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SOURCE: WEATHER.GOV

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NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

– SPORTS –

Cold Springs earns 43-39 win over Appalachian; Lady Eagles dominate, 78-22

» PAGE 4

Remembering former sheriff Wendell Roden

Staff Reports
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Former Cullman County Sheriff George Wendell Roden, 88, passed away Dec. 27, 2024. His funeral was held Dec. 30, with many local law enforcement and other departments turning out to pay their respects.

On Dec. 31, the Wallace State Police Department posted to social media, "Yesterday, officers from the Wallace State Police Department had the honor of joining the Cullman County Sheriff's Office, ALEA, Madison County Sheriff's Office, and several of our local fire departments in the funeral of former Cullman County Sheriff Wendell Roden."

Roden served as Cullman County sheriff from 1978-1990, after serving with the Cullman Police Department beginning in 1965. » PAGE 2



Wendell Roden in an undated photo »

WALLACE STATE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Christkindlmarkt 2024: 'A truly magical event'



SHERRY BROWN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

One of the many artisan booths that surrounded the 2024 Cullman Christkindlmarkt

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — The 2024 Cullman Christkindlmarkt brought holiday cheer to downtown Cullman, setting new records and solidifying its place as a premier seasonal event.

Nathan Anderson, executive director of Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism, reflected on the event's success and shared plans for its future.

"This year's Christkindlmarkt significantly outpaced last year, with major improvements in the market's duration, food variety and merchandise offerings," he said.

"We added five additional days of operations and introduced extended hours on Thursdays to give seniors a less crowded time to visit. This year, our goal was to elevate the whole family experience with a broader range of attractions, food options and entertainment, ensuring enjoyment for everyone."

The event welcomed over 300,000 attendees from 45 states, including visitors from as far away as Alaska.

"The expansive draw of our market highlights Cullman's emerging status as a premier holiday destination," Anderson said.

Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs shared his appreciation for the teamwork and dedication that made the event such a success.

"As mayor and on behalf of the city council, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the parks and recreation department and all City departments whose collaboration and dedication made this year's Christkindlmarkt an outstanding success," he said.

"Together, we have created an atmosphere that not only brings joy to our community, but also attracts visitors from across » PAGE 8

Marine Resources seeks fisheries input from public



ADCNR

Dena Thornton shows off a huge 11.5-pound sheepshead caught this winter while fishing with Brett Rutledge. » PAGE 6

COLUMN

Drones fell on Alabama » PAGE 7

PET OF THE WEEK

Meet Bella the bulldog



CULLMAN COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

Bella » PAGE 2

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CRIME

Arrests and incidents reported Dec. 31

Staff Reports
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Below are the arrests and incidents reported Dec. 31, 2024. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

GJ = grand jury; **FTA** = failure to appear

CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

No arrests or incidents reported.

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

INCIDENTS

Dec. 26

• theft of property-4th degree; Wal-Mart; general merchandise; $70; Olive St. SW

• theft by fraudulent leasing/lending; Choice Rentals

• duty upon striking unattended vehicle; person; damage to '12 Honda; $500; 2nd Ave. SW

ARRESTS

Dec. 30

Watson, Braden H.; 27

• FTA - domestic violence-3rd degree

• FTA - interference with a domestic violence emergency call

• FTA - criminal trespass-3rd degree

• FTA - public intoxication

Lay, Zackary J.; 36

• theft of property-4th degree

Townsend, Timothy B.; 31

• theft of property-4th degree

Perales-Martinez, Jose E.; 21

• DUI

• possession of marijuana-2nd degree

• possession of drug paraphernalia

Castana, Daniel A.; 33

• resisting arrest

• FTA - theft of property-4th degree

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

No arrests or incidents reported.

Find arrest and incident reports online Monday-Friday at www.CullmanTribune.com.

Bella (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Meet sweet Bella, a 2.5-year-old bulldog mix who is The Cullman Tribune Pet of the Week. She is an intelligent and understands leash etiquette. While Bella may be a bit shy at first, with patience, encouragement and love, she opens up to let her true self shine.

She is the perfect therapy/companion/reading dog.

Her adoption fee is $130, which includes spay, DHLPP vaccine, Bordetella vaccines, rabies vaccine, wormer, general exam at the vet and microchip.

Visit the shelter at 935 Convent Road NE. It's open Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

If you plan to meet Bella but she's already been adopted, she barked to let everyone know her friends are still seeking new homes.

Contact the Cullman County Animal Shelter at 256-734-5448 or cullmananimalshelter@co.cullman.al.us.

Roden (from Front)

He was the second of four generations of law enforcement officers in the Roden family.

"He was an innovator and many things that make Cullman County law enforcement great started with him.

"Most importantly he loved his community and left an influence of community service that continues in many to this day," read his obituary.

According to his obituary, "He was preceded in death by his parents; sons, Mark Roden and Michael Roden; brothers-in-laws, Terry Gambrill, Clint Ellard, and Clifford Ellard. Survivors include his wife, Janice Roden; sons, Robert (Gwen) Roden, Tyler (Sonja) Roden and Jon (Candy) Roden; fourteen grandchildren and eight great grandchildren; sisters, Wynona Gambrill and Faye (Daryl) Hood."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit your calendar items or public notices to wendy@cullmantribune.com

The Crossing Food Bank
The Crossing is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m.-noon and 1-3:30 p.m. We are located at 1503 Second St. SW, Cullman (in the Housing Authority).

