

NRCS State Technical Committee
9:00am Tuesday, November 28, 2023
U of A CES State Office, Little Rock, AR

Agenda attached.

Meeting called to order by Amanda Mathis, NRCS, at 9:00am.

Members present: (Sign-in sheets & zoom list attached)

Opening Comments

- **Mike Sullivan, NRCS State Conservationist**
 - Gave a progress report on 2023
 - CSP -AR had the most obligations of any state at ~\$47M
 - EQIP \$79M
 - Staffing increases- NRCS at over 300 employees
 - Worked on national/state priorities- Equity, Urban, Climate, Partnership and training
 - Partner Agreements are needed to help deliver, expect 2 notices of funding in FY24- one for IRA and one for traditional technical assistance
 - Completed program rollout meeting with all staff-
 - EQIP/CSP to proceed concurrently.
 - IRA Funds - \$58 million FY24 Allocations (certain restrictions with IRA)
 - Remain in a continuing resolution which has certain restrictions such as travel
 - Working to simplify programs
 - RCPP improvements underway
 - Target to make improvements to CSP
 - Want feedback from State Technical Committee- through subcommittees or otherwise.

Subcommittee Reports

- **Grazing Lands Subcommittee – Jeremy Huff**
 - No formal recommendations from spring meeting to report on
 - Discussion on adding payment scenarios for hay distribution under practice 590
 - Discussed 805 Amending Soil Properties with Lime as a high priority practice
 - Fall Meeting was held November 21, 2023

- Reported on newly approved payment scenario within the 590 Nutrient Management practice
- Discussed adoption of the 805 Amending Soil Properties with Lime
- Fence 382 specification will need updates (cross member length and remove cedar as an upright post material type)
- New graphics available on many job sheets/specs
- **Water Quality Subcommittee – Canton Ford**
 - See attached slides with maps
 - No formal recommendations
 - FY23 NWQI Obligations were presented
 - FY24 NWQI Requests – 4 projects approved with 2 new ones:
 - Bayou Bartholomew, primarily cropland
 - Lower Little Red , mix of cropland and pasture
 - FY24 Source Water Protection Updates
 - Map of current and proposed focus areas (some new for FY24)
 - 328, 329, 340, 390, 391, 393, 590 Practices
 - Edge of Field Monitoring FY24
 - National Bulletin soliciting new projects will be released in late winter
 - Streambank Floodplain Workgroup
 - Meeting on December 14th
 - Meeting details to follow
 - First meeting will be virtual
- **Alternative Crops – Troyce Barnett**
 - Meeting held September 19th
 - No formal recommendations
- **Water Quantity – Rodney Wright**
 - See attached slides
 - Spring 2023 Minutes
 - Brought subcommittee up to date on recommendation status
 - Lowering the yardage eligible for land leveling
 - Considered using practice code 462 but does not apply for land being leveled for irrigation
 - Instead edited the minimum yardage required for the 464 Land Leveling practice.
 - Reduced from 100 yards minimum down to 60 yds
 - Adjusting the pumping plant automation equipment
 - 533 Pumping plant lifespan = 15 years- this outlives most technology
 - If technology has failed might be able to use the “Reapplication of failed conservation treatment” clause to allow for reapplication
 - New Furrow Irrigated Rice Scenario

- Arkansas Online Irrigation Scheduler – to return in 2024 with revisions
- Pitless Tailwater Recover System and possible methods to provide cost share were discussed.
- New Business Summary
 - Arkansas Governor orders updated plan to guide water policy, investment
- **Energy Subcommittee – Stephen Smedley**
 - See attached slides
 - Met on September 7, 2023
 - Looking to expand reach of committee
 - Need new Energy TSPs - TSP Shortages – no new TSPs coming forward
 - Training needs – sealant in poultry houses and construction techniques
 - Include ventilation, insulation, and multiple practices in 2024 CIG
 - Suggestion to include more CAFO in local funding pools
 - Out of state TSP
 - Reach out to utility companies, HVAC, or insulation consultants
 - QI or TSP
 - High Priority Practices Recommendations
 - 374
 - 670- Energy system
 - 672 – Building envelope
 - New recommendations would not be available at higher rate until 2025
- **Wildlife Subcommittee – Ryan Parker**
 - See attached slides
 - **Recommendation #1** - Expand the current 25 WLFW – Bobwhite Counties to align with the western eco regions
 - **Recommendation #2** - adoption of Aquatic Connectivity framework for FY25 to focus on habitat connectivity between center of stream through flood plain habitat
 - **Recommendation #3** - revising the AR State Specification for Practice 422 Hedgerow Planning related to width and number of rows.
 - Need to produce shrubs in AR, hoping to connect with Bachum Nursery to grow some
 - Updates on biological job sheet update
 - 643, 645, 649,

- Update on the feral swine program – 9,261 hogs eradicated
- **Forestry Subcommittee – Doug Akin**
 - See attached slides
 - Met on November 15, 2023 held at Bachum Nursery
 - 85 participants
 - Agenda included
 - Agroforestry practices Forest Farming/379 and Alley Cropping/311
 - Minimum number of pine trees per acre that should be acceptable in tree or shrub establishment
 - 612 Practice Specifications
 - Forest Stand Improvement/666 Scenario 78 - possibly could use it in thinning dense pine plantation
 - No recommendations from the Forestry Subcommittee at this time but feedback was solicited at the meeting, and it is anticipated that feedback will be incorporated in recommendations for the spring State Technical Committee meeting
- **Urban Conservation – Katy Brantley**
 - See attached slides
 - Meeting on September 21, 2023
 - **Recommendation #1**
 - Adjust how we described/define urban ag to be more inclusive of all animal productions and community agriculture
 - Small-scale operations producing crops and/or animals as part of a community, local, or regional food system
 - Continue to refine at a state level with partners to ensure we are all using similar descriptions for all programs
 - **Recommendation #2**
 - Continue to provide guidance on resources and NRCS programs available to small-scale/urban producers
 - AR Urban website
 - Make small scale scenarios list available
 - On website
 - In urban conservation practices workbook
 - **Recommendation #3**
 - Translate outreach documents into other languages
 - Spanish
 - Hmong

- Burmese
 - Marshallese
- **Recommendation #4**
 - Make the locally led process more inclusive and accessible
- **Recommendation #5**
 - High raised beds as an approved scenario instead of a variance
- **Recommendation #6**
 - New CIG guidance for urban ag
 - Urban (new definition on slide)
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Kennard Williams**
 - Meeting on October 23, 2023
 - Follow up meeting with State Engineer
 - Deep tillage – recommendation to be added back into the practice list- as financial assistance practice for alternative crop situations and HU and Socially Disadvantaged. Addresses concerns with small operations where compaction is an issue.
 - If approved, would not be eligible until FY25
 - November 16, 2023
 - Water wells – NHQ amended to 5 years
 - State engineer can approve high HP pump on a case-by-case basis
 - Combustion pumps may need to be larger than 10 HP due to vendor issues
 - Change the verbiage to pre-approved
 - Land smoothing
 - Changed to 2 – 5-year irrigation history for non-irrigated ground
 - Land leveling is for irrigated ground
- **Soil Health Subcommittee – Keith Scoggins**
 - Meeting on November 21, 2023
 - Project Updates
 - Economics
 - Poultry litter project
 - Five Oaks closed out one CIG project and started a new one
 - Regenerative Agriculture
 - Decide not to require certification
 - 336 – Soil Amendments
 - Evaluate waste materials for compost
 - Create a compost “cheat sheet”

- Soil Health Conference
 - To be held in Jonesboro, AR
 - AACD & Arkansas Soil Health Alliance sponsor
 - Tentatively to be held in November 2024

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission – Garrick Dugger

- Provided an update on the new Private Lands Habitat Division
 - New Division as of about 10 months ago
 - 8 – 10 private lands biologists
 - Austin Booth, AGFC Director, encouraged more focus on private lands
 - AGFC has worked to leverage partnerships
 - Quail Forever – 8 Farm Bill Biologists
 - 5 Member Strike Team (fire breaks and prescribed burns
 - Ducks Unlimited- moist soil management biologist
 - National Wildlife Turkey - one forester
 - US Fish and Wildlife Service – hire a new person for the Cache river area
 - Deer Management – currently 1 million acres enrolled and work with deer clubs
 - Agreement with APHIS - \$400,000 to answer nuisance wildlife calls and hiring additional feral hog technician
 - Leadership Team
 - Farm Bill Liaison – Harvey “Bubba” Groves
 - \$3.5 million new cost share program – targeted 9 conservation practices
 - Application process will be announced soon
 - To start in December 2023/January 2024
 - Bubba Groves spoke to his new role as Farm Bill Liaison
 - Talked about the need for strong relationships
 - Going to meet with the area conservationists to see how they can partner to meet the needs of landowners

Inflation Reduction Act Practices – Corey Cornelious

- See handout in meeting packet and attached slides
- Highlighted practices in handout are new practices
 - Evaluation Criteria and Review Process
 - Input and Feedback
 - Prioritization

- Evaluation Documentation and Just
- Review Teams
- Recommendations for next list
- Criteria #1 – Mitigation benefit
 - Does it have a direct impact on greenhouse gas emissions reduction or removal
 - Is it being evaluated for specific implementation and geography
- Criteria #2 – Benefit Estimation
 - Science based methodology for quantitatively estimating mitigation benefits
 - Additional guidance
- Must be supported by scientific literature
- Process Flow Chart
 - Meets both criteria
 - Add to list fully
 - Meets Criteria #1 and methodology can be added as “provisional”
 - Develop methodology
 - Does not meet Criteria #1 or #2 then does not get added
 - Evaluation Team must be identified
 - Additional information and justification for recommendation
 - Key literature
- Some key practices in Arkansas and not currently approved as primary practices which means use of IRA funding to support their implementation is very limited or not available.
 - Irrigation Reservoirs and tailwater recovery systems
- Input Opportunities
 - New practice requests must be submitted March 2024- need to leverage all available data to help get listed at least as provisional
 - Need to engage with those who may have data or information now that can help support the case

Program Updates

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)– Corey Cornelious**
 - See attached slides
 - FY24 Program Signups
 - FY24 we are announcing signup both CSP Classic and EQIP General at the same time
 - News release went out announcing sign up deadline as December 8, 2023
 - IRA, CIC, MRBI and other initiatives are included

- Expanding opportunities for ACT NOW in FY24 and will be announcing them soon
- ACT NOW will include Urban/High Tunnel, IRA Soil Health, IRA Energy, and CSP Urban
- EQIP IRA Strategies
 - Soil Health
 - 30 counties
 - CSAF Practices 328, 329, 345, 340, 590 and 336
 - Facilitating Practice – 595
 - ACT NOW - Yes
 - Energy/CAFO
 - Statewide
 - CSAF Mitigating Practices – 374, 670, 672, 313, 367
 - Facilitating practice – 316
 - ACT NOW - Yes
 - Forest/Wildlife
 - Statewide
 - CSAF Mitigating Practices – 14 practices listed
 - Facilitating practices – 490, 338 & 394
 - Grazing/EQIP CIC (CIC is the bridge between EQIP & CSP)
 - Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC)
 - Statewide
 - CSAF Mitigating Practice – 528
 - Facilitating practices – 15 practices
 - Rice/Irrigated Cropland
 - 21 counties in east Arkansas – counties have been added and will still take suggestions
 - CSAF Mitigating Practices: 449 (AWD), 430 Separate Category
 - Facilitating Practices – 464, 533, 410, 587, 443, 646, Soil Health, 449
 - Categories and funds are subject to change
- **RCPP and MRBI- Dianne Schlenker**
 - See attached slides
 - Shared watersheds where new watershed assessments are planned for FY24
 - Shared watersheds with MRBI financial assistance funds for FY24
 - Share FY24 RCPP Projects and projected funding

- Shared status of FY23 RCPP Proposals and announced newly selected projects.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program - Sherry DeGraphenreed**
 - See attached slides
 - Shared comparison of FY22 and FY23 total obligations
 - Top 10 practices and activities and new bundles for FY24
 - FY24 Program Signups and Strategies
- **Agriculture Conservation Easement Programs- Alexis Cook**
 - See attached slides
 - Share FY23 program accomplishments
 - Provided information on IRA as related to WRE and ALE
 - Seeking to expand work with ALE during FY24
 - FY24 Program Signups
- **PL566 Small Watershed Program- Randy Childress**
 - Tremendous work going on with AR Blake Mayors Association projects
 - 6 engineering firms are working on 14 sites
 - Over 500 letters sent with 11 scoping meetings being held and 8 outreach meetings hosted – 28 events over the last 40 days.
 - Bayou Meto under construction – turned on pumps for first time
 - Grand Prairie awarded additional funds and under way
 - Departee Creek construction stalled until riparian easements are secured
 - Projects going in West Fork of the White River
 - All total over \$225 Million in PL566 project work going on in the state

Closing Remarks – Mike Sullivan, AR NRCS State Conservationist

State Conservationist Comments

- Talked about the opportunities and challenges
 - Tailwater recovery systems were not included due to several factors and needs evaluation to see if the benefits outweigh the concerns
 - Reduce negative impact on ground water decline
 - Convene a small group to discuss the benefits such as reduction in fossil fuel that might outweigh the concerns
 - Work with Rodney Wright and Stephen Smedley
 - All IRA funds must be spent by 2025/2026

- Pumping plants were approved if converting from diesel to electric
- Irrigation pipeline approved
- Prescribed burn is shown for pasture but not for forestry/wildlife – more data needed (338)
- Recommendations need to be submitted by March 15, 2024, for approval in 2025
- Upcoming activities and need to get outreach done earlier than later to be sure that landowners and producers have time to participate.
- Urban emphasis with a new Urban County Committee to be formed
- Working Lands for Wildlife – focus on aquatics and partnerships regarding species needs and habitats
- IRA Discussion – looking for input for 2025 with more discussion on prescribed burns

The meeting adjourned at 1:30pm.

State Technical Committee Meeting Agenda

State Extension Office Building Auditorium
2301 South University, Little Rock, AR 72204
Nov 28th, 2023

Registration for in-person attendance: <https://forms.office.com/r/bnxTU1jvqp>

Registration for ZOOM: <https://bit.ly/Fall-2023-ASTCM-Zoom-Registration>

9:00 am – 1:30 pm

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Mike Sullivan

Subcommittee Reports (*max 8 mins each*)

Grassland

Jeremy Huff

Water Quality

Canton Ford

Soil Health

Keith Scoggins

Alternative Crops

Troyce Barnett

Water Quantity

Rodney Wright

Energy

Britt Hill

Wildlife

Ryan Parker

Forestry

Doug Akin

Urban Conservation

Katy Brantley

Outreach, Equity, and Inclusion

Alvin Peer

AGFC – Private Lands Division

Garrick Dugger

Bubba Groves

Inflation Reduction Act Practices

TBD

Lunch (11:30-12:15)

Program Updates-

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Corey Cornelious

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Sherri DeGraphenreed

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Lori Barker

Partnership Programs (RCPP/MRBI)

Dianne Schlenker

Agriculture Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)

Alexis Cook

Watershed Programs

Randy Childress

Open Discussion

All Attendees

Closing Remarks & Adjourn

Mike Sullivan

Grazing Lands Subcommittee Report Summary

Spring Meeting – May 25, 2023

- ➡ - No formal recommendations
- ➡ - Discussion on adding payment scenarios for hay distribution that would aid in nutrient management
- ➡ - Discussion on recommending the adoption of an interim standard “805 Amending Soil Properties with Lime.”

High Priority Practice Discussion in August

- ➡ - The subcommittee recommended “805 Amending Soil Properties with Lime as a high priority practice.”

Fall Meeting – November 21, 2023

- ➡ - Discussed the approval of a new payment scenario within the 590 Nutrient Mgmt standard for hay distribution.
- ➡ - Discussed the adoption of the 805 Amending Soil Properties with Lime standard.
- ➡ - Discussed changes to Fence 382 specifications.
- ➡ - No formal recommendations.





United States Department of Agriculture

FY24 Fall Water Quality and Source Water Protection State Technical Committee Presentation

ARKANSAS

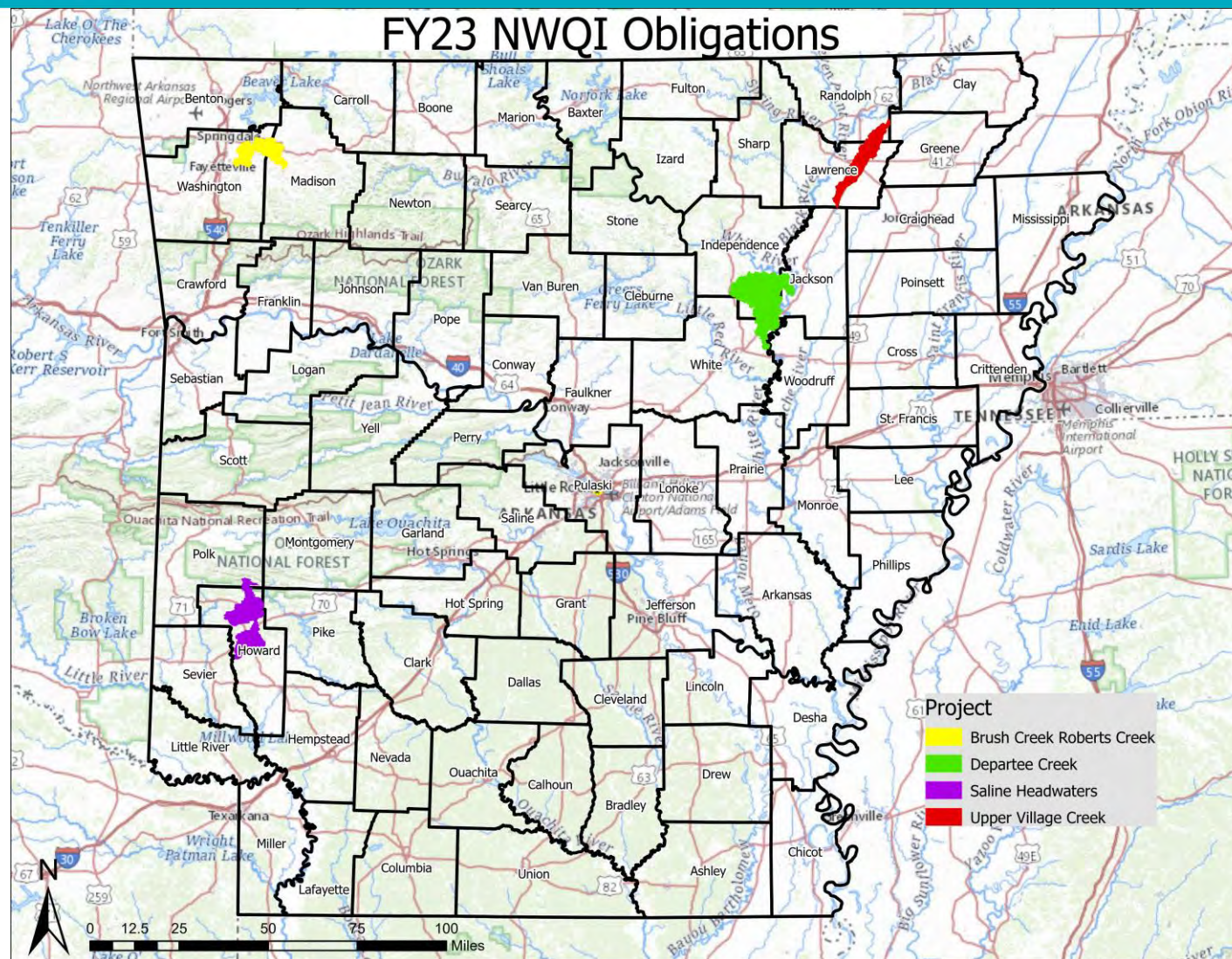
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Canton Ford, Water Quality Specialist
11/28/2023

