

## 2017 Mid-South Ag & Environmental Law Conference Speaker Biographies

**Christy Barte** is a Springfield native and a graduate of Springfield High School. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Tennessee at Martin with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She attended the law school at the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law. While in law school, she was a member of *Tennessee Journal of Practice and Procedure*, and authored *Anastoff v. United States: Precedence of Unpublished Opinions*.

After graduation, Christy began practicing law in her hometown of Springfield at the Law Offices of Larry D. Wilks under the guidance of the late Larry D. Wilks. Her practice focused primarily in the areas of Real Estate Law, Contract Law, Estate Planning, Probate and Social Security Disability. In 2004, Batson Nolan opened an office in Springfield and Christy has managed and grown that office into a thriving law practice. She is a member of the Robertson County (Tennessee) Bar Association, Montgomery County (Tennessee) Bar Association and the Tennessee Bar Association. Since joining Batson Nolan as an associate, Christy's practice has been primarily people-focused, but she also enjoys representing Corporate, Banking and Governmental Entities. She also has an interest and forte for Agricultural Law.

**Vance W. Cook** is an attorney with his office in Princeton, Kentucky. His practice is concentrated in the areas of estate planning and administration, taxation and business planning, real estate and 1031 Exchanges, Medicaid and elder law, and agricultural law. Mr. Cook received a B. S. degree in finance from Western Kentucky University in 1988, graduated from the University of Kentucky College of Law in 1991, and received his LL.M. in Taxation from the University of Florida in 1992.

Mr. Cook frequently speaks on issues including Medicaid and estate planning for elderly clients, the use of wills and trusts in estate planning, and the federal estate and gift tax laws. Mr. Cook has also been a speaker at the KBA continuing legal education program (Kentucky Law Update) in Gibbertsville, Kentucky presenting topics including Medicaid and planning for elderly clients (2011), recent changes in legislation concerning trust administration and probate practice, and a summary of the Kentucky Inheritance tax laws.

**Mr. Greg Cole** joined the Farm Credit System more than 29 years ago as a student intern with what was then known as the Farm Credit Bank of St. Louis. During his tenure, Greg has served in various roles and was named as President and Chief Executive Officer of AgHeritage Farm Credit Services by the Board of Directors in April 2008. Prior to being named CEO, Greg was the Chief Operating Officer for AgHeritage. Greg earned a Bachelor of Science of Agriculture Business and Economics at Arkansas State University and is a graduate of LSU Graduate School of Banking. AgHeritage Farm Credit Services is a cooperative lending institution with managed assets in excess of \$1.1 Billion that services the financial needs of the agricultural community in 24 counties throughout Central and Southeast Arkansas. AgHeritage Farm

Credit Services is part of the national Farm Credit System with assets in excess of \$260 billion and is one of four Farm Credit associations in Arkansas with total assets in excess of \$2.8 billion. Farm Credit is the largest single lender to agriculture in the U.S. and in the state of Arkansas. Its mission is to serve Agriculture and Rural America.

**Jeff Peterson** focuses his practice on commercial transactions, creditor's rights, bankruptcy, and agricultural and food law. He is a frequent speaker on agriculture and finance topics and is the current chair of the American Bar Association Agricultural and Agribusiness Financing Subcommittee. Jeff is co-managing attorney of the St. Cloud office and co-chair of the Commercial Financial Services Practice Group.

Jeff previously practiced law in the Kansas City area. He has a background in agribusiness, working for a large agricultural cooperative as a commodity market analyst in Minneapolis and Kansas City prior to graduating from law school.

**Grant Ballard** is an attorney with the Banks Law Firm who concentrates his practice in the area of agricultural law. Grant understands the challenges that modern agricultural producers face and is familiar with the legal issues that may arise on a farm operation. Grant received his Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Business from the University of Arkansas, where he also completed his law degree and LL.M. (Master's) in Agricultural Law. Grant handles cases involving crop damages, crop insurance litigation, federal farm programs, and environmental regulation of agriculture.

**Robert Serio** is a partner of Serio & Bishop, a firm located in Clarendon, Arkansas that focuses largely on representation of agricultural and agribusiness clients. Robert represents farm clients throughout the United States, which includes a focus on farm business entity structure, USDA administrative appeals, federal farm programs and other Farm Bill matters, and estate planning. He is a longtime member of the American Agricultural Law Association and recently served as a member of the Association's Board of Directors. Robert is a nationally preeminent attorney regarding business entity structure and federal farm program payments in the southeast United States and beyond.

