

## Conversation about Volunteer Leadership: Hayley Andrus

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

With a master's in environmental science from Washington State University, Apache County Farm Bureau President Hayley Andrus can explain firsthand the importance of being grounded in grassroots membership organizations. She's living it.

Mother of five girls ranging in age from 14 to three years of age, Andrus is partnered with her husband, Milo, in running a cow/calf operation in North-eastern Arizona, in addition to their mobile large-animal veterinarian practice.

Their days are full, to say the least. But Andrus commitment to Apache County Farm Bureau came about with the recognition that the mission of Farm Bureau is critically important to production agriculture and the farmers and ranchers represented. Because everyone's lives are so busy, Andrus' leadership goals reflect an effort to make every volunteer minute count.

Here's how she does it.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Tell us about your businesses (ranch and Vet practice).

**Andrus:** We run a cow/calf operation in North-eastern Arizona. We winter most of our cattle around the small town of Concho, and summer on a forest permit outside of Show Low. Our Vet business is a mobile large animal practice.

**Arizona Agriculture:** What inspired you and your husband to get into ranching in Arizona and share a bit about your family's ag history?

**Andrus:** Our family is new to Arizona; we've been here just over eight years. After we finished graduate school at Washington State University (WSU) (go Cougs!) we moved to western Wyoming for a couple of reasons. First, the veterinarian practice was a mixed animal practice where Milo could gain experience with several species. Secondly it was only a couple of hours from Milo's family's ranch in Southeast Idaho.

For the next 5 years we spent all our days off in Idaho working on the ranch. I grew up on a farm and ranch in central Utah, and spent my college summers range riding in Colorado, so the idea of making our living in agriculture was a dream Milo and I both shared. Milo's family unexpectedly sold a large chunk of their ranch in Idaho, and we started searching the western U.S. for places to re-invest in ranching. That search led us to Apache County, Arizona.

It has been a steep but rewarding learning curve the past 8 years. We feel blessed and fortunate that his family decided to re-invest in agriculture and that they were will-

ing to let us take the lead here in Arizona.

As a side note, it has been a bit of a homecoming for me, my paternal grandparents grew up in Taylor. My father was born in Winslow. I've have really enjoyed being here having grown up listening to stories of this area.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Regarding your agriculture businesses, what have you brought to the operation that's different from the recent past, specifically as it relates to management and the whole scope of your day-to-day?

**Andrus:** First, we have a much more intensive management style than the recent past. The first three years all we did was fence, fence and fence. We wanted to be able to have more intensive rotational grazing and that took putting up miles and miles of neglected cross fences and building new fences. I think the next three years (and then some) we've buried and laid miles of water lines from existing and new solar powered wells. This effort has paid dividends, after the extreme drought in the last 3 years we have cut our herd numbers, but we are still in business.

Without the rotational grazing and the water development, we most likely couldn't have had the grass to keep any cows. We are continuing our con-

servation efforts with invasive brush management projects and more water development. Milo thrives on improving whatever he touches, and he has more projects and plans than we have time for but we keep chugging along to make our rangeland, our animals and our infrastructure better and better.

Secondly, when considering our day-to-day we wanted our family to be an integral part of our operation. We have five girls ranging from 14 to three years in age. They have all been horseback since they were young, (the youngest two have been riding long before they walked). The girls are learning valuable lessons here on the ranch and they are learning the nuts and bolts of the business.

This family centered approach has maybe been different from the more recent past. Brandings may take a little longer as we teach and allow the girls to rope and drag, getting five girls up and saddled before sunrise takes more effort so there are some things that probably aren't as efficient than if we used a crew of adults. But when we began this Arizona adventure, we made our objectives clear that raising a family was our top priority followed closely by raising quality beef.

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## WOTUS: The Fight Continues

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

Last month brought with it some discouraging news on the issue that seems to be the never-ending cycle of environmental regulation: what does it mean to be a Water of the United States, or WOTUS.


If you have been around Farm Bureau at all since the 2010s, you know that WOTUS has been a flagship issue for our organization since 2015. Specifically, there have been a series of challenges regarding how EPA determines what "waters" it has jurisdiction to regulate in the first place. The 2015 rule had a definition of jurisdictional water that was so broad it covered so-called waterways that may have water in them only a handful of days each year.


That's why Farm Bureau was thrilled when, in June 2020, a new rule was enacted to replace the over-broad 2015 rule. The 2020 rule, called the Navigable Waters Protection Rule (NWPR), was celebrated as clearer, less burdensome, and still perfectly capable of protecting the quality of America's navigable waters. It also placed significant power to regulate surface water quality back where, in our opinion, it belongs: at the state level. In response, Arizona was the first state to pass a Surface Waters Protection Rule in light of the new NWPR, proving that we are willing and capable of protecting their own water resources without intrusive federal oversight.