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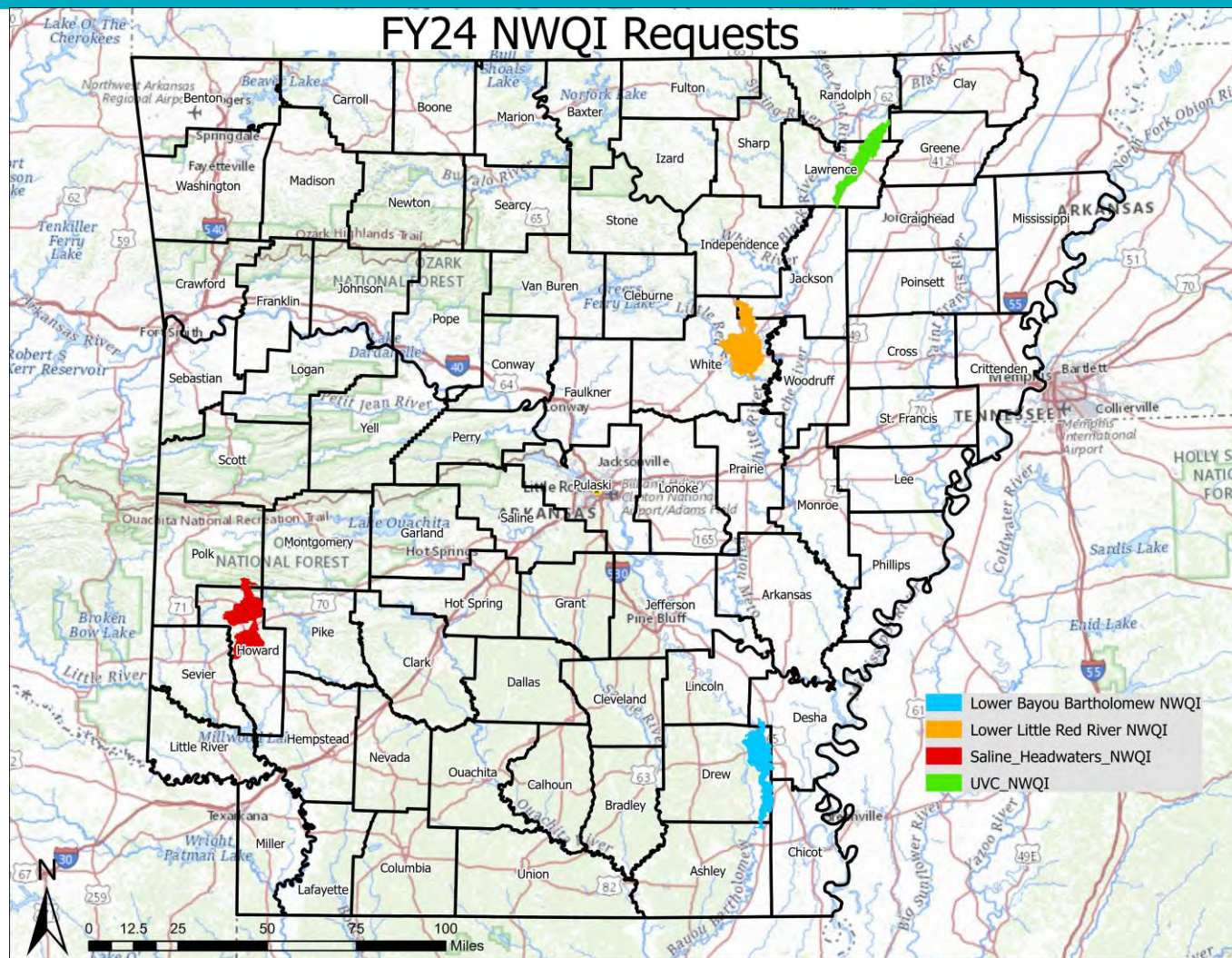
Account Name	Contracts	Total Obligation	Total Acres	HU Contracts	HU Obligation
NWQI: Brush Creek-Roberts Creek	5	\$ 69,434.00	188.00	1	\$ 649.34
NWQI: Departee Creek-Willow Slough	2	\$ 86,462.00	300.20	0	\$ -
NWQI: Upper Village Creek	6	\$ 921,512.00	2,467.80	3	\$ 384,790.00
NWQI: Saline Headwaters	14	\$ 473,309.00	268.70	6	\$ 619,759.34
Totals	27	\$1,550,717.00	3,224.70	10	\$1,005,198.68



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NWQI Project	Project Lifespan	Annual Fund Request	Project Fund Request Total
Upper Village Creek	FY2023-FY2026	\$ 600,139.85	\$ 2,400,559.40
Saline Headwater	FY2023-FY2026	\$ 400,000.00	\$ 1,600,000.00
Little Red	FY2024-FY2027	\$ 519,430.00	\$ 2,077,720.00
Lower Bayou Bartholomew	FY2024-FY2027	\$ 1,183,094.95	\$ 4,732,379.80
Total projected for FY24		\$ 2,702,664.80	\$ 10,810,659.20

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FY24 Source Water Protection Priority Practices

- 328 Conservation Crop Rotation
- 329 Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
- 340 Cover Crop
- 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- 391 Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393 Filter Strip
- 590 Nutrient Management



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Meeting Discussion

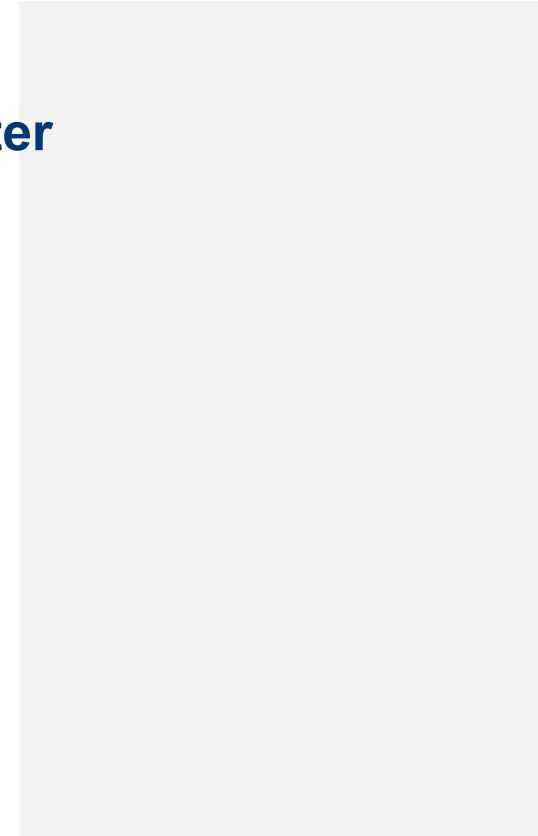


Edge of Field Monitoring – FY24

- National Bulletin soliciting new projects should be released in late winter

Streambank-Floodplain Workgroup

- Will meet December 14th
- Meeting details will be sent soon
- First meeting virtual only



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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
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FALL 2023 STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING (WATER QUANTITY REPORT)



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Lead:

Rodney Wright, Ph.D. State Water Management Engineer



Fall 2023 Water Quantity Subcommittee

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Zoom only meeting

AGENDA

- I. Spring 2023 Minutes
- II. Old Business
- III. New Business – Water Plan
- IV. Closing



Committee supports a formal recommendation to lower the yardage eligible for land leveling by adding 462 to the list of Arkansas practices.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to fields where depressions, mounds, old terraces, turnrows, and other surface irregularities interfere with or adversely affect surface drainage, erosion control, and equipment operation.

This standard does not apply to land leveling for irrigation. Refer to NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Irrigation Land Leveling (Code 464) for this purpose.

462-Scenario 1: Precision Land Forming and Smoothing, Low Shaping

Yardage: 60-124 cy/ac

Payment Rate: \$250.87/ac [\$151 @ 60%]



Committee supports a formal recommendation to lower the yardage eligible for land leveling by adding 462 to the list of Arkansas practices.

464-Scenario 1: Irrigation Land Leveling

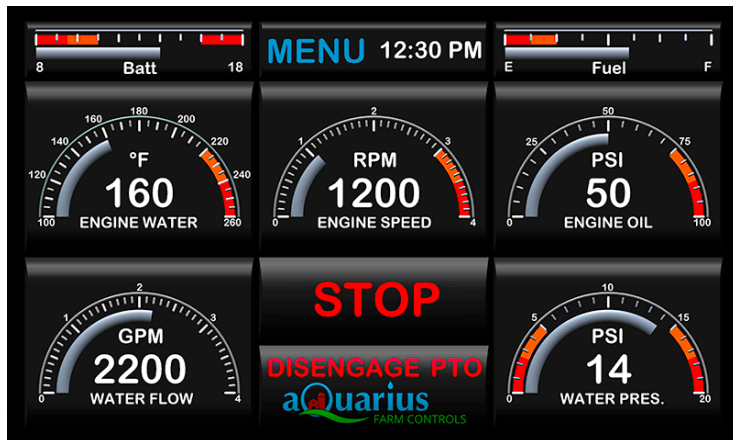
From NRCS Arkansas EQIP Guide:

Yardage: **>60** – 600 yd³.

Payment Rate: \$2.13/ yd³ [\$1.28 @ 60%]



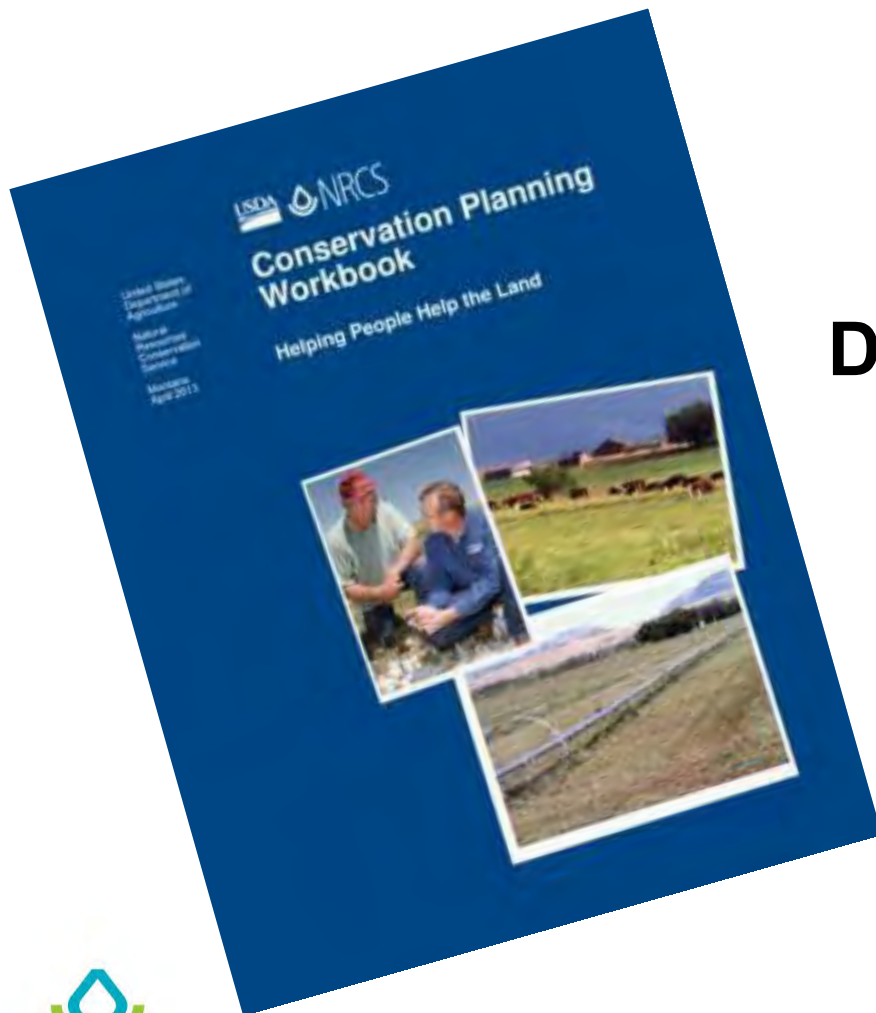
Committee supports a formal recommendation to adjust the lifespan of pumping plant automation equipment in Arkansas



533, Pumping Plant Lifespan = 15 years
 449, IWM Device = 1 year
 443, Surge Valve = 15 years

Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual

530.43 Contract Requirements



D. Contract Completion and Expiration

...

(3) The contract ends once it passes the expiration date and neither the participant nor NRCS has any further responsibilities under the contract...



Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual

530.64 Reapplication of Failed Conservation Treatment

Requirements

- (1) Active or completed contracts may be modified to provide for reapplication...that was completed and failed, provided all the following conditions are met:
 - (i) Failure was caused by circumstances beyond the participant's control...



Committee Supports Furrow Irrigated Rice Scenario in EQIP

Manage water levels in rice fields for the entire growing season to minimize greenhouse gas production

...**One:** alternate/wetting and drying (AWD) flood management.

Two: managing rice water requirements by intermittent furrow irrigation, usually referred to...as furrow-irrigated rice (FIR) or row rice.



Returns in
2024!?

Free irrigation scheduling alternatives for Irrigation Water Management – 449, Basic Level Arkansas Online Irrigation Scheduler

https://irrigweb.uada.edu/irrLoginSuccessfull.asp

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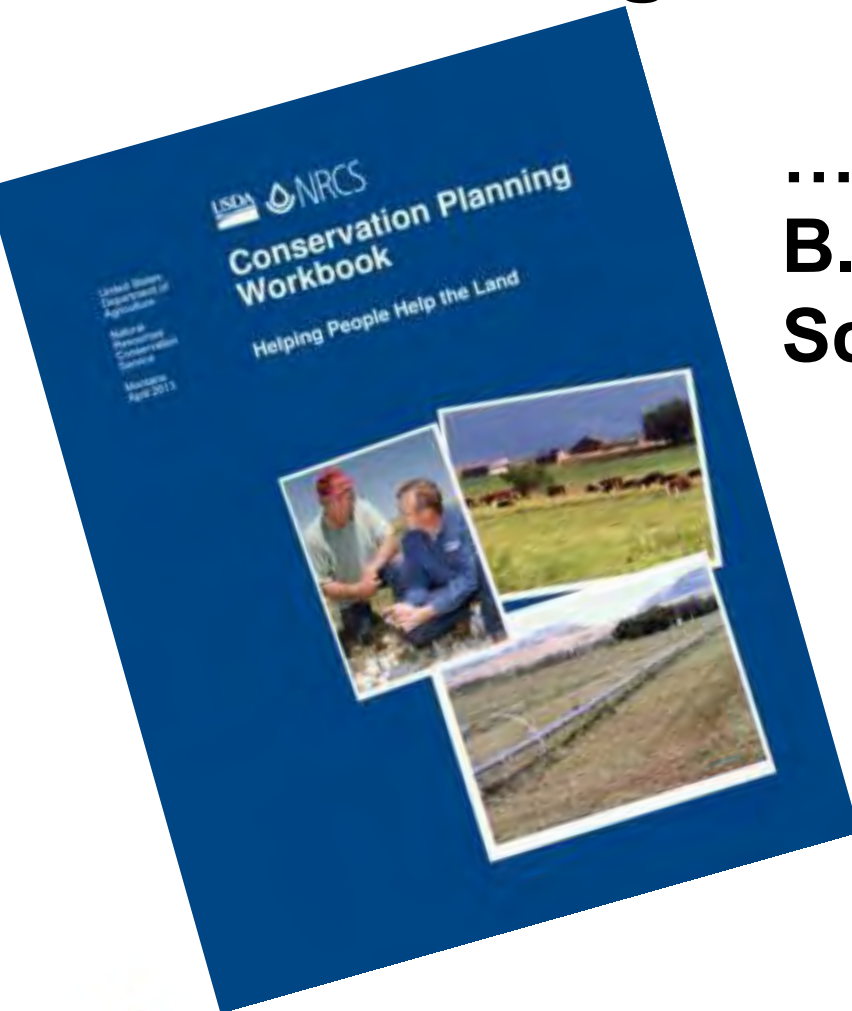


Pitless Tailwater Recovery System -Dr. Chris Henry



Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual

512.31 Payment Schedules



...

B. Requirements for Developing Payment Schedules

...

(4) One Payment Schedule Per Practice.— Payment schedules may only address the costs associated with a single stand-alone practice... Payments for other stand-alone practices may not be bundled or included in another stand-alone practice payment schedule...



Pitless Tailwater Recovery System (PTRS)

Itemized Funding – EQIP, 60%, FY23 - Below is allowed

Bundling,
if contracted
as one PTRS
practice.

Practice Code	Practice Name/Scenario Name	Payment Unit	Payment Rate	Contract Item Cap	Quantity
533	Pumping Plant				
	Electric-Powered Pump Less than or Equal to 5 HP , no pressure tank	Brake Horse Powe	\$1,068.81	\$ 66,000.00	5
	Advanced Pump Automation	Each	\$5,129.74	\$ 66,000.00	1
	Variable Frequency Drive	Brake Horse Powe	\$75.92	\$ 66,000.00	5
430	Irrigation Pipeline				
	Intake or Res Discharge, Steel, IPS	Feet	\$25.12	\$ 75,900.00	9
	Stand Pipe, Steel, IPS	Feet	\$246.92	\$ 75,900.00	8
449	Irrigation Water Management				
	Rice Intermittent Flood All Season	Acres	\$26.53	No Caps	40



University of Arkansas Pitless Tailwater Recovery Irrigation - Various codes

A program participant wanting to install the Pitless Tailwater Recovery Irrigation system in a Furrow Irrigated Rice field may apply for financial assistance by selecting several existing practice codes...

- 533-Pumping Plant
- 430-Irrigation Pipeline
- 449-Irrigation Water Management.

