



# Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Late Summer Edition ♣ 2017

The newsletter is always available online at [www.pfb.com/berks](http://www.pfb.com/berks)

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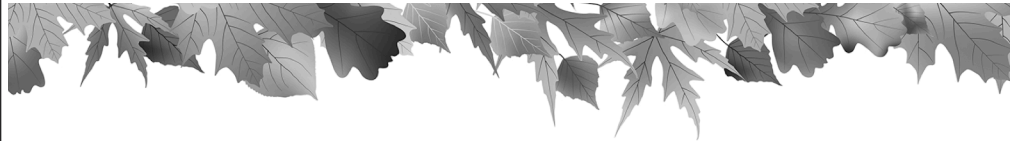
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### CID/Newsletter Editor

Elizabeth Peifer \_\_\_\_\_ 610-689-4934

### State Director District 3

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## Annual Banquet

Friday, September 29, 2017

**6:45 p.m. Registration; 7:00 p.m. Dinner**  
**Adults \$10 - Children 10 and under FREE**

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*Questions? Call Robin at 484-925-4132.*



## Upcoming Events

### Policy Development Meetings:

Dorothy Wagner: 610-689-5496

*Wednesday August 27, 2017*

George Moyer: 717-933-8748

*TBD*

Paul Zimmerman and Dennis Essig: 610-488-7126

*TBD*

### Measure the Candidate:

*October 5, 2017*

### BARN Farm Tour:

*October 14, 2017*

### Bountiful Berks Banquet:

*(formerly the Farm City Banquet)*

*October 27, 2017*

### PFB Annual Meeting:

*November 13, 14, 15, 2017*

## Thank you & welcome to the following people who joined Berks County Farm Bureau as Regular Members in the past year!

Laurie Armstrong  
Michael Bashore  
Carol Batdorf  
Jonathan Bicksler  
Matthew Bittle  
Richard Blair  
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David Brown  
Josh Brown  
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Vance Getz - 717-945-6645

David Mory - 610-419-0250  
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**Michael Davidheiser**  
Boyertown, PA  
610-367-6095

**Hugh McGinley**  
Birdsboro, PA  
610-582-2862

**Daniel Williams**  
Kutztown, PA  
610-683-6823

**Brian Hunsinger**  
Douglassville, PA  
610-582-5204

**James McIntyre**  
Morgantown, PA  
610-286-6170

**David Wilson**  
Birdsboro, PA  
610-582-9233

**David Koeffler**  
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**Christine Ramsey**  
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**William Young**  
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# IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

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DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
August 11	BCFB Board Meeting	Dorothy & Rodger Wagner's Home	7:30 p.m.
August 27	Policy Development Meeting	Dorothy & Rodger Wagner's Home	
September 8	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
September 29	BCFB Fall Banquet	Virginville Grange	6:45 p.m. registration; 7:00 p.m. dinner
October 5	Measure the Candidate	Berks County Ag Center	
October 13	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks County Ag Center	7:30 p.m.
October 14	BARN Farm Tour		
October 27	Bountiful Berks Banquet (formerly Farm City Banquet)		
November 13-15	PFB Annual Meeting		

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## Parts of State Budget Finalized

The main part of Pennsylvania's 2017-2018 budget is now law although, as of mid-July, funding for some programs — including several important to agriculture — remained in flux.

Gov. Tom Wolf allowed the spending plan, which passed the General Assembly June 30, to become law without his signature as lawmakers continued to hash out a plan to raise the money needed to cover a \$2 billion gap between the spending called for and available revenue.

The plan funds the state Department of Agriculture's general operations at just more than \$31 million, restoring \$1.5 million that officials had said was crucial for programs such as PA Preferred, Farmland Preservation and food inspection. But the outlook for other agriculture priorities was unclear.

The state Senate passed a separate bill fully restoring the state's \$30 million contribution to the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, which plays a critical role in helping farmers produce healthy food, monitor for diseases and train the next generation of Pennsylvania veterinarians. But that bill had not passed the House as of mid-July.

Funding for Penn State Extension also remained in flux as of mid-July. That spending bill passed the Senate but not the House.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will continue to advocate for agriculture's priorities as the budget talks continue and thanks the grassroots members who sent more than 1,100 emails and letters to lawmakers advocating for programs important to farmers and explaining why supporting agriculture is critical to Pennsylvania's economy and food security.

## Pa. Pension Overhaul Becomes Law, PFB Urges Further Reform

A long-sought effort to overhaul Pennsylvania's public pension system and shift the responsibility of making up future funding shortfalls away from taxpayers is finally law.

