

Conversation about the Cotton Ginning Link in the Ag Supply Chain: Kelci Murphree

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Armed with her Business Management degree from Arizona State University, Kelci Morrow Murphree set out to work in agriculture and celebrate the generational farming she comes from. In all of it, cotton has been the central crop for this family.

Full disclosure, Morrow Murphree is my niece by marriage, and it's been fun watching her, and nephew Kyle, build a family and career around Arizona agriculture. So, when she recently started as Pinal Gin's gin manager, I had to continue tracking her career trajectory and find out her new experiences at the gin and get an insider look at this critical aspect of the cotton supply chain. After all, I knew she wouldn't turn me down for an interview.

Indeed, we often discuss the actual cotton production, how our Arizona cotton is in global demand and what markets it goes into, but how often do we quiz our gin managers about the very critical and unique requirements of cotton ginning.

I think of another friend and colleague in the cotton industry, Greg Sugaski of Olam Cotton Sunshine Gin, and can recall his focus and engagement on all things cotton. Sugaski is a fellow Project CENTRL, Class 7, classmate. We couldn't move the cotton industry forward without our gin managers.

So, besides some of the obvious questions, I asked Morrow Murphree about her take on this unique supply chain link in the cotton industry.

Arizona Agriculture: Like many Arizona farm and ranch families, you come from a generational farm family in southern Arizona. Talk about what it means to stay involved in the industry, especially in your new role as gin manager for Pinal Gin?

Murphree: My family has been farming since the 1970s and before that, they had a custom harvesting and trucking company. It has always been important to me to stay in the ag industry, it's what I know and what I am passionate about.

Before taking on my position at Pinal Gin, I was with Helena Agri-Enterprises for six years. There I was able to work with seed, chemical, fertilizer and other inputs. I loved the diversity and constant change that came with my position but at the end of the

day, cotton has been my family's focus and I know ultimately this is where I needed to be. I am very proud to be a woman in ag. I feel like there are several of us paving the way for future women wanting solid careers in agriculture.

Arizona Agriculture: Describe what's been most exciting and rewarding for you in your new role?



Kyle and Kelci Murphree are rooted in Arizona agriculture. Their daughter, Karsyn, is the fourth generation if she pursues a career in agriculture. (Photo courtesy of Brooke Marcella Photography)

Murphree: This season everything has been exciting, although I had worked at a gin before I was not this involved. It has been so exciting to learn about the entire process and be hands-on dealing with growers, marketers, vendors, and the gin itself. I have learned so much in such a short amount of time.

Arizona Agriculture: What's been most surprising in your new role?

Murphree: Coming from a management background I have seen it all, I can't really think of anything surprising.

Arizona Agriculture: What do you like the most about what you do?

Murphree: To be completely honest, I like every aspect of my job. I get to deal with accounting, network with new people, and do day-to-day problem-solving.

Arizona Agriculture: During the season, gins run 24/7. I've read that a cotton gin can't afford any downtime, so managers always talk about "Keep the stands in." Explain what this is and describe what this felt like during this latest cotton season? Note to reader: A "gin stand" is the last piece of machinery to receive seed cotton before it heads into the pressing operation to make the cotton bales. It removes the lint from the seed with a series of saws. Then the lint goes one way, the seeds go another, and the trash goes a third. Some suggest it's the most important part of the gin, so, keeping the stands in – a continuous flow into the stands – is one of the biggest industry headaches.

Murphree: Yes, if the stands aren't running the rest of the gin will have to stop production. It's never a good feeling to check the cameras and see the stands out, that means there is a problem, and we are getting behind. This year, due to employee issues, we only ran a day shift so it is

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The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: The State Legislature So Far

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

With committees meeting in person, members required to be present to vote from the floor, and the COVID-19 restrictions that prevented in-person meetings lifted, the rhythm of the legislative session is back. What are the highlights (and lowlights) so far? Well, here's the breakout.

The Good

Wildfire Mitigation: The natural resources committees have been relatively quiet this year, but what they are talking about aligns with Arizona Farm Bureau's policy priorities. One of the first bills passed was an amendment to the wildfire mitigation funds the Legislature allocated last year, removing restrictive language to make sure that we can get those funds to ranchers in a timely manner.

Off-Highway Vehicles: We have had several bills aimed at preventing further damage to public lands from the use of off-highway vehicles, both by strengthening the recreational immunity protections for lessees and by examining ways to reallocate resources to secure more funds for enforcement officers and damage mitigation.

Sales Tax Exemption for Used Farm Equipment: A bill to exempt used farm equipment, rather than just new farm equipment from sales tax has broad support and is moving through the legislative process.

New Water Sources: There's a clear appetite to spend significant resources on securing new water sources for Arizona and lots of good ideas on how to spend those resources to benefit rural Arizona. For a session where we planned to play significant defense, we've been pleasantly surprised at how much we've been able to support.

