

NRCS State Technical Committee
9:30am Thursday, October 17, 2024
UACES, Little Rock, AR

Agenda attached

Members present: (Sign In Sheets attached)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Amanda Mathis welcomed the group and introduced Justin Meissner, Acting State Conservationist.
 - Provided a brief report on current activities such as hiring, new urban field office in Little Rock, AR
 - IRA funding has been a resource for \$5.7 Billion funds for Climate Smart (\$1.4 billion for RCPP) nationally
 - Gave a brief report on funding allocated to landowners
 - \$179 million projected for FY25
 - NRCS staff – 338 employees plus ~103 partner employees
 - Alvin Peer has been promoted to serve as the SW Area Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

Subcommittee Reports

- Grassland – Jeremy Huff
 - Amending Soil Properties with Lime (810)
 - Payment rate has been raised to \$60-70/ac for FY25
 - Virtual Fence
 - More research is needed
 - Fence checkout sheets
 - New sheets to assist new employees
 - No new/formal recommendations
- Water Quality – Julie Bennett, Acting Water Quality Specialist
 - FY25 NWQI – Discussed the four current projects with funds
 - Upper Village Creek
 - Saline Headwater
 - Little Red

- Lower Bartholomew
 - Source water protection practices will remain the same
 - No new/formal recommendations
- Soil Health - Keith Scoggins
 - 30+ attendees at the meeting, virtual meeting as a convenience for participants
 - Reviewed that a recommendation from last year to raise the cap on cover crop to allow more acres to be planned under the cap was adopted and implemented for FY24
 - IRA funds for soil health
 - 156 contracts which resulted in \$19 million in soil health contracts in FY24
 - Updates on CIG projects, agreements, etc.
 - *Recommendation*
 - Increase 595 cap from \$6,800 to \$20,000 per year to allow for pest management spot spraying- technology is expensive and producer aren't adopting at \$6,800.
 - CIG Areas of Concern was discussed as well.
 - ASHA – Southern Soil Health Conference
 - November 13 – 14, 2024
 - First National Bank Arena, ASU
- Water Quantity – Rodney Wright
 - Three presentations given during subcommittee meeting
 - Arkansas Water Plan – Tate Wentz, NRD
 - CIG Update – Lori Barker, NRCS
 - Master Irrigator Program
 - Amy Kremen gave a presentation on this program
 - Arkansas Groundwater Summit – November 7, 2024 at Rice Research Center, Stuttgart.
 - *Recommendation*
 - Arkansas would seek to have a Master Irrigator Program for program and once in place give priority ranking points similar to CO.
 - *Recommendation*

- AGWI – Ranking Pool adjustment to give special consideration to applications in Phase 1 in GP & BM if they need on farm practices to help them complete/connect to surface water.
 - Farmers in the area need conservation practices to connect to the canals.
 - Funding Pitless Tailwater Recovery continues to be developed
 - Reservoirs applied in FY24 was 8 which was up
 - High priority practices were discussed- 449 Scenario 10 is approved as a high priority practice.
 - Payment Rates: 75% and HU-90% versus old 3 Payment Rates 60, 75, & 90%
 - Exception: The following large expense items will remain at 60%.
 - 436 - Irrigation Reservoir
 - 447 – Irrigation and Drainage Tailwater Recovery (Delta Tail Water Pit)
 - 464 – Irrigation Land Leveling
 - 430 – Irrigation Pipeline
 - 533 – Pumping Plant (only scenarios 5, 8, 12, and 15 – which are the electric & internal combustion pumping plants > 70 HP)

These 533-scenarios would typically be planned with reservoirs and tailwater pits.
 - This suite of practices line ups with those available for the Arkansas Tax Credits
 - Reservoirs
 - Land leveling
 - Conversion to surface water
 - Discussion on tax credits and the ability to sell them on the market
- Energy – Britt Hill
 - Discussion on how bi fold doors have the best RValue and are the standard integrators are moving to
 - *Recommendation*

- Conservation practice 672 – building envelop (no longer fund roll sealed doors only allow for bifold doors.
- Recruit more TSPs to do energy audit
 - Proposed the idea an agreement to link mentor/TSP with collage students to learn how to do audits
 - Updating the specifications for 374
 - Specification – American Society of Biological Engineers has good specifications but is behind a paywall, may look to University of Illinois instead
- Wildlife – Canton Ford
 - Held in conjunction with the Forestry Subcommittee
 - Reported on the funding allocations
 - EQIP IRA- \$5 million increased funds largely went to flooding for ducks
 - 420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting Job sheets will be on FOTG
 - 828 – Wildlife Habitat Site Preparation – Interim practice
 - Will allow for up to spraying on site prep
 - Training- Partner training with AGFC/QF
 - Addressed the need to jointly write better/alike plans to improve satisfaction.
 - October 9, 2024 Training held in Mayflower in coordination with partners AGFC/QF
 - Addressed the need to jointly write better/alike plans to improve satisfaction.
 - Four additional training opportunities will be offered for staff
 - Additional training for partners will be held in the Spring 2025
 - Ask for input on certain practices
 - Hedgerow Planting- job sheets updated to see how we can use native plants and do more.
 - 643 Restoration to rare declining species- low cost construction to mitigate flooding in practices.
 - Aquatic Habitat Projects- WLFW possible
- Forestry – Doug Akin
 - Met on September 30, 2024

- Agenda items
 - Cost share rates
 - Joint chiefs – FY25 proposal
 - Demo dashboard for viewing contracting data
- *Recommendation*
 - Payment rate increase to 75%, recommend that firebreaks, medium and steep (scenario 2 & 3) stay at 40% and Forest Stand Improvement, Scenario 78 to stay at 60%.
- Urban Conservation – Katy Brantley
 - Used a hybrid meeting at St. Joseph Center, NLR
 - Agreed on the 75% payment rate increase and continue the 90% for HU
 - Urban funding
 - Offer General EQIP with urban and specialty crop pool
 - Use Urban land use modifier to define space
 - Use Geospatial layers
 - Municipalities with 1 mile buffer
 - Census designated municipalities
 - Discussion about timeline and process from application to project initiation
 - *Recommendation*
 - Develop a fact sheet to explain contracting process and timeline
 - Practice Catalog/Tools
 - Suggestions
 - Clearer definitions of practices
 - Special subset list for urban practices
 - Add links
 - More photo
 - Glossary of terms and acronyms
 - Additional suggestions
 - Interactive tool/decision tree to select practices
 - List of local resources applicable to urban growers in field offices
 - Offer caterpillar tunnels, movable high tunnels

- Outreach, Equity and Inclusion – Clyde Williams
 - Need for assistance with covering the cost for installation of power poles with 533- not allowable via policy.
 - Wider spacing for tree planting- allowable under 612
 - More urban outreach needed. To help answer what does urban mean and what is being done for those producers

FSA Update – Doris Washington, Executive Director

- Working on livestock disaster in NW Arkansas with tornado and drought
- Continuing resolution continues
- Improve the partnership with NRCS to increase other opportunities to expand- Urban Ag- MOU.
- Dismantling shared services. Pulaski County FSA will be at the Urban Office, in Pulaski County, until set will remain at Lonoke.
- Urban producers including loans and programs.
- Program analyst is the new staff title for former Program Technicians, this change provides a better career path
- Program management analyst for the loan division
- Added to their leadership structure by establishing a Deputy Executive Director – currently posted for hiring and would be a staff position, not political appointment. This will help with continuity in the future.