2024 EQIP GUIDE - ENTRY



Practice Code	Practice Name/Scenario Name	Payment Unit	60% Payment Rate	Quantity	Contract Item Payment
533	Pumping Plant				
	Electric-Powered Pump Less than or Equal to 5 HP , no pressure tank	BHP	\$ 1,289.94	5	\$ 6,450
	Advanced Pump Automation	Each	\$ 4,596.20	1	\$ 4,596
	Variable Frequency Drive	BHP	\$ 75.63	5	\$ 378
430	Irrigation Pipeline				
	Intake or Res Discharge, Steel, IPS	Feet	\$ 39.06	4	\$ 156
	Stand Pipe, Steel, IPS	Feet	\$ 352.58	8	\$ 2,821
449	Irrigation Water Management				
	Rice Intermittent Flood All Season	Acres	\$ 25.27	40	\$ 1,011
					\$ 15,412



- Survey bottom 1/2 to 1/3 of field, may need irrigation land leveling practice to direct drainage to pit.
- SCTs/CETs will need to make sure the pit is set at the proper depth.

Energy, Combustion, & Electricity Efficiency	372	Combustion System Improvement (number) • Used for stationary or mobile engine replacement or repower to electric motor	E372A	Switch to Renewable Power Source
			E372B	Renewable Energy Source for Large Internal Combustion Engines
	374	Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation (number)*	None Available	
	430	Irrigation Pipeline (feet)* • Used to reduce energy use ^[4]	None Available	
	441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation (acres)* • Used to reduce energy use ^[4]	None Available	
	442	Sprinkler System (acres)* • Used to reduce energy use ^[4]	None Available	
	533	Pumping Plant (number)* • Used to reduce energy use ^[4]	E533C	Install VFDs on pumps*
			E533D	Complete pumping plant evaluation for energy savings*
Rice	449	Irrigation Water Management (acres)* • Used as part of an alternated wetting and drying (AWD) system in rice fields	E449B	Alternated Wetting and Drying (AWD) of rice fields*

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List for FY2024



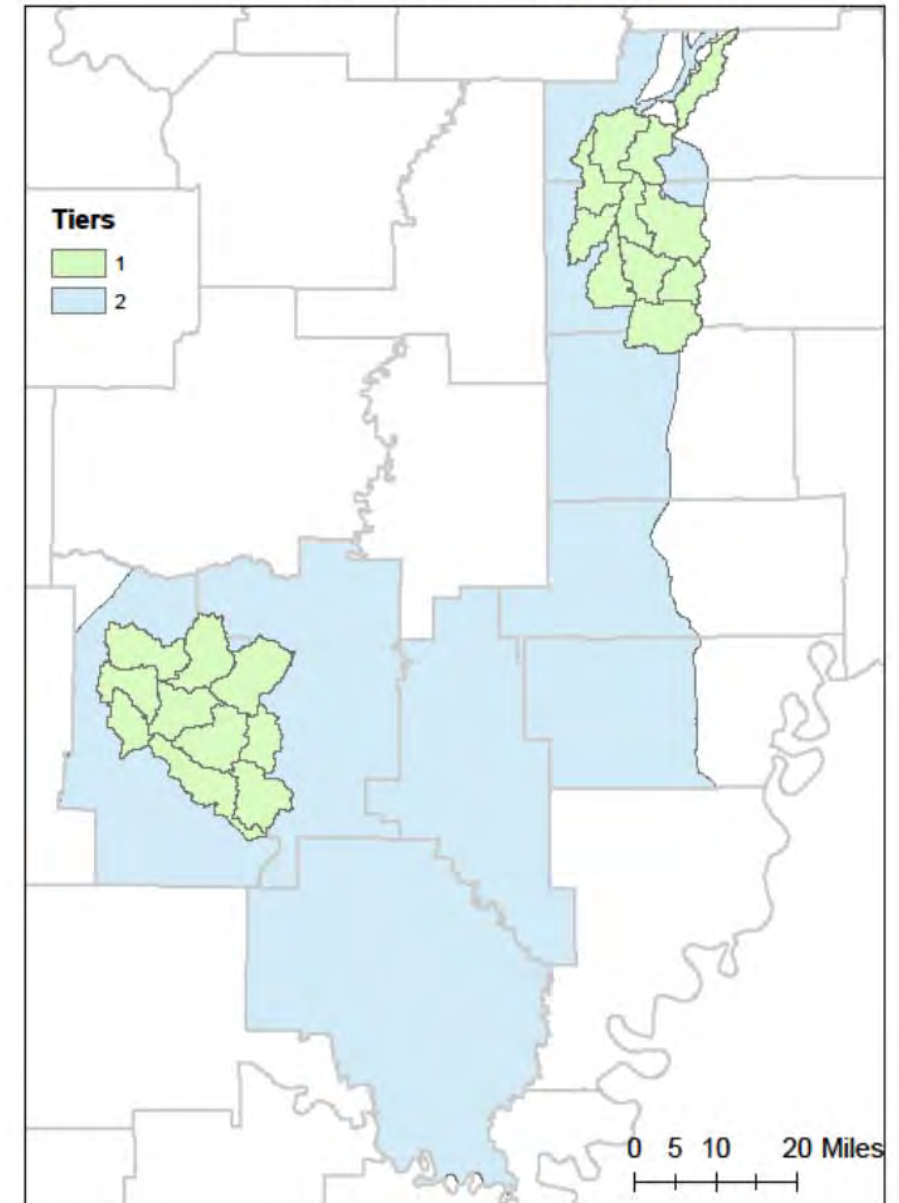
AGWI Ranking Adjustments

Committee was in favor of:

- Adjusting ranking to make reduced groundwater use a priority.
- Review Tiers system to make sure the most critical needs are addressed.



2023 AGWI - Only 2 Tiers



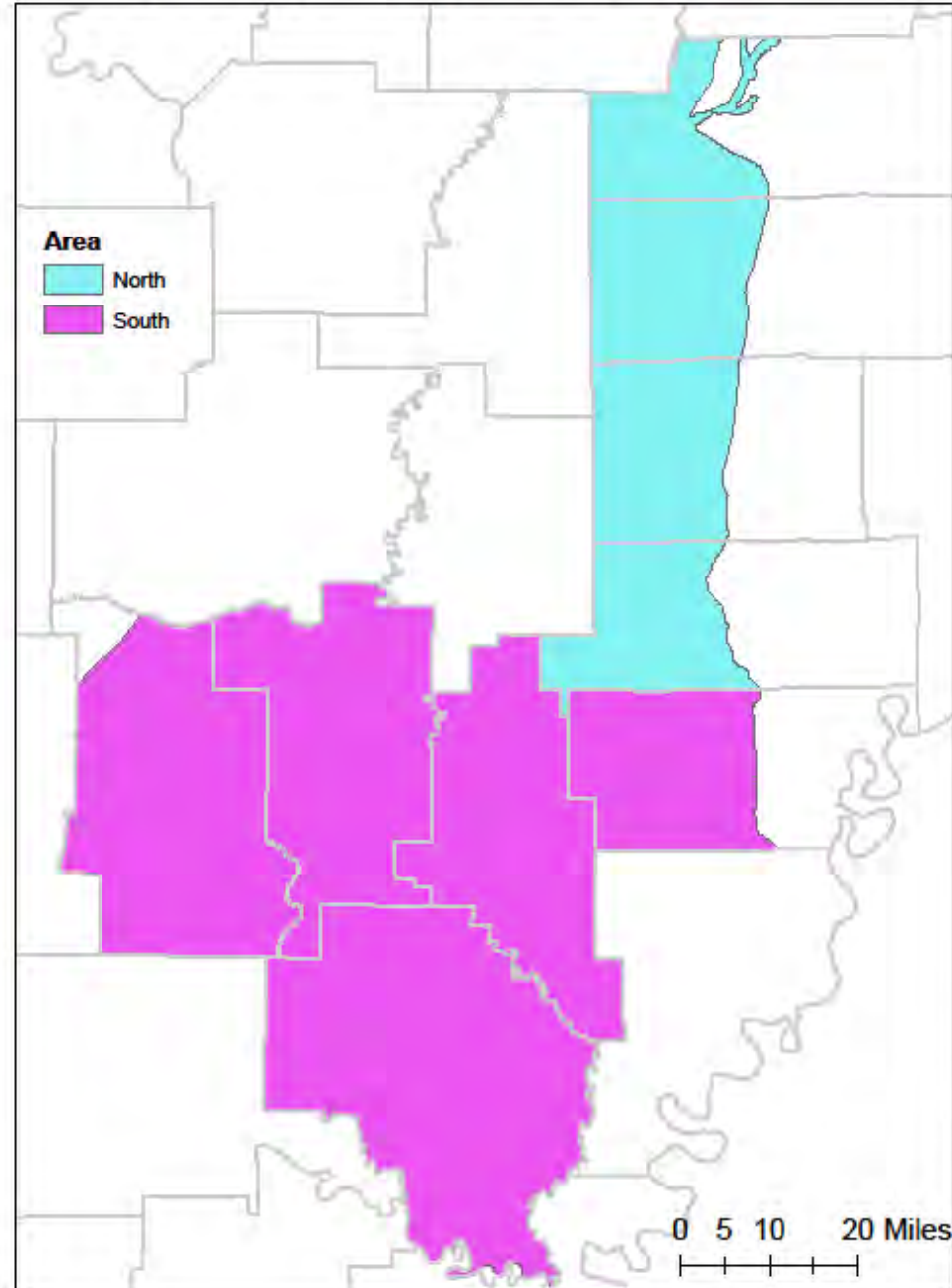
Arkansas Groundwater Initiative (AGWI)



**No More Tiers
Ranking Adjustments
Pending**



2024 AGWI - North and South Areas



OLD BUSINESS SUMMARY

- ✓ 464-Land Leveling Recommendations
- Timeframe related to Pump Automation Equipment
- ✓ Row Rice Scenario in EQIP
- ✓ ?-UA Irrigation Scheduling, IWM Basic Alternatives
- Pitless Tailwater Recovery System
- ✓ AGWI Tier / Ranking Adjustments



Arkansas governor orders updated plan to guide water policy, investment



Ryan Benefield, P.E., Deputy Director,
Arkansas Natural Resources Division

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FALL 2023 STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING (WATER QUANTITY REPORT)

- ✓ Old Business
- ✓ New Business
- ✓ High Priority Practices
- ✓ Arkansas Water Plan



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Energy State Technical Committee Meeting

**Britt Hill, Environmental
Engineer**

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Mobile: 870 714 9976

joseph.hill@usda.gov



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Energy Subcommittee



September 7, 2023

- **Members present**
 - Debbie Moreland
 - Randy Bushea
 - Yi Liang
 - Tiffany Williams
 - Shannon Griffin
 - Britt Hill



Points of Discussion

- **Outreach to attract new energy TSPs**
- **Training needs**
 - Proper use of sealant in houses and construction techniques
 - Developing application, funding pools, ranking questions
- **Include ventilation, insulation and multiple practices for the 2024 CIG**
- **Recommendation to include more CAFO energy practices in the locally led work group process**



TSP Shortage



- **TSP must be a registered engineer or certified energy manager.**
- **Current TSPs are aging out and no new TSPs.**
- **Out of state TSPs provide an unusable audit**
- **Reached Cherie Lafleur, Catherine Stanley, Kip Pheil for guidance on TSP shortages and received some great ideas on how to fill in the gaps.**
 - Utility Companies, HVAC or insulation contractors
 - QI or TSP
 - FY2024 CEMA 228 for Agricultural Energy Assessment does not require the use a TSP
 - TSP for FY2024 Agricultural Energy Design (DIA 120)



High Priority Energy Practices

New High Priority Practice Recommendations for FY24

- **CPS 374 – Energy Efficient Ag Operation**
 - Development and implementation of improvements to reduce or improve the energy efficiency of on-farm energy use.
- **CPS 670 – Energy Efficient Lighting System**
 - An agricultural lighting system with increased energy efficiency.
- **CPS 672 – Energy Efficient Building Envelope**
 - A boundary between a conditioned space and an unconditioned space that meets or exceeds best practices for energy efficiency.





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Wildlife Subcommittee Recommendations

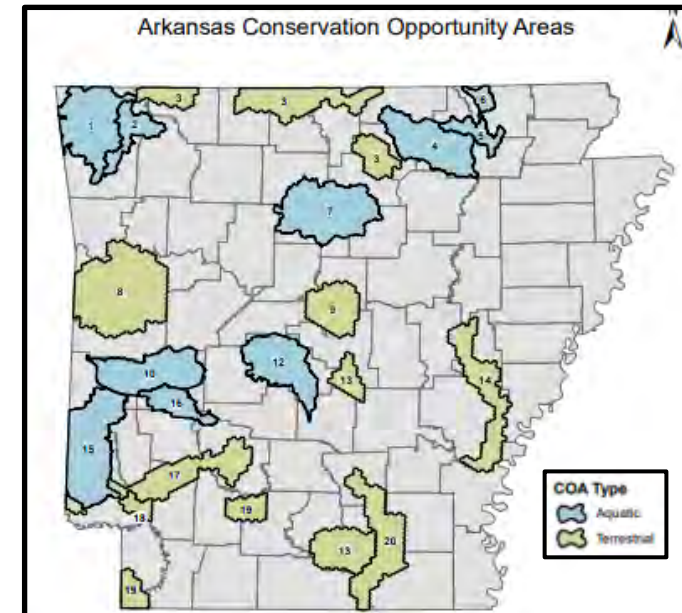
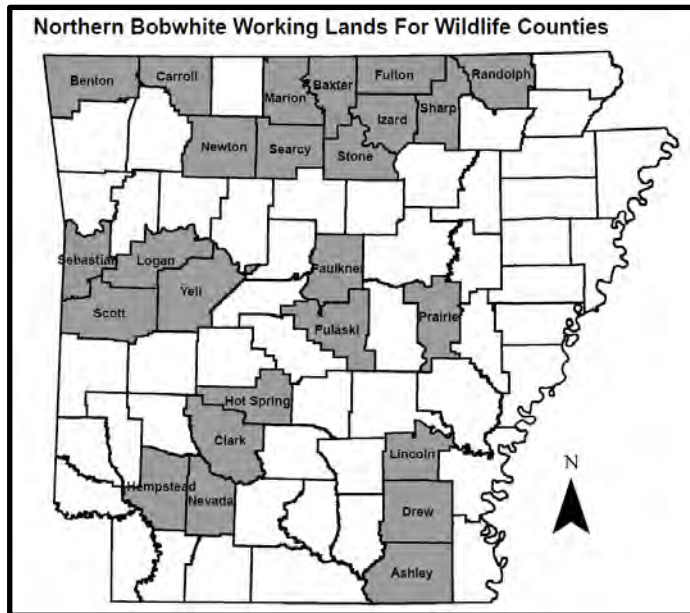
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Recommendation # 1

- The subcommittee recommends a change to expand the current 25 WLFW – Bobwhite Counties to the Western Ecoregions 1 through 5 below.
- The subcommittee recommends using a combination of AGFC Quail Focal Areas, updated Conservation Opportunity Areas, and areas where current WLFW dollars have been implemented to refine ranking questions that determine where funds are prioritized.



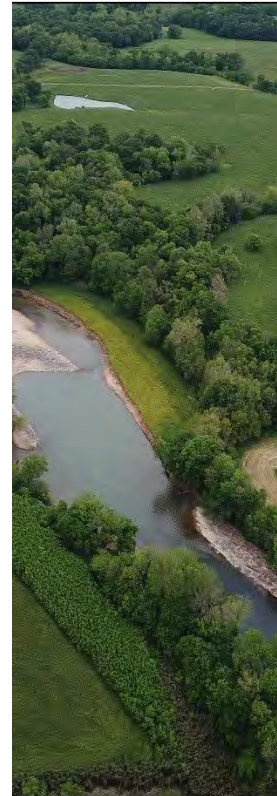
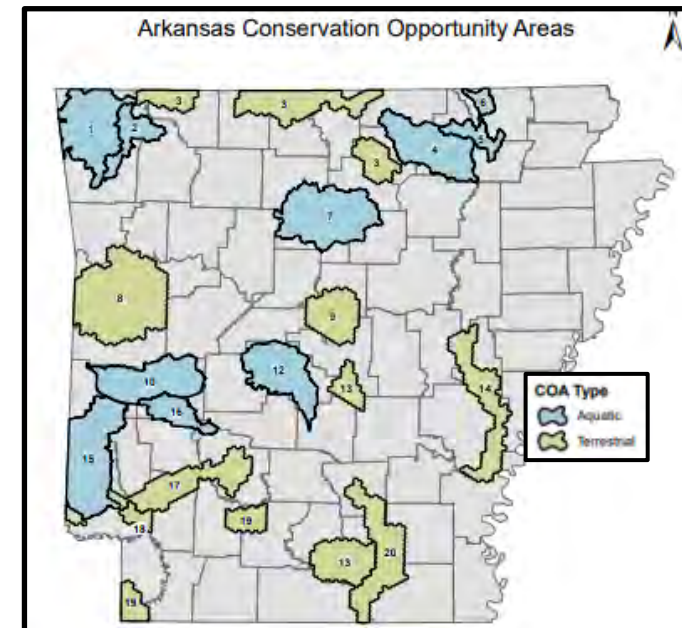
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Recommendation # 2

- The subcommittee recommends the adoption of WLFW – Aquatic Connectivity Framework for FY25 in Arkansas to focus on habitat connectivity between center of stream through floodplain habitat.
- The subcommittee recommended bring together a working group to complete the Aquatic Framework survey and put forward a request by February. The working group will work in tandem with the new NRCS Streambank/Flood Plain working group.