The Bad

But the year isn't without its bad ideas, too. As usual, there's a long list of bills that run directly counter to Arizona Farm Bureau policy. From

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2022 AgFest: Highlights of a Bright and Fruitful Day

By Ana Kennedy Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager



From an AgFest equipment display to Farm Bureau County booths with members highlighting agricultural products and issues from across the state, participants garnered a first-hand look at Arizona agriculture. Standing near Arizona Farm Bureau’s Centennial sign, (Left to right) Frank Krentz (Cochise County Farm Bureau), Representative Lupe Diaz, Representative Gail Griffin, and Tina Thompson (Cochise County Farm Bureau), helping us mark our 100 years of success. Upper Left Photo: regaling in our modern farm equipment is (Left to Right) Mark Freeman (Maricopa County Farm Bureau), Representative Travis Grantham, Senator T.J. Shope, and Chip Wilson (Maricopa County Farm Bureau).

Arizona Farm Bureau hosted Legislative AgFest on Wednesday, January 19th at the Arizona State Capitol. Fifty-two legislators attended the event and connected with over 120 AZFB members and guests from across the state. Farm Bureau members were able to highlight agriculture from their respective counties, as well as discuss Arizona Farm Bureau’s priority issues relevant to the current legislative session.

Since AgFest is now a luncheon event, we are grateful to the Farm Bureau Financial Services Grill Team for once again providing a delicious BBQ meal and feeding approximately 250 people. No one ever leaves AgFest hungry!

New and Different

Additionally, this year we had several new components to AgFest. Because AgFest spread out onto 17th Avenue west of the Capitol, we included an equipment display that featured several modern tractors, a baler, and some antique tractors. A special thank you to Empire-Cat, Dykstra Machinery and the Arizona Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association for providing the tractors for our first-ever AgFest equipment display.

Also new to Ag Fest was a space dedicated to the aggie organizations who also work to promote awareness of Arizona agriculture. We appreciate the Arizona Nursery Association, Arizona Cotton Growers Association, Arizona Association of Conservation Districts, and the Agribusiness and Water Council of Arizona for participating with their own displays and giveaways.

Finally, thank you to our members for taking the time to leave your farm or ranch to share the importance of agriculture with our legislators. This event would have not been possible with you. We look forward to another great event next year. 🚜



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Cotton Ginning

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important to be able to be as productive as we can within the 11-hour shift.

Arizona Agriculture: We had a pretty good cotton harvest season with USDA-NASS telling us we averaged 1,291 pounds per acre, the highest since the 2018 crop. Is that buzz about production and yield felt in the gin during the peak of the season?

Murphree: As with everything else in the Ag industry this year, acres were down, but with the good weather most of our grower’s yields were up so the gin was not affected.

We will end up ginning about the same number of bales as they did last year. Next year, however, may be a different story.

Arizona Agriculture: I’m told that once at the gin, the cotton really acquires its value when it becomes a bale ready to be shipped. Talk about this?

Murphree: The process is fast once the cotton is ginned, the finished bales will be shipped to the warehouse (usually by the next day) and from there they are graded and classed by the USDA and sold.

I believe the grower usually will receive a payment within a week or two.

Arizona Agriculture: There are more opportunities in agriculture than the jobs we typically think of. While you’re still in that “younger generation,” what would you tell students going to UArizona or ASU about ag jobs and opportunities? What should they expect when they get out?

Murphree: The great thing about the Ag industry is, it is continuously evolving and changing. With the advancement of technology, everything is becoming more efficient and cost-effective.

When most people hear ‘Ag’ they picture someone standing out in a dirt field, but this is not always true, there are office jobs, sales positions, fieldwork, and so much more.

Arizona Agriculture: You’re seeing several links in the cotton supply chain. What makes our Arizona cotton supply chain links so special from your perspective.

Murphree: I don’t have any other supply chains to compare to, but I believe our supply chain is special because of the people.

I have met so many amazing people that I am lucky to deal with on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. The people are what make the entire process smooth. I know that if I ever question or need help, I have multiple people to call on.

Arizona Agriculture: What message do you wish to convey to fellow Arizona Farm Bureau farm and ranch members?

Murphree: Agriculture is an ever-changing field, and we never know what the season will bring. We are all in this together and with the awesome Ag community, we will be able to face the problems head-on and come out on top. 🚜

The Latest from the USDA: Meat Processing, Disaster Relief, and Climate-smart Practices

By Victoria Okula, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been staying busy, and the recent announcements about new programs, reporting tools, and grant opportunities are a testament to that.

In January, USDA and the White House announced a \$1 billion investment to provide financing, funding, and subsidies to help increase capacity and size diversity in the meat processing industry. This comes on the heels of, and is an expansion on, prior subsidization for the same purpose that was employed earlier in the summer of 2021. This announcement also referenced the need for tools to identify and report anti-competitive practices.

