

NRCS Fall State Technical Committee Meeting

9:00am Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Agenda attached.

Meeting called to order by Amanda Mathis, Asst. State Conservationist, at 9:00am.

Members present:

See attached list - 86 participants

Welcome & Opening Remarks – Mike Sullivan

- Provided an update on NRCS activities
 - EQIP
 - Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Pilot
 - National Civil Rights Award Received
 - Chiefs Awards – Canton Ford, Mark Robinson, Melissa LeCrone, and Amanda Mathis
- FEVS shows Arkansas NRCS higher employee satisfaction than NRCS nationally or regionally.
- Training for employees continues to be a strong need and challenging due to covid.
- Worked with conservation districts to provide training, outreach, and education to stakeholders.
- Focus continues with climate smart agriculture, especially rice and forestry
- Expand locally led conservation efforts targeting urban conservation as one of the priorities
- Dedicated to improving training avenues until in-person meetings can be held
- Covid is a concern related to safety for employees, but field offices have adapted, and landowners needs continue to be met
- Vaccine requirements are being updated related to contractor and vendors
- Infrastructure Bill includes watershed funding, etc.
- Mentoring Program for employees was rolled out in FY21

Subcommittee Reports

- **Grassland** – Jeremy Huff, State Grazing Specialist
 - No formal recommendations from Spring meeting but discussed new standards for which payment scenarios are being developed
 - Pasture training – 3,000+ participants in 2021

- 25% is partners, landowners, etc. involved
 - Thanked AACD for their support in hosting these virtual trainings
 - Thanked multiple speakers, ACA, AGLC, etc.
- **Water Quality** – Canton Ford, Water Quality Specialist
 - NWQI & MRBI & RCPP updates and planning process
 - Katie Mann, NRD – Nutrient Reduction Strategy Status
 - No official recommendations made
 - Breegan Andersen, TNC asked if two stage ditches could be increased for adoption
 - 3 NWQI Projects with continued funding- Bush Creek, Roberts Creek, Departee Creek, some projects receiving a bit less due to funding cut in AR allocation.
 - Reviewing and adding information to existing Watershed Assessment in Planning Phase
 - Greasy Creek
 - North Fork Cadron Creek
 - Saline headwaters
 - Little Strawberry
 - Cossatot River
 - Lower Bayou Bartholomew
 - Will write Upper Village Creek Watershed in Lawrence and Randolph Counties
- **Energy Subcommittee** – Britt Hill, State Energy Specialist
 - Possibility of use of solar options for poultry operations is being investigated
 - Reported on the meeting which discussed energy needs for poultry houses; solar, etc.
 - **Recommendation** – update Code 374, Scenario 1 for FY23
 - Make the fans smaller to 36” and up due to demands by integrators
 - Smaller fans are more efficient and makes houses cooler
 - Done in other regions and have shown improvements
- **Soil Health Subcommittee** – Keith Scoggins
 - Updates on soil hemp project – not planted but hope to move to the State Plant Board
 - Soil Health Manual is being developed
 - Research continues various practices
 - Practice code 336 (was 808 interim practice) using soil amendments has been accepted
 - NRCS, U of A DOA, ASHA will host another joint training being planned for May 2022

- Implementing cover crops and the creation of a guide document for NRCS to provide to landowners on planting dates, termination dates, etc.
- Spring Meeting will be held in February 2022.
- **Alternative Crops – Troyce Barnett**
 - Discussed 808 Soil Amendment for approval (compost application on the farm to deposit organic matter)
 - Looking at two scenarios- 3 tons of organic matter applied and 1 ton
 - Encouraging this practice
 - Looking at no-till, strip tillage, pest management, mulching
 - Biochar is one of the activities being discussed
 - Urban and Rural Agriculture – opening practices to help enhance these efforts
 - Climate Smart practices are being incorporated
- **Water Quantity – Cory Perrin, Water Quantity Specialist**
 - No recommendation currently
 - Recommends further study with input from other states (California) regarding practices 815/817
 - Existing conservation practices can impact the water quantity and aquifer
 - Land leveling practice and question of reducing minimum yardage requirement – needs more study
- **Wildlife Subcommittee – James Baker**
 - Feral pigs – 450 properties (400,000 acres with 9,000 pigs removed)
 - Working lands for wildlife - \$550,000 spent and the practices
 - Forest Stand Improvements
 - Firebreaks
 - Prescribed burning
 - **Recommendation** – lack of winter water for waterfowl
 - Practice 646 is being utilized in CSP at 45,000 acres per year.
 - Want to increase that number of acres by elevating Code 646 (Shallow water) to a high priority practice for EQIP.
- **Forestry – Doug Akin**
 - Charley Williams provided an overview on Keeping It in the Family
 - Joint Chiefs Proposal was reviewed
 - AR-LA RCPP discussed
 - Small group has been created to discuss a variety of issues related to silvopasture.
 - Discussed some other practices that have lower TPA that might be used for wildlife rather than Silvopasture (i.e. 666)
- **Comments**
 - John McAlpine – asked by Biochar and its limitation

- Troyce Barnett – subcommittee was concerned about the availability of biochar before opening it up as a practice
- Biochar plant in Monticello but not working due to lack of market which might help move Biochar forward as a practice
- U of A DOA released a new Biochar fact sheet, it was provided for meeting attendees to view.

Formation of New Subcommittees

- **Urban Conservation** – Helen Denniston
 - Urban Agriculture was made a priority for NRCS by Secretary Vilsack
 - NRCS is at the forefront of this effort and is taking steps to ensure that our urban agriculture producers receive technical and financial assistance to remain sustainable.
 - An Urban Agriculture Subcommittee being created
 - The Specialty and Alternative Crop Sub-Committee has historically provided input on urban agriculture previously.
 - Using the input from the Specialty and Alternative Crop Subcommittee, AR NRCS, implemented EQIP scenarios that address small scale/urban agriculture farmers in 2019
 - Currently urban agriculture producers can apply under EQIP for financial assistance to install conservation practices address soil health, irrigation and water conservation and other resource concerns.
 - Various funding pools are available to assist small farms with their operation
 - Helen Denniston asked for volunteers to serve on this new subcommittee.
 - Amanda Perez, U of A DOA was a recommendation by Dr. Mike Daniels
 - Debbie Moreland, AACD, volunteered to serve on this subcommittee
 - Martha Manley, Lee County, volunteered to serve
 - Levell Foote would like to serve on this subcommittee
 - Conaly Bedell, Sebastian County CD, volunteered to serve
 - Charley Williams would like to serve
 - Brenda Williams with Communications Unlimited was recommended to serve.

Outreach, Equity, and Inclusion – Alvin Peer

- New Subcommittee – purpose is to advise the State Conservationist and others by identifying obstacles as we seek to improve outreach, equity and inclusion in all programs.

- Many times, implicit bias occurs without any real intent but has impacts
- Racial impacts need to be acknowledged and addressed
- Outreach – meeting people where they are regardless of their knowledge and/or size of the farm
- Equity – farmer wants the same information
- Inclusion – what is available and what is needed for Arkansas going forward
- Decision making – small choices can be significant, making conscience choices to address implicit bias can lead to lasting change.
- Alvin asked for volunteers to serve on the committee
 - Brentney Sargent, KKAC Organization
 - Dr. Calvin King
 - Debbie Moreland
 - Dr. Mike Daniels
 - Charley Williams
 - Wilbur Peer

Mike Daniels introduced a new NRCS/UADA shared staff person, Dr. Kishan Mahmud who is the new Soil Health Ecologist. He will be helping identify key ecological

Private Lands Partners Day 2022 – Ted Zawislak, AGFC

- Arkansas Private Lands Stewardship Alliance
 - Created in 2019 but has been active since 2010
 - Targeted private lands professionals
 - 21 members – state, federal agencies, NGOs, etc. and anyone who works with private lands is welcome to join us
 - Worked with IRWP to submit a proposal to host Private Land Partners Day to showcase AR Partnerships working on Private Lands.
- **Partnerscapes**
 - Promotes public/private partnership
 - Works to grow and leverage conservation funding
 - Supports local, watershed and/or place-based conservation efforts
 - Annually hosts Private Lands Partners Day
 - Landowners and conservation partners
 - 200 folks attend
 - Opening reception, field trip, conference day, closing dinner and benefit auction
 - Field trip highlights conservation partnership work “near” the conference site
 - Conference day features stories from host state and from around the country

- Locations shown from 2008 – 2021 some on-site but last two years have been virtual due to Covid
- 2022 – Northwest Arkansas
- An opportunity to highlight agriculture and conservation community
 - Need good attendance from landowners and professionals
 - Attract national and state leaders
- **Save the Date – October 4 – 6, 2022**

Source Water Protection – Edgar Mersiovsky

- Source Water Protection Priority Areas (see map)
 - Some are for water quality and others in groundwater quality
 - Practices
 - Most of the practices are in east Arkansas
 - NWQI practices provided the funding to protect source water
 - FY21 SWP Local Priority Areas
 - CAW, Little Rock
 - Beaver Water District, NW Arkansas
 - Practices included (graph shown)
 - FY22 SWP Local Priority Areas
 - Same as FY 21 with additions:
 - Conway Corp, Faulkner County
 - Clarksville Water Supply, Johnson/Franklin Counties
 - Funding opportunities
 - National Water Quality Initiative
 - RCPP
 - Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative

Program Updates

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** – Corey Cornelious (power point)
 - Climate Smart – Pilot Program
- Oct 8, 2021, announced the sign up for FY 2022 EQIP program general sign up news release was announced
- FY 2022 EQIP Implementation Schedule will be released soon
- New Ranking Tools for FY 2022 includes: Seasonal High tunnels and Climate Smart Agriculture Forestry (CSAF)
 - FY21 as a pilot program but FY22 will have new funding pools as well as our current pools
- CSAF – Arkansas was one of 10 states that participated in FY 2021 EQIP pilot signup for this program

- Core conservation practices were selected based on their ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon in the soil.
- The signup was offered along several of the lower MS Delta counties which carried the large population of HU producers, etc.
 - Pilot counties: Arkansas, Jefferson, Phillips, St. Francis, Desha, Crittenden, Lee, Lincoln
 - Core practices defined
 - Supporting practices defined in power point
 - 24 applications submitted with 19 selected for \$1,036, 728.51 – 2,377.1 acres impacted
- EQIP obligated over \$51 million statewide for conservation
- Decision has not been finalized on what counties will be involved in FY22 CSAF and may have a special sign-up.