But predictably, almost as soon as it was enacted, the legal challenges to the NWPR began to pour in. And early in August, we learned that a federal district court judge in Arizona issued a very unfavorable ruling in a case challenging the NWPR. (For full disclosure, the Arizona Farm Bureau is an intervenor in that case, joining the defendants and other natural resource users to defend the 2020 Rule.) With relatively little explanation, the judge vacated the 2020 Rule because she felt continuing its implementation would be detrimental to the health of America's waterways. This was the first time a federal court had undertaken to vacate the rule, despite more than a dozen other challenges to it that are currently pending in courts across the country.

Legally, the scope of this vacatur is less than clear. Recent court precedent would suggest that it applies only to the parties involved in the case, and the states in which they are located, meaning the 2020 Rule is still applicable in all

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**Arizona Agriculture:** You’re somewhat new to Farm Bureau leadership. Talk about the experience so far?  
**Andrus:** The pickings were slim when it came to leadership in our county Farm Bureau, so I felt it was time I took a turn. I didn’t know enough to feel like I could do the job well so for the first year I concentrated on just showing up. I thought that by showing up to the board meetings, and events I could get my feet wet and start to understand a path forward and a useful role I could play in this capacity.  
I have gained a real appreciation of the state outreach team. This leadership volunteer position is already daunting with the other responsibilities I have, but the outreach team has been amazing. Specifically, our outreach manager Christy Davis, who does such a great job of helping, working and empowering myself and other members that sit on our county board.

As I began to get a greater understanding of the mission of Farm Bureau, I set two goals for our county and myself. One was to be a true resource and help to members and producers, and not to have meetings or events that don’t help in some important way. No one has extra time for that. Secondly, I wanted to get Ag in the Classroom back into the classrooms here in Apache County. We are making strides on both those goals I think, still a lot more to do but we are making strides.

**Arizona Agriculture:** If you were talking to a new ag Farm Bureau member thinking about getting more involved, what would you tell them?

**Andrus:** I really believe in the mission of Farm Bureau. As Ag producers our businesses are rarely a 9am to 5pm or 40-hour-a-week job. It is a business wrapped up with family wrapped up with unpredictable weather and animals, wrapped up in markets wrapped up in finances wrapped up in payments and bills.

A lot of us are just trying to keep our heads above water. When we think about volunteer work it can seem really daunting to sign up for more to do. We may balk at an organization that requires a membership fee. Maybe we think we can’t afford the time or the fee.



When considering their day-to-day, Hayley and Milo Andrus want their family to be an integral part of their ranching business. They have five girls ranging from 14 to three years in age. They have all been on horseback since they were young. As a result, the Andrus girls are learning valuable lessons on the ranch including the nuts and bolts of the business.

worried about this path, they thought I had gone over to the dark side. I began the program in January and for Christmas, before I left, they gave me the most western and cowgirl gifts you could imagine, they were afraid that I was going to forget my roots and start hugging trees! I chuckle at that now.

Graduate school was a wonderfully formative experience for me. I enjoyed being the “black sheep” in my department and I was constantly helping people understand agriculture. There was just so much misinformation or skewed perspectives, I kept wondering how Agriculture got so behind on messaging. I think I can understand it a bit, as producers we don’t have time to be actively messaging to a greater culture or individually lobbying legislatures at the state and federal level.

We may not have much time to even keep up with legislative bills that are really affecting us. When I found Farm Bureau- I thought, ok! This is the type of group I have been looking for! I appreciated the mission of Farm Bureau and I think it does an especially good job of keeping grounded in their grassroots membership. Farm Bureau takes on the busy work of advocacy that producers can’t keep up with. As well as creating avenues of influence for the greater population not involved in ag to understand and support agriculture. As producers, we can take comfort in knowing that they are out there working for our best interest. I am very attracted to the grassroots policy development. It is comforting to me to know that issues specific to our area have a direct chain of communication that can gain ears to lawmakers and influencers.

**Arizona Agriculture:** What’s your philosophy about volunteer leadership?  
**Andrus:** I’m not sure I have ever thought about my philosophy of volunteerism. I grew up with a wonderful father who prioritized volunteering in our community. He truly embodied the adage that it takes a village to raise a family, and he was always willing to help out in his village.

His example would be the foundation of my philosophy, and to articulate it would basically be: Show Up. You may not know enough, you may not have time to do it perfectly, but show up. Do what you can, be involved in your village, care about community.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Of all the programs in Farm Bureau, what appeals to you the most and why?  
**Andrus:** I’m not sure I could decide on the most appealing program in Farm Bureau. As I understand and learn more and more about the grassroots policy development aspect, I am quickly becoming a fan.