Cullman Low Vision Support Group Meetings
Third Tuesday of every month, from 10-11:30 a.m., at the Alabama Career Center, 1201 Katherine St. NW in Cullman. Contact Olivia Wade, case manager, at 256-389-2502.

Baileyton Bargain Days
First Saturday of each month from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at the old Baileyton fire station next to the town's park. Beauty and health products, toys, home goods, pet items, food and many everyday items. A donation of $20 will allow a shopper to fill up a bag, and for $40 a shopper can fill a large box. Some of the items of greater value will require a larger donation. There will be some restrictions and product limits on the items. Cash and checks accepted. Proceeds will be used for park improvements and capital improvements for the town.

Alcoholics Anonymous
The Grace of God group of Alcoholics Anonymous has open AA meetings (all are welcome) Mondays and Thursdays from 7-8 p.m. at the Carriage House, located next to Grace Episcopal Church, 305 Arnold St. NE Cullman. Contact phone numbers: 256-347-1097, 256-841-2209 or 256-708-1340

Church Services: Spirit Life Church of GOD
• 1650 St. Joseph Dr. NW, Cullman
• Friday, Jan. 3 - Celebrate Recovery. Fellowship and testimonies. Hurts, habits and hang-ups are a part of everyone's life. Come and see how to overcome these and more! Bring a dish, dessert or drink for a potluck meal at 5:45 p.m. Meeting starts at 6:30. Childcare provided.
• Saturday, Jan. 5 - 8 a.m. Men's breakfast and Foundry Farm outreach
• Sunday, Jan. 5 - 9 a.m. Van runs in the 5 Points Area. Call Betty Hays at 256-338-3728 for pickup. Breakfast at 9:30. Bible study classes for children, youth and adults at 10. Praise and worship and message by Pastor Bobby Dodd at 11.
• Sunday, Jan. 5 - 2 p.m. Prayer service

Alcoholics Anonymous
Sundays, 3 p.m. at Cullman First Church of the Nazarene, 5415 Alabama Highway 157. CLOSED literature study. Handicap accessible.

TOPS (Take off Pounds Sensibly) Meetings
Fridays, 9:30-11 a.m., at the Donald E. Green Adult Active Center, 1625 Cleveland Ave. SW. The first meeting is free. TOPS, a national program, is a hands-on/pounds-off approach to weight loss and management through weekly meetings providing information, accountability, support and encouragement where you make the changes that make sense to you.

Cullman NAR-ANON Group Meetings
The NAR-ANON family group meetings are a worldwide fellowship for those affected by someone else's addiction. We offer Help by sharing our experiences, strength and hope. We carry the message of hope by letting others know that they are not alone by practicing the 12 Steps of NAR-ANON and changing our own attitudes. We Respect Your Anonymity. Our program is not a religious one, but a spiritual way of life. Meetings will be held at The Ruehl Building (Family Life Center of St. John's Church) Tuesday evenings at 6 p.m. Contact Jamie Weathersby Smith 256-708-7122 or Don or Nancy McKenzie 256-736-3327 or 256-736-3470 for more information.

Cullman Al-Anon Meetings
The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of friends and family whose lives have been affected by alcoholism. The Cullman Serenity Al-Anon Group meets each Monday at noon at 1519 St. Joseph Dr. NE. There is also a Zoom meeting each Tuesday at noon. The Courage to Change Al-Anon Family Group meets on Thursdays at 6 p.m. at Grace Episcopal Church at 305 Arnold St. NE in the Carriage House, located between the church and the Arnold House on the corner. For more information call 256-734-2231 or 256-531-4429.

The Pantry at The Link
• 708 Ninth St. SE, Cullman, AL 35055
• Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
• Closed for lunch noon-1 p.m.

The Foot of the Cross Church Revival
Jan. 12-15. Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday at 7 p.m. 2.25 miles north of Alabama Highway 157, on Eva Road. Evangelist Ryan Wilburn.

Cullman County Soil & Water Conservation District Quarterly Board Meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 9:30 a.m. at the USDA Service Center, 501-B Fourth St. SW in Cullman.

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LEGALS

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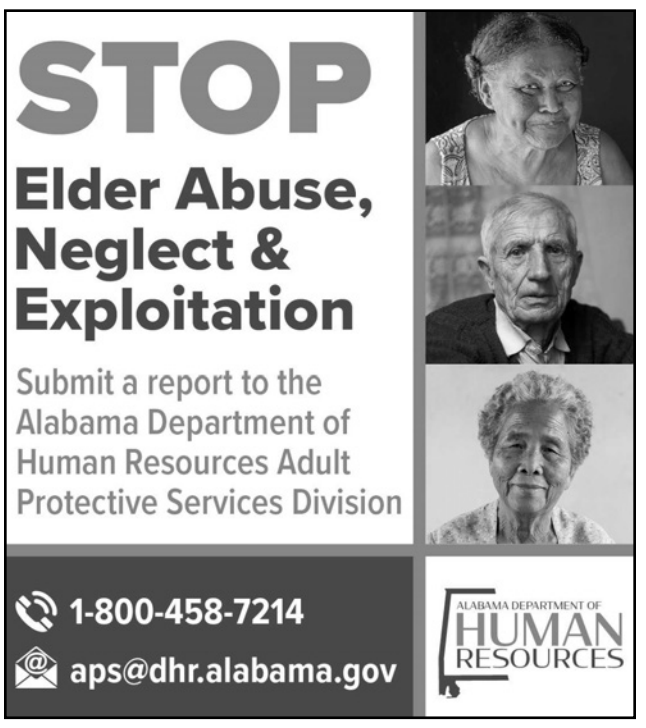
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www.CullmanAl.gov

