

## NCFB sends 163 to American Farm Bureau Meeting in Seattle

One-hundred and sixty-three North Carolina Farm Bureau members traveled to Seattle, Wash. for American Farm Bureau’s Annual Meeting. Twenty-six from NCFB served as voting delegates on national farm policy.

During the Jan. 10-13 event, NCFB was recognized for a special achievement: NCFB President Larry Wooten accepted, on behalf of the state organization, the award for reaching the milestone of more than 500,000 members—a level only one other state Farm Bureau has reached. Wooten was honored for helping lead efforts to grow the state’s membership.

“It’s always good to be recognized when we accomplish a major milestone, but with agriculture facing so many really important issues right now that really need the policy time and attention of Farm Bureau, it’s hard to celebrate for too long,” Wooten said.

In addition, Young Farmer Jamie Ager, of Buncombe County, made it to the finals of the



**NCFB had 26 voting delegates, the second most of any state at the American Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.**

AFBF Discussion Meet. Young Farmer John Allen, of Iredell County, was a Top 10 finalist for the Achievement Award.

American Farm Bureau Federation’s Annual Meeting showed the dedication and determina-

**See AFBF page 2 .....**

## N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission now pondering 2010-11 hunting, fishing rules

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) will meet next month to vote on several proposed regulations that would affect hunting and fishing rules around the state.

One proposal would allow government or non-profit groups to conduct organized hunting events where participants would not be required to first obtain hunting licenses. NCWRC would have to give permission for these events and their participants, who would still have to meet a number of requirements before taking part.

Two game lands would see their deer seasons extended, and another new game land would be established in the latest proposals. The either-sex deer season would go to the maximum sea-

son on Jordan Game Land, Sandy Mush Game Land would get an introductory either-sex deer season, and a conservative either-sex deer season is planned with the creation of the new Pond Mountain Game Land in Ashe County.

Domesticated or feral animals—except hunting dogs, where allowed— would not be permitted to be released on game lands, and the release of any animals in wildlife areas would not be permitted without NCWRC permission.

Particularly but not exclusively in Western North Carolina, a boom in the bear population poses a threat to livestock and crops. Toward

**See Wildlife page 5 .....**

## AFBF continued from page 1 .....

tion of today's young farmers and core volunteer leaders of the state's largest general farm organization.

"At the very time we need to increase our food production, climate change legislation threatens to slash our ability to do so," AFBF President Bob Stallman said in his keynote address. "The world will continue to depend on food from the United States. To throttle back our ability to produce food—at a time when the United Nations projects billions of more mouths to feed—is a moral failure."

Climate legislation now in Congress would shift as many as 59 million acres—the equivalent of every acre of land used for crop and food production in California, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Tennessee—of food production into forestry.

Stallman concluded with a quote by Gen. George Patton: "Make your plans to fit the circumstances."

Also, North Carolina Farm Bureau officials helped lead a discussion on ways to help build vibrant communities.

"Farm Bureau has a responsibility to assume a position of leadership," said session moderator Larry Wooten, NCFB President.

In order to stay vibrant and healthy, rural communities depend on local farmers and ranchers, but the reverse is also true: Farmers and ranchers depend on vibrant and healthy local communities, Wooten added.

NCFB is involved in many rural development initiatives, said Debbie Hamrick, NCFB's Director of Specialty Crops. They include local foods initiative Farm to Fork, the Farm Energy Efficiency Project, the "Strategic Plan to Protect North Carolina's Agricultural Water Resources," and more.

She advised those interested in helping their rural communities to think outside the box.

"Reach out to traditional and non-traditional partners," she said.

## Census hiring going on now, NCFB members urged to help

North Carolina Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau are official U.S. Census partners, and encourage members to take an active role promoting or working for the census effort in their communities.

Recently, 15 U.S. Census offices opened statewide, and testing is going on now for temporary census-taker jobs.

The testing takes 30 minutes, and a 28-question practice test is available online. Learn about the census and hiring at [2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs](http://2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs).