As a result, in February, the Justice Department announced a new online portal through which the public can provide anonymous tips as to possible anti-competitive practices or behavior through their new website: www.farmerfairness.gov.

The administration is also focused on helping producers who were and continue to be burdened by natural disasters. In late 2021, President Biden signed into law the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act, which includes \$10 billion in assistance to agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms, and other eligible disasters experienced during 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the Act specifically targets \$750 million to aid livestock producers for losses incurred due to drought or wildfires in the calendar year 2021. In early February, USDA announced a two-phase disaster assistance program for crop and livestock producers leveraged through either the Livestock Forage Program or crop insurance programs.

And the conversation about disaster relief would not be complete without attention to climate-smart practices. While the agriculture industry only accounts for 10% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, many farmers and ranchers have already implemented climate-smart practices to demonstrate their willingness to be a part of the solution. Accordingly, USDA announced their plan to invest \$1 billion in pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify GHG benefits. Pilots will provide technical and financial assistance to producers who implement climate-smart practices on a voluntary basis on working lands; pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and market the resulting climate-smart commodities. 🚜



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The Good

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mandatory well metering to bans on pesticides, we once again have reason to be thankful for legislative leadership that prevents these bills from getting a hearing in the first place. Other bills may not have support from committee leadership, but there are enough members in the caucus who are interested in them that we’re keeping a close eye on these bills to see if they move in unconventional ways.

One such bill is a frequent flyer, the Rural Management Areas concept. This bill would allow county supervisors to declare “at-risk” groundwater basins as rural management areas, and then nominate individuals to form a council that would develop regulatory restrictions for water use within that basin. While we were thankful for work we did over the interim with the sponsor and the bill’s proponents to try and make us more comfortable with the bill, including adding a grandfathered agricultural pumping right and guaranteeing agricultural representation on the council, it still does not sufficiently align with Arizona Farm Bureau’s rural water policy. This is largely because the bill could now apply to any at-risk basin in the state, and not just those basins in counties bordering the Colorado River. For an untested concept to now be applicable statewide is a dangerous proposition, and we are watching closely to see how we might need to engage in this bill in the coming weeks.

The Ugly

As we expected, issues of education and elections have given legislators plenty to be distracted by. Proposed changes to election laws made the “ugly” section of this list, not because of their content (that’s a debate for an entirely different article), but because of the methods of public engagement as they’re discussed. Disgust for the lack of decorum in the committee hearings has united both sides of the aisle.

On the education front, schools are facing a key deadline of March 1 before the state’s limit on school expenditures kicks in. If the Legislature doesn’t vote to override the spending limit, schools will be forced to cut spending so as not to exceed the limit. While normally, the decision to override that limit would probably be a straightforward one, this happens to be the year that the spending limit was the basis of the Arizona Supreme Court’s decision to strike down Proposition 208, which increased taxes on small businesses and top income earners. That’s significantly hampered political will in the majority caucus to act quickly to increase the limit, leaving schools in a very uncomfortable limbo.

It’s Good to Be Back

After two unconventional sessions in 2020 and 2021, the 2022 Session of the Arizona Legislature feels normal once again – if such a word can be applied to state political arenas. And while there’s still *lots* of session left to go, we’re happy with the trajectory so far. 🚜

FAQs About the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol

Staff Reports

In a period of ever-greater supply chain scrutiny and growing demand for transparency, The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol® sets a new standard for more sustainably grown cotton. To enroll as a grower, the deadline is **March 31**.

Aligned with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, the Trust Protocol brings quantifiable and verifiable goals and measurements to more sustainable cotton production and drives continuous improvement in six key sustainability metrics – land use, soil carbon, water management, soil loss, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy efficiency.

Cotton farmer and Cotton Trust Protocol Grower Jim Webb said, “With the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, U.S. growers have our own verification program. It’s grower-friendly and easy to enroll. The U.S. cotton grower has always been sustainable and now we have a verification process that our retailers need. This will keep U.S. cotton at the forefront and be the choice of cotton for the world.”

“My family has been farming since 1976, so we’ve seen a lot of changes over the years,” adds Adam Hatley, Trust Protocol grower member and owner of Associated Farming Company. “By keeping up with industry innovations, we’ve been able to make changes that have not only improved our agriculture practices and our profitability but have also reduced our greenhouse gas emissions and our carbon footprint.”

The Trust Protocol underpins and verifies U.S. cotton’s sustainability progress through sophisticated data collection and independent third-party verification. Choosing the Trust Protocol cotton will provide brands and retailers the critical assurances they need that the cotton fiber element of their supply chain is more sustainably grown with lower environmental and social risk.