AR NRCS Organizational Update – Morgan Morrisett

- Add a new area (Southwest) with Alvin Peer being selected as the new Asst State Conservationist for Field Operations
- Makes a total of 4 administrative areas
- Map and contact information provided in meeting packet
- AC- now supervising about 21-22 employees, down from 30+
- Vacant area support positions have been advertised
- Changes will allow for improved/faster field level support which should improve local service and ability to get questions answered

FY2024 Notice of Funding Opportunities Summary – Amanda Mathis

- IRA Specific NOFO - \$3.8 million available

- Defined Emphasis Areas
 - Have to address at least one of the emphasis areas
 - 15 proposals submitted
 - 5 proposals funded which obligated \$2.4 million
 - ALCDC
 - Boone County CD
 - U of A – Irrigation Water
 - U of A – Hay Land
 - U of A – Climate Smart Irrigation
- General TA NOFO- \$4 million available
 - Reviewed emphasis areas, proposals have to address at least one of the emphasis areas
 - Received 48 proposals
 - Approved 29 - \$11 million
 - Central AR RC&D
 - ADA
 - UADA (3 projects)
 - East Arkansas Resource Conservation & Development
 - WSBZ Farms
 - Equilibrium Inc.
 - Minorities in Conservation
 - Arkansas Forestry Division
 - Macedonia Missionary Baptist
 - Learn to Grow Arkansas,
 - 12 Conservation Districts

Program Updates

- PL566- Randy Childers (handout attached)
 - Status update on all pending projects provided.
 - Discussion on whether other programs (i.e. EQIP) could be used to address off site flooding
- EQIP – Cory Cornelious (powerpoint attached)
 - \$17.2 million made available for local led out of \$102 million

- Conservation Stewardship Program – Michela Martin (powerpoint attached)
 - FY 25 Signup October 21, 2024 to November 22, 2024
 - IRA CSP - \$12 million
 - FB CSP - \$51 million
 - Shared top Enhancements and Acreage amounts
- Conservation Innovation Grants – Lori Barker
 - Overview of FY 24 funded CIG projects
 - Reviewed 2025 CIG Areas of Concern
 - Nutrient and Sediment Reduction in Impaired Watersheds
 - Irrigation
 - Soil Health
 - Climate Smart
 - Urban Agriculture
 - Energy
- Partnership Program (RCPP/MRBI) – Dianne Schlenker
 - MRBI Priority Watersheds (maps and power point) If an area was prior MRBI and has since closed, it can be considered for a new project if there is still work to be done.
 - RCPP
 - Partner Involvement
 - 5 year budget
 - Stand Alone Program
 - FY 24 – 18 projects with FA FY25
 - New NFO for RCPP - April 3, 2024
 - Funding available - \$1.5 billion
 - Maximum funding \$25 million
 - Deadline – July 2, 2024
 - Submitted 3 AFA (Alternative Funding Arrangements)
 - 6 Classic proposals
 - No word yet on pending applications
 - MRBI – requested \$14 million – allocated \$12.4 million
 - MRBI CSP - \$10.3 million far exceeds any prior year allocation

FY 25 Working Lands Financial Assistance Program Strategies – Clyde Williams

- FY25 allocations will break record for funds that was set by FY24 funds. Source of input- field, LLWG, subcommittees, partners.
- Goal to increase use of CSP statewide- have goaled all offices to try for 5 applications per county.
- EQIP FY 25 Planned funding pools were shared
- FY25 Act Now funding opportunities were shared
 - Two ACT Nows will be announced soon
 - On Farm Energy
 - Cover Crops

FY25 CSP Opportunities (map)

- Renewal Statewide – compete within their county

FY25 EQIP Practice Payment Rates

- 75% cost share rate
- 90% Cost Share Rate for HU

ACEP (Agriculture Conservation Easements Program) – Alexis Cook (Handout)

- 755 easements for 285,000+ acres
- 724 easements have been restored
- FY24 – 1 easement WREP and 11 IRA Easements
- 2024 Funding obligated for acquisition and restoration \$9,761,733
- Reviewed AWMA and GARC data for FY25- using 80% of AWMA rates, table provided some some adjustments to rates depending on the Area and land use.
 - No concerns or issues with proposed GARC
 - AWMA will be attached to minutes for those interested in viewing
- Discussion on open space plan for NWA and whether that may be a fit for an ACEP ALE designated area plan.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00pm

State Technical Committee Meeting Agenda
State Extension Office Building Auditorium
2301 South University, Little Rock, AR 72204
October 17, 2024

Registration for in-person attendance: <https://bit.ly/In-Person-Registration-2024-Fall-ASTCM>

Registration for ZOOM: <https://bit.ly/Zoom-Registration-2024-Fall-ASTCM>

9:30 am – 2:00 pm

Welcome & Opening Remarks Justin Meissner, Acting STC

FSA Update Doris Washington, SED

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	Canton Ford
Forestry	Doug Akin
Urban Conservation	Katy Brantley
Outreach, Equity, and Inclusion	Clyde Williams

AR NRCS Organizational Update Morgan Morrisett

Lunch – *Provided by Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts*

Program Updates-

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Corey Cornelious
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Michela Martin
Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	Lori Barker
Partnership Programs (RCPP/MRBI)	Dianne Schlenker

FY 25 Working Lands Financial Assistance Program Strategies Clyde Williams

Agriculture Conservation Easements Program (ACEP) Alexis Cook

Watershed Programs Randy Childress

Open Discussion All Attendees

Closing Remarks & Adjourn Justin Meissner

Grazing Lands Subcommittee Report – Fall 2024

- Amending Soil Properties with Lime (810)
- Virtual Fence
- Fence Checkout Sheets
- Recommendations