City of Cullman
Planning Commission

On Monday January 6, 2025, at Cullman City Hall Auditorium at 5:30 P.M, at the regular meeting of the City of Cullman Planning Commission, a public hearing will be held to allow affected parties to voice their concerns related to the following items:

1. Short form subdivision – Fairway Drive NW - combine two lots into one lot
2. Short form subdivision – 2424 Industrial Drive SW – create three lots
3. Preliminary subdivision – Frankweiler Community – Scott Street NW
4. Conditional use request -1625 2nd Avenue NW – Perfect Choice Towing









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LEGALS

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE

Default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness secured by that certain Mortgage executed by **Rachel N. Becerril and spouse, Adrian Isaac Estudillo Beerril,** to Traditions Bank, as follows: Mortgage securing the property described below, said Mortgage dated July 13, 2022, and recorded on July 14, 2022, in Mortgage Book 2021 Page 330 in the Office of the Judge of Probate of Cullman County, Alabama; as modified by that Modification of Mortgage executed by **Rachel N. Becerril, a widow,** to Traditions Bank, as follows: Modification of Mortgage dated July 3, 2024, and recorded on July 5, 2024, in Mortgage Book 2089 Page 352 in the Office of the Judge of Probate of Cullman County, Alabama, the undersigned Traditions Bank, as Mortgagee, under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in said Mortgage, will sell at public outcry to the highest bidder for cash, in front of the main entrance of the Courthouse in Cullman, Alabama, on **January 21, 2025,** between the legal hours of sale, the following described real estate situated in Cullman County, Alabama, to-wit:

All that part of the SW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Section 8, T11S, R3W Cullman Co, AL being described as: Beginning at a point on the North line of said forty 51.7 feet West of the NE corner of said forty; thence South 89 degrees 00 minutes West along said North line 209 feet; thence South 1 degree 00 minutes East 209 feet; thence North 89 degrees 00 minutes East 209 feet; thence North 1 degree 00 minutes West 209 feet to the true point of beginning. Situated, lying and being in Cullman Co, AL.

Property address: 317 Good Hope School Road, Cullman, AL 35057

This sale is made for the purpose of paying the indebtedness secured by said mortgage, as well as the expenses of foreclosure.

PUBLICATION DATES: December 26, 2024, January 2, 2025 and January 9, 2025
NEWSPAPER: The Cullman Tribune

TRADITIONS BANK
Mortgagee
Steven C. Smith
SMITH & SMITH, LLP
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, AL 35056-0398
Telephone: (256) 734-4721
Fax: (256) 734-4774
steve@smithandsmithllp.com

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF LOUIE D. HUSSEY, Deceased. * CASE NO.: PC 2024-179

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE that Letters Testamentary having been granted to CALVIN CLEMENT, as Personal Representative of the Estate of LOUIE D. HUSSEY, deceased, on the 17th day of December, 2024, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that all persons having claims against the said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Calvin Clement
Personal Representative

Melvin Hasting
Attorney for Petitioner
PO Box 517
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0517

TO: **The Publisher of The Cullman Tribune**

Please publish the above Notice once a week for three consecutive weeks and send an affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

Tammy Brown
TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

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PREP BASKETBALL

Cold Springs earns 43-39 win over Appalachian; Lady Eagles dominate, 78-22

Nick Griffin
nick@cullmantribune.com

BREMEN, Ala. – The Cold Springs Eagles and Lady Eagles were back home for a pair of varsity matchups against Appalachian Monday night and both teams earned wins. In the girls' game, the Lady Eagles knocked down 14 three-pointers, eight of which came from Ella Dickerson, and cruised to a 78-22 win. In the boys' matchup, Cold Springs fell behind in the fourth quarter but battled back to edge Appalachian 43-39.

Cold Springs 78 – Appalachian 22 (Varsity Girls)

Paizley Whitlow laid one in for two and Ella Dickerson knocked down a three to give the Lady Eagles a 5-0 start. Dickerson's next basket made it 7-0 and Holly Bruer and Kaydance Williams each scored to stretch the lead to 11-0 midway through the first quarter. Cold Springs continued to pressure Appalachian on the defensive end, making it very difficult to bring the ball up the floor and turning turnovers into easy points. Back to back buckets from Kenady Graves made it a 15-0 game and Dickerson drained another three to make it 18-0. Another Dickerson score gave the Lady Eagles a 20-0 lead and after Appalachian finally scored its first points with just over a minute to play in the first, Williams sank three of her next four free throw attempts to make it a 23-2 game. Baylee Perdue drilled a three in the final seconds of the first quarter to put Cold Springs in front 26-2 at the start of the second.