The General Assembly passed and Gov. Tom Wolf signed legislation that ends defined-benefit pensions for new state and public school employees and, instead, offers workers a choice between three retirement plans that combine elements of traditional pensions and 401(k)-style plans.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau believes that the new law is a significant step in reducing taxpayers' risk of skyrocketing state pension costs but should not be the end of the effort.

While the change limits taxpayers' risk of being on the hook for major shortfalls in the future, it does not address the more than \$70 billion unfunded liability in the current pension system that is straining state budgets and prompting school districts to cut programs and raise property taxes.

"While changes under the new pension law will likely be helpful in the future, the absence of a meaningful plan to reduce the current pension debt load will continue to drain Pennsylvania's financial resources and likely result in higher real estate property taxes for landowners and cuts to services in many school districts across the Commonwealth," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "Because farmers need to own large amounts of land to remain economically viable, they are often hit the hardest by increasing property taxes."

PFB encourages state leaders to build on this important step by continuing efforts to rein in pension costs in both the short and long term.

## Apple Growers Approve New Marketing Program

Pennsylvania apple growers have voted on a replacement for the Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program, which they opted last fall to discontinue.

Starting May 27, growers will be assessed five cents per bushel for fresh apples and one cent per bushel for processed apples. That will generate between \$200,000 to \$250,000 annually, which will be used for membership to the U.S. Apple Association, research, consumer education and the related administrative costs.

The change was approved by 68 percent of eligible growers, representing 78 percent of the state's apple production. Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said his department is happy with the vote. "Pennsylvania's apple industry is ranked fourth in the nation and is a strong contributor to the state's agriculture economy," he said. "We look forward to working with the commonwealth's apple growers in charting the future of this industry."

The new program will be overseen by a seven-member board. Growers interested in serving or nominating a board member should contact Jen D'Angelo with the state at [jedangelo@pa.gov](mailto:jedangelo@pa.gov) or 717.783.9948. Growers with questions about the new program should contact Laura England, Bureau of Market Development Director, at [laengland@pa.gov](mailto:laengland@pa.gov) or 717.783.8462.

## **EPA Announces Plans to Consider Ditching WOTUS**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has officially announced proposed rulemaking to rescind its controversial Waters of the U.S. rule, in response to an executive order issued by President Donald Trump in February.

The rule — which gave EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers broad authority to regulate as “water” nearly all land areas, including 98 percent of Pennsylvania lands — was issued by former President Barack Obama’s administration but never went into effect because of injunctions issued by federal courts that questioned the rule’s legality.

Farm Bureau is leading the legal fight against WOTUS and believes it attempts to regulate land areas far beyond what is allowed under the Federal Clean Water Act, and would cause nearly every acre of farm land to be regulated. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will be encouraging all members to express to EPA strong support for repeal of WOTUS during the comment period for the proposed rulemaking, which is expected to be during the month of July.

## **PFB President Briefs Members of Congress**

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau President Rick Ebert spoke to members of Pennsylvania’s congressional delegation during a briefing, hosted by U.S. Rep. Glenn “G.T.” Thompson, on the state of Pennsylvania agriculture.

Ebert told lawmakers that agriculture is struggling and that dairy producers are especially feeling the pinch with supply too high, prices too low and the Margin Protection Program not working as the safety net it was intended to be. He stressed that farmers need a 2018 Farm Bill that provides a working safety net, a trade environment that supports the export of Pennsylvania and U.S. agricultural goods, and reforms to farm labor, taxes and regulation that take into account the unique needs of the agricultural community.

In addition to Thompson, Reps. Dwight Evans, Charlie Dent, Brian Fitzpatrick, Mike Kelly, Pat Meehan, and Lloyd Smucker attended the event as well as and nearly 20 House and Senate staffers. Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding joined the event as well.

## **Noxious Weeds Update Passes Senate Committee**

A Pennsylvania Farm Bureau-supported update to the state laws governing control of noxious weeds has cleared its first hurdle in the state Senate. House Bill 790, by Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski of Luzerne County, was approved by the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and now heads to the full chamber for consideration.

The measure would add to the list of noxious weeds to be controlled several new species that are adversely affecting agriculture. It would also, by default, include weeds that are on the federal list and allow the state Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee to conduct studies to add or delete

plants from the list. The bill would also allow beneficial weeds with the potential to become invasive — such as *Miscanthus*, which is used for biofuel — to be cultivated in a controlled environment with a permit for research.

## **State Senate Committee Approves Wind Power Bill**

A state Senate committee has approved a Pennsylvania Farm Bureau-supported bill that would allow construction of wind turbines on preserved farmland.

