



Southern Region Middle Managers News

***** State Report Issue *****

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Alabama Report

For the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), the state budget increased slightly. County budgets vary but overall have been steady related to total revenue brought into the system.

In the County Extension Coordinator ranks – what some states call the County Director, the “baby boomers” are retiring (8-10 this year). Those positions are being filled. There is an increase in 4-H Agent hiring due to the Centennial Youth Initiative and increased funding from the Alabama 4-H Foundation. Agriculture, Family & Consumer Science, and Urban Agent hiring appears to be steady with some realignment as to programming areas taking place. Except for County Coordinators and now 4-H Agents – we utilize a Regional System in Alabama.

As referenced above – the “baby boomers” are retiring, sometimes in significant numbers, and I expect this to continue for the next 3 years.

Related to Initiatives – the Centennial Youth Initiative for the State 4-H Program is one of the most significant efforts implemented in 2015. When ACES reorganized in 2005, 4-H Agents worked in more than one county and this has remained the case until recently. Funding from the Alabama 4-H Foundation has allowed for the hiring of 4-H Agents so that each county will eventually have a full time 4-H person. This effort is called CYI or the Centennial Youth Initiative.

There were several administrative issues addressed this year with three being money management related. A new County Funding Model, a County One Pager that shows ACES’ cash investment in each County, and a County Expense and Income sheet for County Appropriation budgetary use were all refined and implemented. The new County Funding Model once completely vetted, will leave a much higher amount of money in the County Account for use by that County. The County One Pager is a document that has been very beneficial to show County Commissions, Municipalities, and other funding sources ACES’ investment in that County. For example, a County Commission may be giving a \$50, 000.00 appropriation while



ACES is investing \$400,000.00 in that County. This shows our commitment and theirs. The County expense and income sheets help County Coordinators more accurately budget and better represent needs to funding sources.

Related to the above protocol issues – I want to refine and grow these areas into the 2016 Fiscal Year. Further, we have a Grassroots Series of Advisory Meetings. I am not completely satisfied with the functionality of this process nor are County and Regional personnel. We are taking steps now into 2016 to better implement these processes.

I feel we are handling the following, but three major success hurdles facing County Coordinators, agents, and specialists within Alabama as communicated to me by them:

- For CEC's – making sure all programmatic areas are being represented in their county to an appropriate level and managing their time as well as multitasking responsibilities is a significant hurdle at times.
- For Regional Agents – given the size of many of their areas; meeting the needs to an appropriate level in each of their Counties is a hurdle.
- For Specialists – since many are merged into academic departments; meeting departmental needs and Extension needs can be a challenge.

Urban Extension for ACES is addressed through a formal partnership with Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities. Urban Regional Extension Agents affiliated with AA&MU lead urban programming efforts and UREA's have split programmatic assignments. Programming for Urban Issues/Initiatives resonates from over a dozen Regional Centers within Alabama.

Contact: Stanley Windham, windhst@aces.edu

Arkansas Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- The Arkansas Division of Agriculture receives an average of 85% funding through the Arkansas Higher Education appropriation. There has been no increase in state funding since 2008.

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- Approximately twenty-five county positions are being kept vacant in Arkansas in order to meet budget demands.
- On July 1st, 2015 Arkansas launched a new funding plan for increasing county funding. Arkansas State FY2016 appropriation was the same as FY2015, except the Division of

Agriculture was asked to hold back 1% of funding in reserve.

- There has been no across the board increased COUNTY funding for Arkansas Extension since 2002.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- Yes – Arkansas Extension expects approximately six to eight retirements over the next twelve months.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- The Arkansas Cooperative Extension leadership plans to tailor educational programs to match Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson's goals of increased education for computer education/programming skills through 4-H STEM programs and increase efficiencies across all program areas.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- The new county funding plan is the major administrative effort in Arkansas this year.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- Over the next two years, county staffing will be aligned with county funding.
- Administration in cooperation with District Staff will revise the County Agent Performance appraisal instrument. The current instrument has been in place for about twenty years. Administration plans to increase county agent starting salaries.

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

Major hurdles in addition to funding in Arkansas are:

- Decreased educational programming capacity due to overall decrease in personnel.
- Recruiting a quality applicant pool for Family and Consumer Science and Agronomic county level positions.
- Increased fiscal responsibility, at the local level, for staff chairs (county directors) and county administrative assistants.