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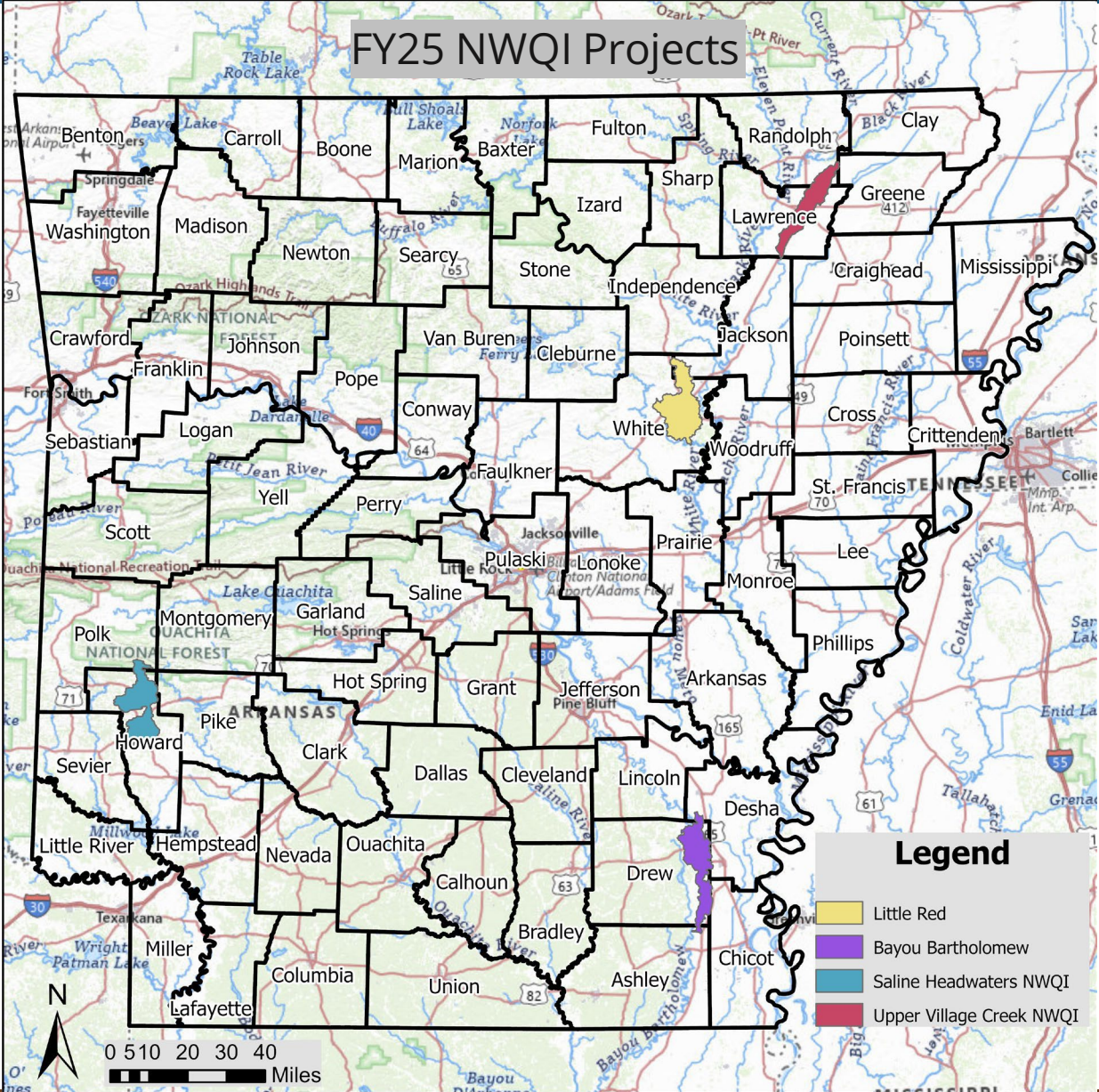
Fall FY25 Water Quality Subcommittee

Julie Bennett

Acting State Water Quality Specialist



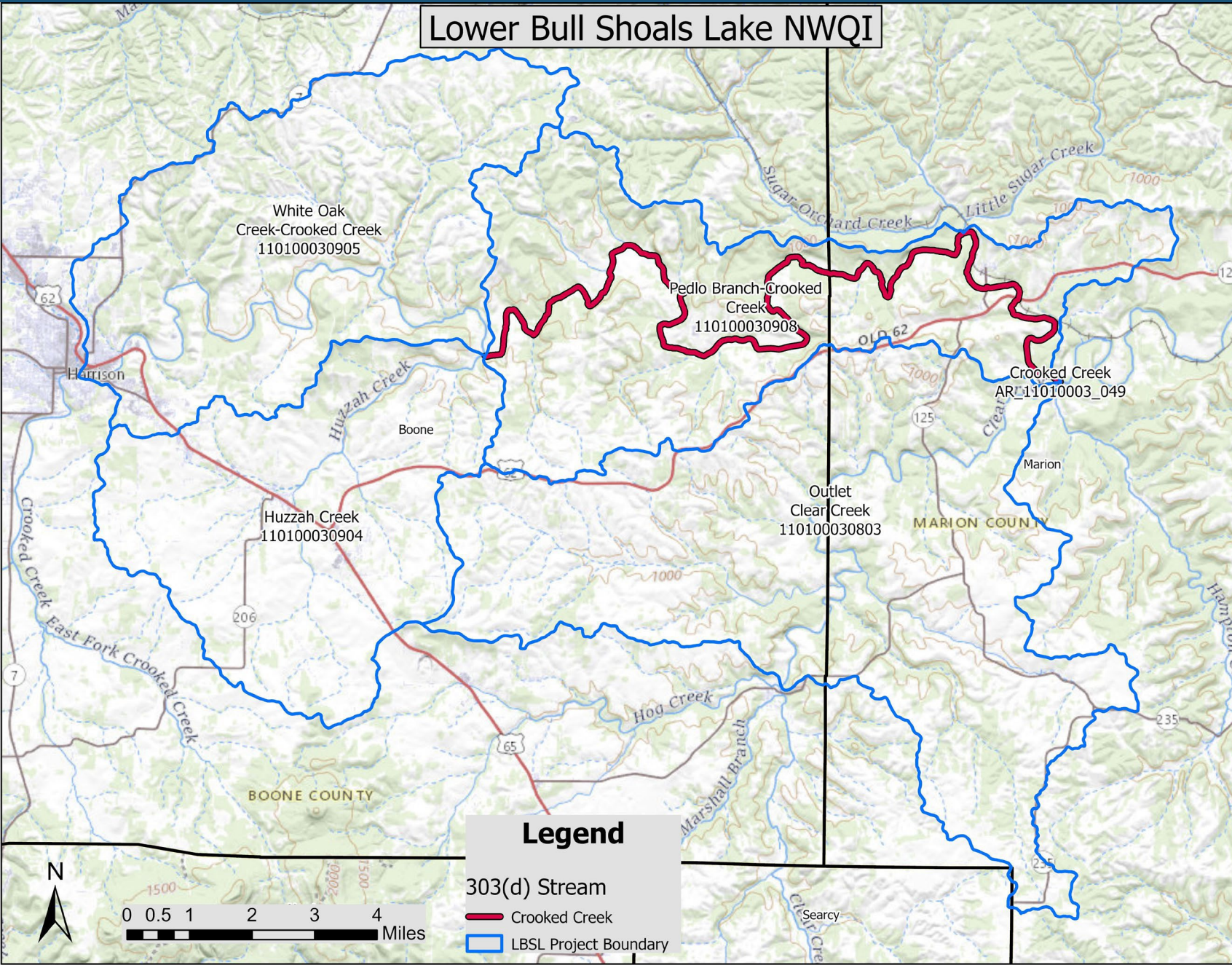
FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