NCFB Associate Legislative Director Linda Andrews said \$400 billion federal dollars are distributed annually based on census data; schools, hospitals and other community facilities are placed based on census data; and census data determines boundaries for local, state and congressional districts.

That last point is one Andrews said is of chief importance. Already, 85 percent of North Carolina's state lawmakers hail from just 15 urban regions.

Andrews will continue to promote the census around the state in the months ahead.

The steps to having a successful census are simple. Stay informed on census news, relay accurate information to others and make sure to participate by completing and returning your household's questionnaire.

You can also support the census by following it on Twitter, becoming a fan on Facebook, or by watching videos on its YouTube channel.

Already, scam artists are seeing an opportunity in the census. Remember: an official U.S. Census taker will carry a badge and will never ask to enter your home, or for your Social Security, bank account or credit card numbers.

**THE  
VOICE  
OF AGRICULTURE®**

North Carolina Farm Bureau (NCFB) is the unified, statewide Voice of Agriculture®. Working through our grassroots organizations to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural North Carolinians, we strive to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. We are a private, non-profit, grassroots organization that has been actively promoting farm and rural issues since 1936 through legislative and policy initiatives, member services, field representation, agricultural education, public relations and other programs.

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# Ag Water Work Group gets ideas flowing at first meeting

A diverse group of stakeholders representing 14 organizations is using a \$100,000 grant from Altria to develop a strategic plan in 2010 for protecting agricultural water resources in North Carolina.

The group is co-chaired by North Carolina Farm Bureau President Larry Wooten and North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler.

Wooten said water is a major common concern for all North Carolina farmers. Growers have been concerned about water quality for decades, but now water quantity is an issue.

“With the state growing like it is, water is going to be a determining factor in where agriculture grows in this state and how fast it grows,” Wooten said. “If we’re going to preserve the rights of agriculture to use water, we’ve got to work together on a strategic plan and do the right thing for agriculture.”

The 2009 Agricultural Water Use Survey had a 90 percent return rate and revealed that agriculture accounts for less than 2 percent of water use in the state.

“There are going to be very contentious discussions about water,” Troxler said. “There will be not only scientific discussions but political discussions and philosophical discussions about who actually owns water, who allocates water, how it’s done. All of this is going to have a big impact on agriculture.”

Mitch Peele, NCFB’s Senior Director of Public Policy, said that there is some good news for the time being.

“North Carolina has been regarded as a water-rich state, and we still are very blessed to have an ample supply from river basins, multiple streams, lakes, reservoirs and numerous private wells across the state,” Peele said. “We have in excess of 3 million private wells and thousands of farm ponds across the state.”

But recent years have brought bad news, too.

During the late 1990s, for example, aquifers in eastern North Carolina began losing more water than was replenished naturally.

“The state responded with regulation,” he said.

As a result, the capacity use area rule mandated permitting of large water users, including agriculture. Water allocation and rationing

were also included in the rule. Recent droughts brought further government action from the Governor’s office and General Assembly.

Agricultural advocates have had a voice in the discussion, but attempts at stricter regulations are ongoing.

Peele said agriculture has continued to recommend voluntary and incentive-based solutions, education and conservation, alternative sources and protecting the rights of private well owners and land owners.

“There’s a better way to protect our resources without restricting landowner rights,” he said.

However, certain groups advocating more government control challenged the voluntary approach as ineffective for the long-term and also attempted to discredit the Agricultural Water Use Survey results.

North Carolina Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation Director Cecil Settle is grant administrator. He said the project will include the following three components:

1. A strategic plan for protecting agricultural water resources in North Carolina.
2. An agreement with the U.S. Corps of Engineers on permit requirements for creating new agricultural water supplies (i.e., farm ponds).
3. A system to implement water training for conservation district staff and others who will be helping farmers create new water supplies.

Work on the strategic plan will continue through October 2010, with public announcement of the plan’s completion set for November 2010.