High Priority Practices – Clyde Williams (power point)

- NRCS, with input from the STC, may designate up to 10 practices to be eligible for increased payment for conservation practices
- FY 2022 is proposing to designate 3 practices that were recommended in subcommittee meetings as High Priority Practices:
 - CPS 329 Residue & Tillage Management
 - CPS 340 Cover Crops
 - CPS 646 Shallow water development & management
- Practices that high potential for conservation benefits but are underutilized (329 & 646)
- Practices with underutilized practice purpose (340)
- High priority practices may have a high payment rate (up to 90%)
 - Decision has not been finalized
 - No additional funds, so any funding changes will come from other programs
 - NRCS will encourage participants but careful not to undermine the other funding pools negatively.

Local Led Workgroup – Lori Barker (power point)

- 2021 LLWG = \$18,482,542.68 million with 632 contracts impacting 115, 807 acres
- FY 2022 LLWG
 - Provided training to field offices on 2022 process to collect LLWG information
 - LLWG Meetings were held by Sept 12, 2021
- Information

- 17 questions in attempt to broaden the discussion beyond just EQIP FA allocations. Included:
 - Impaired watersheds
 - Need for new projects
 - Practices
 - Urban Agriculture
 - 21 counties responded with Urban interest
 - Interest in increasing for backyard vegetable production
 - High tunnels
 - Micro-irrigation
 - Demand for locally grown produce
- FY21 CIG approved, Ecosystems Protective Services, LLC
 - The Field Set-Aside Pilot Project – three practices
- 2022 CIG Areas of Concern
 - Nutrient and Sediment Reduction in Impaired Watersheds
 - Demonstrates effectiveness of high potential conservation practices
 - Irrigation
 - Elevate cropping systems
 - Demonstrate irrigation techniques
 - Drones
 - IWM for alternative crops to provide instructional documents to producers
 - Soil Health
- Comments need to be by mid-December 2021 to Lori Barker for potential ideas for CIG projects

Partnership Programs – Dianne Schlenker (power point)

- Dianne Schlenker and Roger Cousins co-chair this effort
 - Nine projects which requested funding with watershed assessments with assistance from private entity and conservation districts
 - Received approval and conducted watershed assessments in:
 - County Line Strawberry
 - Flat Hills
 - North Big Creek
 - Glad-Raft White Oak Creek
 - Lower White Bayou Des Arc
 - Lee County
 - Arkansas County Lower White

- Flat Rock
 - Phillips County Water Quality Project
- Submitted 5 of the projects to be moved to implementation phase in FY22- all 5 were approved.
- The remaining watershed assessments remain valid should NRCS seek to move them into implementation phase later on.
- **MRBI Implementation Phase Funding**
 - 14 projects - \$13,831,939 funded with EQIP FY 2022
 - Application Cutoff for consideration of Ranking 12/17/2021
 - Ranking and Cost Estimates
 - 2 Phase Process
 - Readiness Phase
 - 1 new Readiness Phase MRBI for FY22– Cache Watershed
 - Implementation Phase
 - Second year starts managing the program with funding cycles
 - 4-year budget
 - EQIP & CSP
 - Financial assistance for EQIP 75/25
 - Concentrates on system approach using core and supporting practices
 - Priority Watersheds (map)
 - Contact NRCS if you want additional areas to consider for MRBI project
 - Need to start identifying FY 2023 planning phase projects now
- **RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership)**
 - FY22 – 6 projects
 - Mid-South Graduated Water Stewardship -USA Rice
 - AR-MS Conservation & Soil Consortium – KKAC Easement Project
 - East Arkansas Delta Regional Conservation Project - EAEC
 - AR-LA CDN Open Pine Landscape Restoration – American Bird Conservancy
 - Restore the Earth Foundation – Easement Project
 - Buffalo River Watershed Partnership – TNC
 - Total - \$5,860,000 FA available for FY22
 - 165 partners have been involved in RCPP overall
 - Overall funding is much larger when partners contribution is included

- Mike Sullivan commented on how much NRCS appreciates staff and partners for making this program a success

Conservation Stewardship Program – Clyde Williams (power point)

- Top FY 2021 CSP Activities
 - Forestland
 - Concentrated erosion
 - Pest pressure
 - Fire management
 - Degraded plant condition
 - Prescribed burning
 - Others are show in Power point
 - Agriculture land
 - Practices shown in power point
- Looking ahead in FY 2022
 - Organic and Transitioning producers continue to have a unique opportunity to apply for CSP
 - CSP – Organic Activities
 - Alternative Subcommittee are asked to help get the word out as well as others
 - CSP State Priority Resource Concerns
 - Ag Land (Cropland and Pastures)
 - Forest Land

Easements and Watershed Programs – Randy Childress

- Watershed program – filled vacancies to implement projects such as Departee Creek project
- West Fork and White River – existing watershed plan which is being amended to add streambank stabilization and construction funds will be requested in 2022
- Lake Bennett – finalize watershed plans with local engineer firm
- Muddy Fork Site #1 – decommissioning the dam and working with local conservation district
- Grand Prairie Irrigation and Drainage Project – construction is ongoing with \$62 million committed to that project – Contracts in 2022 to get water down to Hazen
- Bayou Meto Irrigation and Drainage Project – funding requests are being pushed in 2022
- \$500 million available for watershed funding
- Randy thanked the partners for their support in these projects
- Preliminary Planning Investigation Program – evaluation of projects

- Lee, Phillips, and St. Francis Counties
- Osage Creek has also requested consideration for planning
- Easements- Arkansas led the nation with \$14 million for easements
- \$5 million with Mississippi River Trust with 12% delegated to HU landowners
- Tri-State - 50% funds dedicated to HU landowners
- Arkansas – 286,000 acres with 750 easements
 - 266,000 acres restored
 - Still leading the nation on these easements
- Recommendation – take 10% of our easement allocation (\$14 million = \$1.4 million) and set up a separate ranking tool for HU landowners. Funds not spent roll back into the general funding pool. No objections were voiced.

Open Discussion

- EPA – Randall Rush
 - Rod Snyder has been appointed to be Senior Policy Advisor for Administrator Regan.
 - EPA Farm, Ranch, Rural Communities Committee – EPA is hosting the Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Advisory Committee (FRRCC) public meeting virtually on November 15-16, 2021, The purpose of this meeting is to discuss recommendations on (1) creating a holistic pesticide program for the future and (2) supporting interagency environmental benchmarks with interagency partners on the issues of water quality and quantity and food loss and waste.
 - WOTUS Update – seeking roundtables to provide input on the regional implications of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS)..
 - EPA Farmer to Farmer Grant RFP due out in early December, 2021.
 -

Closing Remarks & Adjourn – Mike Sullivan, AR NRCS State Conservationist

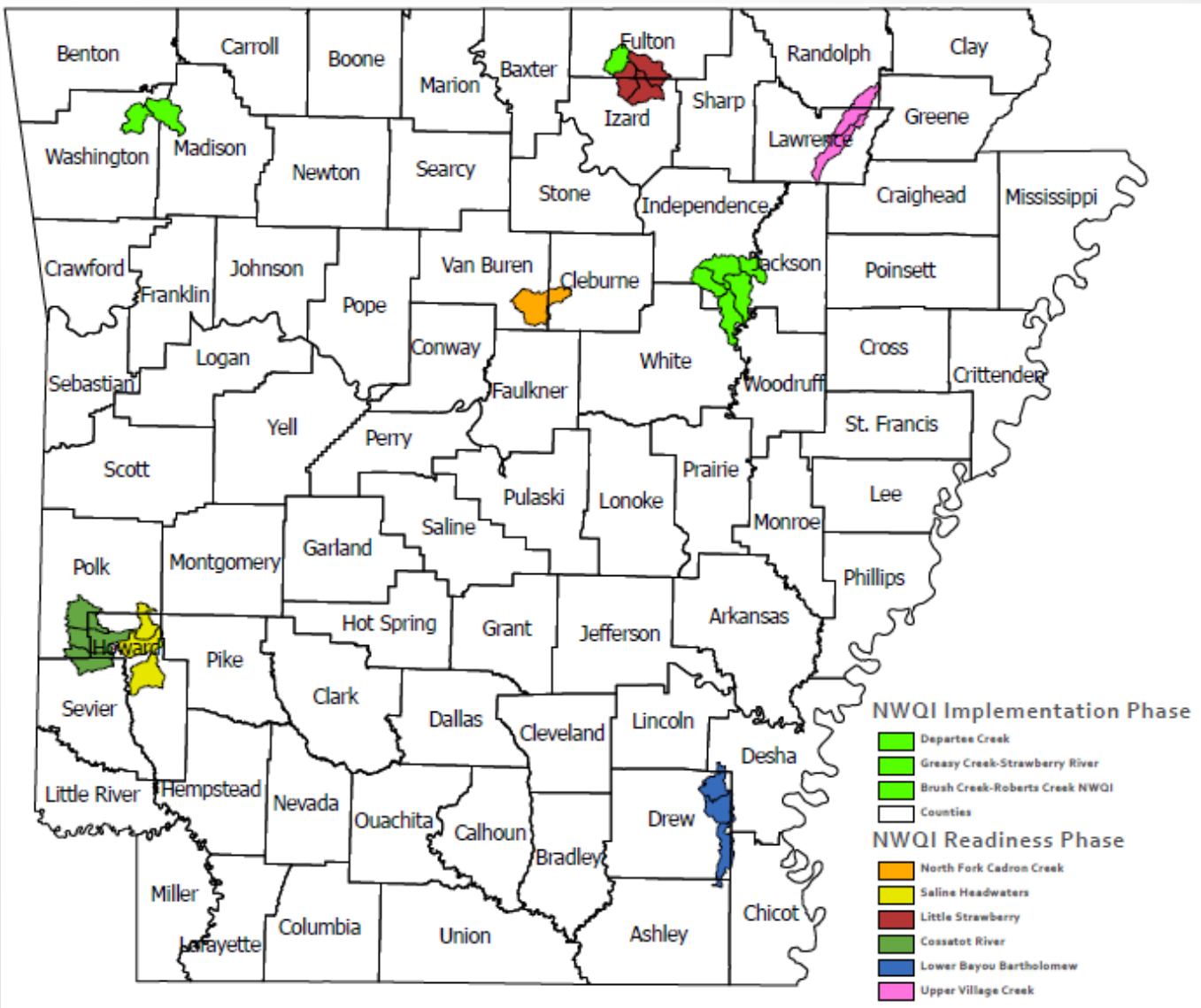
- Thanked everyone for their participation and work to help landowners “help the land” regardless of the program and/or project.
- Pace of change continues to evolve rapidly
- Thankful for the partnership and the successes
- Encourages the group to think about what we can achieve in the future

Meeting adjourned at 11:50am.