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- Water Quality/Storm Water educational programming funded by Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) municipalities.
- Outdoor Water Efficiency Program in partnership with water utility
- SNAP in Urban Schools
- Public Policy/Ballot Issues

Contact: Sharon Reynolds, sreynolds@uaex.edu

Florida Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- S/SW Coastal counties budgets are flat or increasing slightly, depending on ad valorem and sales taxes. Heartland counties are flat
- State and federal budgets supporting Florida Cooperative Extension have remained stable for the most part during the last 5 years. We have had some losses (e.g., FNP a few years ago) and some gains (e.g., state salary increases in 3 of the last 5 years).

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- NE The typical 10% turnaround in agents continues but no position is lost. As always, "the best thing we do is that we constantly hire new agents. The worse thing we do is that we constantly hire new agents".
- S Retaining and gaining
- SW Creative Co. Directors are finding ways to assist counties in increasing their FTEs by partnering with Extension to "house" the employees

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- It is possible there will be a flux of retirees by July 1, 2016 due to changes in UF sick leave payouts that will not favor employees after that date

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- A strategic staffing plan will focus on hiring regional and state specialized agents; revenue enhancement efforts will begin to assist in helping Extension to expand its funding portfolio.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- Yes. We are in the process of establishing UF "cash" bank accounts in each of our counties and providing our agents with UF purchasing cards. These actions will standardize and improve the flow and accountability of county-based extension funds. This action is part of our revenue enhancement effort.
- We are also increasing the number of "grant" counties, where a county sends funds for extension agent salaries as a "grant" to UF instead of directly paying agents the county share of salary.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- We will be adding a new position to our county operations unit due to the increased workload brought on by the administrative needs of revenue enhancement and county grants. County grants typically come with no indirect costs but we are looking to change that policy to support the new position

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- Time management and lack thereof defines workload, local administration flexibility with professional scheduling, and increasing number of county and state regulations.

- Complacency, scholarship, reporting

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- A FL Extension Strategic Plan for Metropolitan Areas will be rolled out in 2016

Contact: Charles Vavrina, csv@ifas.ufl.edu

Georgia Report

Georgia Extension came under new leadership in January. Dr. Laura Perry Johnson, former District Director and member of the MM committee, was appointed Associate Dean for Cooperative Extension. In July we replaced her director position with Mr. Mike Stewart. Mike is new to Extension and comes from a long history in county government serving as a county manager, working for the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia and as a consultant to local government.

Budgets:

- Georgia Extension budgets are currently increasing. Both county and state governments have increased their contribution to Cooperative Extension in the past year. During the past recession Georgia experienced a wave of retirements. Many of these retirements were rehired to bridge programming during this downturn. We are aggressively moving away from retire/rehire agents and filling those positions with new and energetic agents. We are not back to our agent numbers of five years ago, but we are starting to make substantial progress. After four years of little or no raise, Georgia gave a 4% raise last year and a 5% raise this year.

Retaining/hiring agents:

- Last year Georgia had many qualified applicants for each position. However, the past six months this trend has reversed. We are currently having a hard time finding qualified ANR agents with row crop and horticulture experience. Animal science degrees are slightly easier to find. We are

currently generating a strong pool of 4-H and FACS applicants. Starting this fall, Georgia will be increasing efforts to recruit from around the Southeast. We have not increased starting salaries.

New initiatives:

- Georgia is currently reviewing several staffing options to increase our efforts in Urban programs. New resources will be directed toward supporting urban program this year. Hosting the National Urban Conference was a great catalyst for renewed conversations.

Administrative Issues / Masters Degree Requirements:

- The University of Georgia is increasing efforts to hire with a Masters degree. New university requirements no longer allow us to extend full faculty status to BS degreed agents hired after July 1. BS hires go into a provisional faculty position and have six years to obtain a MS degree or create a body of work worthy of faculty appointment. To support the agents with BS degrees, we are enhancing our efforts to support agents getting a degree while employed.

Administrative Issues / Local Program Funds:

- County programs in Georgia maintain a local checking account for managing local programs. These accounts manage funds from local donations to program registration fees. In the past two years we have created a new statewide 501c3 organization to umbrella these accounts. One that is inclusive of all three program areas. We have revised the operating guidelines and hired a full time auditor/fiscal management trainer to help counties manage and stay in compliance with operating rules. Our management of these local accounts has improved greatly in the past year.