Launched in the summer of 2020, the Trust Protocol is voluntary for U.S. cotton producers and allows us to report on six key sustainability metrics from the farm level. This initiative works to help drive all U.S. cotton production towards their 2025 sustainability targets and beyond.

Can you tell me a little bit about the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol?

- Launched in 2020, the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is a farm-level, science-based program that sets a new standard in more sustainably grown cotton.
- It brings quantifiable and verifiable goals and measurements to sustainable cotton production and drives continuous improvement in six key sustainability metrics – land use, soil carbon, water management, soil loss, greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency.
- The program enables U.S. cotton growers to prove their sustainable stewardship and drive their commitment to continuous improvement.
- The Trust Protocol helps U.S. cotton growers meet the changing demands from the end customer while also better documenting and verifying the sustainability practices and advances already incorporated into their farms.
- During the program’s first year, the Trust Protocol welcomed more than 560 brand, retailer, mill and manufacturer members including Levi Strauss & Co., PVH Corp and its brands Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, Gap Inc. and its collection of purpose-led lifestyle brands Old Navy, Gap, Banana Republic and Athleta, as well as global apparel manufacturer Gildan.

Why should growers join?

- Virtually all the top 100 global brands have created lists of sustainable raw materials and publicly committed that 100% of their sourcing will come from these lists

FAQs *continued from page 5*

over the next 5 to 10 years.

- The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is a program for the U.S. cotton industry that measures, validates and verifies our sustainability credentials and provides a framework acceptable for these preferred fiber lists.
- By joining the Trust Protocol, growers will be able to demonstrate that their cotton is grown responsibly and demonstrate that the U.S. is a leader in sustainable growing practices.

How can growers enroll?

- The grower enrollment deadline for the 2021/2022 crop is March 31. Cotton growers can sign up at TrustUSCotton.org.
- A new tool this year to assist with enrollment is that growers can authorize account access for their crop consultant who can then enter information on their behalf.

By adding their crop consultant, they can work with growers to help ensure that all necessary enrollment information is entered and accurate.

- If growers have additional questions or would like help with enrollment, they can reach out to the Grower Help Desk at growers@trustuscotton.org.
- “The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol is a really valuable tool that not only allows me to record my current sustainability practices but also shows me areas where I can improve in the future,” concludes Hatley, who further mentioned the process to enroll is straightforward. “The program is an opportunity for U.S. cotton growers to show our customers that we are applying new technologies on our farms and that we are using best management practices to produce and deliver a reliable, sustainably grown product.” 🚜

Meet Arizona Agriculture’s Karin Boyle

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

They are easy to spot. Quite the team actually and their specialty is therapy. I’m talking about a long-time Farm Bureau member and generational dairy farm family kid, Karin Boyle and her therapy cow, Dolly Star.

While I’ve known quite a few of the Boyle family in the dairy industry, Karin and I were not sure we’d ever met before until Arizona Farm Bureau’s January AgFest event down at the Capitol. Her team was invited to be part of the experience.



Karin Boyle with her bovine buddy, Dolly Star, hung out at the Capitol in January during Arizona Farm Bureau’s AgFest.

Dolly Star is a show-stealer. Everyone gravitates to this mini cow in a flash. But I’ll let Karin tell the rest of the story in this ag profile.

Tell us about your unique agribusiness outreach: My name is Karin Boyle and I’m the founder/president of The Dolly Star Foundation. I started a non-profit organization called the Dolly Star Foundation that provides therapy visits to individuals in memory care facilities, hospitals and schools.

I was inspired to start this foundation after spending time with my father in a memory care facility after health issues and witnessing how difficult it was for him to suddenly be removed from his lifelong roots on our family farm to an assisted living campus. His doctors encouraged him to engage in activities that had been part of his life before his illness and that’s when I realized I needed to find a way to bring the farm to my dad. He, like so many others, struggled during this confusing time and I

knew I could help him. This led to the creation of our unique and joyful experience that draws on our community’s agricultural roots - bovine pet therapy!

The mission of The Dolly Star Foundation is to bring healing, comfort, and joy to people in memory care facilities, hospitals, and schools to create beautiful moments for both patients and their families.

The Dolly Star Foundation is named after our first therapy cow, Dolly Star. She is a Micro Mini White Park Heifer that, when full-grown, will only be 36 inches tall, making her the perfect size for facility visits! She has been trained and loves to interact with people of all ages at community events and facility visits. Dolly Star has already reached local stardom at multiple memory care facilities and has been making a huge impact on members of our community.

Tell us about your farm, ranch, or agribusiness operation(s): I grew up in Chandler, Arizona on my parent’s dairy farm, we milked 1,000 cows till we expanded in 2007 and moved our dairy to Coolidge, Arizona. My brothers, Garrett and Robert Boyle, then joined my parents in building McClintock dairy where we milked 3,500 cows till 2019.