FY22 FALL WATER QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE CANTON FORD, WATER QUALITY SPECIALIST

- ▶ Covered NWQI, MRBI, and RCPP updates and planning process
- ▶ Katie Mann, ADA-ANRD spoke about Nutrient Reduction Strategy Status
 - ▶ Use a tiered process and trend analysis to select priority watersheds
- ▶ No official recommendations made
 - ▶ Breegan Anderson, TNC – spoke about increasing adoption of two stage ditches. We are working with engineering staff on this subject outside of State Technical Committee

NWQI UPDATE



	Planned FY22	Proposed Cuts	Remaining
Brush Creek-Roberts Creek	\$726,698	\$310,484	\$416,214
Departee Creek	\$1,201,988	\$101,988	\$1,100,000
Greasy Creek-Strawberry River	\$237,957	\$0	\$237,957
Totals	\$2,166,643	\$412,472	\$1,754,171

- Brush Creek-Roberts Creek receiving largest cut in funding
- Working with DC's on any current needs for projects
- Reviewing and adding information to existing Watershed Assessments in Planning Phase
 - North Fork Cadron Creek
 - Saline Headwaters
 - Little Strawberry
 - Cossatot River
 - Lower Bayou Bartholomew
- Will write Upper Village Creek Watershed Assessment this year



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Helen Denniston State Resources Conservationist

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Under the leadership of Secretary Tom Vilsack, USDA has made urban agriculture a priority within the Department.



NRCS is at the forefront of this effort and is taking steps to ensure that our urban agriculture producers receive technical and financial assistance to remain sustainable.

NRCS is committed to using a locally led process to address urban agriculture. To ensure that we are on point with the needs of our urban producers NRCS will be establishing an urban agriculture sub-committee of the State Technical Committee



The Urban Agriculture sub-committee will provide input on urban agricultural issues and concerns; provide feedback on technical and financial assistance programs; and present new ideas on how NRCS can assist these producers.



Arkansas NRCS has always recognized the role that urban agriculture plays within the state.

The Specialty and Alternative Crop Sub-committee has historically provided input on urban agriculture.



Using the input from the Specialty and
Alternative Crop Sub-committee
Arkansas NRCS implemented several
EQIP scenarios that address urban
agriculture and small farmers in 2019.



Currently, urban agriculture producers can apply under EQIP for financial assistance to install conservation practices to address soil health, irrigation and water conservation, and other resource concerns.



I am excited as we establish this new sub-committee! I will be reaching out to State Technical Committee members, partners and others to find members for this committee.



If you are interested in serving as an urban agriculture sub-committee member, please let me know by dropping me an email or giving me a call.

Helen Denniston

Helen.Denniston@usda.gov

Phone: 970-556-8913



Urban Agriculture

Helen Denniston
State Resource Conservationist
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Arkansas Private Lands Stewardship Alliance



Arkansas Private Lands Stewardship Alliance



- **3 Officers**
- **21 Members**
- **14 Different State/Federal Agencies or NGO's**
- **Group was officially formed in 2019 but most partners have been implementing Private Lands trainings since 2012**



What Partnerscapes Does



- Promotes public/private partnerships
- Works to grow & leverage conservation funding
- Supports local, watershed and/or place-based conservation efforts
- Communicates, educates and shares on-the-ground challenges and successes
- Hosts Private Lands Partners Day annually

What is Private Lands Partners Day

- Landowners and conservation partners from 30 plus states
- Attendance around 200
- Opening reception, field trip day, conference day, closing dinner and benefit auction
- Field trip highlights conservation partnership work “near” the conference site
- Conference day features stories from host state and from around the country



Private Lands Partners Day

Where Have We Been

2008 – Montana

2009 – Colorado

2010 – Kansas

2011 – South Dakota

2012 – California

2013 – Wyoming

2014 – Mississippi

2015 – Nebraska

2016 – Florida

2017 – Maine

2018 – Missouri

2019 – Utah

2020 – Virtual

2021 - Virtual

2022 – Northwest Arkansas

An Opportunity for the Arkansas Agriculture and Conservation Community

- Half of attendees typically come from the host state
- Have attracted national and state leaders
- Sponsors have grown to include state, federal, nongovernment, academic and corporate
- Opportunity to show off the great work getting done in Arkansas
- Learn about partnerships in other states



Save the Date – October 4-6, 2022 – Fayetteville





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Fall 2021 State Technical Committee Meeting

Arkansas NRCS

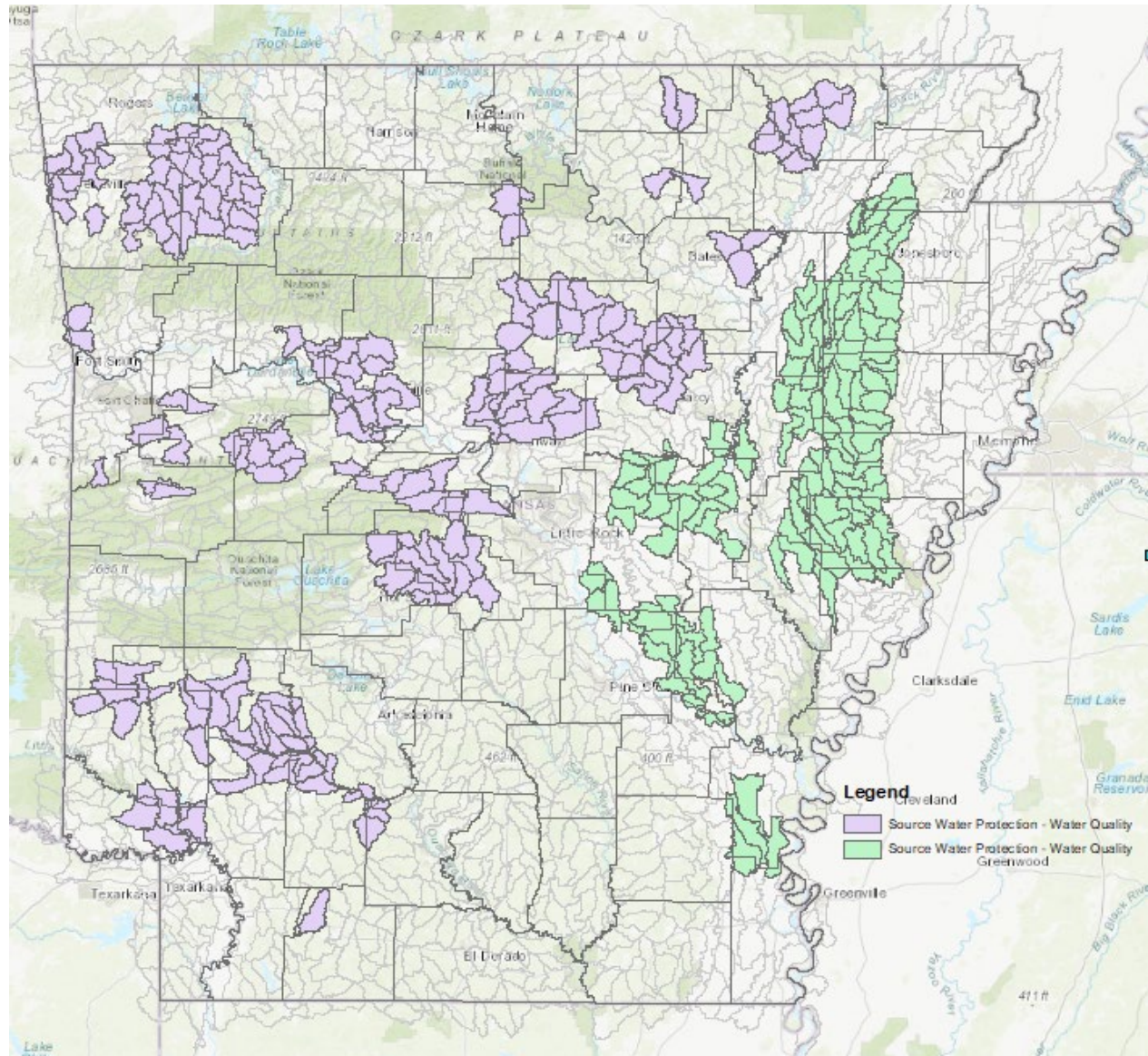
Edgar Mersiovsky, State Soil Scientist
edgar.mersiovsky@usda.gov

