

## Sixth Annual Mid-South Agricultural & Environmental Law Conference

### Speaker Biographies

**Keynote Speaker:** *Stephen Vaden is the General Counsel for the United States Department of Agriculture. Prior to his nomination, he served on the Trump administration's USDA landing team. He previously practiced law at Patton Boggs and Jones Day, specializing in litigation at the appellate level, election law, and administrative law. Vaden has a B.A. from Vanderbilt University and a J.D. from Yale Law School. He clerked for Julia Smith Gibbons of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and for Samuel H. Mays Jr. of the United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee.*



**Fred Clark** is Senior Counsel for the Senate Agricultural Committee. Before that, since 2015, Fred helped lead global missions as a volunteer at his local church. Prior to that, he worked for more than 10 years with Cornerstone Government Affairs as general counsel and managing partner, representing commodity, food, finance, and international entities. Fred served as counsel to the PMA Group for three years. For five years, he was president of Clark & Muldoon, a law firm specializing in agriculture, trade, and finance. Fred served for 10 years as staff in the U.S. House of Representatives, including eight years with the Agriculture Committee, participating extensively in the writing of the 1985 and 1990 farm bills, the Ag Credit Act of 1987, and the Futures Trading Practices Act of 1992. Raised in San Jose, Calif., Fred served as FFA State Treasurer. Fred earned a B.S. in Agricultural Business Management from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and a Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center.

**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.

**Brandon Davis**, a partner at Phelps Dunbar LLP in New Orleans, LA, practices in the areas of labor and employment and business, employment-based and family-based immigration. His employment litigation practice includes representing employers in the defense of employment related claims, alleging retaliation, discrimination and workplace harassment under federal and state statutes. He also handles EEOC charges and other administrative complaints through the administrative and judicial process. He has also represented clients on a variety of human resource and risk management issues, and has assisted employers with implementing effective strategies and labor solutions. Mr. Davis also has an active litigation practice which includes litigation involving class actions, unfair trade practices, non-competition disputes, trade secrets disputes, contract disputes, wrongful termination and employment discrimination, state and federal wage and hour litigation and various commercial

litigation matters. In this regard, Mr. Davis primarily represents clients in the oil and gas, agriculture, technology, health care and engineering industries.

**Shannon Ferrell** is currently an Associate Professor in the Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics, where he specializes in Agricultural Law. He grew up on a cattle and wheat operation in Western Oklahoma, and obtained his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Agricultural Economics from OSU before obtaining his Juris Doctorate from the Oklahoma City University School of Law with endorsements in Estate Planning and Business and Financial Services Law. Shannon spent a number of years in private practice, focusing on agricultural, environmental, energy, and corporate law, before joining OSU in the summer of 2007. As a member of the Department of Agricultural Economics, Shannon holds an extension and teaching appointment. Since joining Oklahoma State University, he has provided over 300 extension seminars and workshops throughout North America with a cumulative audience in excess of nearly 19,000 while authoring over fifty extension publications, including serving as lead author on the Farm Transition Workbook. His extension activities encompass all areas of agricultural law, and he also teaches the agricultural law courses at both Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma College of Law.

**Stephen L. Gershner**, with Davidson Law Firm in Little Rock, AR, finds that helping clients avoid problems and solve legal issues to problems to particularly rewarding. Since beginning his practice in 1978, Steve has had the good fortune to have represented lenders, borrowers, creditors, debtors, bankruptcy trustees, creditor committees, contractors, developers, farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, distributors, automobile dealers, farm implement dealers, marine dealers, hotel and restaurant operators, landfill operators, insurers and insureds.

**Prescott Martin** is Senior Counsel for the House Agriculture Committee. A North Carolina native, Martin holds an undergraduate degree from George Washington University and a law degree from the University of North Carolina School of Law. He is licensed to practice law in Washington, D.C., and worked for the American Sugar Alliance during consideration of the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills.

**Jim Noles**, a partner at Barze Taylor Noles Lowther LLC in Birmingham, AL, teams with his clients to help them achieve their corporate or governmental goals and objectives while complying with the increasingly complex and challenging requirements of modern-day environmental law and regulation. Prior to joining with his colleagues to found Barze Taylor Noles Lowther, LLC, Jim worked for two decades at a major Southern law firm, where he counseled and assisted clients on issues arising from brownfields redevelopment, environmental due diligence, landfill siting, environmental justice, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), wetlands permitting, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**Michael O'Neal** is the Deputy General Counsel at GreenStone Farm Credit Services, which is headquartered in East Lansing, Michigan and covers all of Michigan and northeast Wisconsin. In his role as Deputy General Counsel, Michael provides legal services to the Risk Asset, Credit and Lending departments. He also advises management on corporate and business legal matters. Before joining GreenStone in 2014, Michael was a partner at the law firm of Warner Norcross & Judd in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he represented banks, financial institutions and other commercial businesses in the areas of commercial transactions, compliance, creditors' rights and bankruptcy. Michael graduated from Central Michigan University and has a law degree from Indiana University.