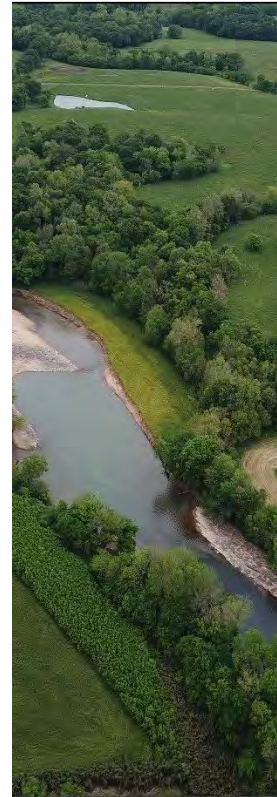
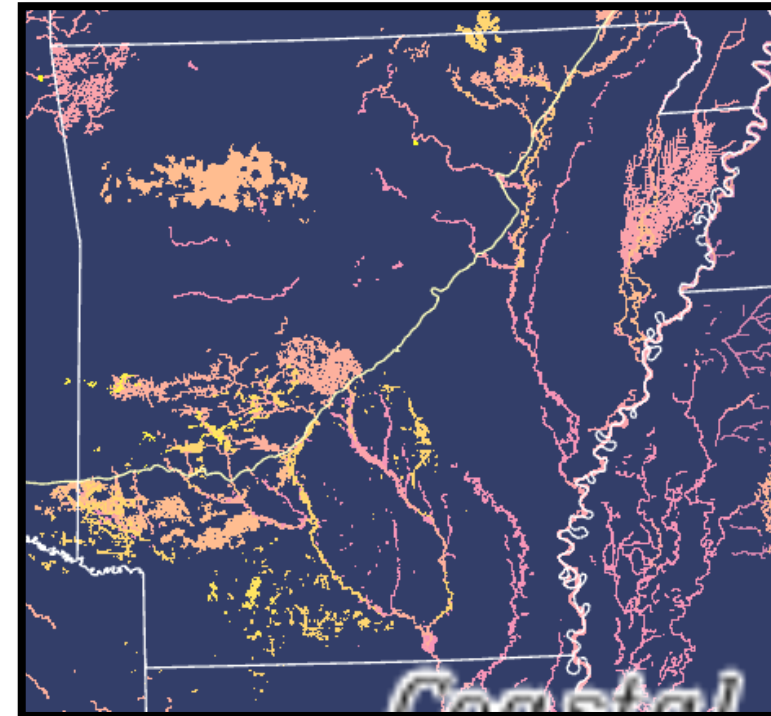
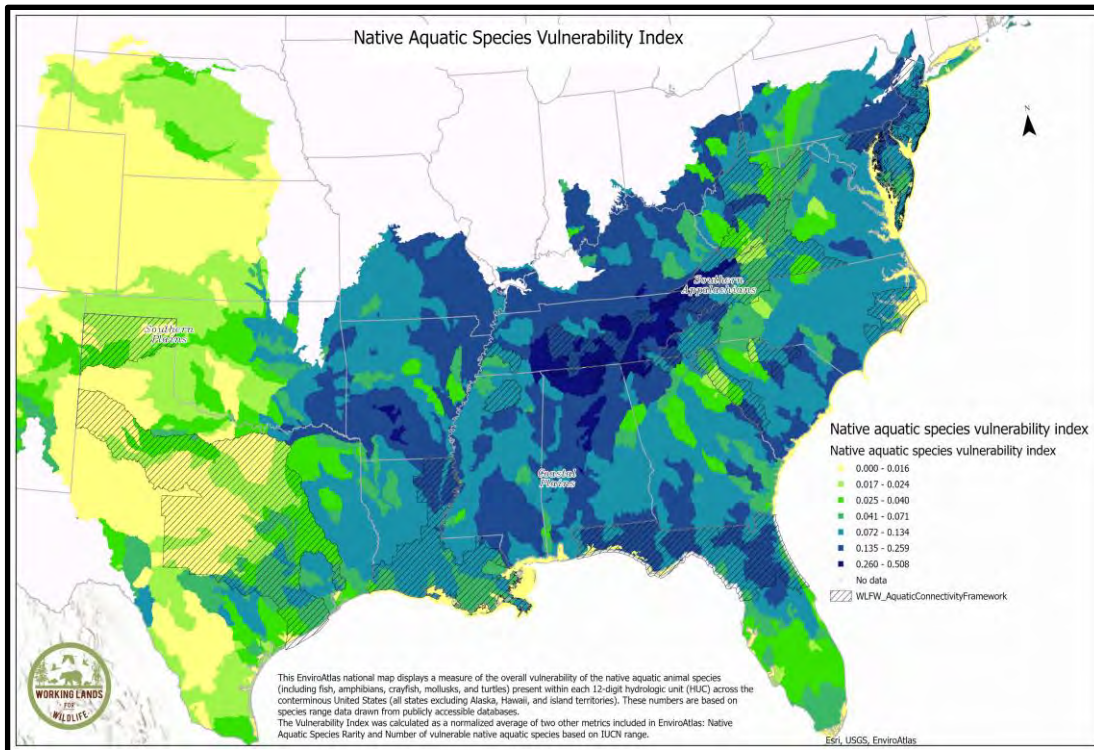
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Recommendation # 2 continued

- The subcommittee recommends the adoption of WLFW – Aquatic Connectivity Framework for FY25 in Arkansas to focus on habitat connectivity between center stream through floodplain habitat.



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Recommendation # 3

- The subcommittee recommends revising the AR State Specification for Practice 422 Hedgerow Planting (last revised in December 2004).

- 1.) Mirror the language in the 422 Standard regarding minimum hedgerow width and number of rows requirements.
- 2.) Eliminate 25% evergreen requirement.

	United States Department of Agriculture	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Practice Specification Hedgerow Planting (Code 422)		
Defintion		
Establishment of dense vegetation composed of shrubs and/or trees in a linear design in, across, or around a field to achieve a natural resource conservation purpose.		
General Specifications		
Hedgerows shall be established using woody plants, or perennial bunch grasses producing erect stems attaining average heights of at least 3 feet and persisting well over winter.		
Minimum hedgerow width, at maturity, shall be 25 feet and shall include 2 or more rows of woody plants.		
Plants selected must be suited and adapted to the soils, climate and conservation purpose. Establish at least two species of native vegetation. Herbaceous vegetation will be included in plantings for ground-nesting birds. Wider widths shall be used to reduce nest predation. At least 25% of the species selected will be evergreen to provide year-around cover. A variety of fruit and nut producing trees and shrubs will be used. Selected plants shall provide cover and/or food to support the landowner's wildlife objectives.		



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Other Updates: Need for AR Shrub Production

Will create a list of Native AR Shrubs that make sense for use in urban/small scale and wildlife habitat projects and submit list to Arkansas Forestry Division Baucum Nursery.

Table B3: Native Shrubs and Small Trees for Pollinators

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	PLANT FAMILY [COMMON NAME]
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i> ¹	Serviceberry	Rosaceae [rose]
<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	Leadplant	Fabaceae [bean]
<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>	False indigo bush	Fabaceae [bean]
<i>Asimina triloba</i> ¹	Pawpaw	Annonaceae [custard-apple]
<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	American beautyberry	Verbenaceae [verbena]
<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	New Jersey tea	Rhamnaceae [buckthorn]
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Buttonbush	Rubiaceae [coffee]
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> ¹	White fringetree	Oleaceae [olive]
<i>Cornus drummondii</i>	Roughleaf dogwood	Cornaceae [dogwood]
<i>Cornus foemina</i>	Smooth dogwood	Cornaceae [dogwood]
<i>Crataegus crus-galli</i>	Cockspur hawthorn	Rosaceae [rose]
<i>Crataegus marshallii</i> ¹	Parsley hawthorn	Rosaceae [rose]
<i>Euonymus americanus</i>	Strawberry bush	Celastraceae [staff-tree]
<i>Halesia carolina</i>	Carolina silverbell	Styracaceae [styrax]



Other Updates: BIO JOB SHEET UPDATE



643 Restoration of Rare and Declining Natural Communities

COMPLETE: JS/IR/IS – Woodland Thinning

COMPLETE: JS/IR/IS – Glade Restoration

COMPLETE: JS/IR/IS – Prairie/Savanna Restoration

645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management

COMPLETE: JS/IR – Habitat Monitoring and Management Scenario

- *Spring Breeding Bird, Fall Covey Count, Photo Point*

649 Structures For Wildlife

COMPLETE: JS/IR Downed Tree Structures

COMPLETE: JS/IR Edge Feathering

420 Wildlife Habitat Planting

COMPLETE: IR – Native Pollinator Plantings

NOT COMPLETE: JS – Native Pollinator Plantings

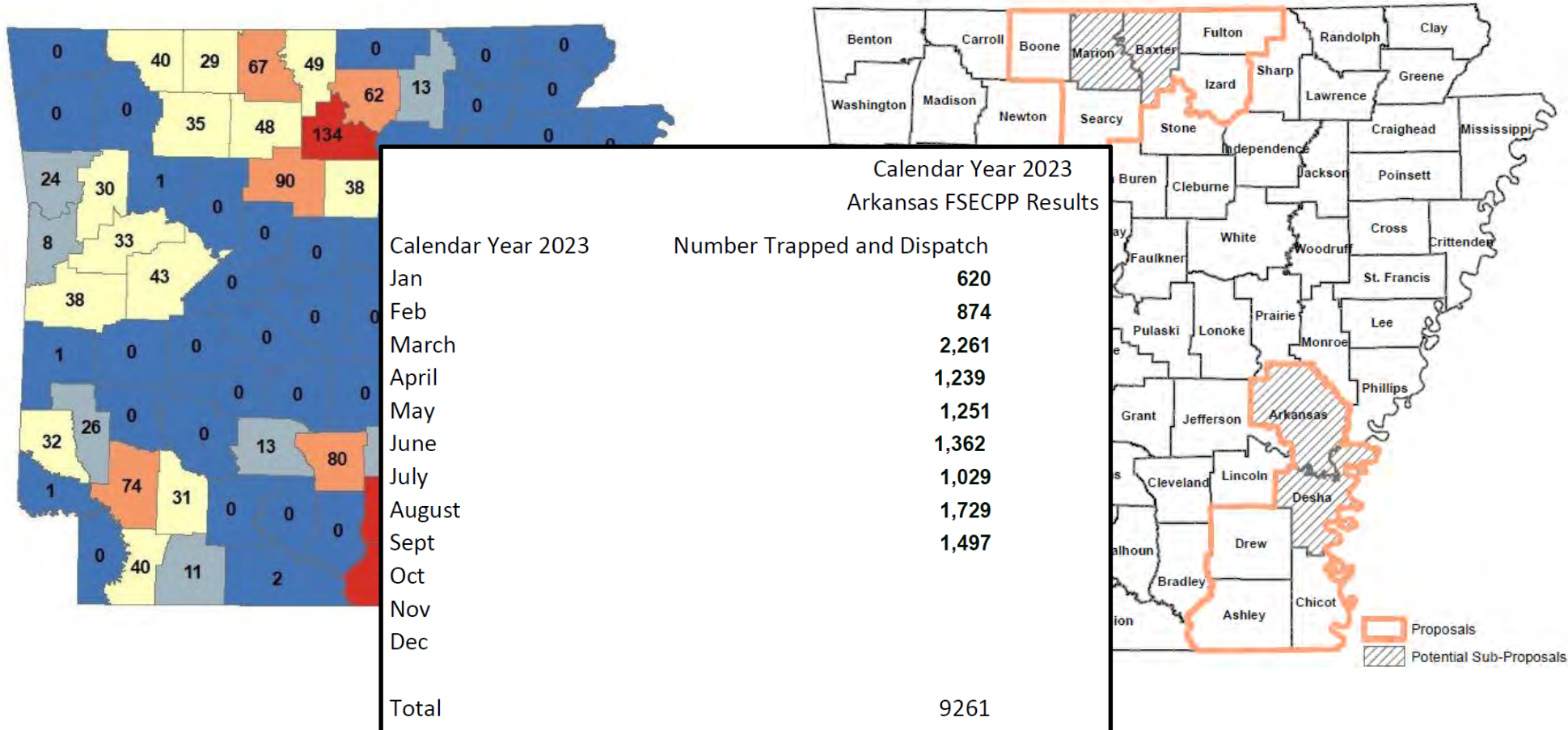
NOT COMPLETE: 327/420 JS/IR Pollinators for Urban Ag



Other Updates: Feral Swine Program

September

Arkansas Feral Swine Potential Proposals



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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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- Forestry Subcommittee met on November 15, 2023
 - 44 people signed the attendance record
 - Agenda items included
 - Agroforestry practices Forest Farming/379 & Alley Cropping/311
 - Minimum number of pine per acre that should be acceptable in Tree/Shrub Establishment/612 (practice specifications)
 - Forest Stand Improvement/666 Scenario 78 – possibly could use it in thinning dense pine plantations
 - Each agenda item was thoroughly discussed including the barriers and opportunities of implementing each practice and scenario.
 - No recommendations from the Forestry Subcommittee at this time, but feedback was solicited at the meeting and it is anticipated that feedback will be incorporated in recommendations for the spring State Technical Committee meeting.



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Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Subcommittee

Recommendations for the State Technical Committee - November 28, 2023

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- **Based on discussions at the small farm and urban agriculture subcommittee meeting**
 - September 21, 2023
- **30 members in attendance in-person and virtually**





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Recommendations



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Recommendations

Adjust how we describe/define urban ag to be more inclusive of all animal production and community agriculture

- Small-scale operations producing crops and/or animals as part of a community, local, or regional food system
- Continue to refine at a state level with partners to ensure we are all using similar descriptions for all programs



Recommendations

Continue to provide guidance on resources and NRCS programs available to small-scale/urban producers

- AR urban website including small farm resources and program information
- Make small-scale scenarios list available:
 - On website
 - In urban conservation practices handbook



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Recommendations

Translate outreach documents into more languages spoken in Arkansas

- Spanish
- Hmong
- Burmese
- Marshallese



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Prácticas para granjas pequeñas y urbanas

Conservación con NRCS, Arkansas

Las prácticas de conservación ayudan a mejorar la salud del suelo, reducir su erosión, mejorar la calidad del agua y aportar otros beneficios a los recursos naturales.

Servicio de conservación de los Recursos Naturales del USDA (USDA-NRCS), Arkansas

Independientemente del tamaño de su granja, disponer de los conocimientos necesarios para conservar, mantener y restaurar los recursos naturales de su granja es una herramienta poderosa. El Servicio de Conservación de Recursos Naturales (NRCS) del USDA puede ayudar a los agricultores urbanos y a los pequeños agricultores a crear un plan de conservación que les sirva como guía para mejorar la salud y la rentabilidad de su granja.

Un plan de conservación puede permitirle tomar decisiones informadas para su granja, evitar los costos asociados con errores de gestión y eventualmente ayudarle a optar a programas federales.

La forma en que gestionamos el suelo influye en su capacidad de funcionamiento más que cualquier otro factor. Se pueden observar tierras productivas y resilientes utilizando un sistema de gestión de la salud del suelo que incorpore estos cuatro sencillos principios:

- Minimización de las perturbaciones causadas por la labranza y el pastoreo excesivo.
- Maximizar la cobertura del suelo con residuos vegetales y plantas vivas.
- Maximizar la diversidad con rotaciones de cultivos y cultivos de cobertura.
- Aprovechar al máximo los recursos vivos durante todo el año con cultivos, forrajes y cultivos de cobertura.

Algunos de los beneficios pueden ser el aumento de la materia orgánica del suelo, la mejora de la resiliencia a sequías e inundaciones, la mejora del ciclo de nutrientes y el aumento general de los ingresos.

Esta hoja informativa enumera algunas de las prácticas de conservación disponibles que se aplican a diversas formas de gestión de recursos naturales de su granja urbana o pequeña. Para obtener más información sobre las opciones disponibles para su granja y cómo implementarlas, visite el sitio web del USDA-NRCS. Podemos ayudarte a tomar las decisiones correctas para proteger y mejorar cultivos y otros recursos naturales.

11/14/2020

Prácticas para granjas pequeñas y urbanas

ARMS042420

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Recommendations

Make the locally led process more inclusive and accessible

- Some members are not aware of these meetings, where they take place, or how to get more information for their area
- Requested a way to make meeting announcements more publicly available



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Recommendations

Higher raised beds as an approved scenario instead of as a variance request to make it clear that accessibility is important to NRCS



Recommendations

Appreciated new CI&G guidance for urban ag:

- o Urban Agriculture comes with unique conservation challenges and opportunities. We are accepting proposals that demonstrate innovations that support conservation of natural resources in urban agriculture contexts, particularly the development and implementation of innovative new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies. Projects could include but are not limited to:



Recommendations

Appreciated new CIG guidance for urban ag:

- Demonstration of resource concerns and conservation practices associated with controlled environment ag methods such as hydroponics, aeroponics, aquaponics, and vertical farming.
- Evaluation of conservation adoption and approaches for urban and small farms and how they are similar to or different from current NRCS programs and opportunities. This evaluation also needs to include suggestions for how NRCS can improve programs and opportunities.
- Demonstration of the environmental effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation practices in a small farm or urban setting that could be added to the list of approved NRCS conservation practices.
- The adaptation of existing NRCS conservation practices to better support and increase adoption on a small or urban farm.
- Demonstration of new NRCS conservation practices that help small and urban producers adapt to the impacts of climate change, through increased resiliency on the farm, increased carbon sequestration, or other methods.





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A photograph of a community garden. In the foreground, there are several tall sunflowers with large green leaves and bright yellow heads. Interspersed among them are numerous zinnias in various colors, including pink, purple, red, and orange. The garden is planted in rows, with some wooden stakes visible. In the background, there is a grassy area, a chain-link fence, and a line of trees under an overcast sky.

Thank you!

