



Items of Interest

Southern Rural Development Center Releases 2024 Annual Report



The year 2024 marks a significant milestone for the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), as it celebrates 50 years of service. Throughout these five decades, the SRDC has worked across state, territorial, and institutional lines to strengthen the Land-Grant System's capacity to meet the evolving needs of rural communities.

The report, titled "Connecting Communities since 1974," highlights how the SRDC unites individuals from varied backgrounds, regions, organizations, and institutions to promote research, outreach, and educational initiatives that tackle critical issues, fostering rural prosperity and vitality.

To view the 2024 annual report, please visit: <https://srdc.msstate.edu/annual-reports>.

Recently Released: Heirs' Property Research Report 2024-4: "Indicators of Heirs' Property Across the South: A Statistical Analysis"

In the report, funded by the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Polity Center at Alcorn State University, co-authors Ryan Thomson (Auburn University), Conner Bailey (Auburn University), and Andrew Gunnoe (Maryville College) explain how heirs' property is land passed down without a probated will which leads to unclear ownership and legal challenges. Additionally, this limits wealth building and contributes to rural poverty, and despite previous research, the scope of heirs' property remained unclear due to limited data. However, recent data from over 3,000 U.S. counties allows for more in-depth analysis. With this data the study maps heirs' property in 14 states, estimating its economic value and identifying key areas ("hot spots"). It also explores social factors linked to heirs' property, highlighting regional and socio-economic patterns. **Link to the report:**

<https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/srdctopics-breakingbarriers/6/>

Webinars:

Date Changes:
Webinar to be held
Winter/Spring 2025:
Who Will Fill My Shoes:
Succession Planning for
Land Owners and Family
Businesses

Dates of Webinar (5-Part Series):

- ~~Module 1: January 22~~
- ~~Module 3: January 29*~~
- **Module 2: February 5***
- **Module 4: February 12**
- **Module 5: February 19**

*Please note modules 2 & 3 presentation dates have been interchanged and will be presented on the dates indicated above.

Time of Webinars:

**2:00 PM ET/1:00 PM CT/
12:00 PM MT/11:00 AM PT**

To register for the webinars, please visit:
https://msudafvm.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2aRrKSK3aF7ad y6

For disability accommodation, please contact Roseanne Scammahorn at r.scammahorn@msstate.edu or (662) 325-5885.

Adapting to the Digital Age: Insights from a National Participatory Research Project

In a new publication, Regional Rural Development Center (RRDC) researchers which includes the SRDC's Director, John J. Green, share their key takeaways from adapting traditional community-engaged research approaches for an entirely virtual setting.

The year-long initiative was a collaboration among all four RRDCs and engaged the efforts of the entire RRDC staff. The project described here was funded New Technologies for Agricultural Extension grant program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and administered by the Extension Foundation.



The RRDCs are regionally focused centers funded by USDA NIFA through the U.S. Congress annual appropriations process. The RRDCs conduct research and outreach programming that builds the capacity of the Land-Grant University System to address crucial needs in our nation's rural communities. To read the full press release, please visit: **Link to Press Release:** <https://bit.ly/3CpaSDR>

You are Invited: Southern Region Outdoor Recreation Listening Session

You are invited to join the [National Extension Tourism Network](#) and the [Southern Rural Development Center](#) for an interactive listening session that will help us understand how to support capacity building around outdoor recreation and the roles of Extension.

Date: Monday, February 17, 2025; Time: 11:00 AM ET/10:00 AM CT (1 hour)

To register, please visit: <https://go.ncsu.edu/kksnnjk>

During this listening session, participants will:

- Learn why outdoor recreation and Extension align and potential opportunities
- Share your current work or interest in outdoor recreation at your institution
- Discuss challenges in implementing outdoor recreation in your Extension work



For disability accommodations, please contact Ann Savage at (919) 515-0920 and/or asavage@ncsu.edu

Southern Rural Development Center Repository: Readership Snapshot Update

In December 2024, the Southern Rural Development Center's repository collection had a total of 152 full-text downloads, the topic three areas with the most downloads were:

- **33 downloads** - *Southern Rural Development Center Annual Reports*
- **30 downloads** - *Breaking Barriers: Examining Heirs' Property Legislation and Access to USDA Programs* with the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University
- **26 downloads** – *Heirs' Property*

These publications and others are hosted by the Southern Rural Development Center on Mississippi State University's platform, Scholars Junction, which allows users to explore published content from the Center and its partners. **To access these topic areas and others, visit the SRDC archival system at** <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/srdc/>

Webinar-Future Directions for Rural Population Research to Inform Extension: Findings from Listening Sessions

The Rural Population Research Network (RPRN) conducted virtual national listening sessions in an effort to identify the issues diverse rural stakeholders see as their top priorities for understanding rural population change.

More than 80 Extension colleagues working with rural people participated in thematic discussions. In this webinar RPRN researchers involved with this project will share findings from the listening sessions and how these insights are being used to inform future research and Extension endeavors. (RPRN is the USDA supported multi-state project W5001.)