Source Water Protection

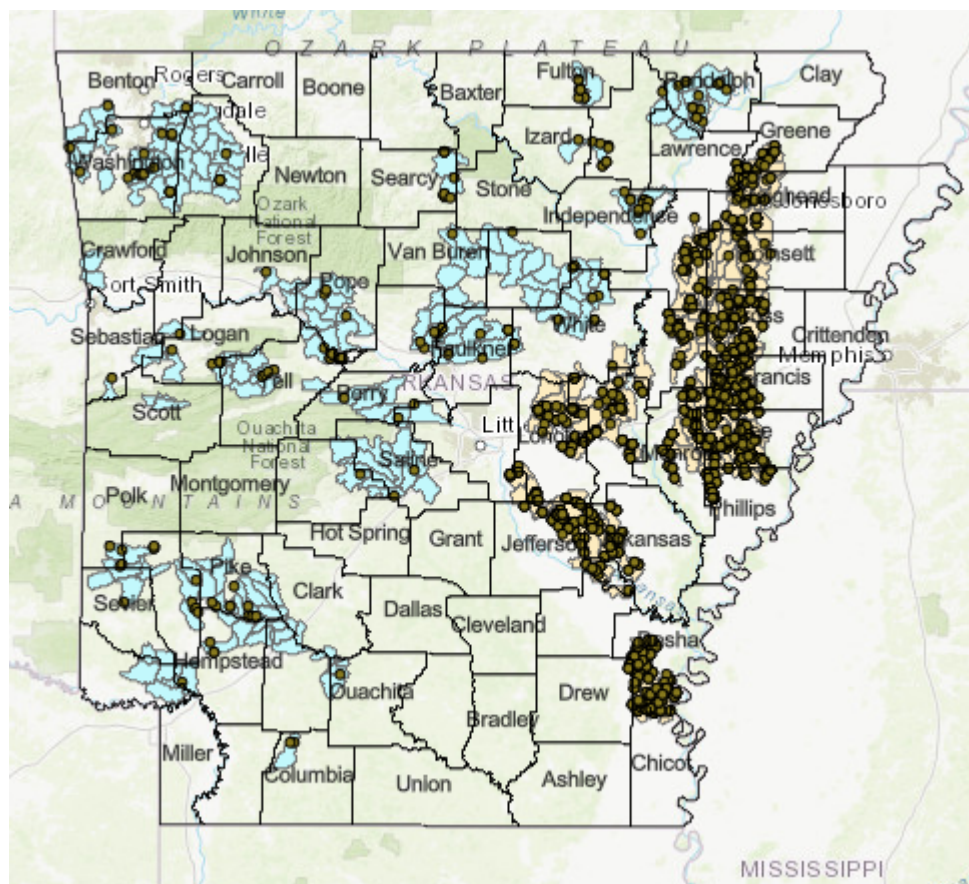
Farm Production and Conservation

FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

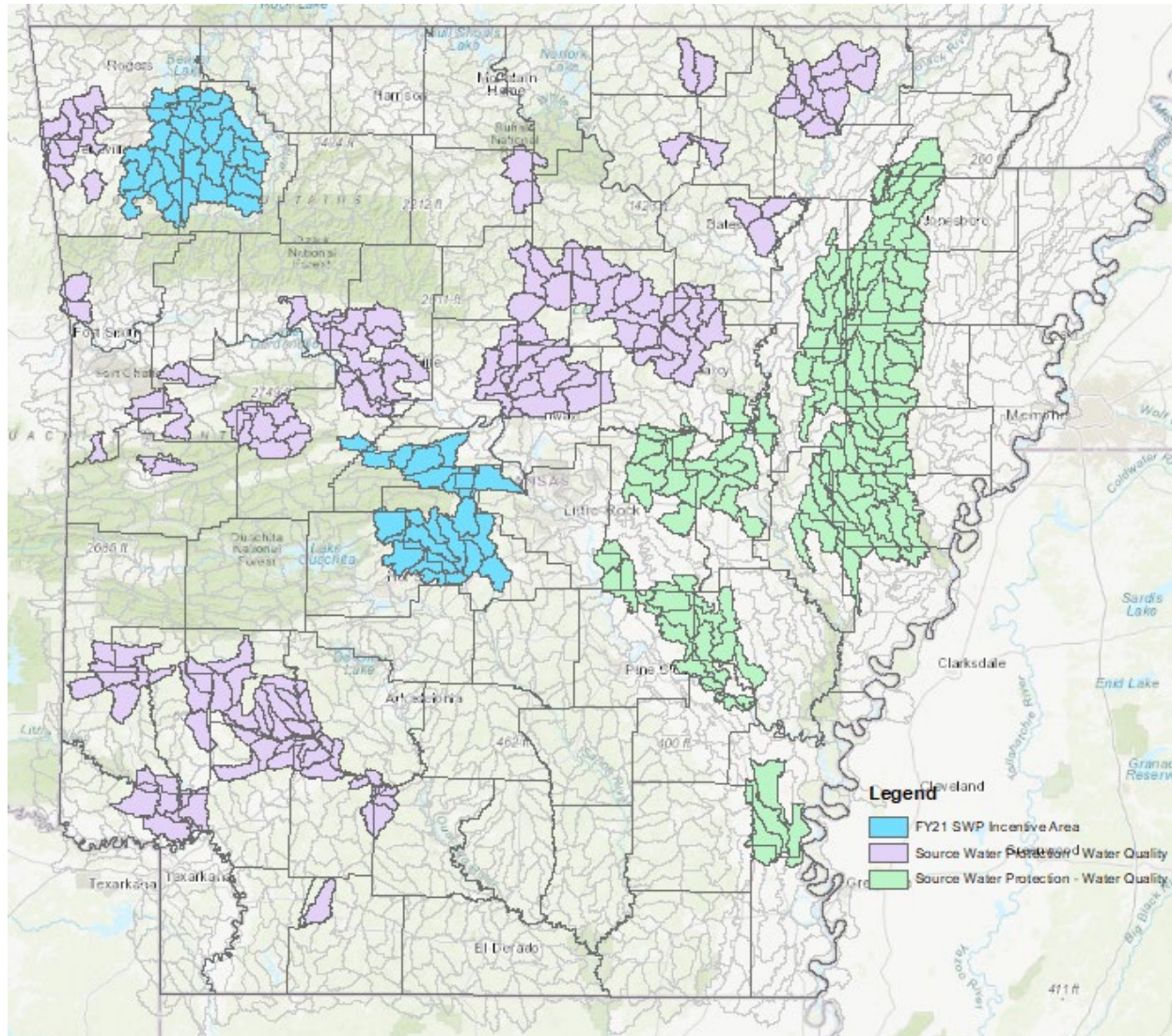
Source Water Protection Priority Areas



Source Water Protection Priority Practices



FY21 SWP Local Priority Area



Source Water Protection Local Priority Practices

SWP Core Practices	Code
Conservation Cover	327
Conservation Crop Rotation	328
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	329
Cover Crop	340
Critical Area Planting	342
Waste Facility Closure	360
Field Border	386
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390
Riparian Forest Buffer	391
Filter Strip	393





NRCS Programs for Source Water Protection – Additional Funding Opportunities

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative





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EQIP Updates

Corey Cornelious
EQIP Program Manager

FY 2022 EQIP Sign-Up

- On Oct 8th, 2021, the FY 2022 EQIP program general sign-up news release was announced with NRCS accepting applications through Nov 19th, 2021. Applications received after this date will be considered in later funding periods, subject to availability of funds.
- The FY 2022 EQIP Implementation Schedule will be released soon.
- New Ranking Pools for FY 2022 includes: Seasonal High Tunnels and Climate Smart Agriculture Forestry (CSAF).

Climate Smart Agriculture Forestry (CSAF)

- Arkansas was identified as one of ten states that participated in the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) pilot sign-up. As part of a whole of government approach to tackling the climate crisis, USDA has developed a Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) strategy that recognizes the important role that agriculture and forestry will play in climate change mitigation and resilience. The purpose of the targeted EQIP signup was for CSAF to prioritize the adoption conservation practices and systems that mitigate greenhouse gasses (GHG) and to ensure the availability of the assistance for socially disadvantaged producers and forest land managers.
- Core conservation practices were selected based on their ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon in the soil. In addition, core practices were grouped into climate change mitigation categories, representing different methods and types of partnerships through which voluntary conservation can effectively support GHG reductions.
- The signup was offered along several of the Lower Mississippi Delta counties which carried Arkansas' largest number of Historically Underserved, specifically Socially Disadvantaged, applicants and the largest backlog of the core unfunded CSAF practices.

CSAF Continued

- Counties selected for the CSAF FY21 Pilot: Arkansas, Jefferson, Phillips, Desha, St Francis, Crittenden, Lee, Lincoln, Monroe
- Categories: Soil Health, Nitrogen Management, Rice
- Core Practices: Conservation Cover, Conservation Crop Rotation, Residue and Tillage Management, Cover Crop, Field Border, Filter Strip, Nutrient Management, Irrigation Water Management (AWD & Row Rice)
- Supporting Practices: Irrigation Land Leveling, Irrigation Pipeline, Structure for Water Control, Grade Stabilization Structure.
- 24 Applications Received - 19 Total Contracts Selected - \$1,036,728.51 Obligated – 2,377.1 Acres Impacted

High Priority Practices

- NRCS, with input from the State technical committee, may designate up to 10 practices to be eligible for increased payments for conservation practices.
- For FY 2022, Arkansas is proposing to designate 3 practices that were recommended in subcommittee meetings as High Priority Practices: CPS 329 Residue & Tillage Management, No-Till, CPS 340 Cover Crop, and CPS 646 Shallow Water Development & Management.
- Practices that have high potential for conservation benefit but are underutilized(329 & 646).
- Practices with an underutilized practice purpose(340).



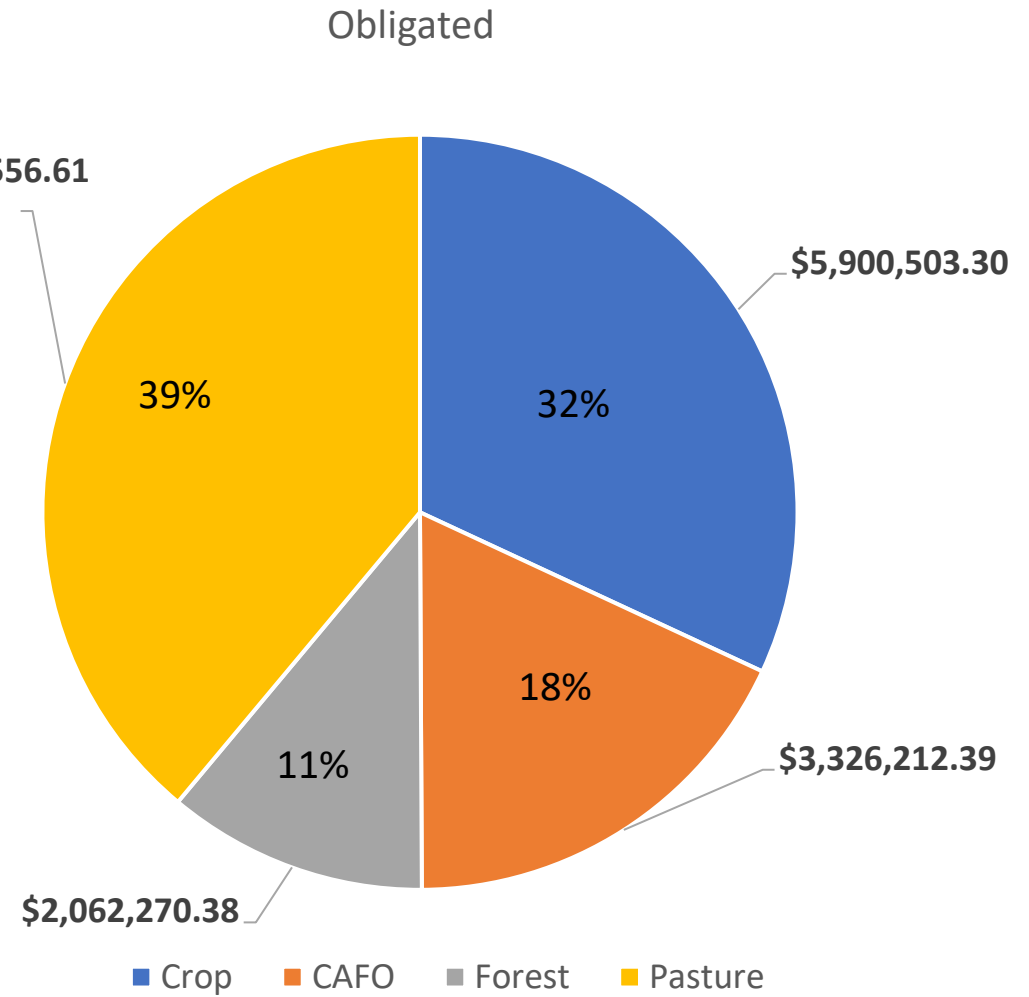
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LLWG & CIG Updates

Lori Barker
Resource Conservationist

2021 LLWG Program

Landuse	Obligated	contracts	Ac.
Crop	\$5,900,503.30	101	44,200.10
CAFO	\$3,326,212.39	65	3,389.10
Forest	\$2,062,270.38	112	14,645.20
Pasture	\$7,193,556.61	354	53,573.10
Totals	\$18,482,542.68	632	115,807.50