House Bill 187, sponsored by Rep. Curtis Sonney of Erie County, was approved by the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and now heads to the full chamber for consideration. The plan would allow the owner of preserved farmland with 50 or more acres to grant a right-of-way for the installation of a wind power generating system. Now, such landowners may grant rights-of-way for other utilities, such as water, sewage, electric, telephone, underground mining and gas- or oil-product lines. The bill would add wind power to that list.

Some farmers have seen benefits from leasing space to wind farms and PFB believes those who operate on preserved farmland shouldn’t be denied that opportunity.

## **Penn State Makes Changes to Extension Operational Structure**

Penn State University is changing the operational structure of its Extension offices, with an effort at building customer relationships. The changes will allow Extension to evolve into the digital age and use technology to showcase services and research available.

Penn State Extension is moving away from the position of district directors and is instead splitting it into two positions: a customer relations manager and a business operations manager. Extension will be organized into 10, multi-county areas. Client relations managers will focus on building county-level support for Extension and its programs and finding ways to best serve communities. The business operations manager will focus on the day-to-day operations of county offices.

As part of the change, all Extension educators will now be part of a unit that works in collaboration with the experts in the College of Agricultural Sciences. Educators will be able to draw on expertise from across the college’s academic departments. Penn State is also working on ways to deliver training and information, including a number of digital products such as videos, webinars and online resources.

“These steps are designed to dramatically improve the relevancy, usability and reach of our programs and services,” said Dennis Calvin, director of Penn State Extension. “The goals are to listen and learn, to match customer needs and priorities with a robust portfolio of science-based information and education.”

## **Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board Alternates Bill Passes House**

A bill that would give the farming community two alternate members on the state Agricultural Lands Condemnation Board has passed the state House.

House Bill 1518, sponsored by Rep. Martin Causer of McKean County, now heads to the Senate for consideration. The board, which meets as needed to review the condemnation of farmland enrolled in Agriculture Security Areas or farmland preservation for highway projects and other measures, includes secretaries from four state agencies and two farmers. The secretaries can select an alternate member to attend meetings if they're not able to make it but the farmers cannot. The bill would change that, allowing two alternate farmer board members, who would be appointed by the governor with consent of the Senate.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports the bill and believes it's important that the farming community has alternates on the board to ensure its voice is heard in the event that one of the farmers on the board is unable to attend a meeting.

## **Farm Bureau Airs Concerns Over Proposed Biotechnology Rules**

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and more than 100 other agriculture groups across the nation are asking the U.S. Department of Agriculture to make changes to its proposed overhaul of regulations governing biotechnology to ensure that the rules don't stymie innovation.

In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, the coalition — which also included American Farm Bureau Federation and other state Farm Bureaus — said the proposed revisions take some bold steps in the right direction but also require significant changes so they do not impose additional barriers.

"The biggest concern for farmers and ranchers is that we obviously want to have confidence in our regulatory system that's based on science, but also fosters an environment of innovation," said Andrew Walmsley, Congressional Relations Director for AFBF. "And if USDA doesn't get this right, the impact would be huge both for competitiveness for U.S. farmers and global markets."

## **Many Pennsylvania Members of Congress Call for Risk-Management Options for Milk**

A bipartisan group of Pennsylvania's representatives in Congress is asking the U.S. Department of Agriculture to treat milk as a separate commodity from livestock for crop insurance purposes and develop risk-management programs to aid dairy producers.

Farm Bureau has advocated for such



steps and applauds the efforts of the group, led by Reps. Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Centre County) and Dwight Evans (D-Philadelphia). Now, livestock and livestock products, such as milk, are not considered commodities for crop insurance purposes.

In their letter to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, the 17 Pennsylvania members wrote that risk-management programs for milk could provide needed relief for dairy farmers struggling from low milk prices as Congress works to improve dairy safety net programs in the 2018 Farm Bill.

## **Farm Bureau Outlines Priorities for NAFTA Renegotiation**

As the federal government prepares to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Farm Bureau is working to ensure that the agricultural community's priorities are considered.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau submitted comments to federal officials emphasizing that trade with Canada and Mexico has been largely positive for Pennsylvania farmers and that any renegotiation of NAFTA should continue to enhance that trade relationship. PFB also recommended areas to improve and modernize the agreement including, overhauling outdated or redundant regulations, expediting transit across borders, hastening the resolution of disputes between NAFTA members, addressing trade barriers related to specific commodities and enacting measures to ensure that U.S. goods are not hampered by issues related to labeling and biotechnology.



American Farm Bureau Federation also submitted comments underscoring the importance of trade to American agriculture and calling for similar reforms to NAFTA.