Future Hurdles:

- The funding relationship with county government continues to strengthen. Counties are contributing at higher rates each year. Also increasing are the challenges of cooperative funding. New federal health care rules and reporting changes are creating new hurdles. Currently we have many counties that treat agents just like any other county employee. Both UGA and counties contribute directly to the agent's salary. While this seems like a great partnership, counties are increasingly wanting to make a distinction between county and university employees to reduce exposure to federal requirements. Additionally, the use of part-time employees is increasingly more difficult to

manage. We are concerned that counties will move away from a cooperative funding model for one that is more contractual and offers them less exposure to county government.

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Kentucky Report

Budget Update:

- For the majority of counties in Kentucky, Extension funding remains adequate. However, challenges remain in our most rural and urban counties. These funding issues are having some impact on turnover rates of these same counties, which tend to exceed our state average of approximately 5%. (Young and Jones, 2015, <http://www.joe.org/joe/2015june/rb2.php>).

Kentucky Extension has a new Human Resource/Personnel Director. Thomas Keene accepted this position earlier this year and has been focusing his early work on improving our hiring and training processes. The following agent demographic statistics were provided by Mr. Keene:

Average agent age: 43.79

Average Tenure with Extension: 13.46 years

% Agents less than 30 years old: 16.5%

% Agents between 31 and 40: 26%

% Agents between 41 and 55: 35%

% Agents over 55: 22.5%

Additional, 61% of Kentucky's agent workforce falls within the 31-55 age group which he thinks positions Kentucky well for the future.

National Urban Extension Leaders Group

- The National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) group will present a formal white paper to ECOP during their July meeting. The report will detail what the group hopes will be a roadmap for helping Extension work more effectively in our metropolitan areas and move toward formal recognition of the group's work. Hopefully, we will have a more complete report in August.

*Young, J.A., Jones, K. (2015). Examining the Impact of Community Size on Retention of County Extension Agents Journal of Extension [On-line], 53(3), Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2015june/rb2.php>

Contact: Jeffery Young, Jeffery.young@uky.edu

Louisiana Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- Over the last decade budgets have been decreasing. Although some individual years, including this year, have been static, rising costs

to operate and unfunded mandates have essentially amounted to a decline in available funds.

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- During this time, there has been a significant decline in agents throughout the state. Many of these reductions have occurred by not filling retirement, but there was a planned reduction in agents in 2010.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- In the next few years, there is expected to be a significant departure of agents through retirement. Although specific staffing plans to address this departure have not been announced, it is expected that declining budgets will prevent some positions from being filled. Only positions viewed as critical will be refilled.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- There haven't been a lot of new initiatives in recent years. As with many of the land grant institutions, there was a push for greater emphasis on biofuels a few years ago, and two years ago we made some additional hires to augment irrigation and water resource research and outreach. Most of these positions were filled by changing responsibilities for positions that had become vacant. We have made some reassignments to address food safety and the impending FSMA.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- There are very few major administrative issues that have created new systems or processes. There has been some minor changes in asset management (inventory), and there always seem to be new issues related to various aspects of the safety program. At this time do not appear to be any major administrative issues on the horizon.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- No

Contact: Patrick Colyer, pcolyer@agcenter.isu.edu

Mississippi Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- For Mississippi State University, County budgets have remained essentially flat. We saw a 5% increase from the state for FY 15-16. Of that, 3% was utilized for a merit-based raise pool. We are

currently determining the impact of a potential 7.8% budget reduction for the current fiscal year depending on a November ballot referendum related to funding for K-12 education.

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- County-based positions are about the same. There were more retirements this past year compared to the years since our last retirement incentive. Coastal Region has advertised positions for all of the vacancies. Because of the salary differential between experienced retirees and new agents, there is still a cost savings even after the positions are filled. However, the budget uncertainty mentioned above may impact vacant positions.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- No. At this point, Coastal Region has a number of mid-career agents and relatively new ones.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- Our biggest effort at the moment is the development of a state plan of work with input from state specialists as well as from a state-wide needs assessment. Signature programs with high impact are being determined. From there, county and individual plans of work will be developed.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- Yes. Three of our four regions hired regional Extension coordinators with a fourth planned. This allows for a higher administrative visibility within the counties.

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- In the past, mentoring. However, we are putting a new system in place that will be more structured.
- Lack of choices for in-service training. Again, this is being addressed with increased involvement of specialists in agent education.

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- We are seeing an increase in school garden requests, but we do not technically have an area that qualifies as "urban" by definition.

Contact: Tricia Knight, tricia@ra.msstate.edu

Oklahoma Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- Decreasing significantly

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- Static to losing. Budget driven.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- Oklahoma will have about normal to slightly above normal retirees in the coming 3 years.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- None of significance.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- Revamped online in-service enrollment system. Changing 4-H enrollment systems.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- Increasing county budget requirements by approximately \$40,000 over next 5 years.