**Kerry McGrath** is an Associate with Hunton & Williams LLP. She has extensive experience with permitting and litigation under the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental statutes. She represents groups from a wide variety of industry sectors, including utilities, mining, oil and gas, renewables, agriculture, consumer products, housing and development, and related trade associations and industry coalitions. Kerry has significant experience with federal litigation, drafting comments on administrative rulemakings, and counseling clients on compliance with regulatory requirements.

**Catherine M. Janasie** is Senior Research Counsel with the National Sea Grant Law Center (NSGLC) at The University of Mississippi School of Law where she provides legal and policy analyses to organizations and government entities on ocean, coastal, and natural resources issues and teaches environmental law classes, including Natural Resources Law, Water Law, and Agricultural Law. She also serves as the Editor of the Sea Grant Law & Policy Journal and as a Vice Chair on the Marine Resources Committee of the American Bar Association's Section on Environment, Energy, and Resources. Prior to joining the NSGLC, Cathy received her LL.M. in Environmental & Natural Resources Law from Lewis & Clark Law School and worked for the National Wildlife Refuge System, Division of Realty of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Previously, she practiced law in New York, NY at the law firm of Carter Ledyard & Milburn LLP. Cathy received her J.D. and B.A. from Rutgers University.

**Peggy Kirk Hall** is an assistant professor and field specialist in agricultural and resource law. Hall is a graduate of The Ohio State University (B.S., M.S., Natural Resource Policy) and the University of Wyoming College of Law (J.D.), where she served on the Land & Water Law Review. She is a Past President and Board Member of the American Agricultural Law Association; Past Chair of the Ohio State Bar Association Agricultural Law Committee and served as an Advisory Board Member for the National Agricultural Law Center. Hall currently teaches Agribusiness Law in the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University and directs research and outreach projects for OSU's Agricultural & Resource Law Program.

**Ross Pifer** is a Clinical Law Professor at Penn State Law where he teaches agricultural law and serves as Director of the Agricultural Law Resource Reference Center. Ross has presented widely throughout Pennsylvania, as well as nationally and internationally, on shale gas and agricultural law topics to audiences comprised of judges, attorneys, legislators, government officials, landowners, and the general public. His research interests are shale gas development and the interface between agricultural and residential development as well as GMO labeling laws. He served as an attorney with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of General Counsel, and has advised military personnel and commands in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Great Britain, and Germany while on active duty with the U.S. Army JAG Corps at the Netherlands Law Center. Among other publications, Ross has written an article on GMO labeling to be published in the Penn State Law Review. Ross earned an LL.M. from the University of Arkansas School of Law Agricultural & Food Law Program, and is an active member of the American Agricultural Law Association.

**Harrison Pittman** serves as Director of the National Agricultural Law Center, the nation's leading source of agricultural and food law research and information ([www.nationaglawcenter.org](http://www.nationaglawcenter.org)). The Center is also the lead institution for the Agricultural & Food Law Consortium, a first of its kind 4-university

partnership designed to enhance and expand the delivery of objective and timely agricultural and food law research and information to the nation's agricultural community. Harrison received his Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law, after attending Mississippi State University and graduating from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He then earned an LL.M. in Agricultural Law from the University of Arkansas School of Law's Graduate Program in Agricultural Law.

**Rusty Rumley** serves as Senior Counsel at the National Agricultural Law Center. He graduated magna cum laude from Oklahoma State University in 2004 with a B.S. in AgriBusiness and in 2007 earned his *juris doctor* from the University of Oklahoma. While attending the University of Oklahoma he was a member of the American Indian Law Review and worked part-time for Oklahoma Farm Bureau Legal Foundation. After law school, Rusty earned his LL.M in Agricultural Law at the University of Arkansas, and is licensed to practice law in the state of Oklahoma. Additionally, he has co-taught a course titled "Animals and Agricultural Production, Law and Policy" several times at the University of Oklahoma College of Law and most recently at the University of Nebraska College of Law and teaches an introduction to agricultural law course through the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, & Life Sciences at the University of Arkansas. His primary areas of interest are in estate planning, taxation, business organizations, landowner liability, leasing and agritourism.