State Urban Conservationist
Katy Brantley Katy.Brantley@usda.gov

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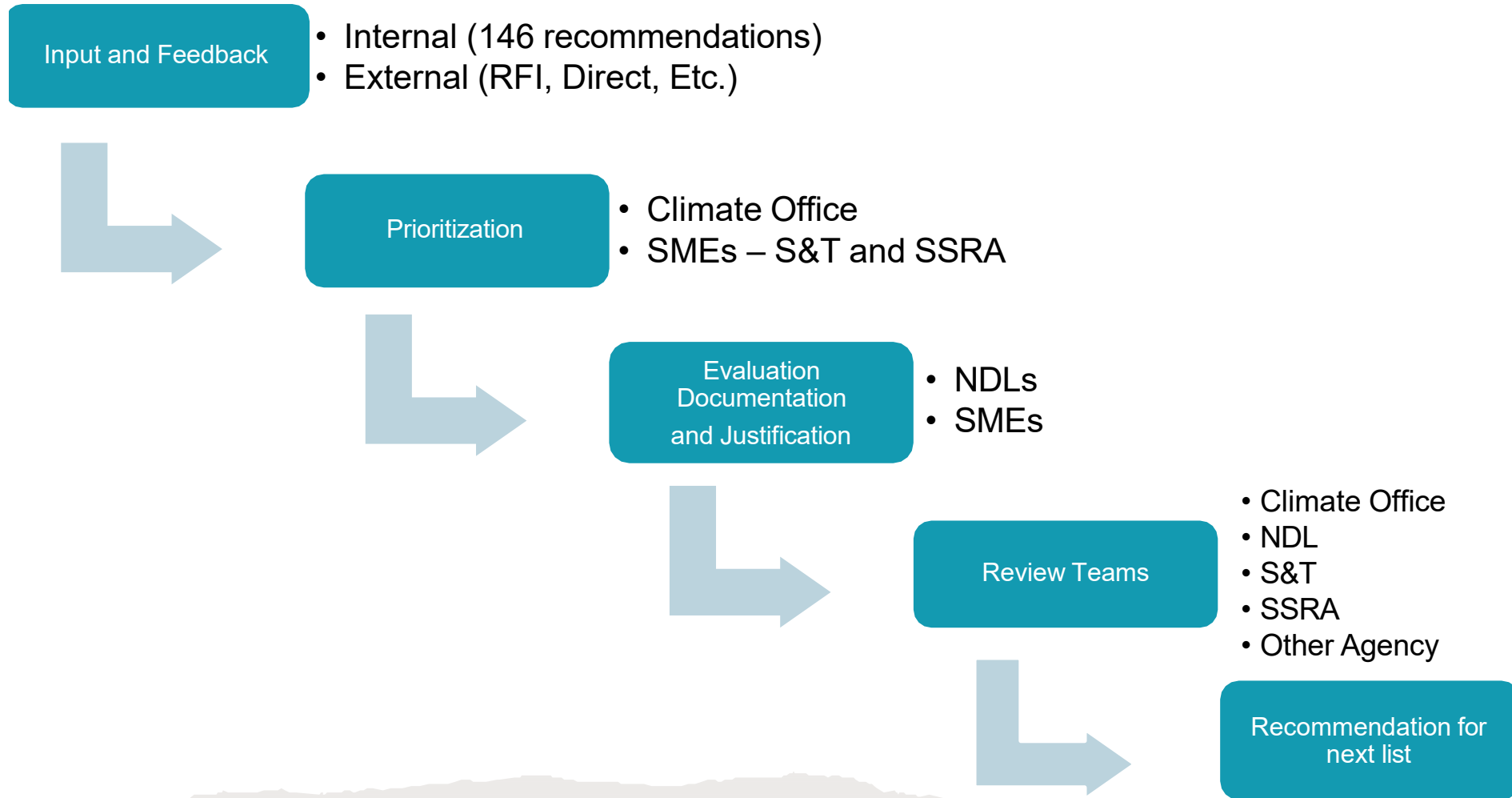
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Evaluation Criteria and Review Process



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Mitigation Activity Evaluation Process

Mitigation Activity Evaluations

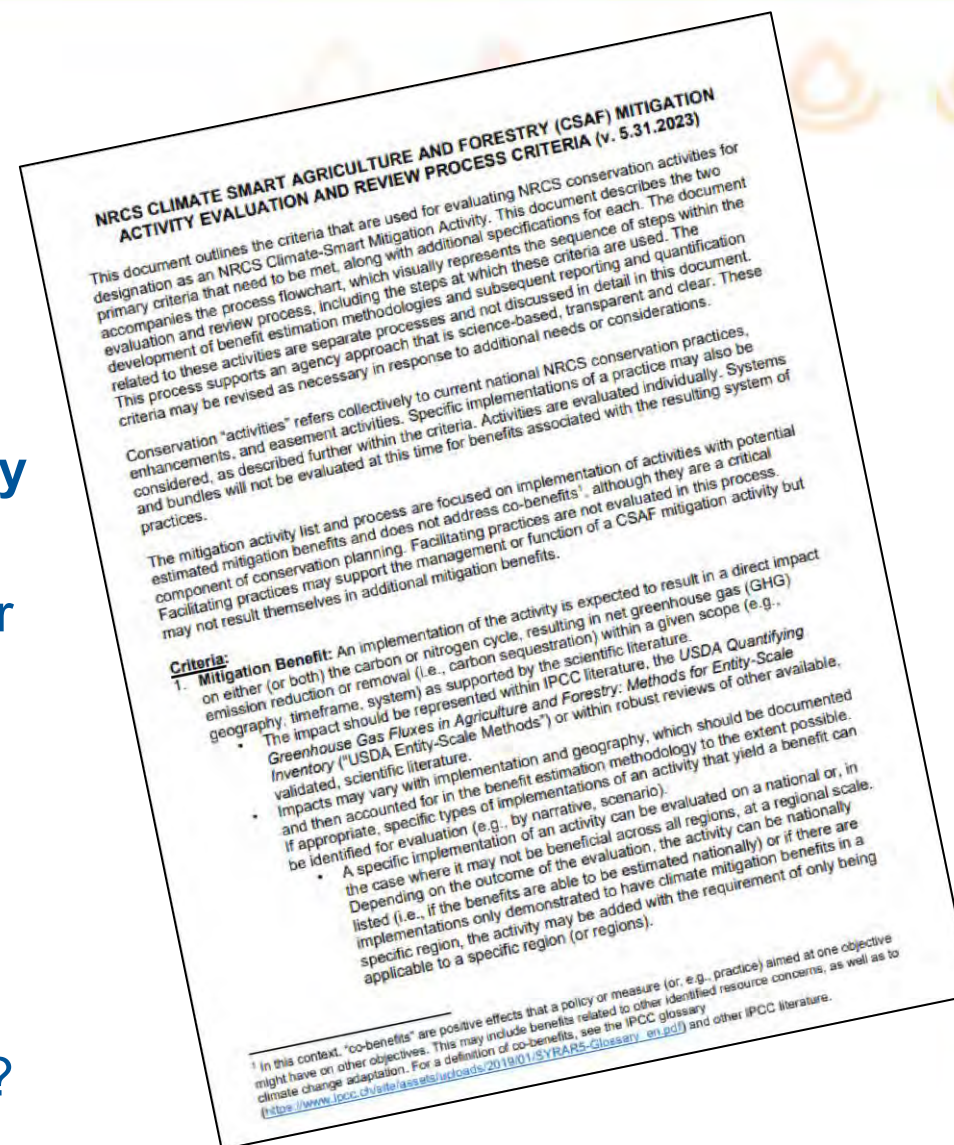
- **Criteria 1 – Mitigation Benefit**
- **Criteria 2 – Benefit Estimation**

Criteria must be supported by scientific literature



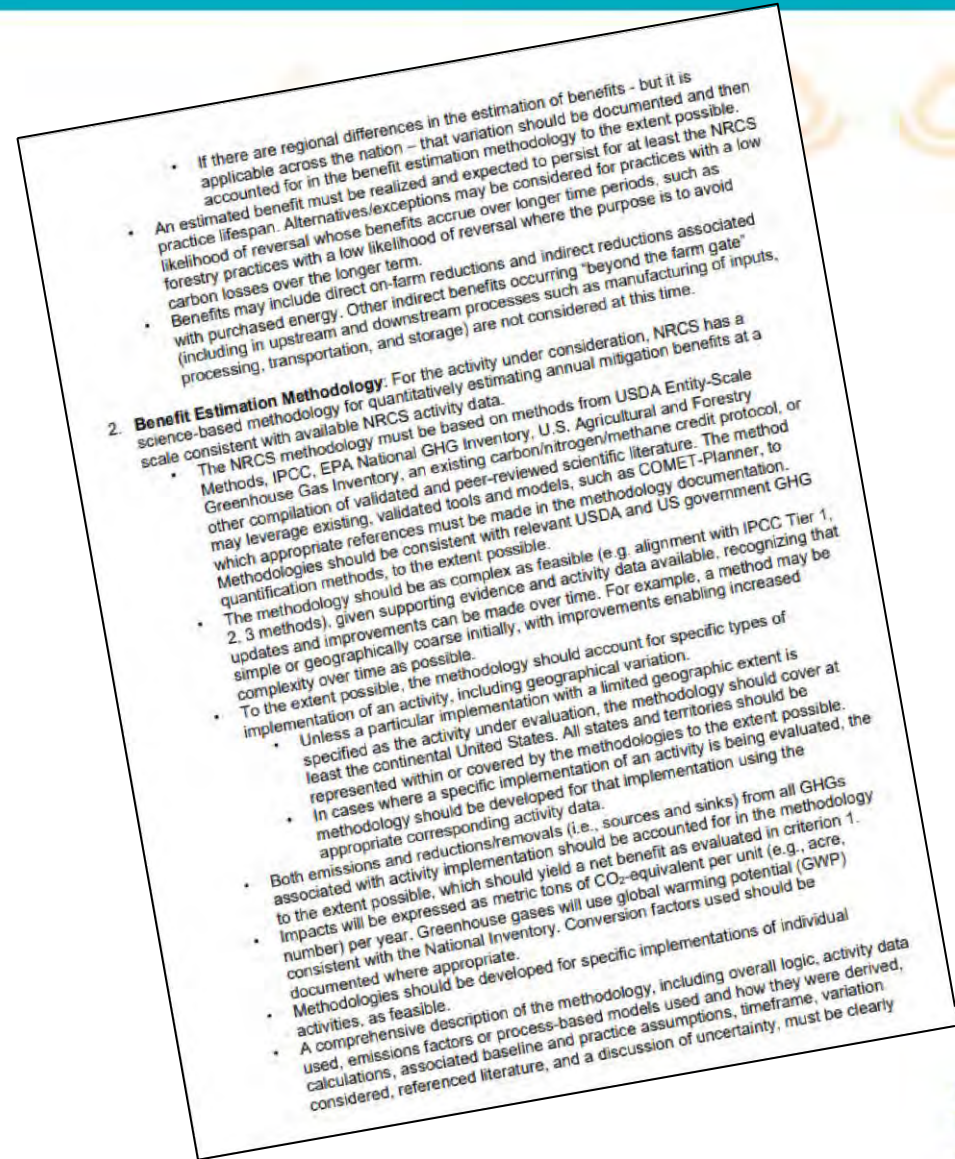
Criteria 1

- ✓ Does the activity result in direct impact on net greenhouse gas emission reduction or removal within a given scope....as supported by the scientific literature?
- ✓ Is the activity being evaluated for a specific implementation and geography?
- ✓ Will the benefit be realized and persist for at least the NRCS practice lifespan?
- ✓ Will benefits be direct on-farm reductions or energy reductions?



Criteria 2

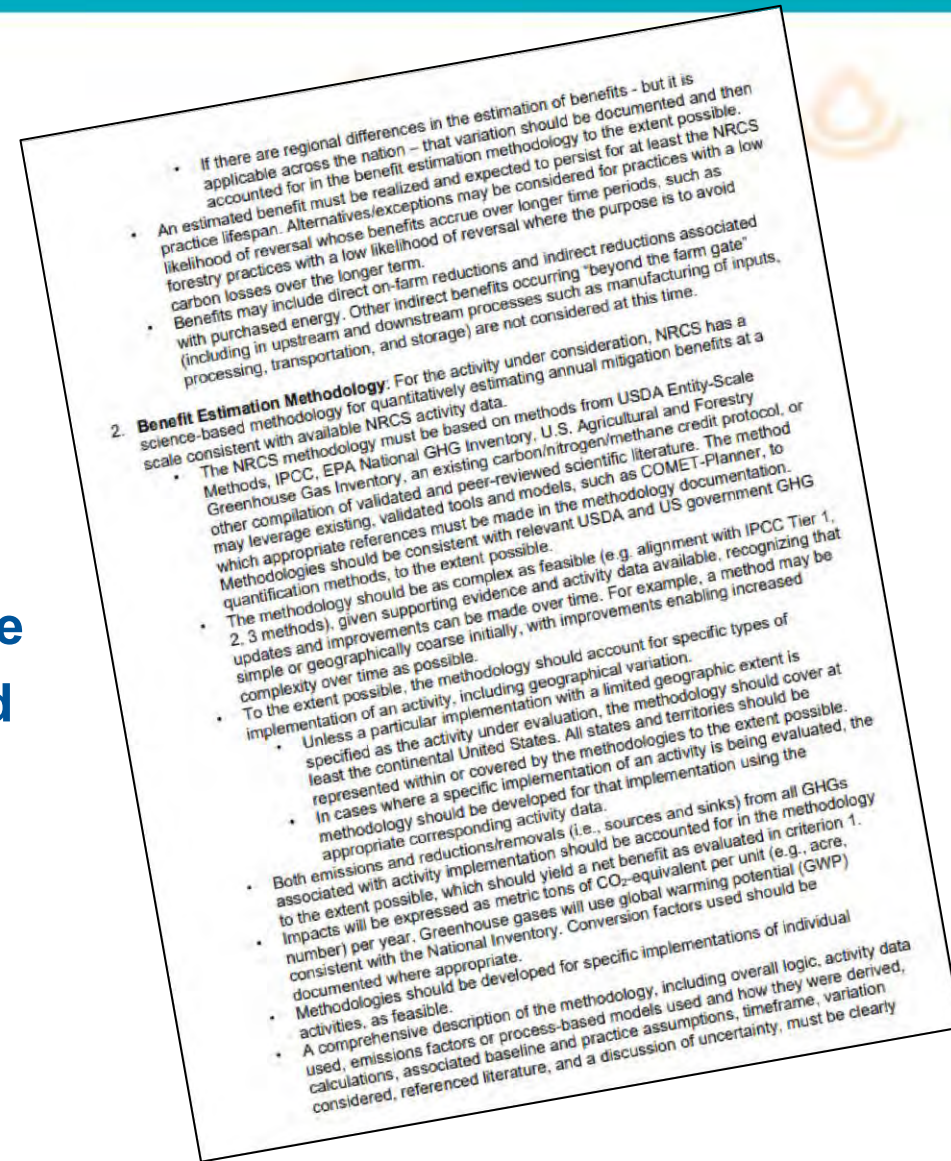
- ✓ Does NRCS have a science-based methodology for quantitatively estimating mitigation benefits using available NRCS activity data?
- ✓ Is the methodology aligned with supporting evidence and activity data?
- ✓ Does the method account for specific types and variation of implementation of an activity?
- ✓ Are both emissions and reductions from all GHG accounted for in the methodology?



Criteria 2

Additional guidance

- ✓ Leverage existing tools and models
- ✓ As sophisticated as feasible, with improvement over time
- ✓ Expressed in metric tons CO₂e
- ✓ Comprehensively documented



Process Flow Chart

1. Meets both criteria

→ Add to list fully

2. Meets criterion 1 and a methodology can be developed

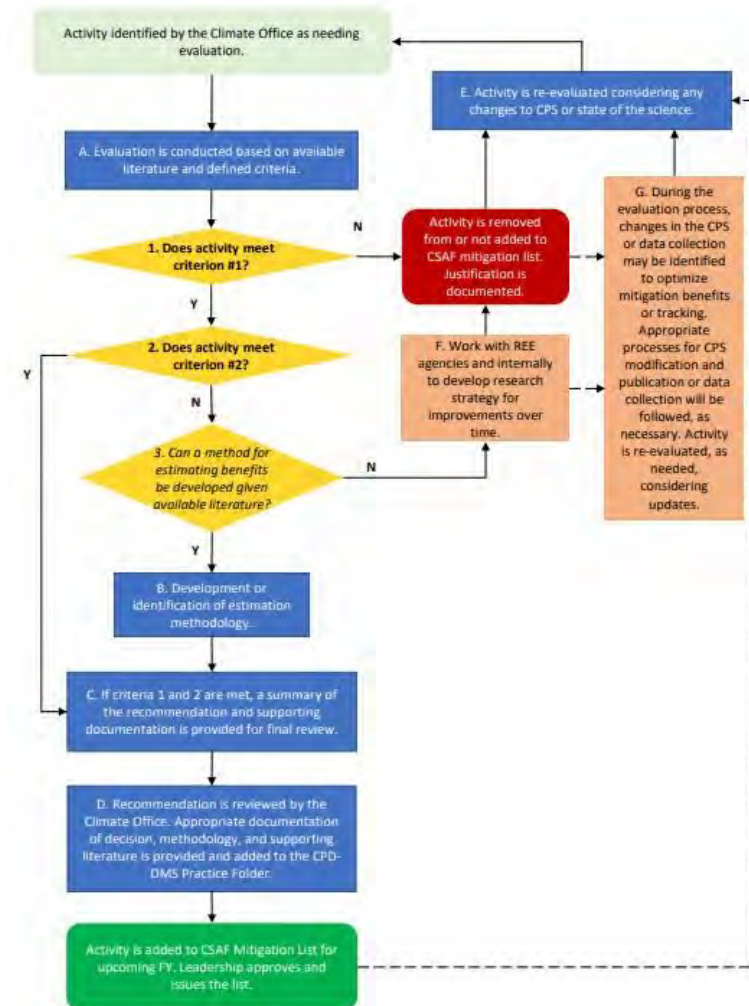
→ Add as “Provisional”

→ Develop methodology

→ Add fully in future

3. Meets neither criteria

→ Do not add to list



Evaluation Recommendation Document

- **Activity Name and Code:**
- **(if applicable) Specific Implementation / Narrative:**
- **Evaluation Team Members:**
- **Date:**
- **Criterion 1**
 - Does the activity satisfy criterion 1? Justification:
- **Criterion 2**
 - Does the activity satisfy criterion 2? Justification:
- **Evaluation Team Recommendation**
- **Additional information and justification for recommendation**
- **Key Literature**



Evaluation Recommendation - Example

Climate-Smart Mitigation Activity – Evaluation Team Recommendation

Activity Name and Code: Composting Facility (317)

(if applicable) Specific Implementation / Narrative: N/A

Evaluation Team Members: Bill Reck (NDL), Greg Zwicke (S&T), Bob Dobos (SSRA), Michael Strobel (Climate NRCS), and Liz Marshall (Other agency – OCE-OEEP)

Facilitator/Observers/Contributors: Sara del Fierro, Laura Schreeg, Dana Ashford-Komburger

Date: Review Meeting #1 8/31/2023 at 2:00pm

Criterion 1

Does the activity satisfy criterion 1? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Justification:

In order to discuss the GHG benefit of the CPS, we need to determine the typical GHG emission from the current situation versus the GHG benefit of the applied practice.

Existing Baseline Situation:

Compost facilities are typically used on livestock operations where there is a excess poorly stored manure or the need opportunity to derive income from the sale of compost made from animal manure. The livestock operator may also have limited cropland for spreading of manure and there is a need to export manure from the farm. In both of these cases, manure is likely stored in an overloaded liquid slurry pit or is removed from a livestock animal housing barn (poultry) and stored in a pile outside and exposed to rainfall. Alternatively, there could be agricultural byproducts that will be poorly stored. NRCS is rarely asked to assist in these situations (agricultural processing operations rarely qualify for financial assistance) but could occur with an urban conservation request.

Practice Applied Condition:

Livestock operator has chosen to install a waste management system which will be optimized for GHG reduction which includes composting of manure. The operator chooses to install a composting facility which includes either an intensive windrow system, a forced air composting system or an in-vessel composting facility (rotary drum or other autonomous mechanical turning device). Some facilities likely had a liquid slurry storage and some of the solids will be diverted from the liquid storage to the composting facility. Both of these composting methods achieve higher composting temperatures and are well aerated composting methods.

Mitigation Benefit:

Methane

- Dairy, Swine, Poultry Liquid systems: For the purposes of determining a mitigation benefit, we are going to keep the comparison fairly generic and primarily use the values found in IPCC 2022,

Chapter 10- Livestock. For the existing situation you would typically see for swine, dairy and some egg facilities a Liquid/Slurry Pit with either one or two emptying events per year. That gives you a Methane Conversion Factor (MCF) between 21 to 80% depending on climate. Likely this rate will be higher since these systems are usually overloaded with low surface area to storage ratios and will behave more like an anaerobic lagoon than a liquid slurry storage. Composting In-vessel has an MCF of 0.5%, forced aeration 1 to 2.5% and intensive windrow composting of 0.5 to 1.5%. Therefore, any percentage of separated solids that are composted in a typical NRCS composting facility will see a significant reduction in methane production potential (20 to 79%).