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- Still struggle with new hires having farm backgrounds and lacking skills to deal with 4-H issues/volunteers, etc.

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- New office in Oklahoma County.

Contact: Claude Bess, claud.bess@okstate.edu

South Carolina Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- Budgets at the state level are increasing for specific program areas. County budgets in support of Extension operations do tend to be a bit strained due in large part to a decreased level of support for county budgets overall from the state.
- Current fiscal year budget request for existing Extension operations were approved in full. In addition, the following items were approved in support of programmatic expansion for Extension and PSA.
- \$500,000 in recurring funding for Agribusiness and Emerging Farmers
- \$500,000 in recurring funding for Vegetable and Fruit Production
- \$500,000 in recurring funding for 4-H Youth Leadership Programs
- \$1.5 million in nonrecurring funding for Ag & Natural Resources Field Facilities
- Also included in the budget is a provision for the state to cover an increase in the cost of health insurance for state employees. The budget conference report also includes an \$800 bonus for

each permanent, full-time state employee who earns less than \$100,000 a year.

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- Clemson Extension expects to retain all existing staff and expand targeted positions identified in the recently approved Strategic Plan

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- Though some retiree departures are inevitable, no large scenarios are anticipated in the coming three years. Many similar departures were realized during the earlier economic downturn.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- The recently adopted 2015-2020 Extension Strategic Plan details a number of new and emerging initiatives seen as priorities both at an organizational and programmatic team level. Much of the new recurring funding approved in the recent state budget is target at priority initiatives focused on 4H program expansion, Agribusiness support and "Farm to Table" (local foods) initiatives.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- The Strategic Plan which may be viewed at www.clemson.edu/extension/strategicplan addresses a number of organization and administrative shifts including but not limited to: the reorganization of program team units under new CORE Divisions, a realignment of regional administrative responsibilities, and the reestablishment of full-time administrative support staff in all county offices.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- The consistent reestablishment of full-time administrative support staff presence in all Extension offices is seen as the preeminent priority at an operational level.

A number of hurdles to County agent success were identified as "threats" in the Strategic Plan. Such hurdles include:

- Competition with the private sector and NGOS for staff and resources;
- Diminished local support and relevance due in part to staffing limitations;
- Agent burnout and poor morale

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- All Extension Core Program Divisions: Agribusiness, Agriculture, Food Nutrition and Health, Natural Resources and 4H Youth Development are tasked with the development and implementation of urban programming and activities. Many projects or activities such as Carolina Clear, Master Gardener, farmers markets/local foods, and 4H have been pursuing efforts adapted to application in urbanized areas for years, but have not been classified as Urban Extension. The new Strategic Plan offers a framework through which urban extension activities may be prioritized at the team level and evaluated as part of the overall work program.

Contact: Blake Lanford, blakel@clemson.edu

Tennessee Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- Extension budgets in Tennessee remain fairly strong. The state legislature appropriated a 4% increase for Extension this year. As part of this, we will be providing a 1.5% across-the-board salary increase to all employees and an additional 1.5% increase based on merit and equity. Funding support at the local (county) level also remains strong. As a result, our staffing patterns have remained fairly constant for the past 5 years.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- We do anticipate a large number of retirements in the coming 3-5 years, which will present both challenges and opportunities. We are greatly concerned with losing so much experience, but also know that retirements can lead to hires of staff at lower salary levels, thus releasing funds for other uses.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- We are continuing to implement a statewide strategic plan, which includes initiatives to increase visibility, encourage employee wellness, increase communication with state and local decision makers, train employees to be better teachers, develop a new 4-H Center in West Tennessee, initiate a new employee mentoring program, improve our process to train new county directors, and enhance our capabilities in IT.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- The most significant upcoming change to county programs will be a major revision/overhaul of our performance appraisal system and processes. A statewide committee has been working for a year on the revisions, with the overall goal of simplifying and streamlining the process. The committee looked at performance appraisal

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- No

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- Mentoring, training, and preparing new hires to be successful, More demands for our services with stable or declining resources, More "competition" exists than ever before; many entities now do what Extension has traditionally done.

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- We are trying to enhance our volunteer support and coordination for 4-H programs in many of our urban counties.

Contact: Ben West, benwest@utk.edu

Texas Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- Extension budgets in Tennessee remain fairly strong. The state legislature appropriated a 4% increase for Extension this year. As part of this, we will be providing a 1.5% across-the-board salary increase to all employees and an additional 1.5% increase based on merit and equity. Funding support at the local (county) level also remains strong. As a result, our staffing patterns have remained fairly constant for the past 5 years.
- Static overall, with some dedicated program enhancement increases for new initiatives.