Date & Time:

Monday, February 25, 2025; 2:00 PM CT/3:00 PM ET

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3PzmJSB>

Presenters:

John J. Green, Director, Southern Rural Development Center; Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Mississippi State University

Katherine Curtis, Director, Center for Demography and Ecology; Professor and Demographic Specialist, Community & Environmental Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Kristina Brant, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, & Education, Pennsylvania State University

Sreedhar Upendram, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Tennessee

Paige Kelly, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, & Education, Pennsylvania State University

The February webinar is presented by the [North Central Regional Center for Rural Development](#) (NCRCD) and the [Southern Rural Development Center](#) (SRDC).

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact Mary Breidenbach at mabreide@purdue.edu no later than 5 days prior to the event.



Regional Spotlight

Empowering Mississippi's Youth: Alcorn State University's Workforce Development Program Delivers Transformative Impact

In the heart of Mississippi, the Alcorn State University Extension Program's Community Resource Development (CRD) unit, led by Dr. Heather Brice, is leading a transformative initiative that is changing lives and shaping futures through workforce development. By providing individualized service delivery, tailored dosage, and frequency of engagement, the program effectively meets the unique needs of Mississippi's most vulnerable children and communities. This strategic approach has yielded remarkable success, equipping adolescents with essential skills and meaningful employment opportunities that lay the foundation for long-term economic mobility.

Building a Foundation for Success

The workforce development program is rooted in a holistic approach that goes beyond traditional job training. Participants receive specialized support tailored to their strengths and aspirations, ensuring they acquire both technical and vocational skills, as well as critical soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Each adolescent undergoes a comprehensive assessment to develop an individualized workforce development plan, ensuring that training aligns with their personal interests and career goals.

A key component of the program's success is its commitment to a nonjudgmental learning environment, where participants feel supported and empowered to fully engage in their training. By fostering a space where young individuals can develop confidence and self-sufficiency, the program positions them for long-term success in the workforce.

A Ripple Effect of Success

The impact of this workforce development initiative extends far beyond individual participants. As these young people gain stable employment, they contribute to the local economy, uplift their families, and inspire their peers to pursue career opportunities. Their success stories underscore the importance of targeted workforce development strategies in creating lasting, community-wide change. The importance of grounding this initiative in social work practices and community development principles has tailored an approach to meet each participant's needs so that vulnerable youth in Mississippi receive the right level of support at the right time. This individualized service model not only increases their employability but also strengthens the social fabric of the community.

A Future Built on Opportunity

The Alcorn State University workforce development program stands as a model of success in bridging the gap between education, workforce readiness, and economic mobility. By leveraging individualized service delivery, strategic partnerships, and community-centered support, the program is breaking down employment barriers and creating pathways to self-sufficiency for Mississippi's youth.

As the program continues to expand, its impact will be felt for generations to come. By empowering young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to succeed, Alcorn State University is not only transforming individual lives but also strengthening Mississippi's communities, workforce, and economy—one success story at a time.

Job Opportunities

Current Job Opportunities at the Community and Economic Development Unit of Prairie View A&M University Extension

The Community and Economic Development Department (CED) at Prairie View A&M University in Texas is dedicated to supporting limited resource families and individuals in achieving a higher standard of living through various means, such as small business development, youth entrepreneurship, community program involvement, home ownership, government assistance programs, non-profit assistance, and workforce development. Our team of professionals is ready to offer consultation and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and community organizations who wish to start or expand their operations. **To learn more about the CED at PVAMU please visit <https://www.pvamu.edu/cafnr/extension/community-and-economic-development/>.**

CED Extension Agent positions are still currently available. **To learn more about these positions visit the Prairie View A&M University job postings web page: https://tamus.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/EN-US/PVAMU_External?q=CED**

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

2025 Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA) Conference

In-Person: February 2-3, 2025, The Westin Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas, Irving, Texas

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 Extension Leadership Conference (ELC)

In-Person: February 19-20, 2025, Savannah, Georgia

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 Public Issues Leadership Development Conference (PILD)

In-Person: April 7-8, 2025, Arlington, Virginia

Save the date and the location of the 2025 PILD Conference.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

In-Person: June 9-12, 2025, The Embassy Suites, Charleston, West Virginia

Join the West Virginia State University Extension Service and West Virginia Extension Service in Charleston for the 2025 NACDEP Conference: Country Roads, Connecting the Farm to the Country.

Call for proposals: <https://www.nacdep.net/2025-call-for-proposals>

Registration will open March 1, 2025.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

2025 Community Development Society (CDS) Conference

In-Person: July 6-9, 2025, Geneva, New York

The conference theme is *Innovative Pathways to Thriving Communities: People, Technology, and Place-based Collaboration*.

[LEARN MORE AND SUBMIT AN ABSTRACT](#)

2025 NETtra Conference

In-person: October 7-10, 2025, Mill Falls at the Lake Resort, Meredith, New Hampshire

Tourism is all about making connections – between people, places, cultures, and time. The 2025 NETtra Conference will connect two organizations comprised of tourism researchers, educators, and practitioners in a first-time collaboration between the [Northeast Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association](#) (NETTRA) and the [National Extension Tourism \(NET\) Network](#), hosted by the University of New Hampshire.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

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