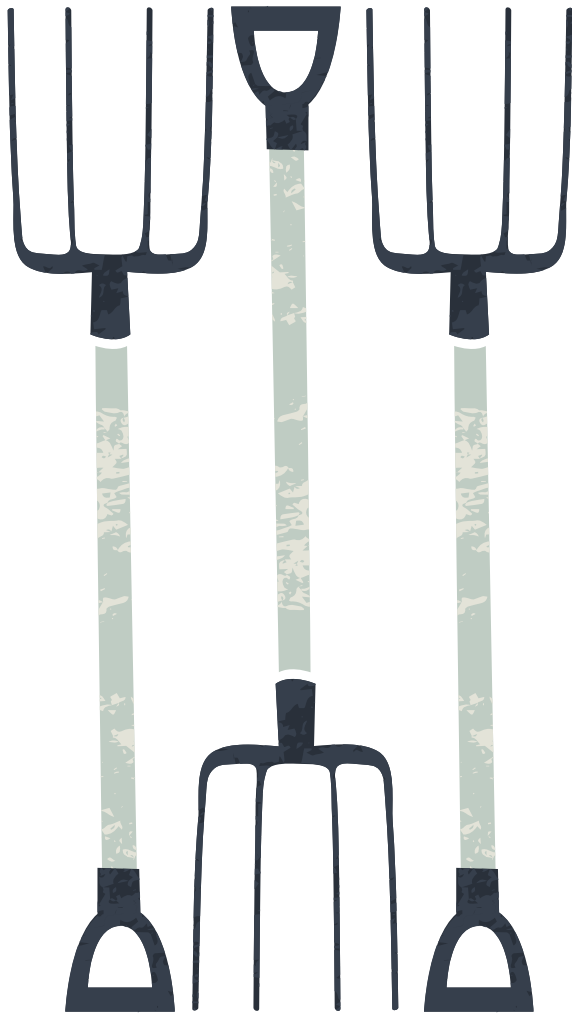
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Adelia Ladson/The Moultrie Observer

Jeff Powell, owner of Powell Cattle Farm, speaks to participants of the Colquitt County Cattlemen's Association's Cattlemen Tour.

Cattlemen's Association tours area farms

BY ADELIA LADSON

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MOULTRIE - The Colquitt County Cattlemen's Association hosted a cattle tour May 1.

The group of about 40 loaded up on a tour bus and visited four cattle farms in the county, including Windy Pond Farm, Powell Cattle Farm, Baker Cattle Farm and Fenco Farms.

The tour was led by Harry Thompson, former vice president of the Georgia Cattlemen's Association Region 14. A representative or owner, at three of the farms, spoke about their operation and the types of cattle they were raising.

Tony Lasseter, owner of Windy Pond Farm, said: "The pure breed business is a real tough business to be in."

He said that what they've been doing the last four or five years is taking purebred Angus cows and purebred Hereford cows and crossbreeding them to make Black Baldy cows, which are also called Black Whiteface.

"And somewhere along the way, we'll make some purebred Herefords and some purebred Angus," Lasseter added.

Lasseter said that he's been raising heifers for years and has always wanted to raise bulls.

"But it takes something special to raise bulls. Heifers are easy to raise but bulls get to be kind of aggravating. They'll tear-up everything," he said.

He said they DNA test every cow that's on the farm and if it's a heifer that doesn't meet his criteria, they send it to the stockyards.

"And the reason is I don't want to wait 2 1/2 years to find out that heifer's not gonna raise a calf," he said. "It costs just as much to feed a sorry one as it does a good one."

Lasseter said the DNA test looks for 17 different traits including the docility, milk, rib-eye, the marbling and the hot carcass, which is the weight immediately after slaughter and evisceration but before it's been chilled.

"The purebred business is fine. I used to have purebred cows. ... It's hard for me to sell a purebred cow," he said. "I started swapping them over and I can sell them Black Baldys."

He added that anybody will buy the Black Baldy cows and they'll pay good money for them.

"And at the end of the day, I don't care what you do, most cows sell by the pound. ... It's putting pounds on the ground is what you want," Lasseter said.

He also said that, as he understood it, the

cow numbers were at the lowest they've been since the 1950s. Then, he said that he didn't understand how a commercial cowman could pay \$3,000 - \$4,000 for a commercial heifer and make it work. The two categories of beef cattle operations are purebred and commercial.