## **Bill Extending Safe Harbor to Local Taxes Advances**

A Pennsylvania Farm Bureau-supported bill that would make it easier for farmers to estimate local tax payments is advancing in the state Senate.

Now, the state and federal governments allow farms and other businesses to estimate tax payments based on the previous year's tax liability. But local taxing bodies don't give those same "safe harbor" provisions. House Bill 866, sponsored by Rep. George Dunbar of Westmoreland County, would extend those provisions to local taxes.

The bill cleared the Senate Finance Committee and will now be considered by the full chamber. It already passed the House.

PFB believes farmers should be allowed to estimate based on the previous tax year given the difficulty in predicting farm income, which varies widely from year to year and is influenced by market forces, commodity prices and input costs.

## **Deadline to Comply with New Water Rules for Produce Extended**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is pushing back the deadline for produce farmers to comply with new agricultural water regulations as it considers whether to simplify the requirements.

The agency is considering revising the rule in response to criticism that it is overly complex, making it difficult to understand and implement. The regulation, established by the Food Safety Modernization Act, sets microbial quality standards for agricultural water that comes into contact with produce in an effort to prevent contamination.

The FDA has not yet determined how long the compliance deadlines will be extended but said the delay will give the agency a chance to work with stakeholders and offer farmers an opportunity to review their practices.

The original deadlines were staggered by farm size and the first round had been due to adhere to the new standards by January 2018. The extension does not apply to farms that grow sprouts.

## **Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus Program Reaches Milestone**

Four million pounds of food has gone to Pennsylvanians struggling with hunger through a state program that helps connect farmers' surplus with families in need.

The Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus Program helps offset the cost of harvesting, producing and packing goods to be donated, making it easier for farmers and processors to see that their surpluses go to good use.

The program, which Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports, was created in 2010 and first funded in the 2015-2016 state budget. Since then, 78 producers from 39 counties have donated surplus dairy products, produce and meat to food banks, serving 558,000 households statewide, according to the state Department of Agriculture.

## **Time to Apply for YF&R Awards**

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will be accepting applications throughout the summer for three Young Farmer and Rancher contests: Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture Award and Social Media Video Contest. Applications for all three are due by Sept. 1.

The Achievement Award recognizes an individual or couple who has made significant achievements in production agriculture and leadership and who has the majority of their income subject to normal production risks. The Excellence in Agriculture Award has a similar focus but recognizes an individual or couple who does not have the majority of their income subject to normal production risk. The Social Media Video Contest invites participants to make a fun, educational video about a farm or agricultural facility that helps promote modern agricultural practices to consumers.

All applicants for the Achievement and Excellence in Agriculture awards and the first four applicants for the Social Media Video Contest will receive \$50 Visa gift cards for their efforts.

To learn more, review contest guidelines or apply, visit [www.pfb.com/award-applications](http://www.pfb.com/award-applications).

## **Membership Season Kicks Off**

Farm Bureau thrives on volunteer members and now is the time of year to renew your own Farm Bureau membership and help attract new members. PFB memberships signed up for in July are good through the end of 2018. That's 18 months of membership for the price of one year.

PFB leaders and staff held a pair of Growing with Farm Bureau Leadership Conferences at the end of June in Clarion and Montour counties to officially kick off membership season and get county Farm Bureau volunteers the information needed to help grow PFB membership.

Please help PFB expand its ranks by getting involved with membership work in your county.

## **Golf Tournament Raises \$45,000 for Foundation**

Despite bad weather cutting outdoor time short at the 25th Annual Richard Prether Golf Classic, the fundraiser was a major success, bringing in \$45,000 to support the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation's agriculture education and literacy efforts.



More than 120 golfers and dozens of sponsors helped raise funds to support projects, including six Mobile Agriculture Education Science Labs, the "Ag on the Go" program and the weeklong Educator's Ag Institute.

"Pennsylvania farmers want children across the state to have the opportunity to learn about farming, the environment and where their food comes from," said PFB President Rick Ebert, who also serves as foundation Chairman. "Money raised from the golf tournament helps the foundation achieve those goals."

Since the golf classic began in 1993, it has raised more than \$824,000.

## **Agriculture Education Bill Clears State House**

A Pennsylvania Farm Bureau-supported effort to beef up agriculture education in Pennsylvania's public schools has cleared the state House. House Bill 944, by Rep. Mark Keller of Perry County, now heads to the Senate for consideration.

The measure would combine now-separate efforts into a new Commission for Agricultural Education, which would be responsible for developing agricultural educational standards and curriculum, connecting students with careers in agriculture, and help facilitate FFA.