## Crop Insurance Deadlines

Sales Closing Date:

Feb. 28—all spring crops except burley tobacco.

March 15—burley tobacco and AGR-Lite applications.

Crop insurance is an important component of any 2010 risk management plan. To learn about the increased benefits revenue products offer over production, or catastrophe-based plans, contact a county Farm Bureau office.

# Online tools for farm advocacy

With technology moving at the speed of life, and government moving at the speed of technology, farmers can have a direct influence on the information highway.

E-mail, text messaging, Web sites, and social media such as Facebook, YouTube and others, are some of the tools farm advocates are using to discuss ideas, thoughts and beliefs that can impact laws and regulations.

NCFB members use e-mail daily to contact lawmakers about crucial legislation and issues. E-mail contact is much faster than standard postal service mail, which can take two weeks to work through Congress' security system.

Text messaging through mobile phones is an instantaneous way that today's ag advocates deliver vital information to relevant sources.

NCFB's web site, [www.ncfb.org](http://www.ncfb.org), is another way the Voice of Agriculture® in North Carolina provides needed information to lawmakers, regulators, Farm Bureau members and the general public to make informed decisions about the

organization's grassroots policy efforts.

And the latest tool in the technology shed is social media.

Farmers and ranchers need to use social media because it is the way many Americans prefer to communicate and learn, said Gina Schreck, president of Synapse 3Di, a technology training and consulting company. Social media is also a mighty tool for building influence. The 2008 presidential candidates used it to attract supporters and campaign contributions, she said.

As the state's largest general farm organization, NCFB is pursuing a major goal for 2010 of improved instant communications with its 5,000 core leaders. This effort includes both a presence on Facebook and YouTube.

Over the next 10 years, the ability of volunteer leaders to communicate quickly and electronically with other volunteers, advocates, elected officials and government regulators will be vital to continuing to make sure the Voice of Agriculture® is heard loud and clear.

## Women's Leadership Advisory Committee kicks off 2010

North Carolina Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Advisory Committee kicked off 2010 with a January meeting to consider agricultural issues and develop plans to further NCFB's mission.

The new committee chair is Betty Mathews, of Perquimans County Farm Bureau, and the new vice-chair is Brenda Brisson, of Bladen County Farm Bureau.

Mathews said she looks forward to working with the committee during her two-year term and thanked all the members for their dedication to Farm Bureau.

In addition to the business meeting, the women's committee heard legislative and policy updates, as well as county and chair reports. The committee also discussed NCFB's 2009 annual meeting, the Women's Conference in March and new communications technology like Facebook.

NCFB President Larry Wooten thanked the committee members for their service and said more instant communications with the organization's 5,000 core leaders is a major goal for 2010.

"We've got a new committee, with a new



***Brenda Brisson, left, and Betty Mathews will lead the Women's Committee as Vice-Chair and Chair, respectively.***

year and new leadership," Wooten said. "I've seen growth in this women's advisory committee throughout the years, and it's the result of the leadership. I appreciate all that you have done, and more importantly, all that we will do together to elevate the activity of our women in Farm Bureau across this state."

# BUREAUBRIEFS

**CORN**—USDA projects U.S. corn production at a record 13.2 billion bushels. This is up from 12.9 billion bushels projected in USDA's December forecast and 1 percent above the previous record of 13 billion bushels set in 2007.

**ESTATE TAX**—The estate tax continues to be one of the big issues in Congress for farmers even though it expired in 2010 but will return in 2011. The exemption levels at the end of 2009 were \$3.5 million per household. The regenerated tax would have a \$1 million per household exemption.

Farm Bureau continues to advocate repeal of the estate tax.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENTS**—Gov. Bev Perdue announced a number of appointments recently, including North Carolina Farm Bureau Members: David Burns, of Laurinburg, was reappointed to the North Carolina Agriculture and Forestry Awareness Study Commission.

L.M. Simmons, of Newport, was appointed to the North Carolina Agriculture and Forestry Awareness Study Commission.