2022 LLWG Program

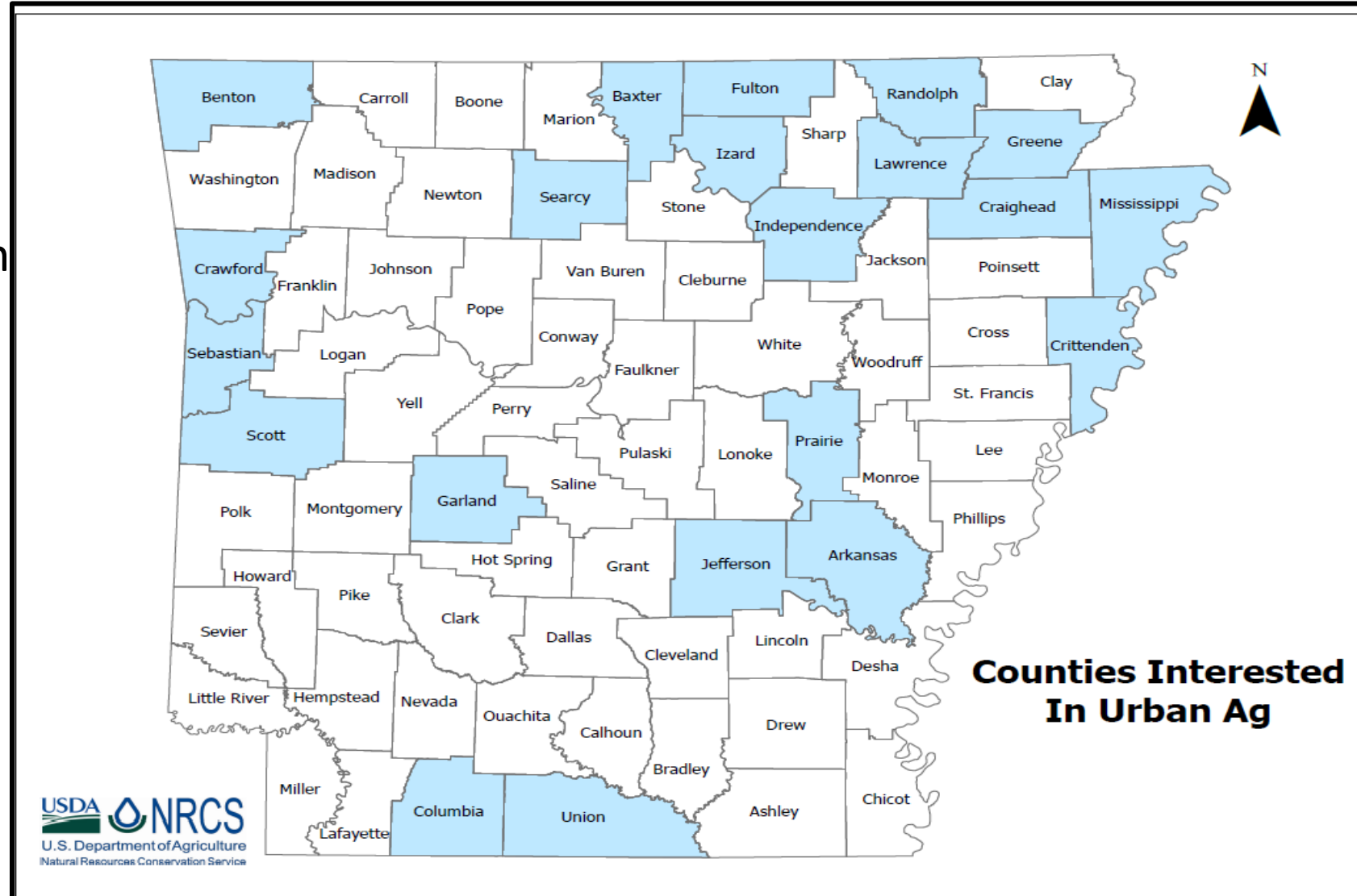
- ❖ Provided Training to Field Offices on 2022 Process to collect LLWG information
- ❖ LLWG Meetings held by Sept 12
- ❖ LLWG summary of County information to provide to subcommittees to address local concerns.
- ❖ LLWG information for resource questions to address local issue through ranking process.

Information from LLWG

- 17 Questions developed based on (summarized):
 - ✓ Impaired watersheds
 - ✓ Need for new projects and what type(RCPP, MRBI, NWQI watershed)and agreements
 - ✓ Practices
 - ✓ Urban Agriculture interest
 - ✓ CSP interest and needs

Urban Agriculture interest 36% from LLWG

- 21 Counties
- Interest is increasing for backyard vegetable production
- High Tunnels
- Micro-irrigation (IWM)
- Crop Management
- Demand for locally grown produce



State 2021 CIG project

- **Ecosystems Protective Services, LLC;**

“The Field Set-Aside Pilot Project”: The project will pilot three new practices that lead directly to a new incentive program. This new incentive program will encourage producers to set-aside fields and flood them, plant cover crops such as millet (provides quality foraging for waterfowl), and during the growing season or post-harvest of crops.

2022 CIG Areas of Concern :
Nutrient and Sediment Reduction in Impaired Watersheds



- Demonstrate effectiveness of “high potential” conservation practices (such as drainage management, wetlands designed for nutrient reduction, conservation buffers, cropping systems including cover crops, manure management with bioremediation application, in-field nutrient management) in reducing nutrient leaching and runoff and document benefits in small watersheds



2022 CIG Areas of Concern: Irrigation

- Evaluate alternative cropping systems and water management schemes to reduce water use and develop educational materials for producers to obtain a comfort level with these ideas so that they may adopt those cropping systems or water management schemes;
- Demonstrate innovative irrigation water management techniques documenting water quality improvements associated with irrigation systems in Arkansas;
- Unmanned aerial vehicle use with irrigation water management uniformity and crop monitoring.
- In field trials for alternative crops that uses in field weather stations that can integrate evapotranspiration data and soil moisture sensors. These trials should be able to evaluate real crop water use during alternative crop growth stages. Develop brochures to help producers incorporate both methods of irrigation water management into farm practices.



2022 CIG Areas of Concern: Irrigation

- Development of an evapotranspiration network to be used for alternative crops in order to better plan and manage irrigation events. Develop instructional documents for producers to incorporate evapotranspiration base scheduling into their IWM plans based on crop type. Example networks are mesonet used in Oklahoma.
- Irrigation Water Management project for alternative crops to provide more instructional documents to producers on how to use irrigation water management devices to trigger irrigation for alternative crops. The documentation should indicate the number of devices needed, measurement depths, and how to use the device reading to know when to irrigate; base on crop and irrigation water management device type

2022 CIG Areas of Concern: Soil Health



- Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of cover crops, crop rotations, tillage and/or soil amendments on soil chemical, physical, and/or biological properties and their relationships with nutrient cycling, soil water availability, and plant growth in areas that have been land leveled in Arkansas;
- Transfer and demonstration of row rice technology can improve soil health, reduce irrigation, and allow rice production to use no-till methods. Demonstration of the use of soil health practices (i.e. cover crop, nutrient management, irrigation water management) in a row rice cropping system, including cost-benefit information and yields.
- Promote practice that further develops soil carbon amendments to increase organic matter and improve aggregate stability that will increase irrigation water efficiency and support microbial communities.



My contact information

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Resource Conservationist and CIG Coordinator

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Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) & Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Updates

