



## Lincoln High Snags Top Prize In TREASURE Forest Tag Contest

**W**ith 44 free "I'd Rather Be In The Woods" tags pre-ordered, Talladega County's Lincoln High School FFA chapter took home first place and \$500 in the recent Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA) tag giveaway contest.

Cherokee County's Sand Rock High School FFA chapter gave away 33 tags, snagging second place and \$300. The chapter also received \$100 from the Cherokee County Farmers Federation. In third place was Morgan County's Falkville High School FFA chapter, with 23 tags pre-ordered. It received \$200.

The winners were announced during National FFA Week Feb. 18-25.

Since January, FFA chapters statewide were encouraged to sign up family, friends and community members for ATFA's free automobile vanity tag.

This contest brought ATFA closer to its minimum tag order, which must be filled by May.

To order a free tag, visit [TREASUREforest.org](http://TREASUREforest.org). ■



### *A Letter From The President*

ATFA Members,

I wanted to take this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks to all who have supported the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association throughout our new license plate design campaign. Without your help, our great programs like Classroom in the Forest and area meetings would not be possible. To those already signed up for a free tag, thank you for your help in reaching our goal! To those who have not yet pre-ordered their free tag, I urge you to do so. We are nearly at both our goal and our deadline. Please reach out to your family, friends and neighbors; any tag sign-up helps us. We are very close to hitting our goal, and I would love to reach it with time to spare. With your continued support, I know we will push forward.

As a reminder, these license plates help generate funds for our association to host educational programs for both adults and schoolchildren. Last year, we reached over 4,000 students and countless adult private landowners. Many of the values and benefits we all cherish, such as clean air and water, wildlife, sustainable timber management, hard work and many other things, are passed on and instilled in the young people we reach every year. As for adult landowners, we help increase the marketing value of their properties and timber and give them the latest information to best manage their land and wildlife populations.

I'd also like to thank the FFA chapters who competed in the free tag giveaway. Congratulations to the Lincoln High School FFA chapter for taking home first place. We appreciate everyone who ordered tags through this contest.

Thank you for everything you do to support the ATFA.

Sincerely,

Billy Joe Johnson



Johnson

Top from left are Lincoln Jr. High FFA Advisor Paige Siegler, Lincoln Jr. High FFA President Skyler Hickman, Lincoln High FFA President Evan Dulaney and Lincoln High FFA Advisor Amy Stephens; middle from left are Sand Rock High School Principal Ben East, ATFA President Billy Joe Johnson and Cherokee County Farmers Federation President John Bert East; bottom from left are Falkville FFA Forestry Judging Team members Austin Orr, Bryce Brian and Briar Kimbrell and Advisor Ashley Holmes.

## State Legislature Considers Forestry, Wildlife Bills

The Alabama Legislature convened in Montgomery Feb. 7 and got back to work on behalf of their constituents. At press time, two bills affecting private landowners, forestry and wildlife were introduced. The session's last possible day is May 22.

**HB 157**, sponsored by Rep. Kyle South (R-Fayette), was introduced to provide the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) a supplemental appropriation. This money comes from the Emergency Fire Fund, a designated account the AFC can tap into for firefighting purposes.

Alabama suffered an extremely hot and dangerous fire season last fall, and fighting wildfires statewide strained the AFC's budget. The proposed supplemental funding — and other means — would sustain the AFC's budget until the end of the fiscal year Sept. 30, 2017. This bill passed the House Ways and Means General Fund Committee and now goes to the full House for a vote.

**HB 184**, sponsored by Rep. Jack Williams (R-Wilmer), would allow hunting of whitetail deer and feral hogs over bait. This bill removes current restrictions of hunting these animals over baited fields, but requires a \$15 annual fee — similar to a duck stamp — paid to the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for each feeder. Hunters would be required pay the fee to hunt over bait in Alabama.

The bill passed the House in a 69-18 vote Feb. 28 and moved to the Senate.

Sign up for weekly legislative updates from the Alabama Farmers Federation at [tinyurl.com/CapitolConnection](http://tinyurl.com/CapitolConnection). ■

## Building Communication Skills



*New TREASURE Forest board members learned communication skills and ideas during a board orientation Feb. 8 in Montgomery. Alabama Farmers Federation Ag Communications Specialist Marlee Moore gave tips for shooting photographs and video. She encouraged members to send in story ideas and event photos for newsletters, social media, the website and potentially the Federation's Neighbors magazine. From left are Moore and TREASURE Forest Executive Director Rick Oates. Board members also learned about the organization's history, status as a nonprofit and educational opportunities during the meeting.*

SAVE THE DATE

ATFA Annual Meeting  
Oct. 26-28  
Muscle Shoals

Be sure to "Like" Alabama  
TREASURE Forest  
Association!



## Game Check's First Year A Success

As the state's first deer season with a mandatory Game Check program ended, reported deer harvest numbers were encouraging, according to Alabama's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

Chuck Sykes, DCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries director, said though compliance numbers need to increase, he was pleased with the first year's results.

As of Feb. 28, the Game Check program reported 45,542 bucks and 36,854 does were harvested. An independent study by DCNR staff reveals 35 percent of hunters used Game Check. They estimate 122,350 bucks and 101,000 does — 223,350 total deer — were harvested during the 2016-2017 hunting season in Alabama.

Forty-six percent of hunters reported through the smartphone app, while 30 percent used the phone system and 24 percent checked in at OutdoorAlabama.com.

The Conservation Advisory Board chose last year to make the Game Check program mandatory for all deer and turkey harvested in Alabama beginning with the 2016-2017 hunting season. Failure to comply is subject to a fine up to \$500.