**USDA, CALENDAR**—As part of its ongoing efforts to educate backyard poultry enthusiasts about infectious poultry diseases, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is offering a free and informative calendar for 2010—Backyard Biosecurity: Keeping Your Birds Healthy.

It contains information about protecting poultry from disease and includes tips on avian influenza infections.

Those interested in receiving this free calendar can go to <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov> and click "2010 Backyard Biosecurity Calendar."

**USDA, NET FARM INCOME**—USDA has forecast national net farm income to be \$57 billion in 2009, down \$30 billion (34.5 percent) from 2008, according to the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service.

The 2009 forecast is \$6.5 billion below the average of \$63.6 billion in net farm income earned in the previous 10 years.

## Wildlife continued from page 1 .....

that end, NCWRC is proposing an extension of the bear season in Hertford County from three days to two weeks, using the same opening and closing dates as neighbors Gates and Bertie counties.

Furthermore, there is a proposal to increase the bear season on an 8,000-acre portion of Chowan Swamp Game Land in Gates County to the full, 12-day season in the rest of the county.

Armadillos are not yet common, but are starting to make their way into the state from South Carolina. A new rule would allow armadillos to be hunted all year and trapped during the regular furbearer trapping season with no bag limits.

Wildlife was a major area of policy discussion for NCFB members as they compiled 2010 policy, and several of the 36 wildlife-related items included recommendations for NCWRC.

Meanwhile, hunters are still waiting for the final word on a number of recommendations sent last year to the General Assembly for approval, a step that is required whenever the agency receives written opposition to a proposal. Lawmakers are out of session until May 12, and they have 30 days from the start of that session to propose bills disproving these rules. Otherwise, the proposals go into effect by default.

Among the proposed changes are several involving deer hunting: remove the daily bag-limit for deer; allow the use of crossbows, without permit, anytime bows and arrows are legal weapons; shorten the bow season by one week and open the muzzleloader season one week earlier to create a two-week muzzleloader season.

Because of their pending status, many of the dates for deer seasons are to be determined.

You can read all of the proposed rules changes at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

## ACTIONREQUEST

The U.S. Senate has yet to vote on climate change legislation, which would establish a carbon cap-and-trade system, opposed by North Carolina Farm Bureau.

That means there is still time to contact our state's two senators, Kay Hagan and Richard Burr and tell them, on behalf of North Carolina farmers and ranchers, "Don't Cap Our Future."

# FIELDNOTES

by Larry Wooten, NCFB President

## Census participation vital for farmers, rural residents

Participation in the 2010 U.S. Census is just as, or maybe even more, important to the interests of farmers and rural residents as taking part in the Census of Agriculture that is conducted every five years. Tony



Jones, an official with the U.S. Census Bureau, said \$400 billion in federal funds will be disbursed to both urban and rural counties this year. The money is allocated, in part, based on the results of the census, which gives the government a picture of where people live and what services are needed.

The results can mean funding for new schools, roads, hospitals, fire stations and police stations.

Census data is also vital to Farm Bureau's policy process and lobbying efforts.

It helps allocate the number of Congressional districts to each state and determines the geographic boundaries of those districts. The data is also used to draw boundaries for state legislative districts and local governments.

So it is important for rural residents to take the time to fill out the census' 10 questions when they arrive in March. All census information collected is not only constitutionally mandated, but it is also protected and kept private.

Rural residents need to be encouraged to take the time to participate in the census because it will result in more accurate data for federal, state and local governments, and therefore, help ensure that rural residents receive equitable government services.

This chance only comes along once every 10 years, so take advantage of this opportunity to be counted for agriculture.

6

"Farm Bureau has a responsibility to assume a position of leadership." Larry Wooten, NCFB President

## NORTH CAROLINA FARM BUREAU LEADER

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**IN THIS  
ISSUE:**

**P1 AFBF MEETING**

**P3 WATER MEETING**

**P4 ONLINE TOOLS**