NWQI Project	Project Lifespan
Upper Village Creek	FY2023-FY2026
Saline Headwater	FY2023-FY2026
Little Red	FY2024-FY2027
Lower Bayou Bartholemew	FY2024-FY2027

Account Name	Allocated	Obligated	Contracts	Remaining
NWQI: Saline Headwaters	\$ 214,853	\$ 136,964	4	\$ 104,809
NWQI: Lower Little Red	\$ 534,164	\$ 534,164	5	\$ 534,164
NWQI: Bayou Bartholomew	\$ 1,246,934	\$ 1,246,934	7	\$ 1,246,934
NWQI: Upper Village Creek	\$ 546,713	\$ 546,713	9	\$ 510,092

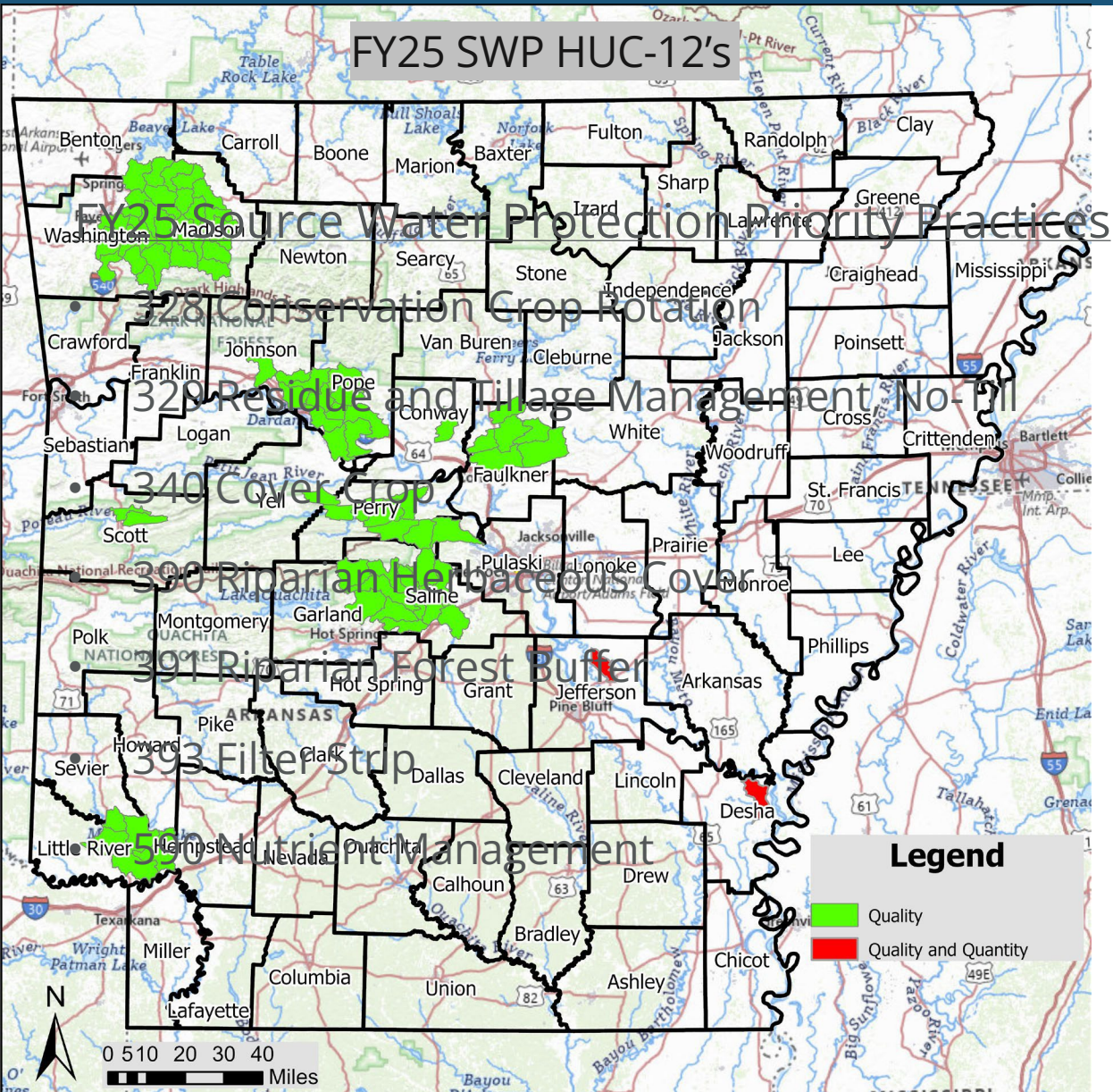
NWQI Project	Annual Fund Request
Upper Village Creek	\$ 600,139.85
Saline Headwater	\$ 400,000.00
Little Red	\$ 519,430.00
Lower Bayou Bartholemew	\$ 1,183,094.95
FY25 Total	\$ 2,702,664.80



Lower Bull Shoals Lake NWQI

- A. Location
 - a) Boone County
 - b) Marion County
- B. Sponsors
 - a) Boone County Conservation District
 - b) Farm Service Agency
 - c) Farm Bureau
 - d) Farm Credit Service
 - e) Boone County Cattlemen's Association

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Questions?



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Soil Health Sub-Committee Meeting Fall 2024



Keith Scoggins
State Cropland Agronomist and Soil
Health Specialists



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Alternative and Specialty Crops Sub-Committee Meeting

 Fall 2024

Troyce Barnett
State Agronomist



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AR NRCS State Subcommittee Specialty Crops Meeting

Oct 1, 2024

Agenda / Minutes

Welcome: Troyce Barnett

Introductions:

AR NRCS State Subcommittee Specialty Crops Members

Old Business: No Old Business

New Business:

FA Payment Rate 60 to 75 **Reviewed By:** Katy Brantley

Positive Reaction from committee for increase to 75%

CATERPILLAR TUNNEL SYSTEM DRAFT STANDARD XXX **Reviewed By: Troyce Barnett**

2025 CIG DRAFT Areas of Concerns Reviewed By: Lori Baker

Adjourn: moved and second

FALL 2024

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

(WATER QUANTITY REPORT)



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Fall 2024 Water Quantity Subcommittee

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

Zoom only meeting

AGENDA

I. Opening

II. Presentations

A. Lori Barker – Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

B. Tate Wentz, ANRD – Water Plan Update

C. Amy Kremen, Ranking credit for Irrigation certification

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

V. Closing





Status of the Arkansas Water Plan Update

Arkansas Natural Resources Commission

Tate Wentz

Chief, Water Resources Management, ANRD

- Phase I complete
- Corps of Engineers – Little Rock District to initiate Phase II (multi-year process).
- Water supply & water infrastructure – 1st.
- Water demand, water quality, flood plan – as funding allows.
- Small focus groups next.



