

# Alabama Farmers Federation

## Alabama TREASURE Forest Association



*Joins*

*By Debra Davis  
Alabama Farmers Federation*

A statewide group focused on improving Alabama forestlands recently voted to affiliate with the Alabama Farmers Federation, the state's largest farm organization. Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA) members approved the merger at the organization's annual conference in Ozark, October 4-5. The affiliation became effective immediately.

With similar mission statements, merging the groups seemed natural, said ATFA President Billy Blackwell, who also serves as mayor of Ozark. "By being a member of the ATFA and the Farmers Federation, forest landowners will have a more prominent voice," Blackwell said. "This affiliation will help our members and our ability to market forestry as a viable, renewable industry on a state, national, and international level."

Blackwell said ATFA would continue its education programs, noting affiliation with the Farmers Federation will enhance its ability to grow county chapters. He praised leaders of both groups for negoti-

ating the affiliation. "Working on this partnership with ATFA board members and officials of the Alabama Farmers Federation has been a rewarding experience," Blackwell said. "We could not have had a better working relationship."

Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell said the Federation welcomes ATFA members. "Many TREASURE Forest Association members also are Farmers Federation members," said Parnell. "This affiliation will strengthen efforts to serve forest landowners throughout the state. Agriculture, forestry, and related industries contributed \$70.4 billion to Alabama's economy. It's important we work to keep the forestry industry strong and growing in Alabama."

The Alabama Farmers Federation represents 17 Alabama-grown commodities, including timber, which is produced in every county.

Alabama Farmers Federation Forestry Division Director Rick Oates will serve as a director of the ATFA, which will be a separate association under the Federation

structure. "The Farmers Federation and the ATFA both have a strong history of representing forest landowners," Oates said. "This merger will increase opportunities to spread the message of good forestry to both rural and urban communities."

The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association was formed in 1991 and has about 3,600 members. The Alabama Farmers Federation is the state's largest farm organization with more than 365,000 members.†

For more information about Alabama Farmers Federation ~ Forestry Division or ATFA, contact Rick Oates at [ROates@AlfaFarmers.org](mailto:ROates@AlfaFarmers.org) or (334) 613-4305.