- Beef, Poultry Litter systems: In these types of systems, the livestock are housed in an area where they are allowed to build up a manure pack either with litter or without. At the end of the growing cycle, the manure pack is removed. In the existing situation, the manure is stacked exposed to the elements until it is ready to be land applied. In the practice applied condition, the litter is composted in an intensive windrow composting system. For the purposes of this analysis, we are only considering the removed manure pack since during the livestock grow out period, the treatment of the manure is the same. For solid storage of manure, the MCF is 2 to 5%. For intensive windrow composting, the MCF is 5 to 1.5% which shows only a small improvement of 1.5% to 3.5%. Forced aeration would have an MCF of 1 to 2.5% which would be an improvement of 1 to 2.5%. In-vessel composting is unlikely but would reduce the MCF to 0.5% for an even better improvement. In these scenarios, the methane reduction is positive but much less than conversion from a liquid system to a solid separation/composting system.

N2O

- Dairy, Swine, Poultry Liquid systems: Using the values found in ICPP2022, Chapter 10- Livestock for N2O emissions there is some effect on N2O. For the existing situation you would typically see for swine, dairy and some egg facilities a Liquid/Slurry Pit with either one or two emptying events per year. The N2O Emission Factors (NEF) for liquid storage is 0 to 0.005. For composting, the only choice available is solid storage with bulking agents that has an NEF of 0.005. That would show that there would be some small amount of increase in N2O. The negative impact of the increased N2O would be far outweighed by the decrease in NH4.
- Beef, Poultry Litter systems: In these types of systems, the difference in NEF would go from Solid Storage (0.01) to Solid Storage Bulking Agent Addition (0.005). The difference between these systems shows as small considering the difference in NEF. However, the benefit is positive.

Literature:

There are numerous papers which conclude that increases in aeration of compost will decrease GHG emissions (AHN 2011, Chang 2020, Jiang 2011, Shuangshuang 2020, Zeng 2018), there is also evidence that moisture content higher than the recommended amount will lead to higher emissions of N2O and NH4 (Brown 2008, Lin 2023). Both of these facts point to higher GHG emissions from a solid stack which has poor aeration and exposure to the elements. This difference points to an improvement in GHG for a typical Beef bedded pack or poultry litter system where the manure pack is removed and stacked in a large pile exposed to the elements versus an intensive windrow composting system.

High temperature associated with vigorous composting activity has been shown to inhibit emissions of CH4 and N2O (Hobson 2005 and Li 2013). Further, Hobson 2005 found that GHG emissions in windrow systems following in-vessel systems were lower than only windrow composting. These results seem to imply that higher temperature, more aerated, and basically faster composting methods will result in lower GHGs being released during composting. This indicated that an in-vessel system would be preferable, and



Evaluation Recommendation - Example

that intensive windrow composting is preferable to static pile composting. Forced aeration would also be preferable to static pile composting. One thing of note is that data for forced aeration composting tends to be collected for wetter composting substrate which may account for higher GHG emissions than is found for in-vessel systems.

Conclusion:

It is fairly safe to say that NRCS Composting Facility in general reduces GHG emission. The amount of emission reduction is dependent upon the starting point for comparison. Starting from a liquid slurry storage and removing solids from this system for composting, regardless of the type of composting, will have a large impact. Starting from an unmanaged solid drystack and moving to composting will also have a positive impact with the degree of impact dependent upon the intensity of the composting operation. In-vessel systems will have the greatest impact, with intensive windrow and forced aeration having a positive but slightly lower impact.

Criterion 2

Does the activity satisfy criterion 2? ☐ Yes ☒ No, but potential to develop method

Justification:

Benefit Estimation Methodology:

A basis for estimation of GHG benefit is provided in the *2019 Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*. Use of this method will require an estimation of the amount of manure and associated byproducts to be treated. Estimation of the amount of waste to be treated is calculated by the field staff that will be designing the conservation practice. Currently this data is not captured in any database currently maintained by NRCS. The minimum required data includes the following:

1. The number, average starting and ending weight, livestock type, time confined for manure capture.
 2. The current waste management system characteristics (percentage of manure collected, the efficiency of any solid/liquid separation, and type of waste storage (both for liquid and solid fractions)).
 3. Annual cycle of herd/flock numbers.
- Other data which could be collected that would improve the estimate of emission reduction:
4. The feed percent crude protein.
 5. Any amendments fed to the herd/flock.

The accuracy of the estimation will depend upon the data supplied.

Potential Method (each of these methods will require software to be developed):

- Option 1 – collect the required data using a combination of CART, payment schedule scenario selected, and contracting information. Then use this data using a software to be developed to make the required calculations. Basically, require entry of the data that would be used by a tool similar to the GLEE spreadsheet and then perform the calculations using a derivative of that software.
- Option 2 – require the field to enter data on the operation into a software product such as the GLEE spreadsheet. Require the estimation of GHG reduction to be entered into CART and harvest this number based on CPS/Narrative selected.

Uncertainty:

This estimation does not account for what happens to the volatilized ammonia which leaves the system. Nor does it account for the ultimate use of the compost developed.

Evaluation Team Recommendation

Based on our current evaluation, we recommend the following for this activity for the upcoming FY:

☐ add to the CSAF Mitigation Activity list. The activity meets both criteria 1 and 2.

☒ add to the CSAF Mitigation Activity list as “provisional”. The activity meets criterion 1, but may not meet criterion 2 at this time, though a suitable methodology can likely be developed with additional time.

☐ do not add to the CSAF Mitigation Activity list. The activity does not sufficiently meet either criteria 1 nor 2. The activity may be re-evaluated in the future considering changes in the practice or state of the science.

☐ do not add to the CSAF Mitigation Activity list. There is not enough information to sufficiently evaluate this activity and we recommend that this activity be prioritized for evaluation in the following year, given additional review and compilation of literature.

☐ remove this activity from the CSAF Mitigation Activity list. It has been determined the activity does not meet criteria 1 or 2. The activity may be re-evaluated in the future considering changes in the practice or state of the science.

Additional information and justification for recommendation

Key Literature

See references mentioned above.

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Expanding Climate Solutions

- **Approach that is:**
 - Science-based
 - Systematic, documented, transparent
 - Flexible
 - Locally led
- **Keep in mind:**
 - Provisional activities
 - Systems approach - Facilitating practices
 - Opportunities outside of IRA





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Input Opportunities



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Opportunities for Input – On-going

CSAF Mitigation Activities - State and Center Recommendations

Please fill out a form for each activity (practice or enhancement) being recommended. Please provide appropriate justification and documentation relevant to support the recommendation.

Activities will be evaluated against two primary criteria:

1. **Mitigation Benefit:** An implementation of the activity is expected to result in a direct impact on either (or both) the carbon or nitrogen cycle, resulting in net GHG emission reduction or removal (i.e., carbon sequestration) within a given scope (e.g., geography, timeframe, system) as supported by the scientific literature.
2. **Benefit Estimation Methodology:** For the activity under consideration, NRCS has a science-based methodology for quantitatively estimating annual mitigation benefits resulting from the activity using available NRCS activity data.

Additional information on these criteria will be available in a forthcoming National Bulletin.

Feedback is welcome throughout the year. Recommendations and feedback received by June 16, 2023 will be considered for FY24. Recommendations received after June 16 will be considered for future years.



Opportunities for Input – On-going

How to develop more input for consideration?

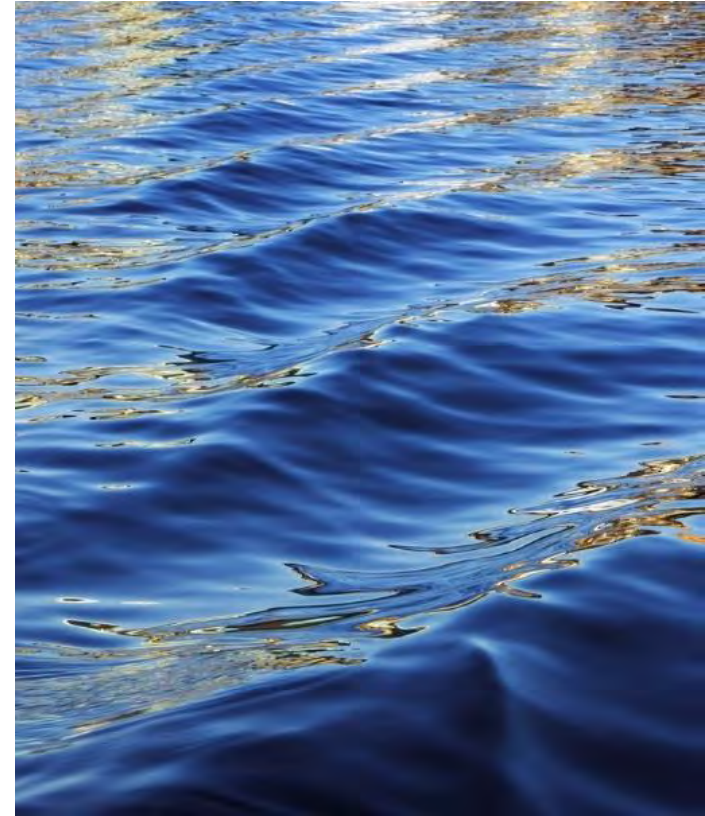
- *Continue to work with*
 - *Partners*
 - *Regional Technology Support Centers*
 - *National Teams*
 - *National Discipline Leads*
 - *SMEs at other agencies*





CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM UPDATES

State Tech Committee Fall Meeting 2022



2022 vs 2023

Classic

CSP Classic 2022

Contracts	179
Obligations	\$23,587,481.57
Contracted Acres	133,465.4

CSP Classic 2023

Contracts	
Obligations	\$36,000,000
Contracted Acres	133,465.4

2022 vs 2023 Renewal

CSP Renewal 2022

Contracts	52
Obligations	\$6,466,989.08
Contracted Acres	34,942.4

CSP Renewal 2023

Contracts	97
Obligations	\$10,400,000.00
Contracted Acres	75,700

CSP IRA 2023 -

CSP IRA FY 2023

Contracts	86
Obligations	\$10,629,290.52
Contracted Acres	97,868.5

- YEAR ONE
- MORE PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS ADDED
- FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR CONTRACTING UNTIL 9/30/2031 (INCREASED FUNDING)

CSP URBAN 2023 -

CSP URBAN FY 2023

Contracts	11
Obligations	\$134,192
Contracted Acres	293.7

- FIRST YEAR
- FOCUS IS ON MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
- ACT NOW BEING OFFERED
- NEW \$4000.00 MINIMUM PAYMENT
- New outreach and fact sheets created for CSP to assist producer and field staff.

Top 10 Base Practices Planned

Code	Practice	Items	Extent	Units
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	199	219,112.5	Ac
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	33	22,724.4	Ac
338	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	35	7,409.8	Ac
340	Cover Crop	123	55,068.5	Ac
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	148	158,555.6	Ac
394	Firebreak	18	143,968.0	Ft
449	Irrigation Water Management	169	178,614.0	Ac
590	Nutrient Management	182	186,639.5	Ac
595	Pest Management Conservation System	126	149,827.8	Ac
646	Shallow Water Development and Management	90	32,962.6	Ac

Top 15 Enhancements Planned

E300EAP1	Existing Activity Payment-Land Use	2,435	1,992,223.0Ac
E315A	Herbaceous weed treatment to create plant communities consistent with the ecological site	131	24,236.1Ac
E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation	94	100,986.2Ac
E328D	Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife	337	134,823.0Ac
E329A	No till to reduce soil erosion	70	28,109.4Ac
E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion	259	85,734.2Ac
E340B	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content	88	39,884.5Ac
E345A	Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion	651	637,493.9Ac
E345C	Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture	81	49,143.0Ac
E345D	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content	140	124,238.2Ac
E511A	Harvest of crops (hay or small grains) using measures that allow desired species to flush or escape	114	54,012.0Ac
E528O	Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality	157	30,955.2Ac
E595A	Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques	426	466,982.6Ac
E595B	Reduce risk of pesticides in water and air by utilizing IPM PAMS techniques	368	292,267.7Ac
E646A	Close structures to capture and retain rainfall for waterfowl and wading bird winter habitat	356	148,313.1Ac

New Enhancements/Bundles: FY24

- **E329F** - No-till into green cover crop to improve soil organic matter.
- quantity and quality
- **E340J** - Cover crop to improve moisture use efficiency and reduce salts
- **E372A** – Switch to Renewable Power Source
- **E372B** - Renewable Energy Source for Large Internal Combustion Engines
- **E484D** - Lowbush Blueberry Mulching for Moisture Management
- **E528U** - Contingency Planning for Resiliency
- **E595H** - Improved crop management to control wheat stem sawfly
- **E643D** - Low-tech process-based restoration to enhance floodplain connectivity
- **B000FST5** - Forest Bundle #5 - Increase Carbon Sequestration and Storage

Revised Enhancements/Bundles: FY24

- **E420A** – Trees removed as option for pollinator species to select from
- **E512L** – Added Land Grant University recommendations as criteria for nutrient and/or soil amendment application when Interseeding forbs and legumes
- **E528A** – Added Forest as a land use for improved Prescribed Grazing
- **E528C** – Added Forest as a land use for establishing refuge area for improved Prescribed Grazing
- **E590A** – Added Strategy option Nature-based fertilizer and Soil Amendments. removed requirement for EFF technology application to supply at least 50% of phosphorus needs.
- **E590D** – Corrected reference to Technical Service Provider (TSP) requirement to state, Qualified Individual is needed to perform and verify equipment and map requirement.
- **E595D** – Required refuge area % changed and areas with the highest risk listed
- **B000FST1** – Forest Bundle #1 – Addition of E612B as an option to include

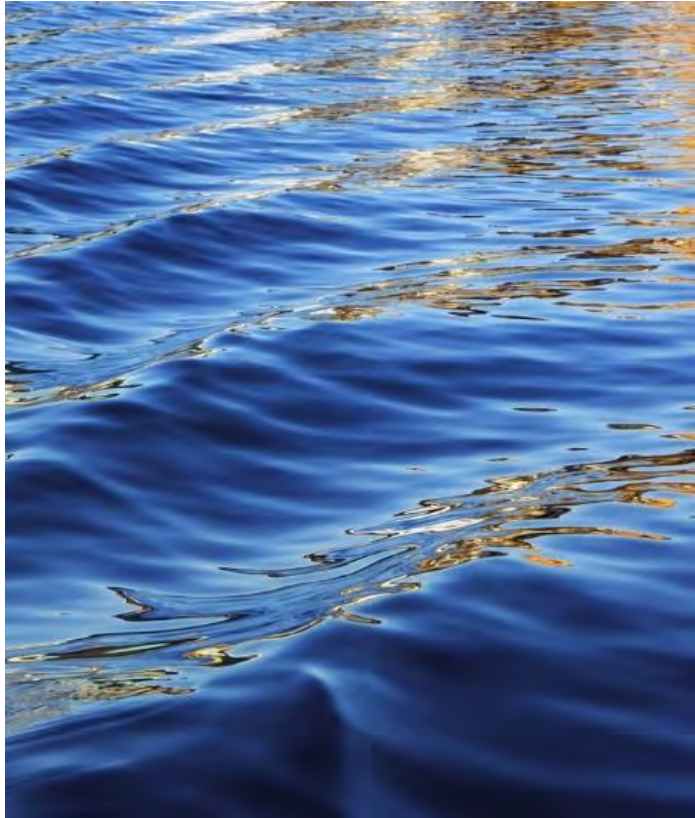
Retired Enhancements/Bundles: FY24

- **E512E** - Forage and biomass planting that produces feedstock for biofuels or energy productions



CSP OPPORTUNITIES

NEW FOCUS AREAS



CSP ORGANICS

- This is funding pool can be used by certified and transitioning too an organic system producers.
- Land uses- cropland, pasture, forestry, AAL
- Comprehensive Conservation Plan (requires use of TSP) equivalent to CAP PLAN in EQIP
- B000CPL22 Crop Bundle #22
- Enhancements available if within organic production guidelines

FY 2024 CSP IRA Strategy

Soil Health/Rice

- **Counties:** Arkansas, Jefferson, Desha, Lincoln, Chicot, Drew, Lonoke, Prairie, Woodruff, Monroe, White, Crittenden, Lee, Craighead, Mississippi, Greene, Clay, Poinsett, St Francis, Cross, Conway, Faulkner, Pulaski, Pope, Jackson, Lawrence
- **CSAF Mitigating Enhancements:** All enhancements on the list.

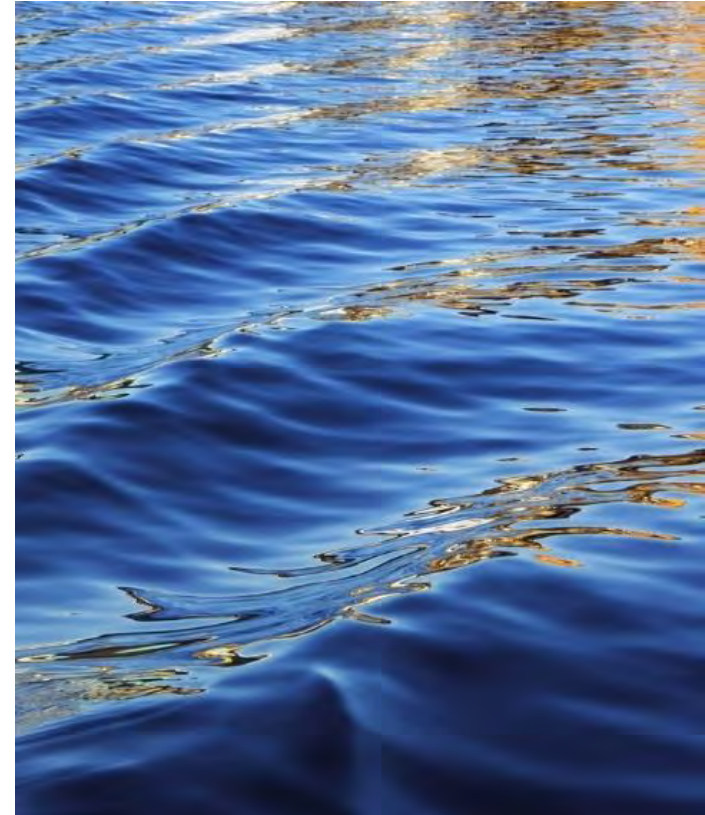
NIPF IRA

- **Counties:** Statewide
- **CSAF Mitigating Enhancements:** All enhancements on the list

**** Possible that some of the CSP Renewals could also be obligated with IRA funds**



Questions?
Comments?
Concerns?