Arkansas Groundwater Summit November 7, RREC, Stuttgart



Will Technology Pay for Itself?

How to Assess Economic Value?

- Reduction in pumping and wear/tear on system
- Increase in grain yield
- Reduction in labor and travel costs to check systems
- Peace of mind (i.e., confidence in decision)
- Staying in compliance
- Among others!



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Ranking pool credit for Irrigation certification?

- **Colorado allows this credit.**

- Theory: Certified Irrigators would do a better job of improving irrigation efficiency utilizing IWM practices, since they are familiar with the irrigation technology.
- Applies to Irrigated Related Fund Pools as a “Resource Question”.
- Certification process is low or no cost, to prevent setting up barriers.

Is the applicant, or the Ag entity that sponsored the applicant, a participant/graduate of the Master Irrigator Program?	YES	5
	NO	0



Ranking credit for Irrigation certification



Voting results

30 in favor

1 opposed



AGWI Ranking Pool Adjustment

Could a ranking question be added to give special consideration to those in the Phase 1 area of both GP and BM so that farmers could potentially qualify to get the help they need?

Farmer Needs

Pipeline

Reservoirs

Pumping Plants

Purpose: Aid farmers in connecting to the main canals & extract water for their farms.



AGWI Ranking Pool Adjustment

Could a ranking question be added to give special consideration to those in the Phase 1 area of both GP and BM so that farmers could potentially qualify to get the help they need?



No objections to adding this ranking question.



**Free alternatives to the
“Soil Moisture by Feel Method”
Arkansas Online Irrigation Scheduler**

**Tested a new version of the Irrigation
Scheduler this past summer.**

**This beta version will be evaluated over the
winter.**

Pending release for 2025.



FUNDING PITLESS TAILWATER RECOVERY - NRCS

**Still developing
guidance with Dr.
Chris Henry.**



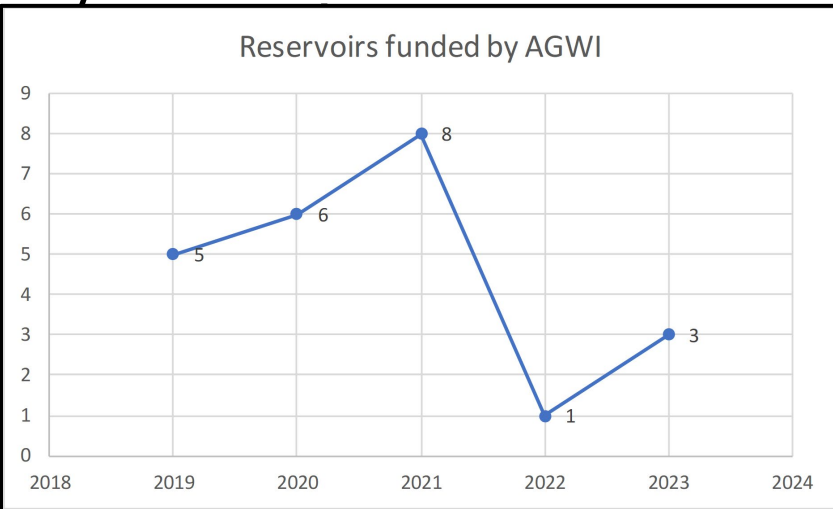
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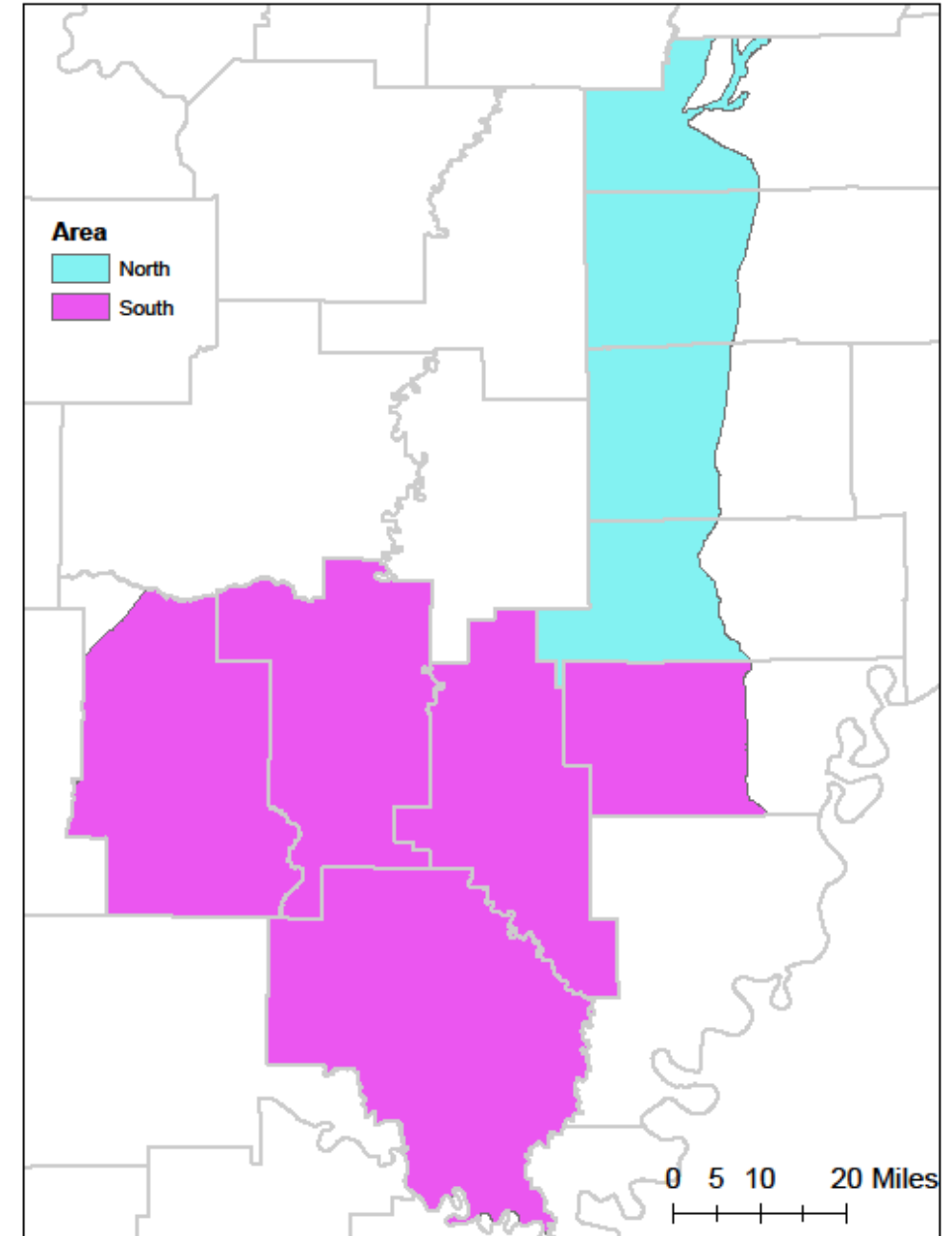
AGWI Tier / Ranking Update

