

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY & AFRICAN AMERICAN LAND RETENTION

Newsletter



Welcome back!

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

This issue of the Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention (SFLR) newsletter features our partner, the Roanoke Electric Cooperative[CS1] . Roanoke's SFLR Project works to restore and conserve threatened forest land by increasing forest-owner income and land asset values. Initially, the program focused on woodland owners in the seven counties that comprise the cooperative's service area. Thanks to additional funding, the program expanded its reach in 2022 to serve additional counties in Eastern North Carolina.

In addition to its services to landowners, Roanoke's SFLR Project engages youth and young adults in advancing sustainable forestry on their family lands and provides role models and mentors for future natural resource professionals.

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- CONGRATULATIONS, ALTON PERRY!
- YOUTH STEAM SUMMIT



Feature Story



**REC Sustainable Forestry
& Land Retention Project**

Unique Collaboration Brings Landowner and Graduate Students Together



Alton Perry, Director of Roanoke Electric Cooperative's Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention (SFLR) Project

James Roger Peterson's farm in Northampton County, North Carolina, had been in his family since he was a child. Through the years, the farm passed from one hand to another until he purchased it at an auction in 1984. In 2016, soon after he enrolled in Roanoke's SFLR Project, his 152-acre farm became the site for a novel partnership between Mr. Peterson, Roanoke's SFLR Project, graduate students at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, and the North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS).

The alliance began when Sari Palmroth, Ph.D., Associate Research Professor in the Division of Environmental Science and Policy at the Nicholas School, approached me about how we might work together to help disadvantaged landowners. Mr. Peterson immediately came to mind. After meeting Mr. Peterson, Dr. Palmroth and her students embraced the idea of working with SFLR and Mr. Peterson in developing a forest management plan, incorporating real-world experience into the graduate silviculture prescriptions course she teaches.

From there, her five-student team began developing the plan with and for Mr. Peterson. They met with him to determine his objectives and goals, then surveyed and analyzed his property. In doing so, the students distinguished seven different tracts—with varying ecological characteristics—within his property. Each tract was evaluated using three scenarios: no management, meeting landowner objectives, and achieving maximum timber values.

The resulting 50-year plan proposed measures for which tracts could generate continuing revenue now and in the future. In addition to timber management, the plan incorporated other measures, including wetland preservation that would enhance the property's wildlife habitats. As the final step, Dr. Palmroth, the students and I met with Mr. Peterson to review the plan, tailor it to his desires, and chart a course for its execution.

Since implementing the plan, Mr. Peterson has conducted a final harvest of existing trees and undertaken significant reforestation. The ultimate goal is to help him and his family ensure that his land remains healthy, productive and sustainable for generations. Regarding his experience, Mr. Peterson says, "They gave me a good plan to work on and work with, and advised me on a lot of things that I didn't know in the beginning. And I trusted them."

Since our inaugural partnership with Mr. Peterson in 2016, Dr. Palmroth, her students, and Duke University's graduate program staff have worked with us in assisting a dozen other landowners. At Duke, the program has become a part of the Nicholas School's master's program curriculum, fortifying the connection between young foresters and their forestland neighbors in North Carolina.



They gave me a good plan to work on and work with, and advised me on a lot of things that I didn't know in the beginning. And I trusted them."

Mr. Peterson

Site Spotlight

Hulan Johnston Family, Roanoke's SFLR Project, and Partners Developing Carbon Farm Plan



Steve Kerekes, SFLRP Communications Consultant

In 2018, Mr. Hulan Johnston and Heirs of the Richard Wills Family Farm in Halifax County began participating in Roanoke's SFLR Project. Today, the Johnston family, in partnership with Roanoke's SFLR Project, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), North Carolina's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the state's Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and county Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), is implementing a Carbon Farm Plan. The objective is to increase the adaptive capacity

of the family's land by enhancing the receipt, storage and release of carbon in the soil.

Alton Perry, Director of Roanoke's SFLR Project, says the work will raise awareness among socially disadvantaged landowners and farmers about the benefits of carbon farm planning. This includes education on soil health and carbon storage principles, carbon mitigation markets and programs, and the implementation of conservation practices.