I’m equally becoming a fan of the Ag in the Classroom. Ag teaches common sense, getting your hands dirty and learning about life in all forms, experiencing new life and even death in plants and animals is instructive. I feel strongly that Ag in the Classroom can and should be an important part of a child’s curriculum.

I also feel like communication and messaging is an important part for our friends and neighbors who are getting more and more distant from their food sources and natural resources. Our American culture needs awareness on these food and fiber systems that provide the basic necessities of life. What Farm Bureau program most appeals to me? Gosh, not sure I could choose. I like them all.

**Arizona Agriculture:** On a broader industry view, where are we a decade from now in Arizona agriculture?  
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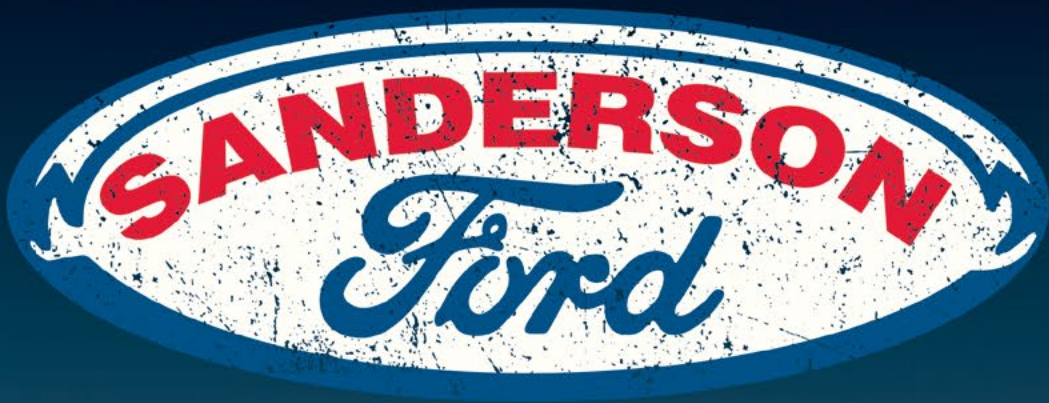
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**Andrus:** I’m still a little too wet behind the ears as an Arizonan to feel like I have any meaningful perspective to give on the future of agriculture in Arizona. Water will continue to be the currency of agriculture in our arid region. There will be more and more demand for this already scarce resource.

Climate change will continue to be a hot topic and I think agriculture in Arizona can and should begin to position itself as part of the solution. The carbon sequestration benefits of our vast rangelands can continue to be used as a larger part of solutions going forward.

In ten years, we will need to feed more and more people on less and less land. Advancements and technology and genetics will continue to play a major role in that. 🐾

Rob Sharkey, Keynote Speaker for Our 2021 Annual Meeting

Staff Reports

**R**ob Sharkey, known as The Shark Farmer, is not your average Illinois grain farmer. He’s a disruptor who is unwavering in his ability to directly address controversial topics. He’ll join Arizona Farm Bureau’s speaker lineup as our keynote speaker where he’ll speak on, “The Art of Listening.”

His provocative style parallels a story-based structure, which resonates with thousands of weekly, global listeners. Juxtapose his rough-around-the-edges persona with an unmatched ability to listen and relate to those spanning generations, time zones, and the rural/urban divide, and you’ve found the formula for an under-the-radar and out-of-the-box communicator.

As a “What the Farm” Podcast co-host and co-founder of the Farm and Rural Ag Network, Rob is changing new media. Co-host Lesley Kelly, known as High Heels and Canola Field, and Sharkey interview experts about bridging the gap between farmers and consumers through real-life conversations.

Join us for Arizona Farm Bureau’s 100th Annual Meeting this November 10th through the 12th. You can register online at azfb.org. You’ll find an article and registration on the homepage. 🐾

WOTUS *continued from page 2*

other states. But it seems that the EPA is interpreting the ruling as a nationwide one, because just a week later, it announced that it would halt implementation of the NWPR in light of the Arizona court’s ruling. So once again, the nation is operating under the vague “pre-2015 rules” that are more a series of court decisions and agency determinations than an actual code.

Though not unexpected, the regulatory changes made since the change of the executive administration continue to feel like déjà vu all over again. While it might be discouraging to see so much of the regulatory progress, we made over the last 10 years seem to disappear overnight, the good news is that we’re more equipped now than we ever have been to fight back against regulatory overreach. We’ve won once before, and have the playbook to win again, all thanks to the vocal, grassroots advocacy of Farm Bureau members like you. 🐾

Farmer John: Your Story is More Interesting than Mine!