Tell us some of the positive outcomes already from this effort in memory care? Recently, a neighbor with Alzheimer’s was able to spend time with Dolly. Her husband shared their experience, “My wife grew up on a dairy farm, and after visiting with Dolly Star she regained some lucidity and began retelling stories from her childhood. Dolly Star gave us all a joyful moment together again.”

It was my honor to bring Dolly to comfort this family. These are the stories, and these are the moments, the Dolly Star Foundation is devoted to creating

Why are you a farm bureau member? We are so fortunate that the Farm Bureau will insure us. Since The Dolly Star Foundation is the first of its kind it was difficult to find insurance for our program. But thanks to Farm Bureau we are taken care of.

Editor’s Note: This ongoing series continues to feature our farm and ranch members. If you have a story to share, contact us at outreach@azfb.org. 🚜

An aerial photograph of a large-scale water infrastructure project, likely a pumping station. The image shows several large concrete structures, pipes, and mechanical components. In the foreground, there are large metal gates or structures partially submerged in water. The background shows a dry, hilly landscape.

A simple line-art icon representing a person sitting at a desk with a computer, used as part of the 'Essential Infrastructure' branding.

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The logo for the Central Arizona Project (CAP), featuring a stylized 'Z' shape and the text 'CAP CENTRAL ARIZONA PROJECT'.

The Sonoran Desert Tortoise Stays off the Endangered Species List

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

After a 12-month finding for the Sonoran Desert tortoise, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS) Service last month declared the species stable and not in need of protection under the federal Endangered Species Act, according to the Service. This is good news for so many of our Arizona ranchers.

“While several of these threats, mainly development and drought, may increase in scope or severity over time, the species and its associated habitat are projected to remain at levels that do not threaten the survival of the Sonoran Desert tortoise in the foreseeable future,”



Last month’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife announcement to not list the Sonoran Desert tortoise is a big win for all involved in sharing the true story of the Sonoran Desert Tortoise’s environment with solid data and the impact an ESA listing would have had on our ranching community.

the agency’s Southwest regional office said in a statement.

“This is a big deal for Arizona with FWS’s recent announcement that they are not going to list the Sonoran Desert tortoise as threatened,” said Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse, a rancher in southern Arizona.

“There are several folks who have been fighting this fight for some time and this is great news. Bill Dunn and Walt and Francie Meyer, awarded our environmental award a few years back, have been instrumental in making sure FWS followed a credible review for this species. If listed, it would have had the same devastating effect the Mojave Desert tortoise did years ago on grazing in Mojave County and beyond.”

In 2015, rancher William “Bill” Dunn wrote in an article regarding the challenges faced with a listing of the Sonoran Desert tortoise, “Have our worst fears come true in Arizona’s desert rangelands? Will one critter finally be the end of the livestock grazing industry because of an agreement between Western Watersheds, Wildearth Guardians and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)? That was certainly the intent of the

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

The entire team comes from farming families or 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.