A Dickerson three-pointer gave the Lady Eagles a 29-6 lead early in the second quarter and after Dickerson split a pair of free throws, Perdue laid one in to make it 32-8. Macie Huffstutler took a steal the other way for an easy bucket to add to the lead and Graves drained a three to make it 37-8 later in the period. Dickerson knocked down her fourth three-pointer of the game in the final 30 seconds of the half to give the Lady Eagles a commanding, 40-12 lead at the break.

Shots kept falling for Cold Springs in the second half, starting with a three-pointer from Whitlow that extended the lead to 43-12. After another Perdue basket, Bruer banked in a three to make it a 48-12 game midway through the third quarter. Williams laid one in to make it 50-14 and Dickerson followed with another three to give the Lady Eagles a 53-14 lead. After a Huffstutler free throw, Dickerson buried back to back threes to in the final minute of the third to put Cold Springs ahead 60-14 at the start of the fourth.

Avery Gerstman drilled a three-pointer to keep the Lady Eagles in front 63-18 early in the fourth quarter and Graves drove to the basket and scored on the next possession to make it 65-18. Gerstman scored off a turnover to add to the lead midway through the final period and she followed it up with a three on the ensuing possession to make it a 70-20 game. Huffstutler laid another in, Aleah Addison buried a three and Gerstman scored one more basket to wrap up a dominant, 78-22 win for Cold Springs.

Dickerson led the Lady Eagles with 26 points and knocked down eight three-pointers in the win. Gerstman finished with 11 points and Graves and Williams each posted nine.

Cold Springs 43 – Appalachian 39 (Varsity Boys)

Ayden Black drained a three to put Cold Springs in front 3-2 early in the opening period and after Appalachian responded with a three on the other end, Breydon Hallmon scored inside to keep the game tied at 5. Ethan Day drilled a three to give the Eagles an 8-5 lead and Matt Williams laid one in to keep Cold Springs ahead 10-8 later in the first quarter. Black split a pair of free throws to make it 11-8 and after Appalachian drained a three on the other end, Bailey Gann scored inside to maintain a 13-11 lead for the Eagles. However, Appalachian was able to finish the first quarter strong and take a 15-13 lead into the second.

Most of Cold Springs' offense in the second quarter came from the free throw line. Hallmon split a pair from the line to make it a 1-point game and after Appalachian scored to move ahead by 3, Tycen Kilgo knocked down two free throws to trim the lead to 17-16. Day hit a pair of free throws to give the Eagles an 18-17 lead, but a 5-0 Appalachian run put Cold Springs behind 22-18 late in the second quarter. However, Boston Archer drilled a jumper in the final minute of the period to make it a 22-20 game at the halftime break.

Hallmon scored the first five points of the third for Cold Springs to keep the score knotted at 25 and Williams buried a three from the corner to give the Eagles a 28-25 lead. Black followed with a three of his own to make it a 31-25 game and Day and Archer added a free throw in the final two minutes of the period to put Cold Springs in front 33-29 at the start of the fourth quarter.

Appalachian was able to start the final frame with eight unanswered points, taking a 37-33 lead midway through the fourth quarter. Linden Hill tipped one in to cut the lead to 37-35 and Day sank a pair of free throws to hold the Appalachian lead to 39-37.

Another basket by Hill tied the game at 39 and Day to the rim and scored to give the Eagles a 41-39 lead with 40 seconds on the clock. Hill added a free throw with 17 seconds remaining to make it a 3-point game and after Cold Springs got the last big defensive stop that it needed, Kilgo added a free throw on the other end to put things out of reach for Appalachian and secure a 43-39 win for the Eagles.

Day led Cold Springs with 10 points in the win, followed by Hallmon with eight and Black with seven.

Cold Springs will be back home Friday night to host West Morgan.

More photos on page 5.



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Ella Dickerson led the Lady Eagles with 26 points in their 78-22 win over Appalachian Monday night.



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cold Springs' Ayden Black drives to the basket during the Eagles' 43-39 win over Appalachian Monday night.

No. 2 Auburn hammers Monmouth in non-conference finale

Jeff Shearer
AU Athletics

AUBURN, Ala. — Ready to thrive in '25, No. 2 Auburn ended the first half with 18 straight points and blasted Monmouth 87-58 Monday at Neville Arena in the Tigers' non-conference finale.

"It was the toughest non-conference schedule in the history of Auburn basketball, and we lost one game at Duke in a close game," Auburn coach Bruce Pearl said of a slate that included four wins over ranked opponents. "Very proud of our kids. We demonstrated we could win away from Neville."

Tied 28-28 with six and a half minutes left in the opening half, Chaney Johnson scored 10 consecutive points before Chad Baker-Mazara made the first of his two 4-point plays.

"We finally got into that rhythm, the shots started hitting," said Baker-Mazara, who made three 3-pointers. "Got ourselves composed and finally hit our shots."

On his way to his ninth double-double of the season, Johni Broome ended the onslaught with a pair of layups to give Auburn a 46-28 halftime lead en route to the Tigers' 60th straight non-conference home win.

In the second half Auburn's freshmen teamed up for two electrifying lobs from Tahaad Pettiford to Jahki Howard, who windmilled the first and reversed the second on a half-court pass, bringing teammates on the Tigers' bench to their feet.

" That kid is a freak of nature," Baker-Mazara said of Howard's high-flying exploits. "You haven't seen anything close of what he does in practice."

"When I first saw it, I couldn't breathe," Cardwell said. "I couldn't believe it. I think it'll go down as the best dunk in Neville Arena."