No More Tiers
Ranking Adjustments

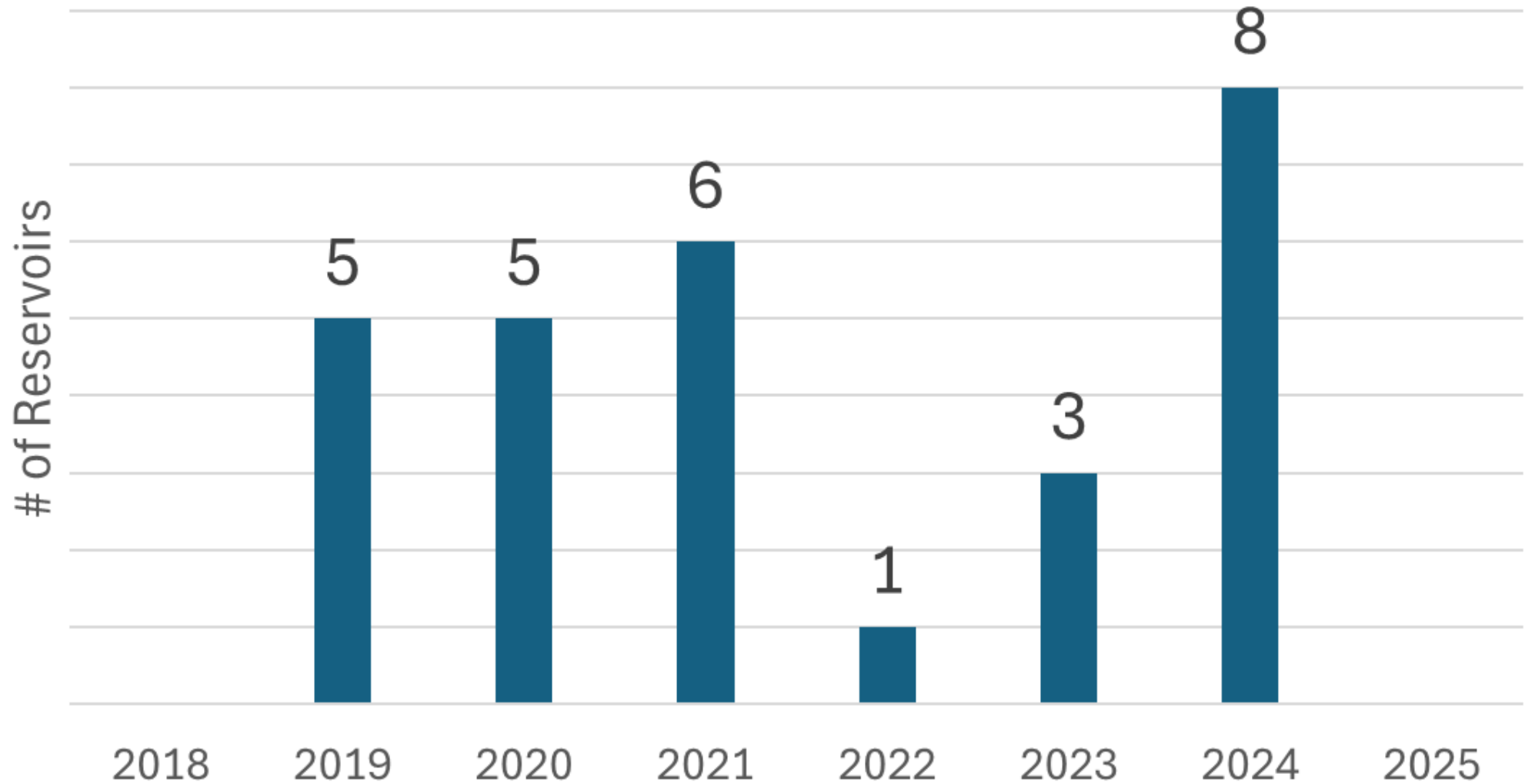
North / South Areas Maintained



2024 AGWI - North and South Areas



Reservoirs planned/applied by AGWI funding



High Priority Practices (HPP)



practices that “Address the conservation of water and declining aquifers and mitigate drought”.

Submitted:

- 449 - Irrigation Water Management, Scenario 10, Rice Intermittent Flood All Season (AWD & Row Rice)
- 464 - Irrigation Land Leveling
- 447 - Irrigation and Drainage Tailwater Recovery
- 436 - Irrigation Reservoir
- 430 - Irrigation Pipeline



Practice Cap Changes



NRCS JOINT STAFF MEETING RECOMMENDED

Code	Practice	Old 75	Old HU	New 75	New HU
436	Irrigation Reservoir (Delta Embankment)	\$ 164,250	\$ 197,100	\$ 195,000	\$ 234,000
462	Precision Land Forming and Smoothing (non-irrigated land)	\$ 7,526	\$ 9,031	\$ 7,500	\$ 9,000
464	Irrigation Land Leveling [Cap based on 120 ac @ 350 cy/ac]	\$ 67,095	\$ 80,514	\$ 75,000	\$ 90,000



Practice Cap – No Changes

NRCS JOINT STAFF MEETING RECOMMENDED

Code	Practice	Old 75	Old HU
430	Irrigation Pipeline (total of all scenarios)	\$ 94,875	\$ 113,850
441	Irrigation System, Micro-Irrigation	\$ 75,000	\$ 90,000
442	Sprinkler System	\$ 7,500	\$ 9,000
447	Irrigation System, Tail Water Recovery (Delta TWP scenario only)	\$ 52,500	\$ 63,000
449	Irrigation Water Management - Manual Read (75% - \$9.23/ac)	\$ 5,550	\$ 6,660
449	Irrigation Water Management - Device w/ Datalogger (75% - \$11.93/ac)	\$ 8,700	\$ 10,440
449	Irrigation Water Management - Device w/ Telemetry (75% - \$14.54/ac)	\$ 10,200	\$ 12,240
533	Pumping Plant (Total of all)	\$ 86,250	\$ 103,500
642	Water Well	\$ 9,075	\$ 10,890

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EQIP FUNDING CHANGES



2 Payment Rates: 75% and HU-90% versus old 3 Payment Rates 60, 75, & 90%

Exception: The following large expense items will remain at 60%.