Lasseter said that he had talked to a man in the industry who was very knowledgeable about it. "I asked him a question, I said, 'How long do you think this is going to go on?' And he said, 'Well, I know it's gonna last three more years. I don't know how much longer it's gonna last after that.' ... The numbers are the lowest they've ever been cause people are getting rid of them. ... For different reasons," he said.

He said some people were getting rid of cows because they were trying to pay off a debt and he said he knew people who sold off their whole herd because they thought it was the "last hurrah." They wanted to get their money, now, because they didn't want to worry about what was coming.

"I mean people are cashing in," he said. "We may not ever see this again, may not never see it. I don't know."

He said that he didn't know what was going to happen but all he could tell them was that, now, the cow business was as good as

he's ever seen in his life.

Lasseter also told the group that he honestly loved working with cattle.

At Powell Cattle Farm, Jeff Powell spoke to the group and he told them that he's been in the cattle business for about 20 years, but only in the purebred business for about six or seven of those. At the Powell farm, they breed Angus cows.

He also introduced his wife, Kay, and his son Harrison.

"Trying to get to 100% purebred," Powell said, "I have some older cows that are commercial. That's the cattle that we're predominately doing ET (embryo transfer) work in. We've got a spring group and a fall group."

He said they usually run about two rounds of the embryos and also one or two rounds of artificial insemination, depending on what he had going on as this was not his full-time job.

Powell works at Helena Chemical.

"Moving towards pretty much 100% AI (artificial insemination) on the AI side of things and just have minimal bulls to clean-up is my goal. ... But with it just being me and Harrison, when he can, it's just hard to catch all the right heats at the right time," he said.

See TOUR, Page 5

TOUR: Continued from Page 4

Powell also said that he consigns some of his bulls to Deer Valley Farm in Fayetteville, Tennessee. They also have a spring sale and two fall sales during the year, he said.

“Most all of my genetics come from Deer Valley. I have bought some heifers and some young cows from Kevin Yon. But the vast majority of them come from Deer Valley,” he said.

He said that in the purebred business, it changes so fast in genetics, especially, on the female side of things. He also said he has aligned himself with a group of ranchers across the country and he follows their protocols.

“There’s probably half a dozen guys that I follow my programs by — try to model myself by them,” Powell said.

He said he didn’t know any cattlemen who were satisfied with his group of cattle even when someone complimented him. Because they think it still isn’t good enough, he said.

“You see holes in your program. You just try to fill in those holes,” he said.

Powell said he tries to work his programs so that he has a market everywhere he goes.

“It’s a lot to keep going on but I enjoy it,” he said.

At Fenco Farms, which is based in Florida, Clay Cooper, the general manager of the location in Colquitt County, spoke to the group.

See TOUR, Page 6



Adelia Ladson/The Moultrie Observer

Tony Lasseter, owner of Windy Pond Farm, speaks to a group of people on the Colquitt County Cattlemen's Association's Cattlemen Tour.

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Tom Sumner
General Manager

TOUR: Continued from Page 5

“We’ve been headquartered out of Floral City, Florida and we have slowly been migrating in y’all’s direction. So we appreciate y’all taking the time to come visit with us today and let us tell you a little bit about our operation and our expansion up this way,” he said.

Cooper said they had predominantly been in the cow/calf business and now have migrated a little bit into the registered brand business, as well.

“So we’ve got a bull sale in October and we’ve got registered female sales and we’ll also be incorporating some commercial female components to those sales, as well,” he said.

Cooper added that they were trying to diversify in their offerings within the industry. In Floral City, he said, was where they managed all of their registered cattle. There were six different locations about 45 minutes from the headquarters, he said.

“Our cow/calves, we go ahead and strip those calves in September. They go out to a backgrounding yard in Paxico, Kansas with Michael Hurla, who backgrounds for us, and then, from there, they migrate over to High Plains and finish all of our cattle out and, then, they go to the grid on national,” Cooper said.

He said that they have been at the Peacock Ranch, in Colquitt County, for several years. Also, they have just acquired a piece of land in Rebecca and up around Ashburn. He said they would be bringing commercial cattle into those locations and continuing their expansion.

“The way we operate our cattle, we operate our commercial the same way as we’re gonna



Adelia Ladson/The Moultrie Observer

Participants of the Colquitt County Cattlemen’s Association’s Cattlemen Tour look at Back and Whiteface cattle at Windy Pond Farm with Tony Lasseter, owner.

run our registered,” Cooper said. “We believe, if we’re offering a genetic to other commercial cattlemen that they need to be able to go out and work and they need to hold together and they need to be able to provide a profit for our commercial cattlemen and our customers.”