United States Department of Agriculture

2023 Conservation Innovation Grants & 2024 Local Work Groups

**Lori Barker
Resource Conservationist
Fall STC Meeting November 28, 2023**

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Conservation Innovation Grants 2023

Three approved CIIG project for 2023

- ✓ **Delta Conservation:** Developing water efficient regenerative organic system of rice intensification in the greater Mississippi Delta Region
- ✓ **Five Oaks Ag Research and Education Center:** Effects of Set-Aside Practices on Soil Health
- ✓ **Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas:** Economic Budget Calculator for Conservation Practices: Producer Education

Delta Conservation: Developing water efficient regenerative organic system of rice intensification in the greater Mississippi Delta Region

1. Delta Conservation will devote 30 acres of specially-prepared land to finding the most environmentally benevolent, water efficient, and economical rice production method possible in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley, commonly called “the Delta.”
2. The project will combine regenerative organic system of rice intensification in a row rice format with a small surface water recirculation system.
3. Over three years we will test multiple combinations of rice varieties, seeding rates, planting patterns, cover crops, and organic fertilization in small trials next to one another to identify and develop the most successful methods.

Five Oaks Ag Research and Education Center: Effects of Set-Aside Practices on Soil Health

- This on-farm conservation research will use innovative techniques to compare soil health under four treatments ranging from conventional, zero-grade rice agriculture to multi-year set aside.
- It will investigate if “Set Aside practices” have measurable improvements on soil health in zero-grade fields with a history of rice production. This project meets multiple Arkansas State Priorities as it will examine effects of different practices on soil health and utilizes novel drone technology to monitor treatments
- Project will quantify soil health in terms of:
 - 1 soil organic carbon concentration
 - 2 carbon mineralization potential
 - 3 aggregate stability (Soil Health Institute 2022).
- It will also examine microbial communities that play an important role in nutrient cycling and crop performance.

Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas: Economic Budget Calculator for Conservation Practices: Producer Education

- This project is to take a refined financial calculator that is currently being used by producers and use it to assist producers in determining economic cost/benefit of irrigation and cover crop practices.
- These models are specific to Arkansas and have support from all commodity boards. The focus will be implementation for advisors and producers.
- NRCS Standard Practices: Irrigation Water Management; Cover Crop; Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface; Irrigation System; Tail Water Recovery; Irrigation Reservoir Economic Budget Calculator for Conservation

Practices: Producer Education

2024 CIG Areas of Concern

- 2024 Areas of concerns – I will send them to Amanda to email out. Please review and let us know by **December 15th, 2023**, of edits that you see need to be made
- Nutrient and Sediment Reduction in Impaired Watersheds : 2 topics
- Irrigation: 6 topics
- Soil Health: 8 topics
- Pasture: 2 topics
- Climate Smart: 1 topic
- Urban Agriculture: 5 topics
- ENERGY:????

2024 Local Workgroup Meetings

- We are drafting the bulletin to be released by late January for the 2024 Local Workgroup Meetings to be held by later part of March.
- The timing has been moved up with the intent to allow the different partners to use the winter months to more participation in the meetings.



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

Dianne Schlenker
Initiatives Coordinator

RCPP POC
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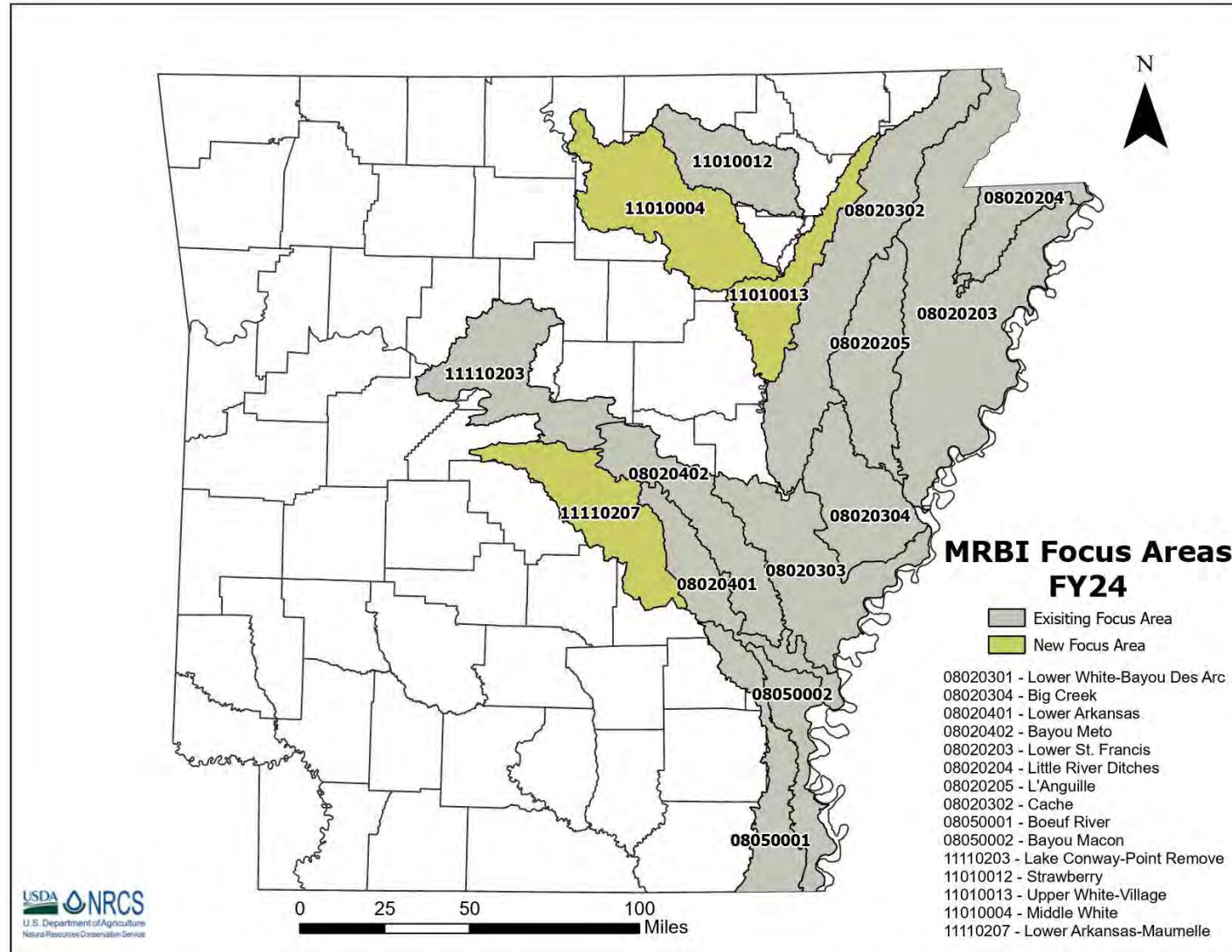
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Priority Watersheds



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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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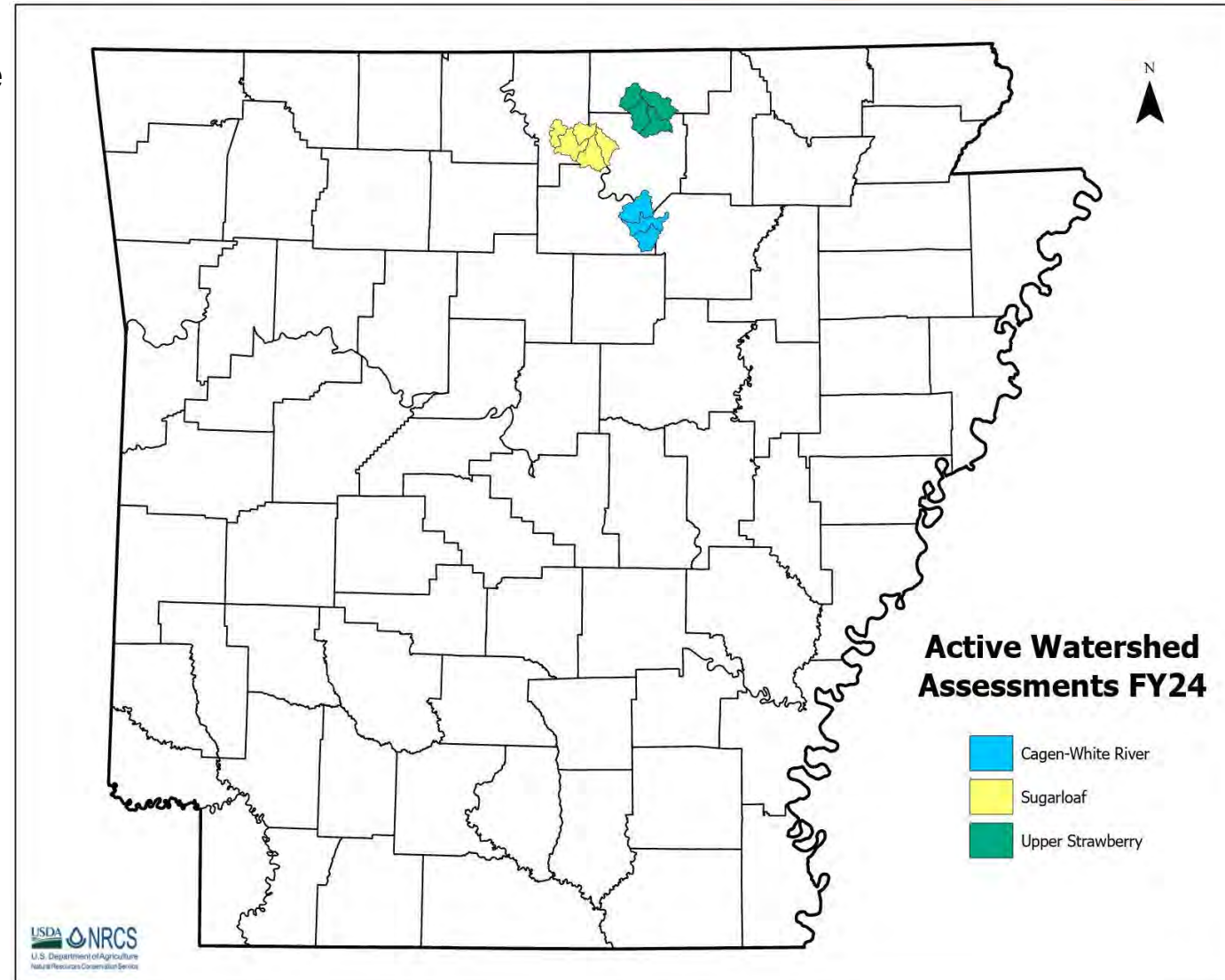
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Watershed Assessments for FY24

Cagen Creek-White River

Sugarloaf

Upper Strawberry

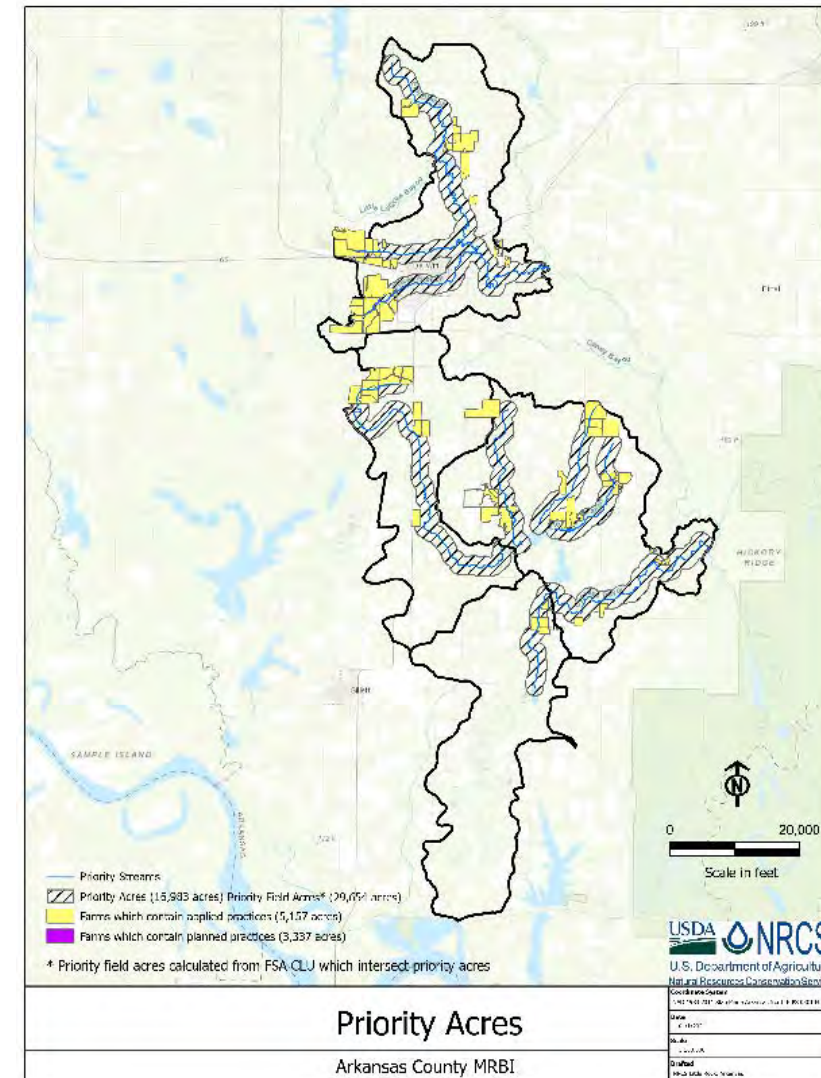
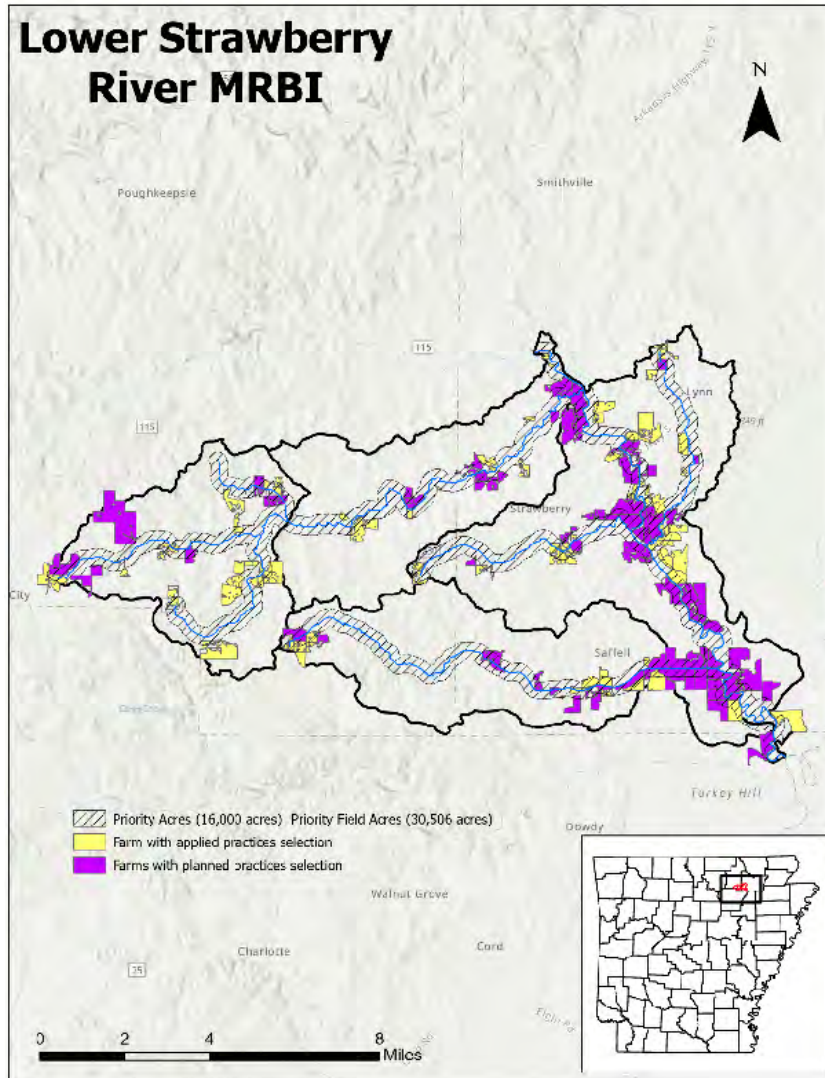


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Targeting in the Watershed





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



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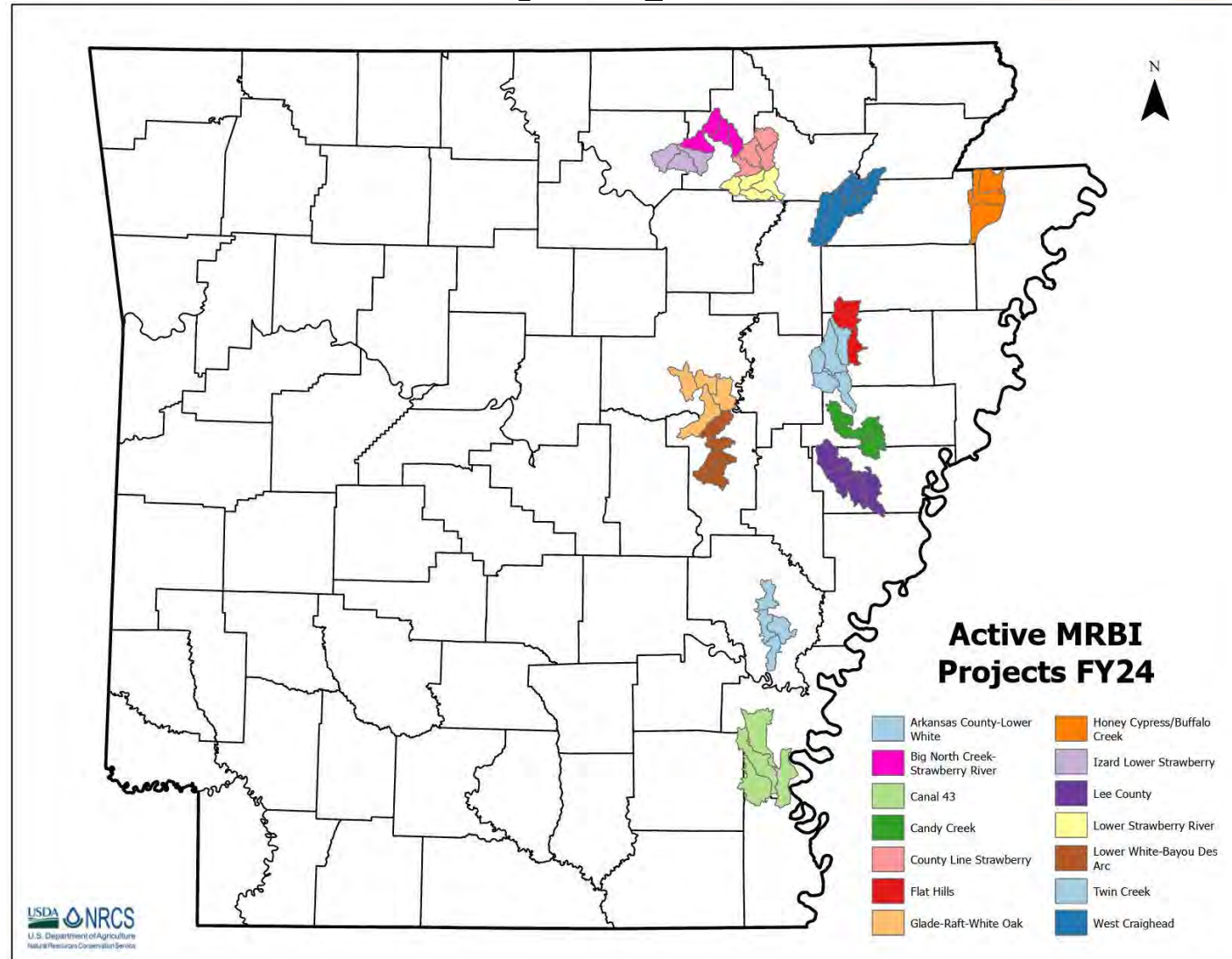
Implementation Phase