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

**W**e continue hearing from Farm Bureau County leaders and Arizona’s farmers and ranchers declaring, “We need to communicate better with the public about what we do.” Impassioned and clear, a variety of ag voices tell the broader farm and ranch community we are not doing enough. This concern won’t improve, though, until we do it together, the old “strength in numbers” maxim.

And one main reason affirms this maxim: Farmer John and Jane, your story and you telling your “ag life” will always resonate with the public more than any one of us telling your story for you. At Arizona Farm Bureau, the Advocacy, Outreach and Ag Education teams celebrate elevating the Arizona agriculture story to our various audiences and we get better and better at it. In fact, when we use strategies that put you out front with “talking” about your farm and ranch business, it resounds more with the public.

Social media regularly proves when Rancher John or Jane speaks, it’s so much richer with strong originality and contextuality. Content counts (it’s also King) and from the source, it matters the most. Farmer/rancher personalities that have committed to the “social conversation” garner thousands, even millions, of followers.

Farmer Jonathan Dinsmore, on Instagram for example, is more popular than anything Arizona Farm Bureau could put out. He’s the farmer! Are you willing to get out front with the public like this young Yuma County farmer? You can do it!

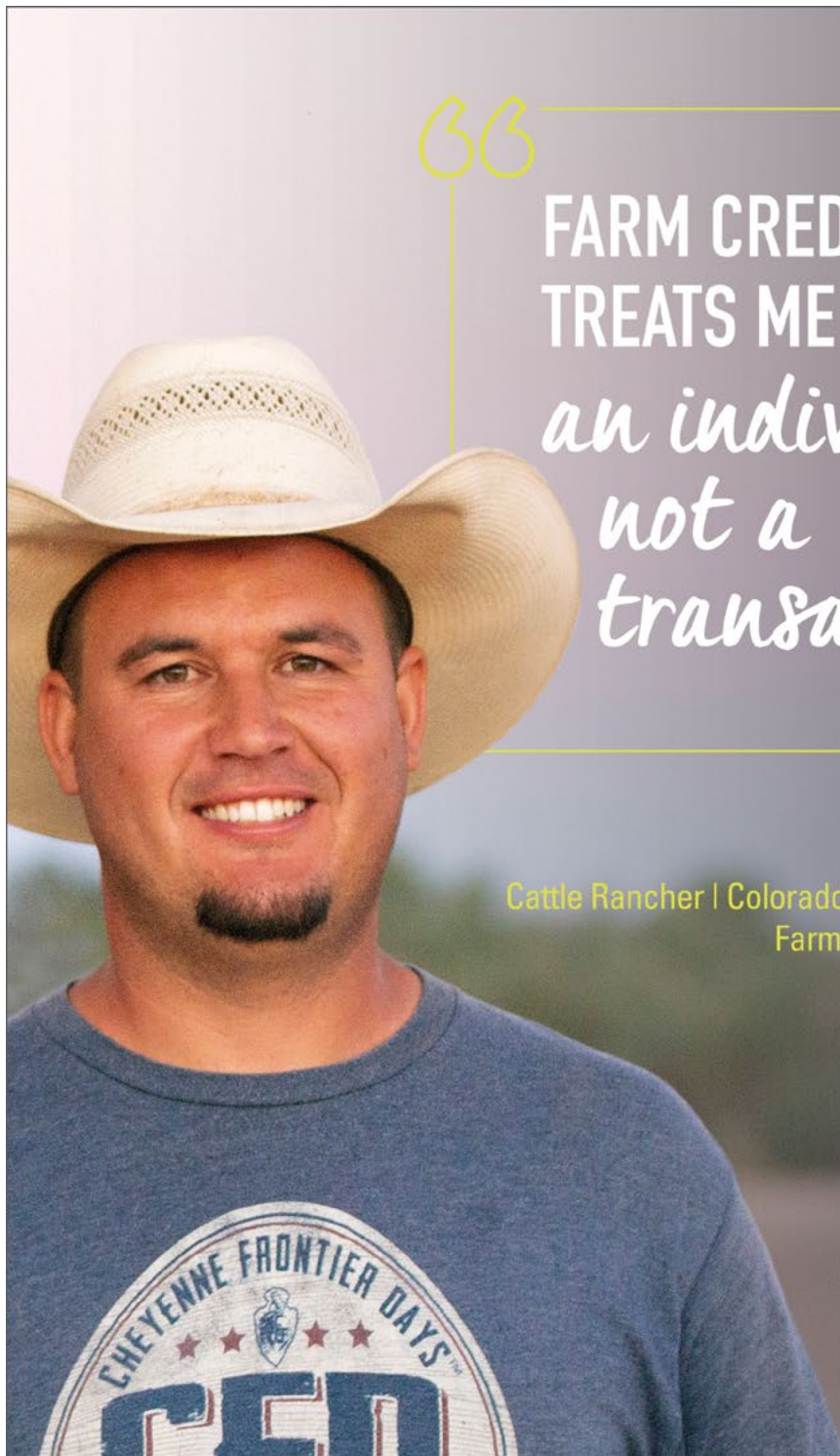


We always want big wins when it comes to connecting with the public but like dating, it’s usually a series of tiny steps that lead up to helping the mutual parties discover something is there, just like falling in love.