"Jahki Howard is going to be a great player and play in the NBA someday," Pearl said.

"He's gifted and talented, and he's also a hard worker."

Broome led four Tigers in double figures with 14 points and shared the rebounding lead with Dylan Cardwell, who logged his first career double-double by grabbing 11 rebounds and scoring 12 points. Broome added four assists, three blocked shots and a steal.

"I'm grateful that I was on the receiving end of a double-double after seeing so many guys before me get double-doubles," Cardwell said. "I'm grateful that it was my turn."

"As good a teammate as any player I've ever coached," Pearl said. "Dylan can play in the NBA because of his ability to guard anywhere on the court. He can bang on the inside."

Baker-Mazara scored 13 points, Johnson added12 and Denver Jones went 3-for-3 on 3-pointers, scoring nine points.

Baker-Mazara was 4-for-4 from the free-throw line, extending his program record for consecutive makes to 39.

"I've found a routine that helps me every time," Baker-Mazara said.

"It's just me and the basket. I take two breaths to make me keep my composure and lock in with the rim."

Auburn outrebounded the Hawks 46-27.

"They had length, but they weren't big like we're going to see in the SEC," Pearl said.

Ten Tigers recorded at least one assist, with Pettiford dishing a game-high five.

"Tahaad wants to be coached. He wants to get better," Pearl said.

"He asks questions. Based on preseason expectations, he's the best freshman in the country.

"Let's say he was 25th (in preseason rankings). He's not the 25th best freshman in the country."

Auburn (12-1) tips off SEC play against Missouri Saturday at Neville Arena at 3 p.m. on SEC Network and the Auburn Sports Network.

"Now we get ready to start the toughest conference schedule in the history of college basketball," Pearl said. "There's maybe never been a league like this.

The strong literally are going to be the only ones who are going to survive. Hungry, healthy, humble is the way to get through it.

"Matchups are going to matter. We're going to lose games, but we can't let a loss affect the next time out. We're healthy and we're ready."



AU ATHLETICS

Auburn's Jahki Howard (3) goes up for a windmill dunk during the Tigers' 87-58 win over Monmouth Monday night.

Eagles (from page 4)


NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE


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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
JANUARY 2, 2025

Marine Resources seeks fisheries input from public



DAVID RAINER

Marine Resources estimates Alabama's private recreational anglers will not meet its red snapper quota for 2024.

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David Rainer
Ala. Dept. of Conservation and Nat. Resources

If you weren't able to attend one of three public meetings recently, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (ADCNR) Marine Resources Division (MRD) wants your input.

The meetings were held in Spanish Fort, Tillman's Corner and Orange Beach to engage the public on a variety of subjects concerning Alabama's saltwater fisheries management, including the state's iconic fish species, the American red snapper.

"We are always listening to what the public has to say," said MRD Director Scott Bannon, who will present the information to ADCNR Commissioner Chris Blankenship for possible consideration at the March 8 Conservation Advisory Board meeting in Montgomery. "We want to hear what people are seeing, what they're not seeing and what their thoughts are. It is important to us considering the resources are really theirs."

Of course, red snapper was high on the discussion list at the meetings with the current Alabama season extending through the end of the year. The numbers as of December 9 from Snapper Check, the mandatory reporting system, indicate private recreational anglers are not likely to reach the quota limit of 659,654 pounds this year.

One proposal brought up at the public meetings was possibly opening the recreational season for the entire month of June instead of just the current four-day weekends of Friday through Monday. The season would revert to four-day weekends in July and continue until the annual quota is estimated to be met. MRD said fishery-independent research suggests the red snapper population is stable, and, while maintaining the ability to monitor catch levels, the season structure could be modified to stay below the harvest limit.

"There was a lot of support for keeping the recreational season open all of June," Bannon said. "There are also a lot of people who like the weekend season like it is now. We will discuss that with the Commissioner and see how he wants to proceed."

Currently, the captain and crew on state-permitted vessels for hire are allowed to retain a bag limit of fish in addition to the customers' take. On those vessels designed to carry six or fewer passengers, the captains asked whether eliminating their bag limit would have any effect on the resources. Bannon said 309 vessels are permitted by the state for residents and 36 for non-residents. Those vessels are permitted to fish for any species in state waters, and some will make multiple trips in a day. About 100 federally permitted boats dock in Alabama and if they are fishing in federal waters they would abide by existing federal captain and crew regulations.

"Our guide industry has learned to be very responsible and encourage people to have a conservation mindset," Bannon said. "They just felt there was not a need for captain and crew bag limits to be kept. Within the industry, most people wanted that.

"When you look at the data, the number of trips where the captain and crew kept limits the percentage has gone down, but the number of trips has gone up. When we first started, we sold about 150 licenses, and now that number is more than 300."

Another topic of significant discussion was about sheepshead, a species that has become a target for recreational anglers recently after years of relative obscurity. Bannon said the harvest data indicate the species is feeling the additional pressure from recreational anglers.

The number of recreational saltwater licenses sold has grown from about 75,000 in 2001 to more than 210,000 in 2023. In a proposal that will go to Commissioner Blankenship, the bag limit would be lowered from 10 fish per person to eight fish per person with the same 12-inch minimum fork length.

"In 2022 a profile on sheepshead was done, which was like a mini assessment," Bannon said.