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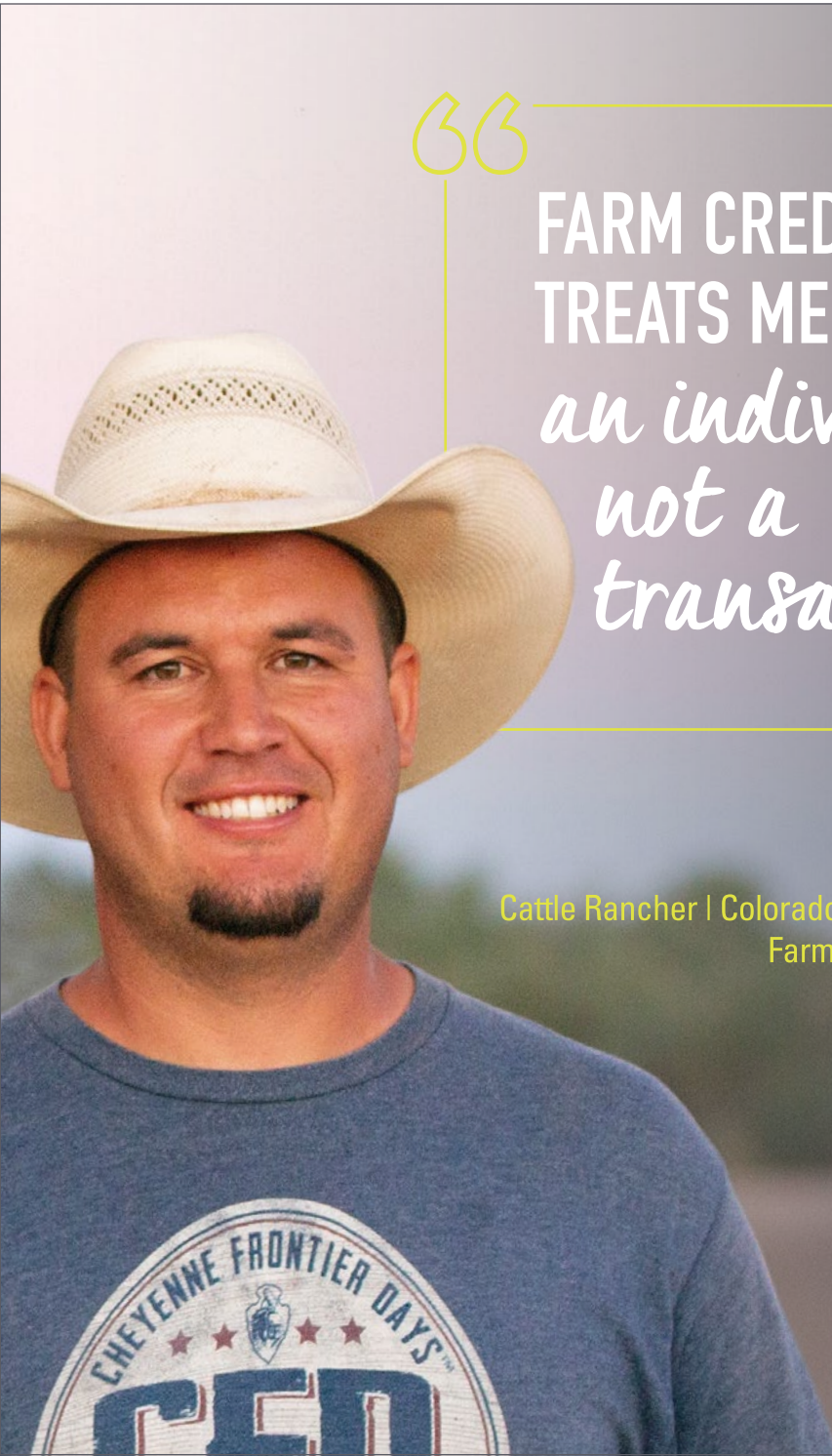
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Mentor Protégé CAMP Profile, 5: Hayley Andrus and Kelsy Taylor

By Apache County Farm Bureau President and rancher Hayley Andrus and NRCS Team member Kelsy Taylor

Continuing our CAMP mentor/protégé series, we profile Apache County Farm Bureau President and rancher Hayley Andrus and NRCS employee Kelsy Taylor in this fifth article in the series.

With the launch April 2021 of the Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP), in partnership with Arizona Farm Bureau, The NRCS team has been front and center in enthusiastically driving this unique partnership. While several other states have the CAMP program, Arizona is unique in the partnership effort with Arizona Farm Bureau. At the beginning of this 18-month effort, Arizona Farm Bureau and NRCS continue to shine a bright light on this exciting program and the experiences our mentors and protégé are going through. Each mentor/protégé partnership is different with unique experiences.

The Andrus Taylor partnership works to understand Arizona agriculture and conservation opportunities, joining forces to provide firsthand experience of the conservation practices and agricultural happenings in northern Arizona.

From Hayley, rancher

What's been the biggest takeaway so far with your meetings over the telephone and/or zoom and/or face-to-face gathering? Kelsy has been an absolute joy to have with us this year. He has been in touch with us on the phone and with us on the ranch several times. He attended our county annual meeting, and he was able to meet producers from the county that he hadn't met yet and gain a greater understanding of the mission of the Farm Bureau. I guess our takeaway has been that we have so much in common with Kelsy and he is a strong ally for agriculture.

Share specifics about one of your meetings? When we shipped our cows to the forest permit Kelsy came every day for a week, sun-up till after sundown. This is the kind of all-hands-on-deck job and he definitely proved himself handy! He jumped in and tried any and every kind of job. As a family operation, he was inducted into the



Kelsy Taylor (left) with Hayley Andrus' husband, Milo, suggests the best part of the mentor protégé partnership is the hands-on knowledge he's gaining from Arizona ranch families.

family that week! We learned that Kelsy really cares about our success as a family ranch. He is so willing to do what he can in his office and work to reach our common goals as caretakers for this land.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful? When we have worked with the NRCD on projects - Kelsy and his co-workers come out to our place and they get to see one area and one project. I feel like this program has been very helpful in giving a broader scope- to why these projects are so essential for the bigger picture. When you get to see the operation over the course of a year, the NRCD projects and the importance to agriculture are more fully grasped.

What do you hope to learn more about? When it comes to possible projects, we don't often know what is available through the NRCD. So, as we go forward in the

Tortoise

continued from page 6

agreement on the litigant's part. The Sonoran Desert Tortoise was seen as the tool to do just that. Their petition to the FWS in 2008 was aimed directly at the livestock grazing industry. It was the same strategy they used in the Mojave Desert Tortoise in Southern California, Southern Nevada and Southwestern Utah. In that case, they were successful in eliminating the grazing industry, to be replaced by a government industry; that of studying the tortoise."