Along with the Johnston family and Mr. Perry, the planning team includes NRCS' Terry Best, Halifax SWCD Supervisor Zeb Winslow, Brunswick SWCD Director Elliot Swain, Non-Point Source Planning Coordinator for the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Allie Dinwiddie; and USDA's Agriculture Research Services' scientist Alan Franzluebbbers, Ph.D.

Plan activities to date have included training, plan review and plan revision through the California Carbon Institute, as well as the tools and resources needed to develop a carbon farm plan, farm site visits and soil sampling, and a



Above: Hulan Johnston family of the Richard Wills Family Farm

first draft of the plan for the Johnston/Will Heirs' Farm. Elements within the farm's plan include creating crop and grazing rotations and establishing silvopasture to provide shade for the cattle and goats on the farm and wildlife in the forested land around the pastures.

Mr. Perry says that in addition to technical assistance with implementation of conservation practices to maximize grazing forage, improve soil health, and sequester carbon, the carbon farm plan uses NRCS's COMET-Farm Tool. "This online tool uses the input of conservation practices and determines the amount of carbon removed from the atmosphere on a yearly basis and into the future. Therefore, the landowner sees the importance and impact of implementing conservation practices on the land," he adds.

The Johnston/Will Heirs' Farm was recently the setting for a field day featuring the pilot Carbon Farm Planning Project. The event provided attendees the chance to learn about conservation practices and the availability of technical resources that can help in planning, financing and implementing these practices.

Field-day attendees included local farmers, NRCS and SWCD staff and other partners. Many attendees expressed their excitement about the program and the on-site demonstrations showcased. Local landowners appreciated the chance to learn from their peers and through the diverse presentations delivered by natural resource professionals, such as Dr. Franzluebbbers. The presentation highlighted his work investigating the carbon sequestration potential of different best management practices (BMPs) and validating these practices. Three landowners from the field day have since reached out to SFLR Project staff to express their eagerness to learn more and incorporate Carbon Farm Planning principles and BMPs into their operations.

The team has enjoyed this collaboration in learning about the Carbon Farm Planning process and the opportunity to participate with the Johnston family in the pilot project. Mr. Perry adds, "This experience has given us a basis for further exploring ways to incorporate common planning elements from Southeastern operations into the carbon farm planning tools that were originally developed to meet planning needs in western states. Armed with this information, we can offer this unique planning tool to our assistance programs for historically underserved farmers in North Carolina."



Above: Carbon Farm Plan Team



CONGRATULATIONS

Alton Perry Named Forest Conservationist of the Year by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation

In July, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation announced the winners of its 58th Annual Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards. Alton Perry, director of the Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention (SFLR) program at Roanoke Electric Cooperative, is the recipient of Forest Conservationist of the Year.

Growing up on a family farm in Franklin County, Mr. Perry learned first-hand the importance of thriving food systems, protecting biodiversity, and conserving natural resources. That understanding and passion for conservation and forest management led him down a career path of helping other family forest owners in diverse communities become successful stewards of their own natural resources.

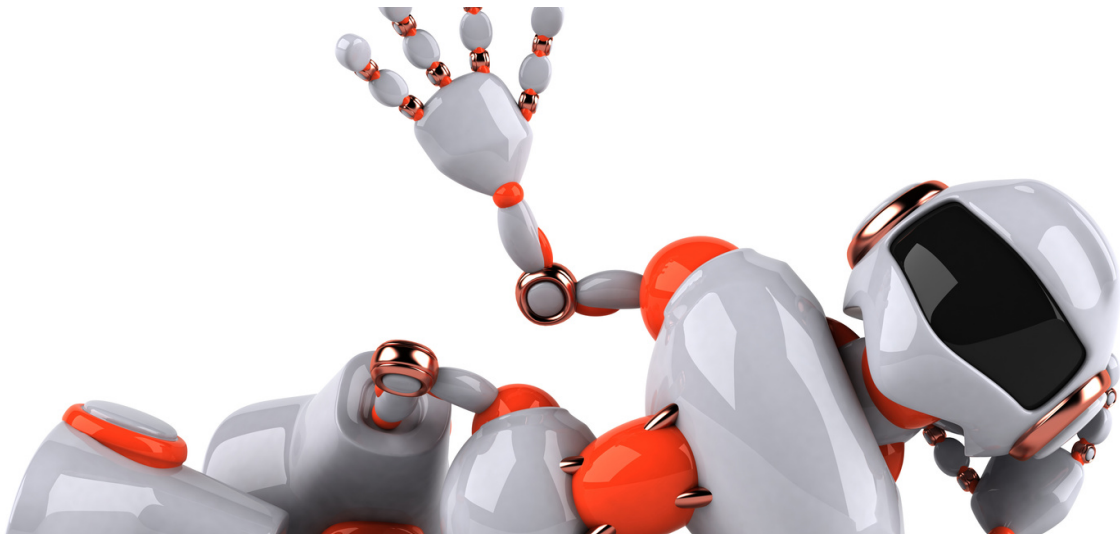
As director of the SFLR program, Mr. Perry helps Black families and landowners in 13 counties in and around Roanoke Electric Cooperative's service area manage their woodlands to enhance their quality of life and build family legacies. He also serves on the boards of several conservation organizations, including the North Carolina Tree Farm Program, The Conservation Trust of North Carolina, and member of the SFLR Network leadership team.