- » 436 - Irrigation Reservoir
- » 447 – Irrigation and Drainage Tailwater Recovery (Delta Tail Water Pit)
- » 464 – Irrigation Land Leveling
- » 430 – Irrigation Pipeline
- » 533 – Pumping Plant (only scenarios 5, 8, 12, and 15 – which are the electric & internal combustion pumping plants > 70 HP)

These 533-scenarios would typically be planned with reservoirs and tailwater pits.



Arkansas Groundwater Conservation Tax Credits

Tax credits for Projects including:

Reservoirs (50%)

Land Leveling (25%)

**Conversion to Surface Water (50%- inside
a critical groundwater area, 25%-outside)**

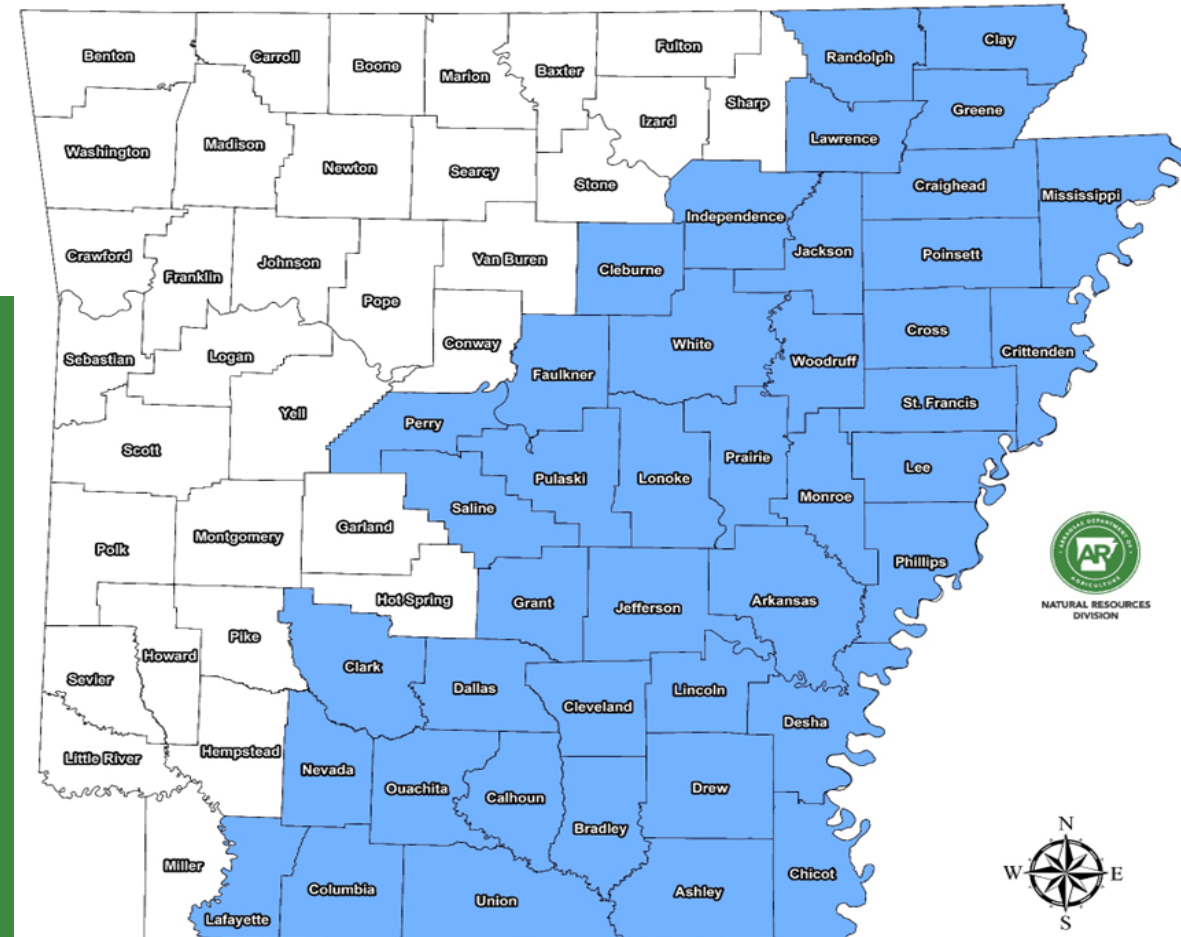
Water Meters

**(50%-inside a critical
groundwater area,
25%-outside)**



SCAN HERE

Critical Groundwater Area for Groundwater Conservation Tax Credits



SPRING 2024 STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

- ✓ Presentations
- ✓ Old Business
- ✓ New Business

WATER QUANTITY



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SPRING 2024 STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

- ✓ Presentations
- ✓ Old Business
- ✓ New Business

WATER QUANTITY



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Energy Sub-Committee Meeting Fall 2024



Britt Hill
State Agricultural Engineer



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FY25 Wildlife Subcommittee



Canton Ford, State Biologist



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FY 24 Fund Allocations



Fund Pool	FY24 Allocation	FY23 Obligation	FY23 Contracts	FY23 Acres
AR FY24 Wildlife	\$ 1,098,569.00	\$ 1,390,602.88	49	5,810.60
Working Lands for Wildlife	\$ 1,758,169.00	\$ 402,261.90	15	2,237.60
Migratory Bird Resurgence Initiative (MBRI)	\$ *4,000,000.00	\$ 6,975,644.00	56	30,212.50
EQIP IRA Forest/Wildlife	\$ 6,500,000.00	\$ -	0	-

Account Name	FY24 Allocation	FY24 Obligated	FY24 Contracts	FY24 Acres
Wildlife	\$ 57,131	\$ 57,131	2	27
Working Lands for Wildlife	\$ 1,763,169	\$ 1,618,293	59	12,522
Migratory Bird Resurgence Initiative (MBRI)	\$ 6,616,169	\$ 6,616,169	98	31,131
EQIP IRA Forest/Wildlife	\$ 5,790,467.34	\$ 5,789,994	184	25,368

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Wildlife Practice Updates

- **420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting**
 - Job sheets will be added to FOTG soon
- **828 – Wildlife Habitat Site Preparation – Interim**
 - Adopting interim practice for FY25
 - Formal Recommendation from Wildlife Subcommittee



- **Meet by Teams on September 30**
- **Agenda items included:**
 - 1) cost share rates
 - 2) Joint Chiefs – FY25 Proposal
 - 3) Demo dashboard for viewing contracting data
- **Recommendation: Firebreaks, medium and steep (scenarios 2 & 3) stay at 40% and that Forest Stand Improvement, Scenario 78 stay at 60%.**



Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Subcommittee

Recommendations for the State Technical Committee



Katy Brantley, State Urban Conservationist

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Recommendations



- From the fall meeting on September 25, 2024
- 32 members in attendance virtually and in-person at St. Joseph Center of Arkansas