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Initiatives Coordinator

RCPP POC
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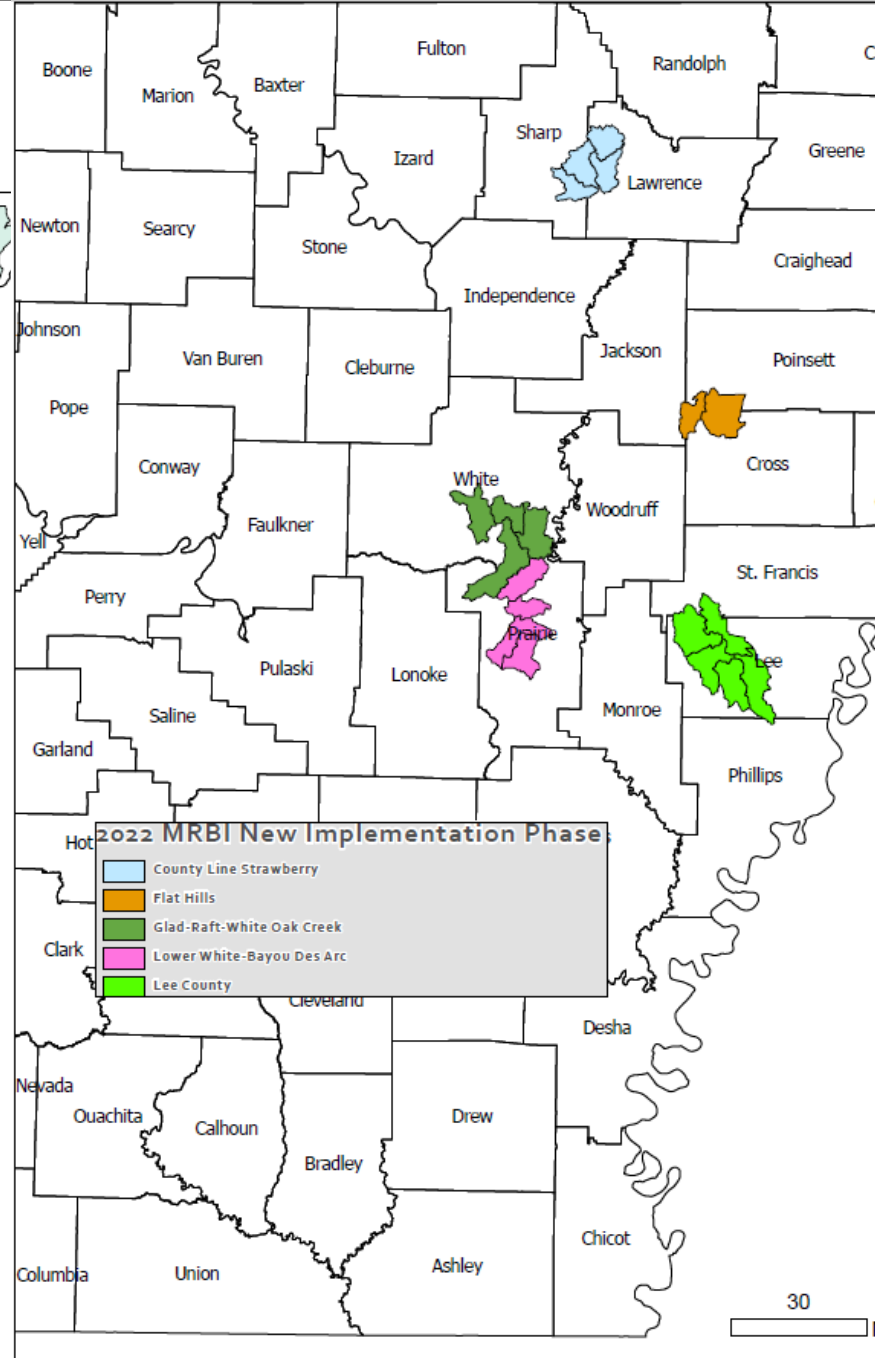
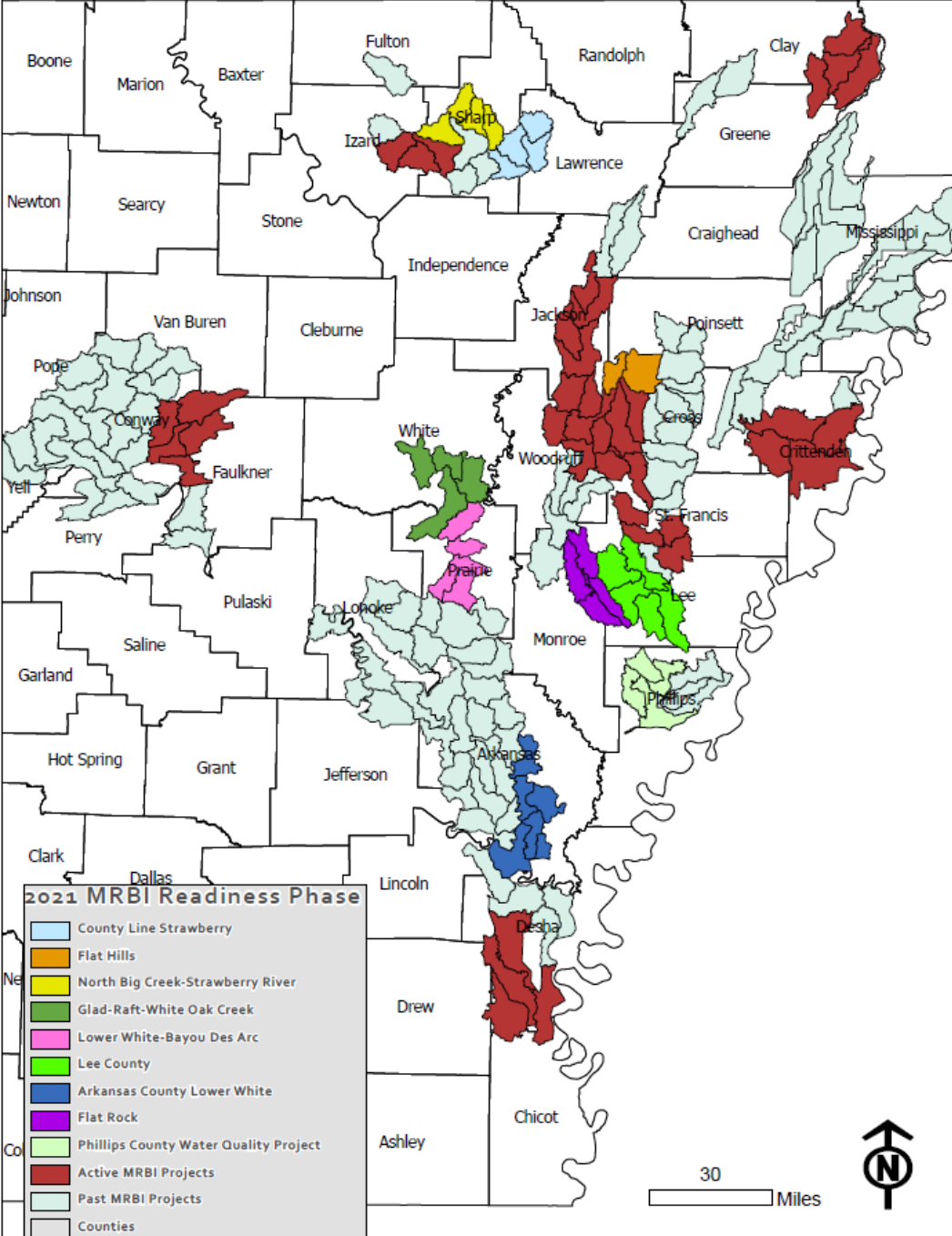
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MRBI Implementation Phase Funding

MRBI Project	Project Life	EQIP for FY22
Cache	FY2020-FY2023	\$818,497
Cadron Creek-Brewer Lake	FY2020-FY2023	\$446,179
Lower St. Francis	FY2020-FY2023	\$908,142
Middle Cache	FY2020-FY2023	\$900,000
Upper Lower St. Francis	FY2020-FY2023	\$855,000
Candy Creek	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,350,001
Canal 43	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,350,003
Twin Creek	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,143,464
Izard Lower Strawberry	FY2021-FY2024	\$360,000
County Line Strawberry	FY2022-FY2025	\$364,408
Flat Hills	FY2022-FY2025	\$666,428
Glade-Raft-White Oak Creek	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,323,400
Lee County	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,500,000
Lower White-Bayou Des Arc	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,846,417
Totals		\$13,831,939



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**Application Cutoff for consideration
of ranking
12/17/2021**



**Ranking & Cost Estimate
2/25/22**

**Initial Selection of Applications
3/4/2022**



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2 Phase Process

Readiness Phase: First year fact finding-gather information through the watershed assessment.

Implementation Phase:

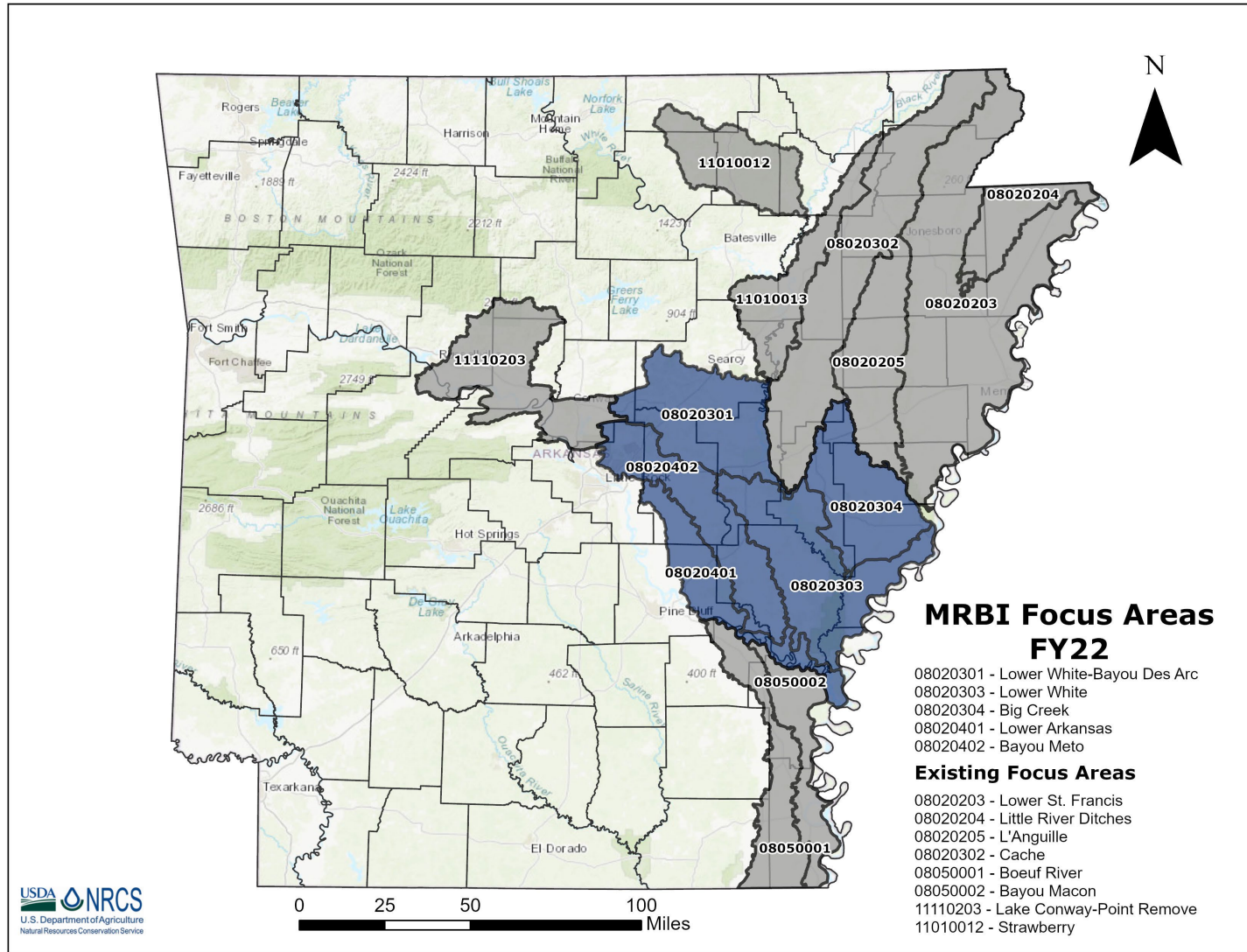
Second year starts managing the program with funding cycles for conservation practices



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Priority Watersheds



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**Readiness Phase: First
year fact finding-gather
information through
the watershed
assessment.**