"There are some concerns that show up. In our sampling program, we started seeing fewer and fewer sheepshead over a consistent period of time.

"The fishery is pretty stable, but the increase in the number of anglers with more than 200,000 licenses sold is increasing the effort. And it's a pretty popular species during the peak spawning during March and April. That's when we see most of the bag limits occur.

"Our goal is to get ahead of these situations instead of needing a drastic change. In talking with Dr. (Sean) Powers (University of South Alabama) and looking at our data, we felt a little change would be helpful. Right now, the average size fish is just a little more than 15 inches. That gives more fish a chance to get to a spawning size."

Redfish (red drum) was also discussed, especially the regulation that allows anglers to keep one redfish larger than 26 inches in the daily bag limit of three fish.

"Some for-hire and private anglers have asked to take a look at whether or not we should be keeping the one oversized red drum," Bannon said.

"Dr. Powers has done some red drum work over the years, and he felt that there are benefits to releasing those oversized fish and not allow any retention. That would help maintain a positive spawning biomass. Red drum is a species our anglers target with regularity. Our 16 to 26 (inches slot limit) is really at the bottom end of their spawning potential. Not retaining those bigger ones would release about 37,000 fish a year and help increase that spawning potential."

One species that has rarely been seen in Alabama waters is now showing up in estuaries and rivers along the coast. The common snook is a popular game fish in Florida, mainly south Florida, but a northward migration has occurred.

Dr. Richard Tarver Webb caught a snook that weighed 5 pounds, 2.6 ounces to establish the record in 2023, but that record was broken by Gardner Love with a 7-pound, 3-ounce fish in 2024. Snook is currently unregulated, and MRD is considering implementing a bag limit of one per person with a minimum total length of 24 inches.

"There has been a push by some anglers to have a zero bag limit," Bannon said. "I'm not big on having a no-take fishery. I feel we are able to provide access to the resources. Historically, this is not a species that has been present in Alabama with any consistency. The discussion is whether they are resident fish, but they are very sensitive to water temperature, so once we have a good, cold winter, it could move them back out.

"CCA (Coastal Conservation Association) Alabama is considering adding snook to the TagAlabama program, and that data will be provided to the University of South Alabama. Dr. Charlie Martin of Dauphin Island Sea Lab is doing some studies on snook and is promoting people to take pictures, weights and lengths and send that to him (cmartin@disl.edu) so he can develop some data on snook."

Tripletail (blackfish) is a species that anglers are targeting more often than in the past, and the information on the fish is not extensive.

"There is a lot of tagging with acoustic tags and traditional tags to try to work out migration patterns and other data," Bannon said. "We do know they travel a lot farther than most people think, and they grow very fast. We're just asking for feedback on what they're seeing to help determine if regulations may need to be adjusted in the future.

"It wasn't too long ago that if you were the tripletail guy, you were the mystic. You didn't say anything about it. Then social media showed up, and now everybody's an expert. They're targeted much more now. Some people have trips that specifically look for tripletail."

MRD discussed implementing a bag limit for sting rays and skates. The concern is primarily associated with bow fishing.

A common practice is to shoot or gig them and remove their tails and there is currently no size or bag limit. Skates and rays have very low reproductive rates with long gestation periods.

"Flounder is the species most people would like to target, but sting rays and skates are in the same waters," he said. "They make easy targets. Shooting them just to be shooting them and then removing the tail is not very conservation-minded."

As everyone who has reeled up half a fish knows, sharks are abundant in Alabama waters, and several shark fishermen have asked for more leeway to harvest the allowed shark species.

"Some anglers have requested more shark fishing opportunities to target the smaller sharks that show up in coastal waters," Bannon said.

"We currently have a rule that you can't have more than five hooks. We're looking at some options to provide increased opportunity. However, we need to be mindful of negative interactions with other species and sea turtles.

"Because of the shark interactions with recreational, commercial and charter fishermen, a lot of people are very supportive of some increased effort in targeting sharks. But we don't want to swing the pendulum too hard and too fast. We are going to approach any increases cautiously."

Good news about the flounder population in Alabama waters was shared at the meetings.

"We're seeing better flounder numbers recreationally and commercially," Bannon said. "We're seeing an increase in benefits to private anglers with more people catching more fish."

In 2019, MRD implemented flounder regulations that reduced the recreational bag limit to five fish and increased the minimum size to 14 inches total length. Also implemented was a 30-day no-fishing period for the month of November, when flounder spawn, for commercial and recreational anglers. On the commercial side, MRD set trip harvest limits of 40 fish, whether taken by hook and line, gig or gill net. Also, in 2008, a state law was passed that will eventually phase out gill net fishing. Only gill net fishermen who had a license on June 1, 2008, are allowed to renew that license for the remainder of the person's life. The gill net licenses cannot be transferred.

"At that time, the commercial gill net fishermen were not seeing catches of 40 fish, but now they are and they would have to discard anything over 40 fish," Bannon said.

"The fish are rebounding. I've always said that if we get an opportunity to give some back that we should.

"We have a limited number who target flounder, and those gill netters are going away through attrition.

"Every year we lose one to two gill net licensees. If we increase the trip limit to 60, 80 or 100 fish, it is projected to just barely move the needle for overall harvest.