Back in 2014, he said the company started collecting DNA samples from their commercial

cattle and heifers. Everything has an electronic identification tag.

“So, what that allows us to do on our commercial side and how we can tie it back to our registered side is we use a lot of our bulls that we’re developing each year, in our seed stock business, to support our commercial business, as well,” Cooper explained.

He said they’ve been pretty progressive on what they do with data collection and have put together a good staff.

“We’ve been pretty fortunate to be able to come up this way,” Cooper said. “We’re steadily looking for ways to evolve in the industry and to continue growing our operation and try to have a little bit of fun while doing it.”



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Thoron named dean of ABAC School of Agriculture & Natural Resources

STAFF REPORTS

TIFTON — Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College announced March 21 that Dr. Andrew Thoron has been named the new dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Thoron joined ABAC in January 2020, as the head of the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication.

“Dr. Thoron is an innovative leader who is well-respected by his colleagues both on campus and across the Southeast,” said ABAC President Dr. Tracy Brundage. “His vision for the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources – which remains one of the most prestigious of its kind in the country – aligns perfectly with our college’s mission to provide the best possible experience for our students.”

Thoron, a native of Illinois, earned a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Illinois State University, and both a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Agricultural Education

& Communication from the University of Florida. He previously served as an assistant professor at the University of Illinois. He also worked as an associate professor in the University of Florida’s Department of Agricultural Education & Communication from 2011 to 2019 before coming to ABAC.

“I’m honored and excited to serve as dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources,” Thoron said. “Together, we will continue to foster a culture of excellence in teaching, community engagement, and industry partnerships, ensuring our students are job-ready and well-prepared to lead in the agriculture and natural resource industries.”

In the past five years, ABAC’s Agricultural Education program has ranked second nationally in the production of agriculture

teachers. 85% of graduates have obtained teaching jobs,

with 90% of those remaining in the profession three years later. The program has also been recognized as the nation’s top post-secondary program for its cooperation with state and national agriculture teacher organizations. Annually, students and faculty contribute over 10,000 volunteer hours to FFA Chapter events at local, state, and national levels.

“The success of the program is a reflection of our faculty’s commitment to providing meaningful experiences that bring academics to life,” Thoron said. “Our students enter the teaching field well-prepared and stay in the profession.”

Thoron also highlighted the continued growth of ABAC’s Agricultural Communi-

cation program, with students securing jobs at major agricultural communication firms, earning internships, and gaining recognition for their research contributions.

“Our students are highly sought after for graduate school by top research universities,” he said.

“Georgia’s largest industry is agriculture, so it is critical that ABAC choose the best possible dean for our School of Agriculture and Natural Resources,” said Dr. Dana Nichols, ABAC’s interim provost and vice president of academic affairs. “In Dr. Thoron, I am confident we have found a leader who will not only maintain the excellent programs that we already offer but also drive the school to new heights. His leadership will ensure ABAC continues our high standards of educating students to support agriculture and natural resources in our state and beyond.”

Thoron and his wife, Ashley, have one son, Reiher. He officially began his new role May 1.



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Chamber awards agricultural scholarship to Moultrie senior

STAFF REPORTS

MOULTRIE — The Moultrie-Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce's Agricultural and Rural Services Committee announced that Lily Watson, a graduating senior at Colquitt County High School, is the recipient of this year's agricultural scholarship.

Each year, the Ag Committee honors an outstanding student who is pursuing post-secondary education in agriculture, agribusiness, or agricultural education.

This scholarship is intended to support and encourage the next generation of agricultural professionals. It

recognizes their potential to contribute to one of the community's most vital industries, the chamber said in a press release.

Watson is the oldest daughter of Sam and Emily Watson. She has been accepted to attend Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College this fall. Her dedication to agricultural studies and commitment to furthering her education in this field made her a standout applicant, the chamber said.

"The Chamber congratulates Lily on her achievements and wishes her continued success in her academic and professional journey," stated the Moultrie-Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce.



Submitted photo

Lily Watson, a graduating senior at Colquitt County High School, received the Moultrie-Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce Agricultural Scholarship. Agricultural Committee Chair Allen McCorvey presents the scholarship to Watson during Colquitt County High School's Senior Honors Night May 1.