In his article on behalf of Arizona Farm Bureau's Arizona Agriculture publication, Dunn outlined a strategy to protect the tortoise through best management practices (BMPs), but as importantly explain the work done through the Winkelman NRCD to keep FWS informed including sharing a little-known tortoise study that had been going on for 30 years.

The ranching Meyer family had been actively studying all aspects of the tortoise on theirs and their neighboring ranches with the help of the University of Arizona where Dr. Walt Meyer was teaching at the time. Using knowledge from that study and with the help of U. of A. Cooperative Extension Economics Department, and Mary Darling, wildlife biologist and longtime tortoise expert they confronted the FWS with enough information to help them to determine that indeed livestock grazing was not a threat to the tortoise.

But the battle has been ongoing. Last month's announcement, then, is a big win for all involved in sharing the true story of the Sonoran Desert Tortoise's environment.

"They really took a good look at the literature and the latest information this time," said Dunn in response to the FWS's declaration. "They determined that the population is 'abundant in Arizona and Sonora' and 'on the order of hundreds of thousands of extant adults.' They don't expect the species to be in trouble 'for the foreseeable future,' which is what the ESA requires. No doubt there will be petitions in the future but for now, we are safe. We must appreciate what the Meyers have done to advance the understanding of this species."

Added Smallhouse, "This is not the first time we've seen that rancher data matters and it's more important than ever for ranchers to stay vigilant in engaging with agencies and providing their expertise of the resources." 🚜

CAMP program, we hope that Kelsy can come up with ideas for land management that aren't even on our radar yet. In short, we don't know what we don't know. We hope Kelsy can bridge that gap for us.

What are you looking forward to in your other meetings/gatherings/learning and sharing sessions? We have made a life-long friend and we expect there too many more good times, good laughs, good plans for improvements on this range. Thank you, Kelsy!!

From Kelsy, rangeland management specialist

What's been the biggest takeaway so far with your meetings over the telephone and/or Zoom and/or face-to-face gathering? There are far too many takeaways I have gained through this experience to list them all here, however, I would say the biggest would be the wealth of knowledge from the producer standpoint regarding the challenges of an agricultural operation which will definitely have a positive impact on the way I conduct business going forward. Another huge takeaway was the opportunity to attend the Apache County Farm Bureau Annual County Meeting and getting to see what a huge advocate Farm Bureau is for Arizona Agriculture.

Share specifics about one of your meetings? What did you learn? Getting to spend a few days with the Andrus family on their operation gave me a great insight into the constant challenges that producers face on a day-to-day basis. Getting to see the conservation practices that they have completed in the past and the long-term effects that these have made have given me more insight into how big of a difference we can make by properly addressing resource concerns.

The hands-on experiences I have gained thus far in the CAMP program will definitely play a role in my thought process when it comes to conservation planning in the future.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful? I feel this program has been extremely helpful in gaining hands-on experience and knowledge that would never be possible working in an office setting. It has also been very helpful for me in enhancing my communication skills and getting introduced to a lot of local producers that I had not met/worked with prior to the program.

What more do you hope to learn about in your area? I hope to continue to expand on my knowledge of day-to-day operations and challenges that are faced by local producers in my area and how our work as NRCS employees can have a positive impact on production agriculture in my area. Furthermore, I hope to put forward everything I have learned in the program and use it to better serve local producers.

What are you looking forward to in your other meetings/gatherings/learning and sharing sessions in the future? I am looking forward to soaking up the wealth of knowledge that Hayley and her family possess and are more than willing to share with me! I am very blessed to have been paired with such an amazing family as my Mentor(s) and I cannot thank them enough for all the experiences and great times, I look forward to many more in the future! 🚜

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The Honorable Mention Goes to You

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

It’s an election year, time to talk about politics, well at least elections.

Before coming to work for Farm Bureau, I’d gone nearly every year to Washington D.C. when I was part of the National Cotton Women’s Committee of the National Cotton Council. The once near-speechless awe I’d maintained for our political leaders had grown thin.

This change of perspective made me nervous. Had I become a cynic about politics? Or might my attitude be defined by a more pragmatic transformation?

One experience certainly helped. In 2007 I had an epiphany moment when joined with Arizona Farm Bureau’s D.C. delegation to meet our Congressional leaders.

In D.C. that year, I was separate from the group as I’d just left a gathering with American Farm Bureau’s Women’s Leadership Committee after giving a presentation. Heading the Farm Bureau delegation’s way, I ended up in Senator Jon Kyl’s office about 10 minutes ahead of the group. While I waited in the office, Senator Kyl walked in trailed by some of his staff.