Steps to Getting to the “Do”

Our family farmed up until 2005. I get how hard it is to even conceive of launching a social media channel (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and more) with everything else on your plate including running a business and raising a family. It’s tough dealing with

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FARMER JOHN continued from page 2

a media query; plus, time consuming. Or, pausing long enough to go into your child's classroom to read to the class an ag-accurate book (even virtually today).

There is hope though and for even the busiest of us, it can be done. I share seven tips to help you become part of Arizona agriculture's information and engagement solution.

1. **Be original, be you.** Your best focus for the context of telling farming and ranching is your story. Begin to accept that even what seems mundane to you is fascinating to someone in the public who has no concept of farming or ranching. Saddled up a horse all your life to ride fence? Boring to you?! Not to Joe or Jane Public. Dulled by the daily tasks of farming? Even starting irrigation pipe seems fun to watch for the city kid (especially on Tok-tok or Instagram's Reels).

2. **Pick just one channel in social media.** Have you decided if you are more comfortable using Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. Not to brag but Arizona Farm Bureau is on every channel imaginable, except Tok-tok and Snapchat. If you have questions, call one of us on staff.

3. **Dedicate a time each day or week or month.** One of our winegrower members once told me, "Julie, I devote about 15 to 20 minutes early in the morning to my social media channels then I'm done for the day, and I don't worry about it for the rest of the time." Most in the retail farming and ranching space get it, but my commodity farmers should too.

4. **Especially for Retail farmers, make a small sign that you always place next to the produce and/or animal ag when you are on your channel or about to take a photo.** Don't just take a picture of tomatoes. They could be anyone's tomatoes. But, if you grew them, place the sign with your company logo by your wonderfully grown tomatoes so viewers know for sure they are yours.

5. **Engage.** So, I can't convince you to open a Twitter account (or use the one you opened but never post on). Fine. But remember every conversation you have with a supplier, family friend, colleague or new acquaintance might be an opportunity to talk about your farming and ranching life. Don't preach, just listen and find that opening to tell your agriculture story.

6. **Make what you celebrate in your business the key to sharing about the business.** New achievements or improvements on the farm and ranch? Are market prices finally coming up? Anything new or different becomes something to tell. Even if you don't want to explain it call us at Arizona Farm Bureau and we'll help you celebrate a win. We need more of those in agriculture right now.

7. **Document with photos.** If you have a smartphone, you have a way to take pictures. Agriculture is visual. Exploit this fact.

Just can't tolerate the idea of engaging with the public. Arizona Farm Bureau and your commodity-specific associations will still be here for you to help you. We always want big wins when it comes to connecting with the public but like dating, it's usually a series of tiny steps that lead up to helping the mutual parties discover something is there, just like falling in love. 🚗

**Editor's Note:** To get your story told, contact Julie Murphree at juliemurphree@azfb.org. She'll help you determine a plan of action.

Update to Agricultural Transportation Handbook! Changes to USDOT Number Requirement

By Ana Kennedy Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) recently rescinded an exemption provided to farm vehicles transporting cargo in intrastate commerce from having a USDOT safety registration number. *Beginning on November 2, 2021, all single vehicles or combination of vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 pounds and greater, including farm vehicles as defined under ARS 28-2514, involved in intrastate commerce will be required to have a USDOT number.* The requirement of a USDOT number already exists for commercial vehicles involved in interstate commerce with a GVWR of 10,001 pounds or greater.

The USDOT safety registration is a number used to identify commercial motor vehicles transporting passengers or hauling cargo in commerce and is used to collect and monitor a company's safety information and collision data. USDOT numbers can be obtained free of charge at [www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/do-i-need-usdot-number](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/do-i-need-usdot-number). For commercial vehicles requiring a USDOT number the USDOT number and company name must be displayed on the vehicle while operating in commerce. According to ADOT, it is permissible for the markings to be temporarily displayed on vehicles that are only used in commerce on a part-time basis.