"These are multi-generational fishermen. It's a limited number of people, and I think they ought to be able to support their families and provide domestic seafood to our restaurants and seafood retailers."

Email marine.resources@dcnr.alabama.gov with comments and/or concerns about recreational and commercial fishing.

To view the 2025 regulation considerations presented at the recent public meeting hosted by the MRD, visit www.outdooralabama.com/fishing/saltwater-recreational-size-creel-limits.

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COLUMN: Drones fell on Alabama

Joe Hobby
Tribune Contributor

These drone sightings over New Jersey remind me of a time years ago when mysterious lights were spotted over Birmingham, Alabama. I know because I'm the one who did it.

I have to make a confession: UFOs have always fascinated me. Maybe that's because I watched "The Day The Earth Stood Still" when I was a kid, and it scared the bejeezus out of me. I always bought UFO magazines with my allowance.

In fact, I can still remember one of the articles I read years ago. It told readers how to make fake UFOs using dry cleaning bags, birthday candles and drinking straws. Supposedly, they would drift in the air with an unearthly glow. For whatever reason, that stuck with me. Boys always like the idea of making something that flies.

Years went by, and this nonsense was forgotten. However, one day my wife Carol brought home supplies for our young son's birthday party, including tiny candles and plastic straws. And when I walked in the house with my dry cleaning and hung the bag over a kitchen chair, my inner child began yelling, "Look! Remember the UFOs? Everything we need to build one's right here!"

I smiled and nodded. Listening to my inner child oftentimes got me in trouble, but it was usually lots of fun! I immediately grabbed everything and headed downstairs, when I heard another voice.

It was Carol, who asked, "What in the world are you doing?"

I gave her the standard husband reply.

"Nothing."

"Then why are you going to the basement with all of that?"

"I'm doing an experiment. It's nothing, really."

She rolled her eyes and said, "Oh, I'm sure."

Ignoring her sarcastic comment, I disappeared down the stairs. Soon, I managed to jerry-rig straws and candles to the bottom of the bag.

"This is never gonna work," I thought.

"Have faith," my inner child responded.

I took the contraption outside and began lighting the candles. Soon, the bag billowed from the warm air. It looked like a big plastic amoeba.

My inner child giggled and said, "This sucker's gonna fly!"

And it did. The bag floated out of my hands as softly as a butterfly, and drifted about 20 feet over my head before it gently descended.

Eureka! I grabbed the balloon, and immediately headed down the street to my best friend Richard's house. He loved immature shenanigans like this. That's why my inner child and his inner child were best buddies. Within a half hour, the balloon had been reengineered, and we headed to a nearby playground for a test flight. We were delighted. The balloon climbed up in the sky, reflecting an eerie light from the candles.

The next day, we began producing balloons that could fly hundreds of feet high for almost 10 minutes. My mind raced with possibilities.

Our wives were not amused. Sadly, they saw this as a complete waste of time! I'm sure the Wright Brothers also faced this kind of resistance.

The following Saturday evening our spouses ordered us to stop the aerial foolishness and run to the grocery store. That was fine with us because my inner child had an idea that would make our trip worthwhile. Before we got in Richard's truck, I grabbed a balloon.

It was Saturday night and the shopping center was buzzing. Every store was packed full of people. Richard and I wisely bought our groceries first, then pulled behind the store. In less than a minute, our little UFO was lit and slowly rising in the sky. Earthlings, beware!

A surreal scene greeted us when we pulled back around front. It looked like time was frozen. Traffic had stopped. Shoppers were gaping at the sky and pointing. We began laughing uncontrollably.

In a stroke of comedic genius, Richard took our prank to the next level. He pulled up to a couple, and began questioning them about the mysterious lights.

"Hey, what is that thing?" Richard asked a couple of Earthlings staring at the object, now hundreds of feet in the air.

The man pointed and replied, "Dunno. Maybe it's a weather balloon."

Richard would have none of that. "No, it's not one of those. Weather balloons don't glow. Look at those tiny little engines. It's a UFO."

The Earthling agreed, saying, "Could be. It ain't making a sound. Maybe it's somethin' the military's testing."

His wife spoke up, saying, "Well, it's scary for somethin' to just appear out of nowhere like that." The balloon climbed higher. Soon, it started dropping tiny fireballs. This always happened when the candles began melting the straws. But the onlookers thought it was something more sinister. Someone pointed and shouted, "Hey, look! It's shootin' somethin'!"

And as if on cue, the balloon flickered and went out, vanishing in the night sky.

Everyone was stunned. "Did y'all see that?" the Earthling said loudly. "It's gone! That thang just went into hyperspace!"

Both of our inner children were laughing uncontrollably. Fast forward over 50 years. Last night, I took my 12-year-old granddaughter to dinner, and we began talking about the New Jersey drones.

She said, "Granddaddy, do you think they're like those balloons you and Richard flew over the grocery store?

I smiled and answered, "I don't know, honey. Maybe somebody had that same UFO magazine as I did."

I'm sure I heard my inner child laughing. #drones#dronesovernewjersey

Joe Hobby is a barbecue-loving comedian from Alabama who wrote for Jay Leno for many years. Find more of Joe's stories on his blog: https://mylifeasahobby.blogspot.com. Follow him on Facebook at Joe Hobby Comedian-Writer.