While leading Conservation Trust for North Carolina's land protection committee over the last seven years, Mr. Perry supported efforts to adopt a "whole communities" approach and applied a racial equity lens to land protection and stewardship programming.

Alton is retired from the North Carolina Forest Service. He served in Wake County from 1982 until 2006 and served as Outreach Coordinator in the state office in Raleigh from 2006 until his retirement in 2012.

"For nearly 60 years, the awards program has been bringing together conservationists from across the state working to protect wildlife, air, water, and land. This year's conservation heroes are land stewardship champions, water advocates, and leaders in preserving unique ecosystems," said T. Edward Nickens, awards committee chair.

Nickens added, "The annual awards are a chance to highlight positive wildlife conservation efforts around the state while inspiring others to become more active in protecting North Carolina's natural resources for future generations."



Roanoke Electric Cooperative's Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention (SFLR) Project Hosts STEAM Summit

On July 29, 2022, Roanoke Electric Cooperative's SFLR Project held its third Youth Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Math (STEAM) Summit at the Rocky Mount Event Center in North Carolina. The summit attracted more than 75 rising and current high school students, their parents, school counselors, educators and youth leaders, and highlighted the numerous opportunities in STEAM fields.

During the day-long event, students had the opportunity to delve into STEAM-related activities, including a Robox Sumo session on robotics technology. Through the interactive session, the youth engaged in teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, engineering and design, and more. Other presentations, discussions and workshops focused on agriculture, renewable natural resources, water quality and the environment.

Students visited with representatives of forest industry companies, state and federal agencies, colleges and universities to explore education and career pathways, such as Elizabeth City State University's drone aviation program.

They were also greeted by STEAM professionals who received their academic degrees at North Carolina institutions, some of whom had participated in earlier SFLR STEAM Summits when they were high school students.

Beyond a Saturday full of activities, attendees were treated to door prizes and lunch as well as 90 minutes, to enjoy, at no cost, the Rocky Mount Event Center's recreation area featuring an arcade, a rope course and an indoor rock-climbing wall.

In addition to Roanoke Electric's SFLR Project and the Roanoke Center, summit sponsors and partners included Black Family Land Trust Inc., Center for Energy Education, CoBank, Elizabeth City State University, Enviva Inc., North Carolina A&T State University Cooperative Extension, North Carolina Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Southern Bank, North Carolina State University College of Natural Resources, and the University of Mount Olive.



Great job on the STEAM Workshop. The kids were really engaged, and it was a great opportunity to talk to students, teachers, and parents.

Thanks again for including us!

--Chris Brown, Mid-Atlantic Senior Community Relations Manager - Communications, Enviva Inc.



Above: Robox Sumo Session at the 2022 Youth STEAM Summit. The purpose of this Youth Summit session is to familiarize students with robotics technology. Through Robox-Sumo, youth learn teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, engineering and design and more. Participants will work in teams and use the engineering design process to design, build and test their robots.



(Elizabeth City State University) - College and Natural Resources Professional Engagement session - Students visit with representatives of forest industry companies, state and federal agencies, colleges and universities to explore education and career pathways.



I liked how they taught us about what colleges offered and how they engaged in what we like."

-Student who attended the Youth STEAM Summit



Very informative, spot-on career and college advice."

-Student who attended the Youth STEAM Summit



It helps me find colleges that are a better fit for my major or minor."

-Student who attended the Youth STEAM Summit