The Arizona Farm Bureau provided comments to ADOT in support of retaining the exemption for USDOT number for farm vehicles involved in intrastate transport and argued removing the exemption would create an undue burden for farmers and ranchers who operate primarily in intrastate commerce, especially because various vehicle and trailer combinations can often put farmers and ranchers over the 26,001 pound threshold and oftentimes the vehicle is also used a personal vehicle. We also noted that Arizona was not alone in providing the exemption, since there are several other states who provide a similar exemption. However, Arizona Department of Motor Vehicles argued the exemption should be removed as having the USDOT number provides enforcement officials the ability to notify drivers of violations through a roadside inspection report, rather than issuing citations. Additionally, they noted there are no exemptions in federal regulations from the requirements of a USDOT number and that the state exemption for farm vehicles put the Department at risk of losing grant funding due to noncompliance and compatibility requirements under the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program.

For more information regarding USDOT numbers and other transportation topics, Arizona Farm Bureau members can obtain a free copy of the handbook by contacting [transportation@azfb.org](mailto:transportation@azfb.org) and including their full name, mailing address and the number of copies requested. Members can also login at [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org) to access electronic versions of the handbook. 🚗



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# Arizona's Flying Farmers and the History of the International Flying Farmers

*Part of an ongoing series celebrating Arizona Farm Bureau's 100 Years*

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

“Of all private pilots, Flying Farmers are perhaps the only ones who will tell you their Cessnas and Beechcrafts and Pipers are no different from their combines, tractors, and pickup trucks,” says the International Flying Farmers (IFF) website’s history page. “After all, airplanes are workhorses too, for hauling supplies, for checking irrigation systems, for compressing the time between the farm and parts store.”

In our own Arizona-agriculture history, a brief mention in the January 1943 *Arizona Producers* publication indicates a shortage in airplanes and pilots led to a cutback in aerial crop-dusting during World War II. The alternative for farmers was ground dusting equipment that they had to commit to share among the farms.

Interestingly, today’s IFF got its start one year later in 1944. Currently based in Mansfield, Illinois the IFF began when an agricultural extension director and a farm editor decided to visit several flying farmers in Oklahoma. H.A. “Herb” Graham, director of Agricultural Extension at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, and Ferdie Deering, farm editor of the *Farmer-Stockman* magazine, traveled across the state. One history-making stop was Henry G. “Heinie” Bomhoff, a wheat farmer. Immediately recognizing a colorful character, Graham and Deering interviewed Bomhoff and in the ensuing discussion uncovered numerous other farmers who owned and used airplanes in their farming and ranching operations.

Inspired by Bomhoff and other flying farmers, Extension Director Graham asked if he would be interested in meeting with others like himself at the annual Farm and Home Week, hosted by Oklahoma A & M at Stillwater.

Says the IFF website, “Returning to Stillwater, Graham took his idea to the college president, Dr. Henry G. Bennett. Not only did the president like the idea, he took it one step further imagining a national organization. Through the combined efforts of Bennett, Graham, Deering and Bomhoff, invitations to an organizational meeting at the college campus were sent to all known state farmer-pilots.

“On Aug. 3, 1944, the meeting was held and the Oklahoma Flying Farmers Association was born. The following year, after the idea had spread to other states, Bennett’s vision became reality. On Dec. 12, 1945, the National Flying Farmers Association was incorporated under Oklahoma law.”

And of course, the first leader of the organization, Heinie Bomhoff, had 4,000 pilot hours to his credit, most of it flown at less than 100 feet while hunting coyotes. As a national organization (Dec. 12, 1945, through 1961) and an international organization due to Canadian farmers joining (1961 to the present), IFF made a definite impact on general aviation. During the early decades, the National Flying Farmers Association played an important role in the development of tax rulings on equipment deductions, renter’s insurance for pilots, and the specific design of aircraft for aerial applications, as opposed to modifying existing war-surplus or passenger aircraft.

IFF’s membership peaked around 11,000 in 1977, but as the farming economy during that period began a downward spiral so did membership. IFF’s website sets the current count at around 275 families or 455 members.

Arizona’s own involvement in IFF has made its mark including having national officers. Alexander G. Knox, part of a Chandler, Arizona Farm family, was an IFF officer from 2014 to 2019 and the president in 2017/18. Still an IFF member, Knox had been Arizona Flying Farmer president for many years before becoming an IFF Officer. His brother, Lyle, is the current Arizona Flying Farmer president. Reflecting the smaller membership, just a few Arizona farming and ranching families are left in the IFF. Said Knox, “But we still have some fun.”

Arizona farm families that have been involved include the Sossamans, Hawes, Shumway, Schnepf, Moore, Hash, Bogle, Sasser, Banker, Kongable, Hollinshead, Baxter, McElhaney, Copeland, Copelin, Dana, Hilgeman, and so many more. In fact, Jap and Faith Sossaman were NFF charter members in 1945.

Local Arizona aviators will appreciate the story of former owner and operator of Chandler Air Service, Inc. John Walkup (1944-2017), who grew up on a farm in Stillwater, Oklahoma. While he was never involved in the Arizona Flying Farmers, he was the first International Flying Farmer Teen president.