Obituary Announcements: Dec. 31

Lorene Earline Brown, 99
Funeral service for Lorene Earline Brown, age 99, of Cullman, is Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025, at 2 p.m. at Jones Chapel First Baptist Church, officiated by Bro. Chris Chambless. Visitation was held at the church on Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025, from 6-8 p.m. and Mrs. Brown will lie in state on Thursday at the church from noon-2 p.m. Interment will follow at Jones Chapel Cemetery. Cullman Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. Lorene was born on May 3, 1925, to Earl Williams and Essie McGee Williams. She passed away on Monday, Dec. 30, 2024, at her residence, surrounded by her loved ones. She is preceded in death by her parents; husband, J.P. Brown; grandson, Jeremy Sams; and brother, Alvie Williams. She is survived by her son, Kenneth Brown (Laura); daughter, Linda Sams; grandchildren, Lenisa Hutson (Stephen), Whitney Dyer (Matt), Cole Brown (Gracie); great grandchildren, Savana Cooke (Delton), Brody Sams, Fisher Dyer, Emmi Dyer; great-great grandchild, Emery Jean Cooke. Please visit www.cullmanfuneralhome.com to sign the online guestbook.

Elsie R. Arcana, 98
Elsie R Arcana, age 98 of Hanceville, passed away on Monday, Dec. 30, 2024, at her residence. She was born, Sept. 2, 1926, to Roy Roger and Louise Roger. She was preceded in death by her parents; husbands, Milton Feindell and Joseph Arcana; and sister, Emma Pourciau Survivors include her children; Robert (Lisa) Feindel, Esther (Tim) Lagrange, Stephen Feindel, Glenn Feindel, and Gary (Eugenia) Feindel; grandchildren, Hayley, Chad, Jennifer, Christine, William, Brittany, Heather, Leslie, Michelle and Francesca,12 great grandchildren; step-son, Michael Arcana; nephew, A J Pourciau; niece, Alma Marroy; and a host of family and friends. Mrs. Arcana will have a memorial mass at Saint Mary's Catholic Church with entombment at Greenwood Cemetery in New Orleans, Louisana, at a later date. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is assisting the family.

Brenda J. Nail, 78
Brenda J. Nail, age 78, of Cullman, Alabama passed away on Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024. Brenda was an active member of Hanceville Assembly of God where she had attended church for over 40 years. She was faithful to her church, her church family and her love for the Lord. Brenda was preceded in death by her Mother Velma Nail, her Father CD Nail, Her Brothers Elbert Nail, Paul Nail and Kenny Nail. She was also preceded in death by her Sister in Law Fay Nail, and Brother in Law Henry Maddux. She is survived by Her Sister Diann Maddux, Brothers Johnny Nail, Quinton Nail (Doris), Jeff Nail (Annette) and Sister in Law Shirley Nail. She is also survived by a host of nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews. Brenda will be greatly missed by all who knew her and loved her. A celebration of life visitation for Brenda will be held Friday, Jan. 3, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Moss Service Funeral Home, 1901 Second Avenue NW, Cullman, AL 35055. Followed by celebration of life funeral service Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025, at 11 a.m. at Moss Service Funeral Home. Brenda will be laid to rest in Good Hope Cemetery, 90 Good Hope School Road, Good Hope, AL 35057. To leave condolences for the Nail family visit mossservicefh.com. Moss Service Funeral Home directing.

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Christkindlmarkt (from Front)

the nation.

"The tireless efforts of our Christkindlmarkt team — including staff, volunteers and vendors — ensure this event remains a beacon of holiday spirit and community engagement. We are all eagerly looking forward to building on this success in the years to come."

As with any large event, there were challenges.

"Looking back, the significant crowds at peak times occasionally made it tough for visitors to find places to eat or enjoy themselves fully," Anderson admitted.

"We're already looking at ways to expand the market site and operational enhancements to better handle the crowds and improve the overall experience next year."

One common concern raised by attendees was the lack of accessible parking for handicapped visitors.

Anderson addressed this issue, stating, "This year, we extended our Thursday hours to help alleviate some of the congestion and provide a less crowded option during the week, which was particularly well received by many of our senior visitors.

"Moving forward, we're committed to further improving access by increasing parking near the north entrance and setting up a designated drop-off and pick-up zone around Arnold Street for seniors and others needing easier access."

When asked to summarize the event in one word, Anderson chose "magical."

"It's tremendously rewarding to witness both young and old sharing laughter, making memories and celebrating all the things that make Christmas special, together," he said.

Looking ahead, expansion is already on the table.

"We are already reviewing plans and meeting with vendors to broaden the festival's scope next year," Anderson revealed.

"We're considering expanding into the (Cullman) Economic Development (Agency) parking area to accommodate more vendors and attractions, providing additional space to better serve our growing audience."

Feedback from families has also prompted organizers to explore ways to extend the market's schedule.

"After hearing similar requests last year, we decided to add additional days and extend our hours of operation during the week to better accommodate school field trips," Anderson said.

"In the coming months, we will be meeting with our vendors to discuss next year's schedule and explore all possible options to meet this increasing demand."

CPRST Event Coordinator Kelly Pulliam expressed gratitude for the support that made this year's event a success.

"We want to extend a heartfelt thanks to our team, vendors, volunteers and generous sponsors," she said.

"To our community and visitors from both near and far, your support each year transforms the Christkindlmarkt into a truly magical event."

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