The Game Check program is easy. Simply download the app, and answer three questions — the animal's sex, the county in which it was harvested and whether the animal was hunted on public or private land.

Don't forget — the Game Check program is also mandatory for turkey season.

Find more information at [OutdoorAlabama.com](http://OutdoorAlabama.com). ■



Check out [TREASUREforest.org](http://TREASUREforest.org) for more information about the organization.



## Upcoming Events

- March 30** ATFA Southeast Area Meeting  
Presentation by USDA Wildlife Services on feral swine  
Ozark  
Contact William Green at [wmgreen@alfafarmers.org](mailto:wmgreen@alfafarmers.org)
- April 11** ATFA Central Area Meeting  
Presentation by John Matulia on property value  
Prattville  
Contact William Green at [wmgreen@alfafarmers.org](mailto:wmgreen@alfafarmers.org)
- April 11** Alabama Forest Owner's Association Annual Meeting  
Columbiana  
Contact William Green at [wmgreen@alfafarmers.org](mailto:wmgreen@alfafarmers.org)
- April 27** ATFA Central Area Meeting  
Presentation on predator management  
Auburn  
Contact William Green at [wmgreen@alfafarmers.org](mailto:wmgreen@alfafarmers.org)
- August 3-6** Alabama Farmers Federation Commodity Conference  
Birmingham  
Contact Rick Oates at [roates@alfafarmers.org](mailto:roates@alfafarmers.org)
- October 26-28** ATFA Annual Meeting  
Muscle Shoals  
Contact William Green at [wmgreen@alfafarmers.org](mailto:wmgreen@alfafarmers.org)

## Forest Firefighters Recognized



*The Clay County Forestry Planning Committee (CCFPC) and TREASURE Forest Association recently recognized Alabama Forestry Commission employees Josh Benefield and Nick Jordan for protecting property of forest landowners and homeowners during rampant, drought-induced wildfire last fall. They and other woodland, volunteer and professional firefighters across Alabama worked long, hard hours to ensure minimal fire damage. From left are Benefield, CCFPC President Norphlett McCollum and Jordan.*

## BOARD SPOTLIGHT GETTING TO KNOW Billy Blackwell

**B**illy Blackwell has almost 20 years experience with TREASURE Forest and served as ATFA president in 2013. Billy worked for the City of Ozark for 42 years, including two terms as mayor. He and his wife, Berta, have been married 44 years and live on a TREASURE Forest near Ozark they co-own with his two sisters. They have two daughters and two grandchildren. Blackwell calls their TREASURE Forest the glue that holds the family together as his sisters return to Dale County each Thanksgiving to discuss the past year's successes and future plans. The Blackwells attend First United Methodist Church in Ozark.



### 1) Why did you get involved with the ATFA?

After receiving our certification in 1999, former Dale County TREASURE Forest President Jack Reynolds invited me to participate in the ATFA. I was looking for reforestation and prescribed burning education and realized the ATFA was the best source for that information.

### 2) What's the ATFA's most important function?

Education. Classroom in the Forest, landowner tours and seminars are ways our volunteers show their love of the forest to others. When landowners share the fruits of their work, many people learn the importance of forestry to our economy and environment.

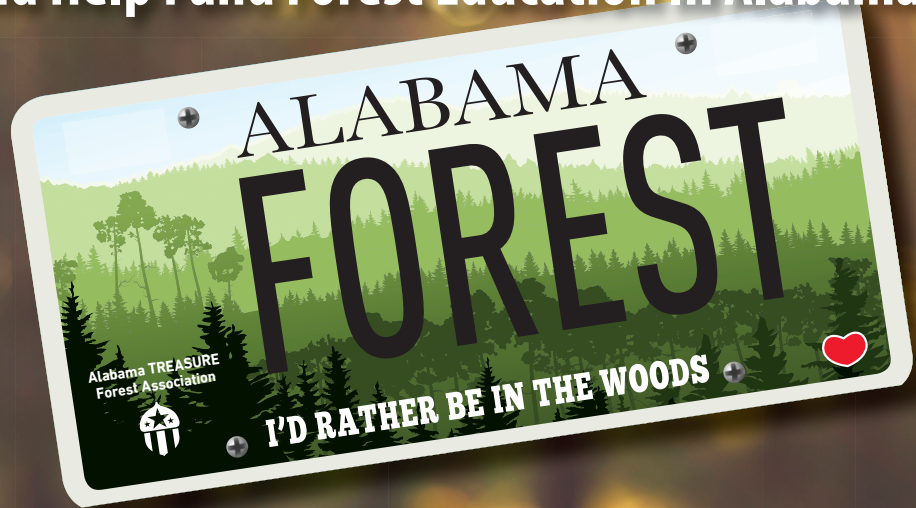
## Past Moody Award Winners Receive TREASURE Forest Print



Former Bill Moody Award winners received prints depicting an ideal TREASURE Forest at the Alabama Natural Resources Council Outreach Symposium and Awards Banquet in Tuscaloosa Feb. 17. They were 2004 winner Shirley Fortenberry, who won with husband Gary; 2009 winners Roy and Becky Jordan; and Randy Gilmore, who won in 2012 with wife Dale. Other previous winners and 2016 winners Gene and Jana Renfroe received prints at ATFA's annual meeting in Atmore last October.

# GET THIS TAG FREE!

## And Help Fund Forest Education In Alabama



For more information, visit [TREASUREforest.org](http://TREASUREforest.org) or email William Green at [WMGreen@alfafarmers.org](mailto:WMGreen@alfafarmers.org).

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