## The Flying Farmer and his Aircraft

While never active in IFF, my own Dad, Pat Murphree, has always been a flying farmer and at 83 and retired still flies to check out other farms. In visiting with him and reflecting on the transition to drones, he will tell you that farmer/rancher pilots used their aircraft to monitor irrigation systems, check livestock and crops and dust fields. Other flying farmer pilots even delivered and picked up supplies and parts.

When I asked him to put together a list of what he used his plane for, he gave me the following.

1. Water scheduling by satellite or aircraft
2. Aerial photos for project leaders
3. Nearing watering dates on crops, looked from aircraft at plant coloration; often adjusted based on coloration of the leaves (he envies the accuracy of today’s drones)
4. After laser leveling fields, evaluated water coverage from aircraft
5. Often looked for insect disease, flood damage or any other natural or man-made damage to farms
6. Trips to meetings in Safford, Yuma and White Tanks

Once, Assistant Director of the Maricopa Ag Center (MAC) in the 1980s James H. Park and dad flew to Safford to meet Jeffrey C. Silvertooth, Ph.D., for the first time, beginning a lifelong friendship. Today, Silvertooth, recent associate dean and director for Extension & Economic Development for Agriculture, Life, & Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension, the University of Arizona, can still recall the first-time meeting dad.

“I most certainly remember Pat and Jim Park flying from MAC to the Safford Ag Center (SAC),” said Silvertooth. “As I recall, this was about 1987 and during my first cotton season in Arizona working as the UA Extension Cotton Specialist. I was learning that many Arizona farmers and ranchers are pilots, and I was not surprised to see them fly over to Safford. But I was immediately impressed with Pat’s passions for farming and flying, plus he had one of the nicest planes I had yet seen! I worked with Pat for many years, particularly while he was the Demonstration Farm Manager at MAC.”

Silvertooth recounts more adventures flying with Dad. “My best memories of flying with Pat were associated with the few times he took me up early in the morning in his aerobatic plane and took us through some aerial maneuvers. I was doing everything in my power to just hang on and Pat was talking to me as calmly as if we were driving in his pickup checking cotton fields in the afternoon. It was great!” 🛩️



One among thousands, retired Arizona farmer Pat Murphree has flown all his life. Like all pilots he feels most comfortable as the pilot, not the passenger on a plane. Taken a few years ago, Murphree is seen here with his grandson, Cayden Murphree.



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# Understanding Aflatoxin Management in Arizona

By Morgan Klenke, Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council

In the late 1970s, a demand for an aflatoxin management program arose as thousands of pounds of milk were being drained into ditches due to unmarketable levels of aflatoxin found in the milk. A solid course of action had to be found.

Aflatoxin enters the milk through feed consumption, specifically found in corn and cotton. A naturally occurring toxin produced by some strains of the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*, proper Aflatoxin management of toxin producing strains remains crucial to quality production. Aflatoxin producing fungi have optimal growth under warm temperatures and access to moisture, an environment easily found in many Arizona fields. The Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council (ACRPC) worked in conjunction with USDA-ARS to develop AF36 Prevail; a biological control agent that displaces aflatoxin producing fungi.



AF36 Prevail is registered to treat cotton, in addition to corn, pistachios, almonds (California) and figs across Arizona as well as other states.

AF36 Prevail is a sterilized nutrient seed, such as milo, that is coated with a non-toxin producing strain of the fungus that readily displaces toxin producing strains, lowering the toxin levels on the crop. With

more than 22 years of use and over two million acres treated, AF36 Prevail is proven as an effective solution in year-over-year applications in commercial crops.

After years of application and analysis, AF36 Prevail was found to be effective at displacing toxin producing strains in crops outside of corn and cotton, creating opportunities for use of the technology in additional marketable crops. AF36 Prevail is registered to treat corn, cotton, pistachios, almonds (California) and figs across Arizona as well as other states.

### Best Practices for Mitigation

Best practices for aflatoxin mitigation include annual area-wide treatments with a

proactive mindset. Application for corn is best in V7 growth until silks emerge; cotton at layby; pistachio, almond and fig from late May through early July under the canopy after cultivation is complete. Optimal results occur when moisture is available within three days of application. Annual application shows additive effects and continued reduction of aflatoxin producing strains. With the help of wind and insects, reduced aflatoxin levels have been found in surrounding, untreated acres providing an expanded areawide affect to displace aflatoxin producing fungi.