## Show Us Your Farm Bureau Pride!

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is encouraging members throughout 2017 to highlight their farms on social media and tell why they are Farm Bureau Proud!

The men and women of agriculture have the most scenic offices: views of beautiful sunsets, open fields and growing crops. You also have the chance to see the fruit of your labor, be it healthy animals, or a bountiful harvest.

We're asking members to share those pictures that showcase your efforts. Make sure to tag PFB on Facebook when posting your photo and use the hashtag #PFBproud for both Facebook and Instagram.

PFB will share some of these great photos on its social media accounts and may use some of the images during our Annual Meeting or other events. Social media is a great way for us in agriculture to tell our story and help the public understand the work we do every day.

## PFB Helps Change Animal Weights Proposal

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau successfully influenced changes to the state's Nutrient Management Program that could have caused some livestock farmers to fall under increased regulations.

The State Conservation Commission is changing provisions to the state's Nutrient Management Program governing Standard Animal Weights. Standard Animal Weights are used to determine if farmers fall under Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) or Concentrated Animal Operation (CAO). So raising those average weights could push more farmers into CAFO and CAO designations—which increases permitting and environmental regulations.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau research found the initial proposal by the State Conservation Commission for animals such as chickens, pigs and dairy cattle fell above average for weights determined by universities or industry groups. PFB's research was generally implemented for the final animal weights as proposed by the State Conservation Commission.

## Member Benefit Spotlight PFB Members Can Save on Ford, Lincoln Vehicles

In the market for a new truck to help on the farm or even a fresh set of wheels for getting around? Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members can now save hundreds of dollars off the price tags of new Ford and Lincoln vehicles.

The Ford Special Offer — available now through the end of the year — offers PFB members \$500 bonus cash toward the purchase or lease of a Ford model or \$750 bonus cash toward the purchase or lease of a Lincoln. All new 2016, 2017 and 2018 Ford and Lincoln models, including hybrids and clearance models, are eligible except for certain specialty models. Non-eligible vehicles include Mustang Shelby 350 and 350R, Ford GT, Focus RS and F-150 Raptor.

To take advantage of the discount, simply register for the offer at [www.pfb.com/ford](http://www.pfb.com/ford) and print a certificate to present at time of purchase at a dealership near you. You must have been a member for at least 30 days prior to the purchase to be eligible.

“Ford Motor Company remains dedicated to expanding our Farm Bureau association and we could not be more pleased than to now work with the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau,” Kevin Cour, Director of U.S. Retail Operations, said. “Ford continues to support the ever-important sector of agriculture and farming for what it means to those wholly committed to feeding the nation - and the world - in regularly challenged economic and environmental conditions. If we can help this vital group of hard-working Americans to own an F-150, the nation's best-selling truck for 40 years, our nation's farmers get equipment that can work as hard as they do.”

For more information about Ford and Lincoln models available or to find a dealership near you, visit: [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com).

## Attorney General Launches ACRE Website

The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General has launched a new website that can be used to lodge and track complaints made through the Agriculture, Communities and Rural Environment (ACRE) law.

The 2005 law directs the attorney general to review local ordinances at the request of farmers and step in when the local rules prohibit or restrict agriculture operations that would otherwise be allowed by state law.

The website includes a chart with the status of current ACRE cases and related documents. It can be accessed at: [www.attorneygeneral.gov/ACRE](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov/ACRE). The office can accept ordinance-review requests by mail, phone or a new email address: [ACRE@attorneygeneral.gov](mailto:ACRE@attorneygeneral.gov).

## Campground Offers Discount to Farm Bureau Members

Buttonwood Campgrounds in Juniata County is offering Farm Bureau members up to a 25 percent discount for reservations.

The campground, along the Juniata River outside Mifflintown, provides a 25 percent discount to Farm Bureau members for any weekday stay, Monday through Thursday. The campground is also offering a 10 percent discount for rentals on Friday through Sunday. Buttonwood is open from April 15 to Oct. 31 and offers RV and tent sites and also rents out cabins.

Farm Bureau members only need to show their Farm Bureau membership card when they show up at check-in. The campground features a number of amenities—a number geared for children and families. Buttonwood rents out canoes, kayaks and also tubing, and will also shuttle boats to a launch point up river. Kids can also ride pedal cars, play laser tag and take advantage of the playground equipment at the campground. There are also themed weekends throughout the year.

Buttonwood takes reservations by phone or online. Any discount will be applied to Farm Bureau members when they arrive at the campground for check-in. For more information visit: [buttonwoodcamp.com](http://buttonwoodcamp.com).