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- Retaining total numbers, but continuing to experience some turnover. We have been able to rehire quality people.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- We do anticipate a large number of retirements in the coming 3-5 years, which will present both challenges and opportunities. We are greatly

concerned with losing so much experience, but also know that retirements can lead to hires of staff at lower salary levels, thus releasing funds for other uses.

- Nothing out of the ordinary

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- We are continuing to implement a statewide strategic plan, which includes initiatives to increase visibility, encourage employee wellness, increase communication with state and local decision makers, train employees to be better teachers, develop a new 4-H Center in West Tennessee, initiate a new employee mentoring program, improve our process to **train new** county directors, and enhance our capabilities in IT.
- A major programmatic initiative is “Healthy South Texas”, a partnership with the Texas A&M Health Science Center received \$10M in new funding to get the program started in 27 counties across South Texas.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- The most significant upcoming change to county programs will be a major revision/overhaul of our performance appraisal system and processes. A statewide committee has been working for a year on the revisions, with the overall goal of simplifying and streamlining the process. The committee looked at performance appraisal
- We have recently completed a major overhaul of our Agent Performance Appraisal System, and made significant revisions to our Onboarding process for newly hired Agents.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- No
- We are currently convening a committee to begin revisions of our Agent Career Ladder System

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- Mentoring, training, and preparing new hires to be successful
- more demands for our services with stable or declining resources
- more “competition” exists than ever before; many entities now do what Extension has traditionally done.
- Onboarding
- Engagement with Production Ag (Large Producers)

- Competition from Other Agencies, Non-Profits, etc...

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- We are trying to enhance our volunteer support and coordination for 4-H programs in many of our urban counties.
- We are planning an Urban Summit for fall 2015 as a Visioning and Professional Development Activity for Urban Agents and Administration.

Contact: Jeff Ripley, j_ripley@tamu.edu

Virginia Report

Are budgets increasing/decreasing/static?

- Budgets are basically static. We had experienced an increase in State funding but those funds have been used to fill numerous agent positions across the state.

Are you retaining, gaining or losing agents (e.g., retirements not being filled and budgets)?

- Virginia has experienced a turnover rate of less than 6% over the course of the last two years. We are retaining the majority of our agents and filling behind vacant positions. However, we have begun to delay filling positions for 3 months to incur some salary savings.

Are you suspecting a large departure from retirees in the coming 3 yrs?

- Over 50% of our agents have less than 5 years of experience, but there will be an increasing number of retirements over the next three years.

Any new initiatives being implemented?

- We have implemented the District Program Leadership Teams (detailed in an earlier MM Newsletter) and we are currently working on Program Teams that will lead the major program directions in the future. These teams are composed of mostly agents and specialists. Currently there are eleven teams.

Did you address any major administrative issues within county operations this year that created new systems, processes, or BMPs?

- A new evaluation Matrix was utilized by the District Directors for this year’s agent evaluations. The new matrix will help to remove some of the subjectivity of the evaluation process. Virginia also considered and evaluated moving supervision of Agents from the District Directors to the Unit Coordinators, however that change was ultimately not implemented.

Are there any major administrative issues within county operations that you want to address next year?

- We will be evaluating our administrative structure in the upcoming year.

In your state what are three major hurdles to county agent success outside of funding?

- With 50% of our agents having less than 5 years of experience it is difficult to pair the new agents with a team of mentors, therefore new agents may struggle adapting to the new role.

Anything happening in your state with urban Extension?

- There is a lot going on in the area of Urban Extension across the state. One area of focus has been identifying and addressing food deserts in urban areas. Virginia will be hosting the “Virginia Urban Agriculture Summit” in the State Capital of Richmond on October

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Editors Comment

This concludes the final edition of the MM News for the 2014 – 2015 SRPLN year. I hope you have enjoyed and benefitted from the effort and I appreciate all of the energy exerted across the southeast to provide material for the newsletters as they came due. Thank you all for a job well done on top of everything else you have to do! Ya done good!

This also concludes my term as editor of the MM News. Three years, my how time flies! I’ve enjoyed working with all of you and hope you weren’t too put off on those rare occasions when I had to *dog* you to get an article in on time for the deadline. I’m looking forward to seeing you all in Orlando and having a successful and productive meeting. See you soon!

Respectfully submitted,

Charlie Vavrina