ACRPC's goal for the Aflatoxin Mitigation Program is to ensure longevity of atoxigenic (non-toxin producing) strain technology for the commodities in need at an economic value. ACRPC offers soil sampling before and after application to measure the fungal populations. In high aflatoxin producing years, displacement can result in dramatically reduced aflatoxin levels, though in some instances, still above optimal levels. ACRPC provides free delivery to Arizona customers and encourages a relationship with the product manufacturer (ACRPC). As a non-profit organization, we hope to maintain contact with our customers to assist in providing research, products, and information to the agriculture community with a mutual benefit of contributing to quality agriculture production. 🚚

**Editor's Note:** To maintain communication with Arizona agriculture, ACRPC is excited to announce that it has expanded its team to include Morgan Klenke, marketing and sales associate for the AF36 Aflatoxin Program. Klenke will serve as the communication line to the commodities for the aflatoxin management program. Spending most of her life in Arizona, she pursued livestock production throughout her time in local 4-H and FFA. Holding a bachelor's degree in Global Agribusiness from Arizona State University, you can reach her at 602.291.2983 or at [mklenke@azcotton.org](mailto:mklenke@azcotton.org). Keep informed and up to date on the latest issues related to aflatoxin management and AF36 Prevail via Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council's social media channels.

- **Facebook:** Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council
- **Instagram:** [AZCottonCouncil](#)
- **LinkedIn:** Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council

## Mentor/Protégé CAMP Profile, 2: Sonia Gasho and Brett Meyers

By Sonia Gasho and Brett Meyers, CAMP program participants

Continuing our CAMP mentor/protégé series, we profile Sonia Gasho, Cochise County Farm Bureau President and owner of Gasho Land and Cattle and NRCS employee Brett Meyers in this latest article.

With the launch this last April of the Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP), in partnership with Arizona Farm Bureau, The NRCS team have been front and center in enthusiastically driving this unique partnership. While several other states have the CAMP program, Arizona's is unique in the partnership effort with Arizona Farm Bureau.

At the beginning of this 18-month effort, Arizona Farm Bureau and NRCS con-

tinue to shine a bright light on this exciting program and the experiences our mentors and protégé are going through.

The Gasho/Meyers partnership will be working together for the next 18 months, joining forces to provide firsthand experience to the conservation practices and agricultural happenings in the southern Arizona area. Of special note, Gasho's degree is in environmental sciences and in her early career was employed by NRCS.

### From Gasho

Thus far the CAMP program has been enjoyable. Brett and I were able to tour our

See **MENTOR** Page 8



With over 75 combined years of experience, Matt Eyrich, Carrie Morales, Cody Stephan and Candilee Struble bring a wealth of knowledge to their new roles as Agribusiness Relationship Managers.

The entire team comes from farming families and has hands-on experience in the agriculture industry. The team understands the complexity of farming/ranching operations and the diverse financial needs of farmers across the Southwest. They are excited to be a part of NB|AZ® and look forward to expanding its presence in the agribusiness market.



**MATT EYRICH**  
623.302.8714  
[Matthew.Eyrich@nbarizona.com](mailto:Matthew.Eyrich@nbarizona.com)



**CARRIE MORALES**  
480.797.8406  
[Carrie.Morales@nbarizona.com](mailto:Carrie.Morales@nbarizona.com)



**CODY STEPHAN**  
928.373.6941  
[Cody.Stephan@nbarizona.com](mailto:Cody.Stephan@nbarizona.com)



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MENTOR

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ranch and Brett attended the Riggs Field Day FFA Com-



Sonia and David Gasho ranch in southern Arizona and are participating this year in NRCS' CAMP program.

petition (a local event held to host FFA students for a regional competition in various Career Development Events). As a result, Brett was able to meet/visit with the Willcox-San Simon staff.

On the ranching side we have monitoring in the works for Oc-

tober and discussed the good and bad of EQIP. Getting monitoring done will be a big help on our end as it's tough to make it a priority and take the time without outside help.

In our area, have 10 key areas and associated transects to read. Since we have done brush removal in some areas it will be interesting to see the difference in production, particularly with the previous years of drought and this year's good monsoon.

From Myers

What's been the biggest takeaway so far?

Sonia has taken the time to explain production agriculture, natural resources in her area, and the hurdles they face in their area. Furthermore, expressing the fact that the best technical solution is not always best for the producer, and conservations plans should address that.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful?

I had the pleasure to travel to Sonia's family ranch and receive a tour where Sonia expressed the importance of coordinated resource management plans, and the value was evident with the success of the multi-agency projects that have taken place – especially, the 'frog pond!'

This program has increased my knowledge and grew relationships with Arizona Producers. Producers face an array of issues rather than just natural resource concerns, and us as conservationist need to be aware of this.

What more do you hope to learn about in your area?

What I want to learn from the program is the rancher/farmer perspective on the NRCS, and what could we, as field staff, do is to ease the EQIP process, etc. 🐸



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