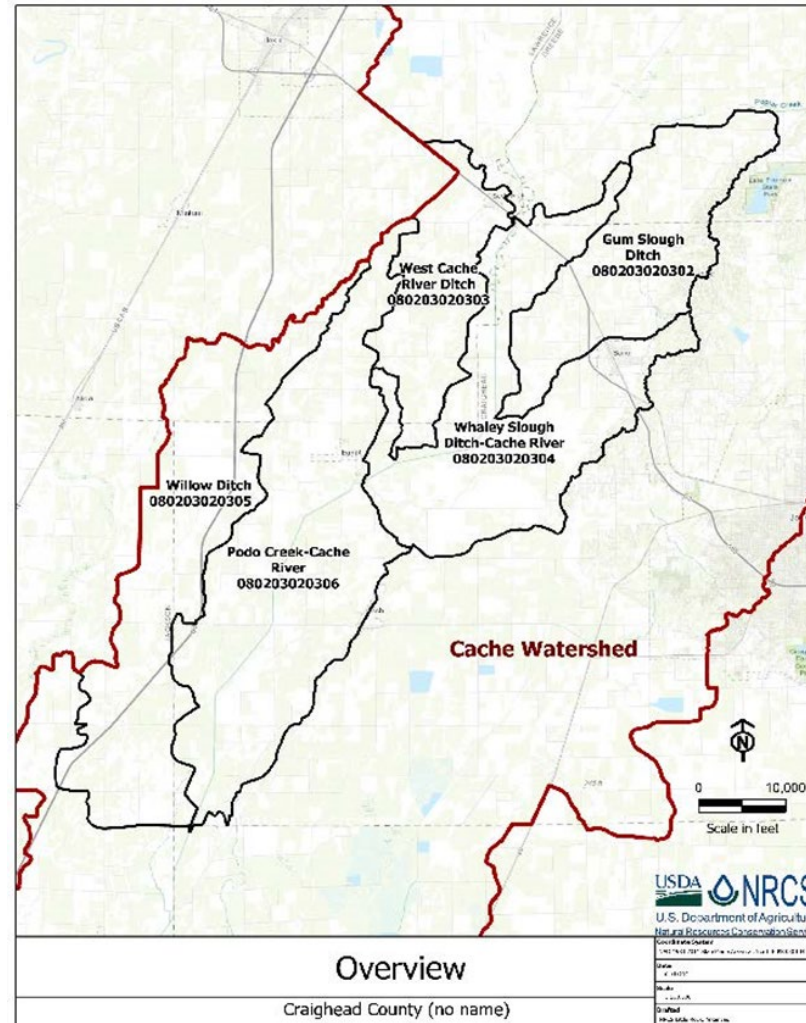
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1 New Readiness Phase MRBI



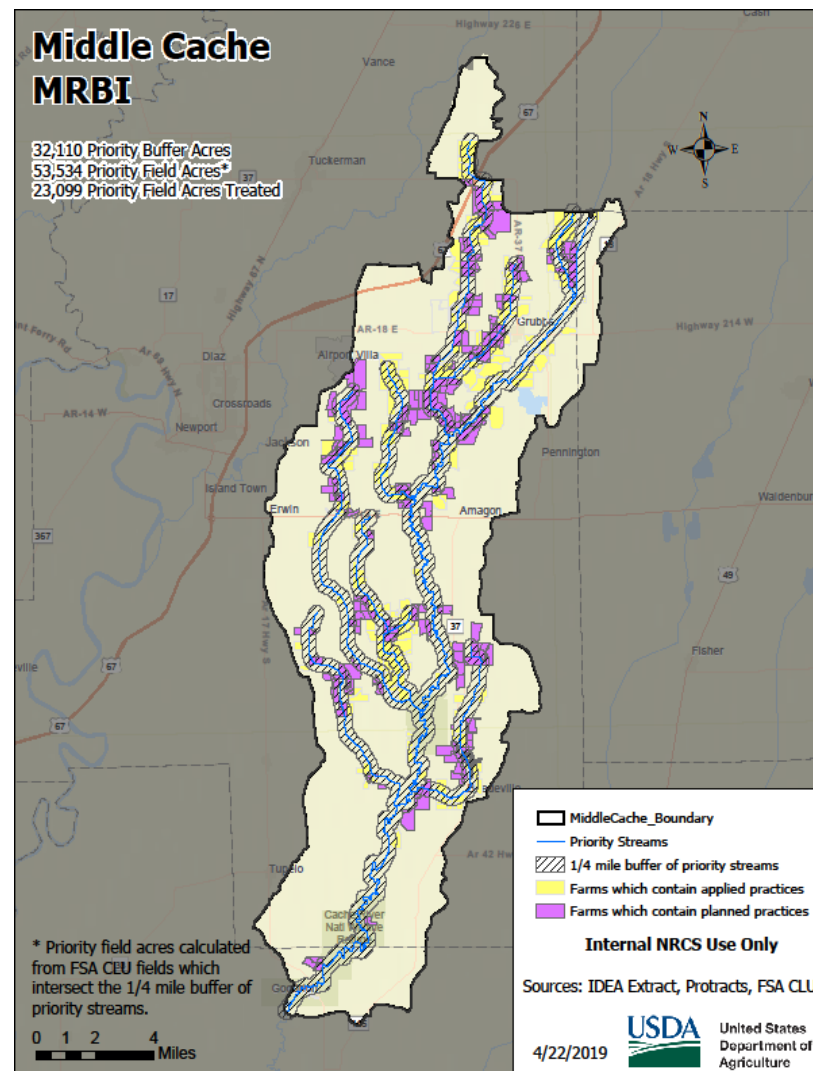
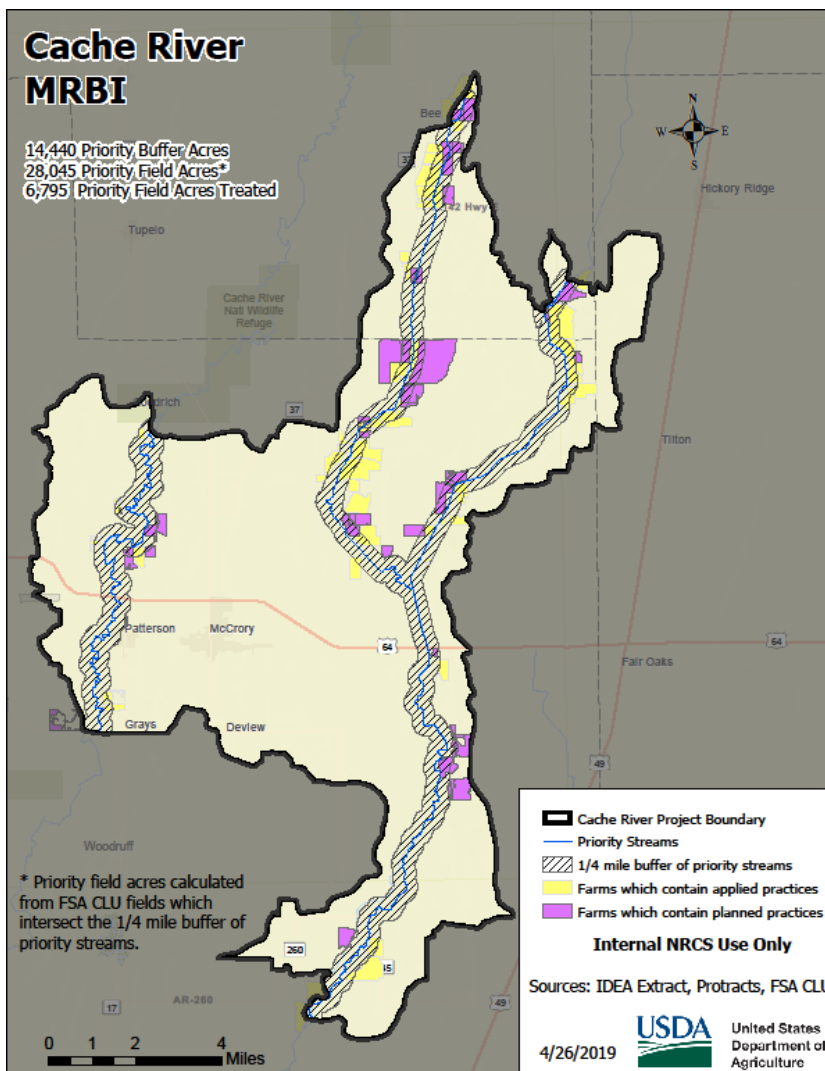
- Eligible due to Cache
 - TMDL for turbidity
 - 3 of the 12 digit HUCs are new to MRBI.
 - Producer interest
 - Partner Interest
 - Critical Groundwater
 - Source Water Protection
-
- 4 projects will be considered for submission in FY22
 - North Big Creek-Strawberry River
 - Arkansas County Lower White
 - Flat Rock
 - Phillips County Water Quality Project
 - Watershed assessments are completed on these.



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Targeting in the Watershed





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Implementation Phase:
Second year starts
managing the program
with funding cycles for
conservation practices



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Implementation Phase

Multi year managing program

- 4 year budget
- EQIP and CSP
- Financial Assistance for EQIP 75/25
- Concentrates on system approach using core and supporting practices
- Adaptive management
- Targets producers in the watershed
- Outreach is on going
- Goals are developed with obtainable outcomes
- Partner support through in-kind or cash





Other Proposed MRBIs?





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Regional Conservation Partnership (RCPP) Update



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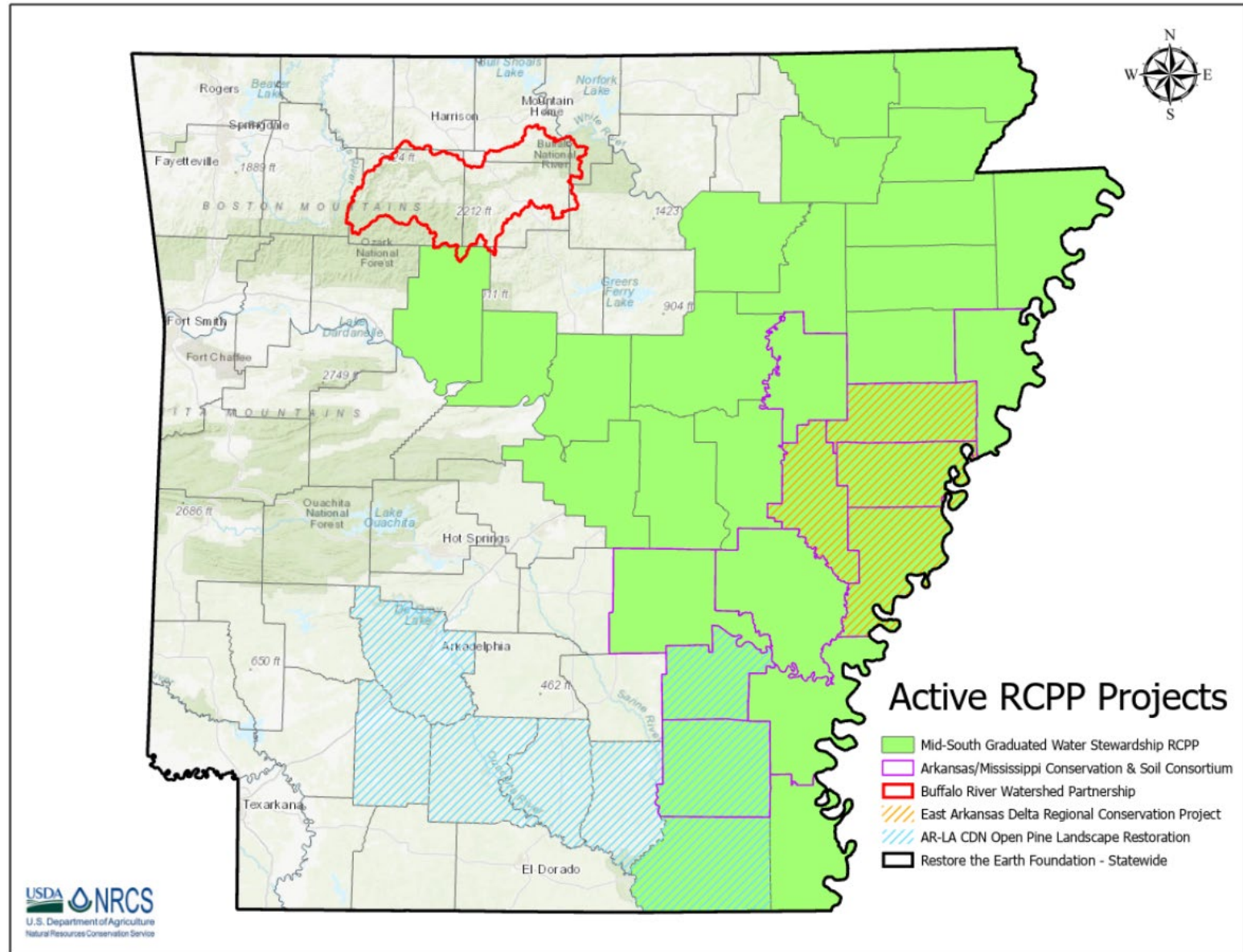