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



MRBI projects for FY24



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MRBI Implementation Phase Funding

MRBI Project	Project Life	Requested EQIP for FY24	FY 24 Allocation after reduction
Candy Creek	FY2021-FY2024	\$500,140	\$500,140
Canal 43	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,500,003	\$1,171,502
Twin Creek	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,270,516	\$992,273
Izard Lower Strawberry	FY2021-FY2024	\$300,000	\$300,000
County Line Strawberry	FY2022-FY2025	\$364,408	\$364,408
Flat Hills	FY2022-FY2025	\$666,428	\$666,428
Glade-Raft-White Oak Creek	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,323,400	\$1,033,575
Lee County	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,500,000	\$1,171,500
Lower White-Bayou Des Arc	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,846,417	\$1,442,051
West Craighead	FY2023-FY2026	\$1,504,825	\$1,175,268
Big North Creek-Strawberry	FY2023-FY2026	\$421,725	\$421,725
Arkansas County Lower White	FY2023-FY2026	\$1,416,826	\$1,106,541
Honey Cypress Buffalo	FY2024-FY2027	\$1,563,610	\$1,221,179
Lower Strawberry River	FY2024-FY2027	\$750,000	\$750,000
		\$14,928,298	\$12,316,591





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Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Update



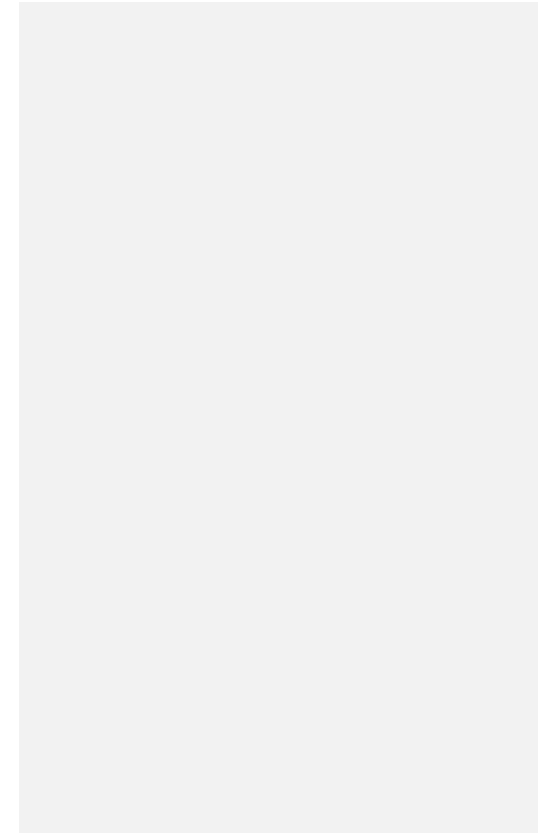
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Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Stand Alone program - \$25 million

- Partner contacts NRCS to discuss project – identify resource concerns-
- Partner obtains support from other partners to meet contribution criteria
- Partner designates project area and targeted area
- Partner decides with input from NRCS the practices to be offered
- Partner develops proposal to address 4 major areas:
- Impact, Partner Contribution, Innovation and Partnership Management.
- Partner develops goals and outcomes.
- Proposal is submitted through RCPP portal.
- Proposal is evaluated in state by evaluation team
- Recommendation is submitted from State Con
- Chief of NRCS has final award authority of project.
- Once project is awarded funding-negotiations start between Lead state and Partner to develop agreement.

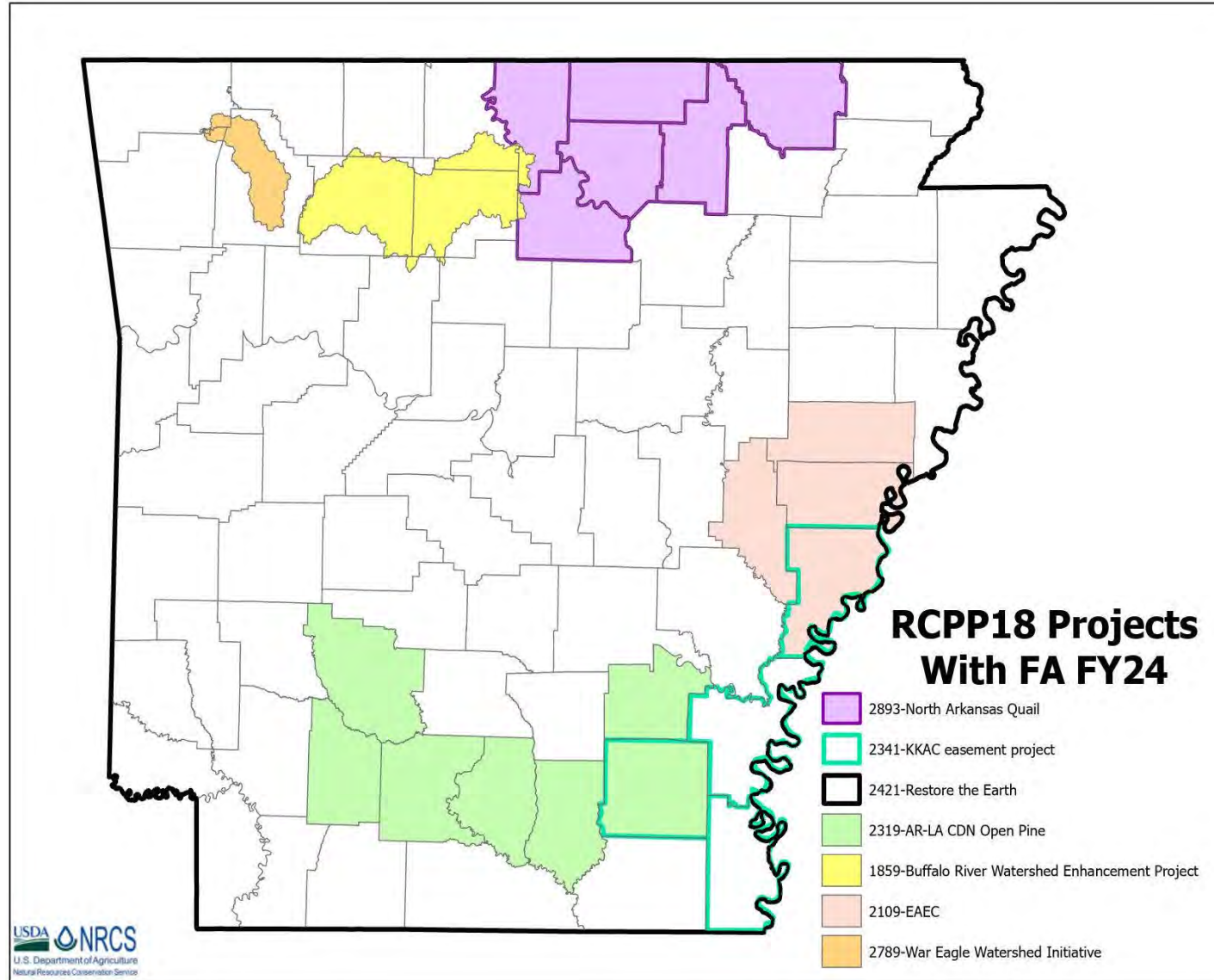


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FY24 RCPP Projects Receiving FA



FY24 AR RCPP Project Funding

Project Name	Project Type	FY24 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
North Arkansas Quail Focal Landscape Renewal	Land Management	\$248,000	75/25
AR LA CDN Open Pine Landscape Restoration *	Land Management	\$619,500	60/40
KKAC AR MS Conservation & Social Consortium *	Easement	\$838,000	PPA signed Working on SA
Restore the Earth – Pilot Private Sector Investment *	Easement	\$1,973,334	PPA signed Working on SA
War Eagle Watershed Initiative	Land Management	\$800,000	75/25
Conjunctive Water Use Protects Mid-South Aquifers	Land Management	No funding but continued work	
Totals		\$3,200,413	

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Recently Submitted Proposals

Partner	Project Type	Funds Requested	Funding Pool	
KKAC Conservation and Outreach	Land Management	\$14,608,470	CCA	Not funded
Generate Capital-Biochar	Land Management	\$15 million	AFA/State Multi State	Not funded
Mississippi River Trust	Easements	\$25 million	CCA	Funded
Chestnut Carbon LLC	Easements	\$22,865,854	State/Multi State	Not funded
KKAC Land Enrichment	Easements	\$23,239,980	CCA	Not funded
Restore the Earth	Easements	\$25,000,000	CCA	Funded
Northwest Arkansas Land Trust	Easements	\$650,000	State/Multi State	Funded





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Questions? What is on the horizon for RCPP?

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Quick Comparison of the Landscape Initiatives

Activities	RCPP	MRBI	NWQI
Partner Involvement	yes	yes	yes
Contribution (inkind/cash)	yes-required	yes-encouraged	yes-encouraged
Desired 1 to 1 match	yes	no	no
Length of Project in years	5 year agreement	4 years	4 years
Resource Concerns	all	Water Quality/Quantity	Water Quality
Practices	all	approved MRBI list	approved NWQI list
Targeting land treatment	yes	yes	yes
Required Reporting by partner	Heavy	Moderate to Light	no
NRCS driven	no	yes	yes
Partner driven	yes	no	no
Portal access-computer	yes	no	no
DUNS/SAM number needed	yes	no	no
Support letters from partners	yes	no	no
Input on CART/Ranking	yes	yes	yes
Development of Agreements PPA/SA	yes	no	no
Land Activity Type	Land management	EQIP/CSP	EQIP
Land Use Type	all	cropland/pastureland	cropland, pastureland woodland
Source water protection sources identified	yes	yes	yes
Eligible area	whole state	12 digit HUCs from focus map	identified watersheds
Eligible funds available	\$25 million limit	based on assessment	based on assessment
Financial assistance rate	usually 75/25	75/25	60/40
Required watershed assessment	no	yes	yes
HU consideration	yes	yes	yes
Responsibility of measurable outcomes	Partner	NRCS	NRCS
Proposal development	Partner	NRCS with input from District	NRCS with input from District
Compete nationally	yes	yes between MRBI states	yes
Most flexible	yes	no	no
Innovative	yes	no	no
Align with State Nutrient Strategy Plan	no	yes	no
Multi county involvement	yes	yes	yes

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ACEP –State Tech Committee Fall 2023

Alexis Cook
Arkansas USDA-NRCS
Assistant State Conservationist for
Easements

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ACEP-WRE –an overview

- 278,536 acres of conservation easements spread over 736 easements
- 274,828 acres restored across 723 easements
- With 3,708 acres of restoration remaining on 13 easements



Restoration and reforestation activities

- Wetlands Created, Restored or Enhanced – 7 Easements – 2,196.45 Acres
- Tree Planting -Hardwoods – 15 Easements – 2,217.15 Acres



2023 Wetland Reserve Easements – Activities

- Number of Easements Selected for Acquisition - 3 Easements
- Number of Easement Acres Selected for Acquisition –395 Acres
- 2023 Funding to be obligated for Acquisition and restoration - \$1,485,589



FY23 ACEP-WRE



Number of Easements selected for acquisition - 3

- Number of Easement Acres Selected for Acquisition – 773Acres
- 2023 Funding to be Obligated for Acquisition and Restoration - \$1,485,589
- Tri- state WREPs - 2022 - 1 easement, 39 acres, \$150,601
- HU enrollments - 3 easements, 773 acres, \$1,485.589



Agricultural Conservation Easements (ALE)

We are working with a couple of land trusts and hope to have some ALE Easements in process in the next FY.



IRA - WRE

Highly organic soils that will optimize the soil carbon sequestration potential and prevent increased greenhouse gas emissions through the maintenance of existing noncultivated areas, restoration of previously cultivated areas to perennial vegetative cover, and restoration of the natural hydrology to keep the soils saturated and anaerobic.

2. Prior converted or degraded wetlands that will be restored to native (adapted or alternative) forests (e.g., bottomland hardwood forests)
3. Program eligible, existing forest habitat that will be maintained as forest habitat through an NRCS-approved forest management plan.
4. Approved localized priorities:
 - a. Restorable cranberry bogs
 - b. Montane wet meadows
 - c. Ephemeral wetlands

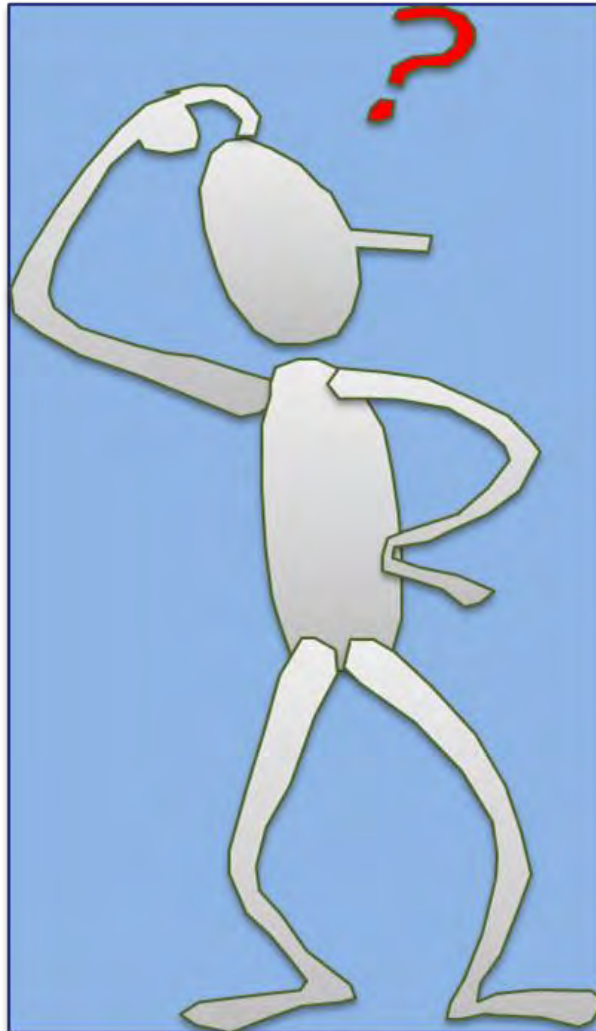


IRA- ALE

1. Program-eligible agricultural lands currently classified as grassland or native vegetation (e.g., sagebrush, tall grass prairie) where NRCS has identified a high threat of conversion to a non-grassland use.
2. Program-eligible cropland or grassland where NRCS has identified a high threat of conversion to a non-agricultural use.
3. Active agricultural rice cultivation on subsiding highly organic soils.



QUESTIONS



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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
 - (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
 - (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.
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FY24 Program Updates

Corey Cornelious
Resource Conservationist

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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FY 2024 Program Signups

- For FY24 we are announcing signups for both CSP Classic and EQIP General at the same time.
- News release should go out this week and application cutoff will be December 8, 2023.
- IRA, CIC, MRBI, and other initiatives are all part of the announcement.
- We are expanding opportunities for ACT NOW in FY24 and will be announcing those signups later this fall.
- ACT NOW will include Urban/High Tunnel, IRA Soil Health, IRA Energy, and CSP Urban.

FY 2024 Program Updates

EQIP IRA Strategies

- Soil Health
- Energy/CAFO
- Forest/Wildlife
- CIC/Grazing
- Rice/Irrigated Cropland



FY 2024 EQIP IRA Strategy

Soil Health

- Counties: Clay, Greene, Mississippi, Craighead, Poinsett, Jackson, Lawrence, Independence, Crittenden, Cross, St Francis, Lee, Phillips, Monroe, Woodruff, Lonoke, Prairie, White, Arkansas, Desha, Jefferson, Lincoln, Drew, Ashley, Chicot, Pulaski, Faulkner, Conway, Pope, Miller
- CSAF Mitigating Practices: 328, 329, 345, 340, 590, 336.
- Facilitating Practices: 595
- ACT Now: Yes



FY 2024 EQIP IRA Strategy

Energy/CAFO

- Counties: Statewide
- CSAF Mitigating Practices: 374, 670, 672, 313, 367
- Facilitating Practices: 316
- ACT NOW: Yes



FY 2024 EQIP IRA Strategy

Forest & Wildlife

- Counties: Statewide
- CSAF Mitigating Practices: 612, 666, 380, 381, 383, 384, 390, 391, 420, 422, 342, 327, 393, 643
- Facilitating Practices: 490, 338, 394



FY 2024 EQIP IRA Strategy

Grazing/EQIP CIC

- Counties: Statewide
- CSAF Mitigating Practices: 528
- Facilitating Practices: 382, 512, 314, 315, 516, 614, 561, 810, 378, 484, 642, 533, 342, 574, 805

FY 2024 EQIP IRA Strategy

Rice/Irrigated Cropland

- This strategy is still under review on how we can make it work with IRA funds could have more changes.
- Counties: Lonoke, Prairie, Arkansas, Jefferson, Phillips, Lee, St Francis, Cross, Crittenden, Craighead, Poinsett, Greene, Mississippi, Monroe, White, Desha, Lincoln, Chicot, Independence, Jackson, Randolph
- CSAF Mitigating Practices: 449(AWD), 430 Separate Category
- Facilitating Practices: 464, 533, 410, 587, 443, 646, Soil Health, 449

** These are initial strategies for EQIP IRA funding for Arkansas. Categories and funds allocated are subject to change.

Questions



Questions can also be submitted to the email box at
AR-Programs@usda.gov:

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

MEETING DATE: November 28, 2023

LOCATION: State Extension Office Building Auditorium
2301 South University, Little Rock, AR. 72204

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