“You must be with the Arizona Farm Bureau group,” Senator Kyl said, as he stuck out his hand to shake mine, noting my name badge. Then, he sat down next to me and we chatted for about five minutes. Flattered, I answered every question the Senator asked (a role reversal for my journalistic questioning of everyone else) and for a moment felt like we were simply two American citizens dreaming of the best for this country, not the Senator and the constituent haggling out the importance of our position on an issue. Jon Kyl didn’t act like a politician to me; he reflected his humanity, the unabashed “Joe, well Jon, Citizen.”

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey’s earlier appointment of Kyl to replace Senator John McCain generated cheers from me because of his statesman-like qualities. Having stepped down and with Martha McSally then in that Senate slot, it’s a reminder of the potential of all of us to serve. Thank you, Senator Kyl, for your service!

This leads me to reflect that all our elected officials start out as average American citizens before they become candidates for office and then serve in those honorable positions once elected. But at their core, they are simply everyday Americans trying to reflect the perspectives and needs of their constituents; some do this well, others need to be voted out when elections come around. By remaining grounded in this fact, we as advocates can exhibit the statesmanlike qualities of disagreeing with our elected officials agreeably as protocol dictates.

However, if money, time and intimidation were not a deterrent, would you be willing to run for a political office on the local, state or national level? A good chunk of our citizenry is well qualified to run for office. In fact, our system of government relies upon citizens who are willing to step up and participate in the public discourse and exchange of ideas that occur in our election system.

A candidate’s lack of “political” experience shouldn’t disqualify them. That’s fixable. The fact that we’re experiencing the day-to-day challenges of American life qualifies us. And for those of us that have gone through leadership training within the Farm Bureau family, we gain qualifications we thought we’d never have to possess.

The idea of political service should certainly not be discounted by those in Farm Bureau leadership. A core competency of ours is to develop leadership and advocacy skills if you get involved in Farm Bureau activities. In our own Arizona Legislature today, we can count a handful of legislators with farm backgrounds and grounded leadership that they credit the Farm Bureau with developing to develop. Arizona legislative Senator Sine Kerr wrote an entire editorial about this very fact.

But also remember that while serving in public office is a great way to have an impact, you do not have to run for office to make a difference. Support those candidates who share your perspective and will fight for your interests. Encourage your friends and those who share your views to do the same. Take the time to develop relationships with elected officials at all levels of government. As Farm Bureau members, we create numerous opportunities for you to meet your legislators.

And once the dust settles and the candidates are seated, we place the “Honorable” before their name. This is only the beginning of the hard work for you and me. They are elected by you and me to reflect the needs and perspectives of you and me, their constituents. Our engagement with our political leaders shouldn’t end after we vote them in office. It only just begins. Our involvement helps hold them accountable.

So, the next time you write to your representative because you’re staying engaged, certainly place the word “Honorable” before their name and title. Also, remember who gave them that honor.

Editor’s Note: Written some time ago, I pull this commentary out every once in a while, during election years to remind ourselves just how important our role is participating in this great country we call America. 🚗

Volunteer Leader Succession: A Success Story

By Christy Davis with contributions by Julie Murphree, the Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach team

Succession is not only important in agriculture on the farm or ranch but also in leadership. At the Arizona Farm Bureau, programs exist to train the next generation of leaders and encourage succession with county and state boards.



Shavan and Reed Flake, during Arizona Farm Bureau’s 2021 delegate session at the 100th Annual Meeting, began their involvement in Farm Bureau through the Young Farmer and Rancher program a few years back.

The two main programs in Arizona Farm Bureau include the Women’s Leadership Committee and the Young Farmer and Ranch (YF&R) program. Well-established programs, each one allows an individual to develop improved communication, media and leadership skills. Over the years, we’ve seen incredible gains in volunteer leadership contributions by many

of our farm and ranch leaders. We have seen in recent years how well this succession plan works, with many of the members who have graduated from the Young Farmers and Ranchers program or Women’s Leadership program and taken on leadership roles within their counties, in addition to giving them a seat on the Arizona Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Today, on the Arizona Farm Bureau State Board of directors of the 24 members, 18 were involved in the Young Farmers and Ranchers and/or women’s programs. The county Farm Bureau boards reflect even more of that succession, with many YF&R and women’s Leadership Committee members participating in leadership on their county board of directors.

One Recent Story

One recent success story is in Navajo County Farm Bureau where Reed Flake, whose family has been involved in Farm Bureau for generations and who was once a committee member on the state Young Farmers and Ranchers, is now Navajo County Farm Bureau President. Flake never thought of taking over as county president but when asked to step up he felt that it was his turn to serve and that after watching those around him, like his dad and his cousin, he was prepared to take on the task. Flake also says being a part of the YF&R program was also a good way to learn about the Farm Bureau and see how the organization operates on a national level and be able to bring those experiences back to the county that he now serves as president. 🚗



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