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Georgia Cotton Commission to hold Mid-Year Meeting July 23

STAFF REPORTS

PERRY — The Georgia Cotton Commission is pleased to announce the guest speakers at the Commission’s 2024 Mid-Year Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at the Nesmith-Lane Conference Center in Statesboro.

The inaugural Mid-Year Meeting is held in conjunction with a UGA Cotton Pre-Harvest Workshop conducted by members of the UGA Research & Extension Cotton Team, according to a press release from the commission. The UGA Cotton Pre-Harvest Workshop will feature sessions where attendees will receive a 2025 crop update and defoliation considerations along with discussions regarding late season irrigation and pest management strategies.

The program speakers are Akiko Inui, Board Chair of The Cotton Board, and Tas Smith, Vice President of Producer Affairs for the National Cotton Council.

Inui serves as the chair of The Cotton Board, which administers the Cotton Research & Promotion Program. She has served as an importer member of the Cotton Board since 2016 and

has been on the Executive Committee since 2020. Inui is the transparency & traceability program advisory consultant for Ralph Lauren and has previously held positions with PVH Corporation, Dow Chemical Company, and Itochu Corporation. She holds degrees from Kwansei Gakuin University and Boston University and serves as an adjunct professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Smith has been with the National Cotton Council since 2019 and currently serves as the Vice President of Producer Affairs. In this role, he works with the American Cotton Producers and the NCC’s grower members to implement policies that enhance the viability and long-term viability of the producer segment of the industry. Before coming to NCC, Smith served as the state executive director of USDA’s Farm Service Agency in Georgia and in roles at Georgia Farm Bureau. Smith is a native of Butler, Georgia, and is a graduate of Valdosta State University.

During the lunch program the Georgia Quality Cotton Awards for the 2025 crop will be presented. There is no charge to attend. Pre-registration is requested to help with meal plans. Register online at www.georgiacottoncommission.org.




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Voters will be asked next year whether to expand conservation tax breaks for farmers

BY TY TAGAMI

Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA – Farmers may soon get more tax relief under a decades-old program designed to keep agricultural land out of developers' hands.

The Georgia Senate on March 18 overwhelmingly approved legislation from the House of Representatives that seeks to double the acreage farmers and other agricultural producers can place under a protective covenant in return for smaller property tax bills.

The final passage of House Bill 90 in a 47-3 vote comes as farmers, timber producers, poultry growers and other agricultural producers are reeling from the damage wrought by Hurricane Helene last fall.

The legislature has considered other ways to help them, including the passage by a 50-1 vote Tuesday of House Bill 223

offering temporary tax breaks and tax credits related to the recovery. currently allowed.

But the protective covenant legislation is a play for the long term. It could encourage more property owners to keep working their land for years to come by bolstering their bottom line.

"It's a tool to allow family farms to continue to grow and expand," said Sen. Sam Watson, R-Moultrie.

HB 90 would only take effect if voters agree to amend the state constitution in November 2026. The Senate also passed HR 32, a companion measure that adds a ballot question asking if the existing conservation tax program should cover 4,000 acres per owner, twice the amount of land

The Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) Program was adopted decades ago. It lets each landowner put up to 2,000 acres under a protective covenant. The land must be used for farming, growing timber or other agricultural production. The property is then valued and taxed at less than what it might sell for as plots for a new subdivision or office park.

Properties are instead assessed and taxed using a formula based on current use, annual productivity, and real property sales data of other conservation use properties.

A similar measure stalled last year,

leading to a special legislative committee that studied the problem of vanishing farmland.

Three out of four of Georgia's 159 counties — and one in seven jobs — rely on agriculture and forestry, the Senate Study Committee on Preservation of Georgia's Farmlands learned. Their final report noted a conundrum, though: if lawmakers expand CUVA to preserve those economic pillars, they also could undermine potential growth in the local property tax base due to unrealized development.

Counties and local governments may push back as land is taken off their tax digest, Katherine Moore, president of the Georgia Conservancy, told the committee when it met last year. Other states, such as Florida, have responded by paying local governments for their foregone taxes.




Rep. Sam Watson

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Ag groups file brief supporting Supreme Court hearing glyphosate case

STAFF REPORTS

WASHINGTON — Groups representing farmers across the United States have filed a brief encouraging the U.S. Supreme Court to hear a case on labeling for glyphosate and other pesticides.