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FY22 RCPP Projects Receiving FA



FY22 AR RCPP Project Funding



Project Name	Project Type	FY22 Funding	Payment Rate
Buffalo River Watershed Enhancement Project	Land Management	\$400,000	75/25
East Arkansas Delta Regional Conservation	Land Management	\$2,800,000	75/25
Mid South Graduated Water Stewardship Program	Land Management	\$2,660,000	60/40
AR LA CDN Open Pine Landscape Restoration *	Land Management	\$309,750	60/40
KKAC AR MS Conservation & Social Consortium *	Easement	In Negotiation	N/A
Restore the Earth – Pilot Private Sector Investment *	Easement	In Negotiation	N/A
Totals		\$5,860,000	





Buffalo River Watershed Enhancement Project

- Description: Collaborate with interested farmers and landowners to increase agricultural sustainability by implementing voluntary conservation practices within the Buffalo River Watershed. Objectives: 1) Collaborate with local farmers, landowners and community leaders in priority watersheds to identify resource concerns and conservation practices to improve farm sustainability and water quality. 2) Reduce sediment and nutrient loads to the Buffalo River by providing technical and financial assistance to implement practices that improves pasture and nutrient management, restore eroding streambanks to prevent loss of pastureland and reduce maintenance costs and sediment loads from erosion of unpaved roads. 3) Assist interested landowners conserve key conservation lands to prevent future erosion and nutrient loads in the Buffalo River watershed.
- Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
- Total FA Funding: \$2,000,000.00





AR LA CDN Open Pine Landscape Restoration

- Description: Our AR-LA Open Pine Landscape Restoration goal is to greatly improve Forest Health for Wildlife Resources in the West Gulf Coastal Plain; the project will connect and build upon ABC's successful programs in other landscapes across the US. The LMVJV Conservation Delivery Network will deliver this project to advance the recovery of species of conservation concern through use of our Desired Forest Condition (DFC) management practices for Open Pine habitat.
- Lead Partner: American Bird Conservancy
- Total FA Funding: \$4,130,000 Multi State Project, AR, LA





East Arkansas Delta Regional Conservation

- **Description:** The goal of this RCPP project is to implement innovative, effective and compelling solutions for the primary resource concerns related to land improvement/management/restoration of row crop and alternative crop producers and landowners in Lee, St. Francis, Monroe and Phillips Counties. The objectives are: (1) to provide technical and financial assistance to all eligible producers and landowners, including socially disadvantaged producers and landowners in four select StrikeForce counties to improve their resource management and cropping systems; and, (2) to help producers and landowners to identify the conservation activities to they need to solve their conservation problems and install appropriate innovative conservation practices CCA's Priority Resource Concerns: water quality degradation; inadequate habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates; and excess/insufficient water/drought.
- **Lead Partner:** East Arkansas Enterprise Community, Inc.
- **Total FA Funding:** \$5,600,000





Mid-South Graduated Water Stewardship Program

- Description: The economically distressed Lower Mississippi River Valley region of the United States has long been fighting an uphill battle to retain groundwater levels, improve water quality, and provide a suitable habitat for the diverse array of wildlife that inhabit the region. The Mississippi River Alluvial Aquifer serves as a vital and valuable irrigation source for rice farmers throughout the region. Decades of annual withdrawals in excess of the aquifer's recharge capabilities have resulted in severely declining water levels that threaten the entire region's viability and could result in regulation for farmers. To address this, USA Rice partnered with Ducks Unlimited and more than 20 other partners in the original RCPP that targeted all levels of producers across the conservation spectrum, from those who are just beginning their conservation efforts, to those who are on the cutting edge of conservation innovation and incentivized them to increase conservation efforts at every level. This renewal will be doing the same with a primary focus on source water depletion, and additional resource concerns of terrestrial habitat, inefficient energy use, and field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss.
- Lead Partner: USA Rice
- Total FA Funding: \$5,600,000.00 Multi State Project

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Restore the Earth – Pilot Private Sector Investment

- Project description: In this proposal, REF, in collaboration with 4 partners, proposes a unique \$20 million pilot project in which private sector funds will invest with NRCS to achieve environmental and social goals. The project targets the acquisition of NRCS held WRE-like permanent easements in Arkansas. The focus is to enroll marginal cropland that will be restored to its previous forested condition.
- Lead Partner: Restore the Earth Foundation
- Funding: Total FA Allocated \$5,180,000





KKAC AR MS Conservation & Social Consortium

- Project description: KKAC Foundation is a non-profit corporation dedicated to assisting the underserved population of the Mississippi Delta Region. The purpose of this project is to increase the number of historically underserved farmers and ranchers participating in the RCPP easement activity type.
- Lead Partner: KKAC Foundation
- Funding: Total FA Allocated \$1,750,000





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**The new National
Funding Opportunity
(NFO) for Classic RCPP
will be coming out soon
and hope to have more
information in
December.**



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First Name	Last Name	Please enter your organization/company name below.
Adam	Eades	USDA-NRCS
albert	Jones	ALCDC
alvin	peer	usda nrcs
Amanda	Mathis	NRCS
Andrew	Grobmyer	Agricultural Council of Arkansas
Becky	Roark	Beaver Watershed Alliance
Bill	Holimon	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Breanna	James	Arkansas Land & Farm Dev. Corp
Breegan	Andersen	The Nature Conservancy
Brentney	Sargent	The KKAC Organization
brian fontenot	fontenot	EPA
Britt	Hill	USDA-NRCS
Brittan	Stancil	USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
Bubba	Groves	AGFC
Calvin	King	Arkansas Land and Community Development
Calvin	Wakefield	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Canton	Ford	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Chandler	Barton	Arkansas Department of Agriculture Forestry Division
Charley	Williams	Charley Everett Williams
Chris	Colclasure	Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture - Arkansas Natural Resources Division
Clint	Johnson	AGFC
Clyde	Williams	USDA-NRCS
Conaly	Bedell	Arkansas Resource Conservation & Development Council
Corey	Cornelius	USDA-NRCS
cory	perrin	NRCS
cory	perrin	NRCS
Cubie	Harris	USDA-NRCS
Danny	Hoots	FSA
Danny	Hoots	FSA
Darcia	Routh	Engineering/AR Dept of Health
Darren	Spinks	Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Forestry Division
David	Graves	Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
David	Williams	Hempstead County Conservation District
Deanna	Wright	Rich Mountain Conservation
Debbie	Moreland	Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Diamond	Smith	ALFDC/ALCDC
Diana	Colvard	Farm Service Agency
Dianne	Schlenker	USDA-NRCS
Don	White	University of Arkansas
Doug	Akin	NRCS
Edgar	Mersiovsky	USDA-NRCS
Emily	Woodall	USA Rice
Eugene	Young	usda nass
Gary	Bennett	NRCS
Hazell	Reed	National Black Growers Council
Helen	Denniston	NRCS
Henry	English	University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
James	Baker	USDA NRCS
James	Burke	University of Arkansas at Fayetteville
JAMES	MCCARTY	Beaver Water District
JAMES	MCCARTY	Beaver Water District
James	Wise	Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment
Jamesha	Hall	NRCS
Jarrold	Yates	Arkansas Farm Bureau
Jason	Milks	The Nature Conservancy
Jeremy	Huff	USDA NRCS
Jeremy	Wood	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Jimmie	Kersh	Chief
Joe	Martin	AR Division of Environmental Quality
John	McAlpine	Kingwood Forestry Services, Inc.
Johnny	Mendoza	USDA NRCS
Jonathan	Baxter	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Joseph	Schafer	Winrock International
Josh	Hankins	USA Rice
Julia	Schmidt	Arkansas Department of Agriculture Forestry Division
Karen	Thompson	NRCS
Katie	Mann	Arkansas Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Division
Keith	Scoggins	USDA/NRCS
Kishan	Mahmud	University of Arkansas
kkac	organization	The KKAC Organization
Kyle	Brazil	Central Hardwoods Joint Venture
LaShica	Miller	Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation
Lawrence	Berry	University of Arkansas
Levell	Foote	UAPB Small Farm Program Outreach
lori	barker	NRCS
Luke	Lewis	AGFC
Marcus	Asher	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Martha	Manley	AACD
Matt	Lindsey	Delta Plastics
Megan	Perkins	Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division
Melvin	Tobin	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
miguel	oliveras	USDA-NRCS
Mike	Cagle	Arkansas Agriculture Department - Forestry Division
Mike	Daniels	Univ. of Arkansas Coop. Ext. Service
Mike	Sullivan	NRCS
Randy	Childress	USDA - NRCS
Randy	Easley	CAW
Randy	Rush	US EPA South Central Region
Rebecca	Fox	NRCS
Reginald	Jackson	USDA NRCS
Rick	Monk	U.S. Forest Service
Robert	Byrd	USDA
Robert	Floyd	ADA Forestry Division
Roger	Cousins	NRCS
Ron	Seiss	The Nature Conservancy
Ryan	Diener	Quail Forever
Ryan	Farney	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Shelby	Spence	AR NRCS
Steve	Brock	Stephen C. Brock
Ted	Zawislak	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Troyce	Barnett	USDA/NRCS
Van	Van Banks	Non Profit Agri
Victor	Ford	University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture
Vincent	Gregory	NRCS
Wilbur	Peer	The KKAC Organization
Willard	Ryland	THE KKAC ORGANIZATION