The groups, which represent a broad swath of agriculture and cover more than 300 million acres, argue glyphosate is a “once-in-a-century” herbicide given its effectiveness at controlling an array of damaging weeds, affordability and low toxicity, according to a statement from the American Soybean Association. However, uncertainty created by interpretations of pesticide labeling requirements has risked farmer access to glyphosate and other tools.

The question at the center of the case, *Dur-nell v. Monsanto*, is whether manufacturers of glyphosate or other pesticides are liable under state law for “failure to warn” of alleged cancer or other health risks when federal regulators have determined their uses are safe, the ASA statement said.

“Such state requirements exist despite regulators at EPA and those of the European Union, Canada, Japan, Australia, Korea, and

elsewhere repeatedly finding glyphosate does not pose cancer risks,” the ASA said. “In the brief, the groups argue the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act has long prevented states from imposing labeling requirements different from EPA findings. Additionally, to require a cancer risk warning label despite such strong evidence to the contrary would be ‘false or misleading,’ which is also prohibited by FIFRA.”

They discuss the continued risks of mis-interpreting FIFRA. Among them, pesticide users will lack clear, accurate labels, which could result in accidental misuse of pesticides and potential harm to the public and the environment, the ASA said. Further, with manufacturers placed in the no-win situation of either disregarding state labeling requirements or making false and misleading statements in violation of FIFRA, these companies may exit the market and leave farmers without much-needed tools.

The Supreme Court will review the petition to hear the case, as well as briefs from other interested parties that include farmers. It will then decide whether to hear the case in the weeks ahead, the ASA said.

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Governor signs major hurricane relief package

STAFF REPORTS

FORSYTH — Gov. Brian Kemp signed landmark legislation Thursday at the Georgia Forestry Association (GFA) headquarters delivering urgently needed relief to forest landowners and rural communities impacted by Hurricane Helene — a storm that caused more than \$1.28 billion in timber losses across Georgia’s most productive forestlands.

The legislation, passed with strong bipartisan support, delivers both immediate recovery tools and long-term support to ensure Georgia’s forestry sector — the largest in the nation — can recover, replant, and remain a pillar of the state’s economy, the GFA said in a press release.

“Our farmers and foresters are tough people,” Kemp said. “Their commitment to moving forward after all they’ve faced is an inspiration to us all. There is still more work to be done, but I’m proud to sign these bills and deliver on our promises to the men and women who are the backbone of our state. I’m also grateful for the dedicated efforts of all of our partners in the General Assembly whose steadfast leadership and determination helped make today possible.”



Georgia Forestry Association photo

See RELIEF, Page 13 Gov. Brian Kemp signs legislation Thursday to help farmers and foresters recover from Hurricane Helene.

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RELIEF: Continued from Page 12

The relief package includes:

- A refundable reforestation tax credit for planting and restoration efforts.

- A state income tax exemption for federal disaster aid.

- A sales tax exemption for certain farm rebuilding materials.

- Ad valorem harvest tax relief for landowners in affected counties — paired with state reimbursements to protect local government budgets.

These measures mirror the real-world needs voiced by landowners, loggers, and mills in the aftermath of Helene, the forestry association said. Throughout the 2025 legislative session, GFA brought together industry leaders, lawmakers, and agency partners to champion policy solutions designed for rapid deployment and large-scale recovery across Georgia's forestry sector.

"Today is about protecting one of Georgia's most essential industries and the people behind it," said Tim Lowrimore, president & CEO of the Georgia Forestry Association. "This legislation reflects what landowners told us they needed most: direct financial relief, tools to recover, and the certainty to keep going."

Georgia leads the nation in forestry, with 22 million acres of commercially available forestland, over 141,000 jobs, and \$42 billion in annual economic impact. The forestry sector is foundational to rural economies, global markets, and environmental stewardship, the GFA said. Helene's devastation presented tremendous challenges to all three — but today's bill signing marks a turning point.

GFA expressed deep appreciation to the governor and legislative champions, including Sen. Russ Goodman, R-Cogdell, and Rep. James Burchett, R-Waycross, for acting decisively on behalf of Georgia's forest landowners.

"We are deeply grateful for the leadership of Governor Kemp and the Georgia General Assembly who stood with forest landowners and rural communities following a generational impact to our forest resources," Lowrimore added. "Georgia's forestry families are resilient — and today, they have the support they need to clean up and move forward."

More information about GFA's Hurricane Helene policy work and recovery resources can be found at: <https://gfagrow.org/hurricane-helene-policy-resources/>.

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