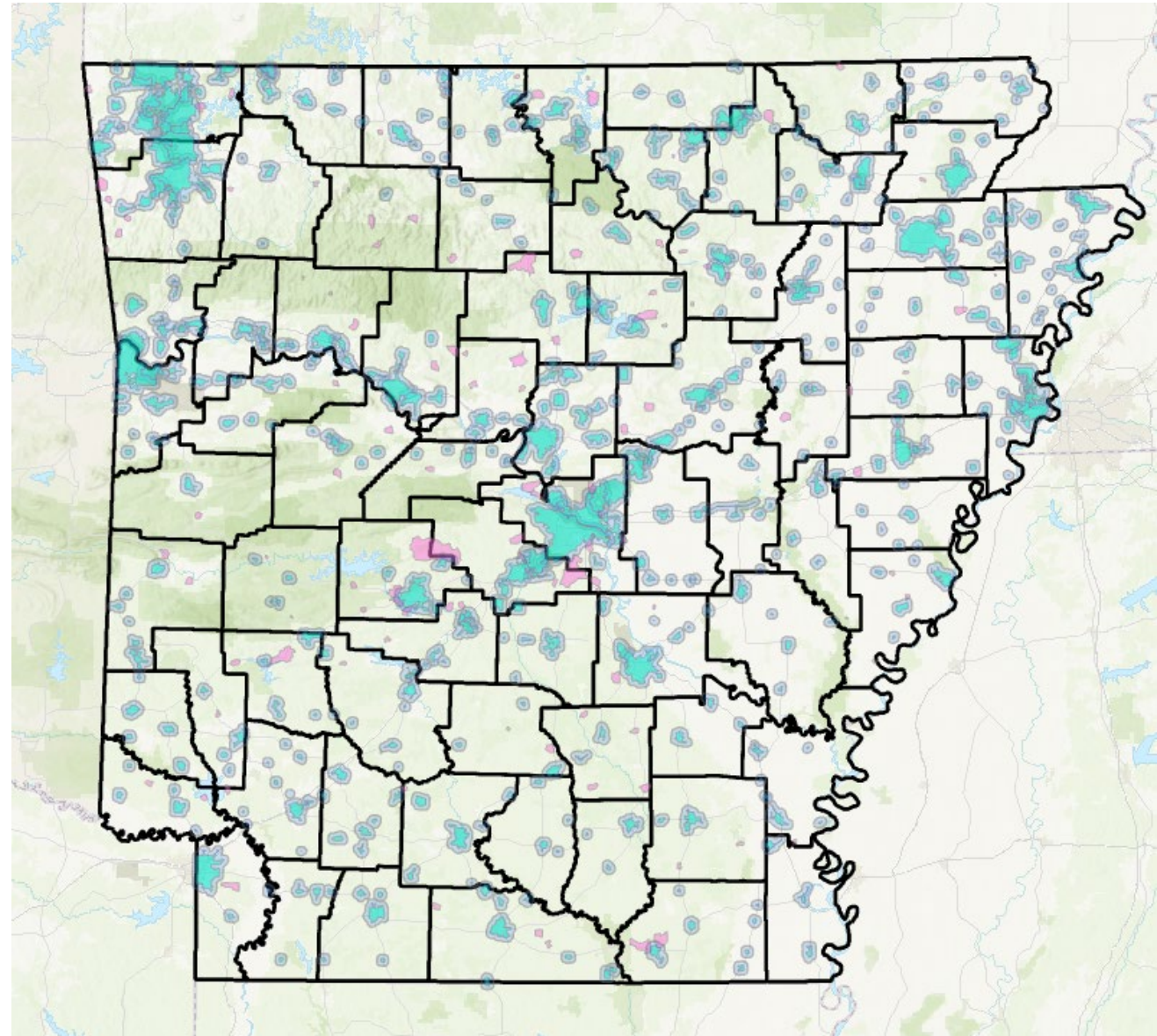
FY25 Programs

■ Payment percentages recommendation:

- 75% cost list for all producers
- Keep HU producers at 90%

■ Urban funding:

- Offer in General EQIP sign up, along with specialty crop pool
- Use urban land use modifier
- Use geospatial layers
 - Municipalities with 1-mi buffer
 - Census designated places



Financial Assistance Process

- Discussion about timeline and process from application to project initiation
- Recommendation:
 - Develop a fact sheet to explain contracting process and timeline



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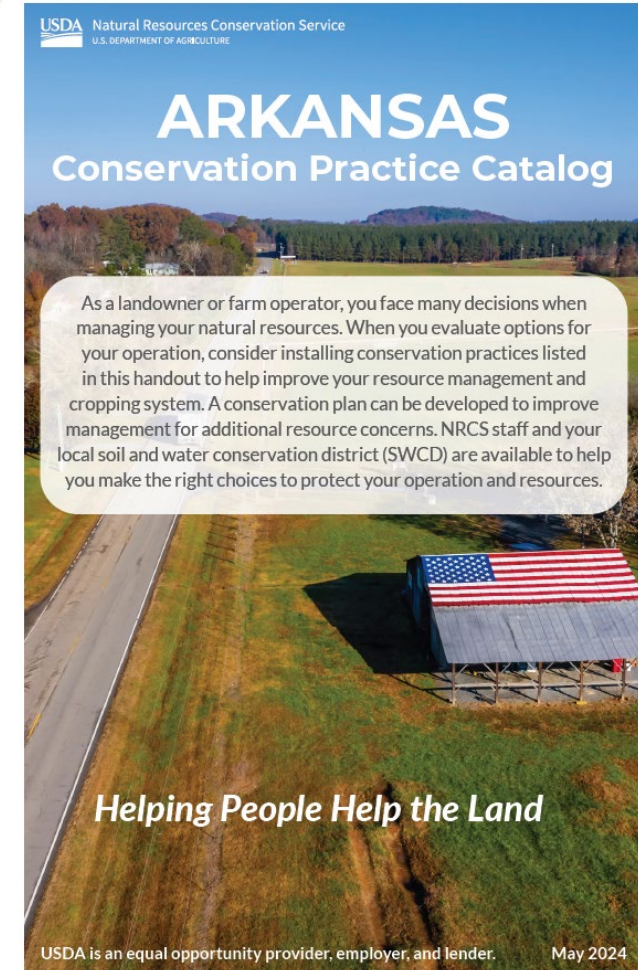
Practices Catalog/Tools

- **Suggestions on what to include for FY26:**

- Clearer definitions of practices (for AR)
- Special subset list for urban practices
- Add links/QR code for more information on each practice (on virtual version)
- More photos
- Glossary of terms and acronyms

- **Additional suggestions:**

- Interactive tool/decision tree to select practices
- Lists of local resources applicable to urban growers in field offices
- Offer caterpillar tunnels, moveable high tunnels





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Thank you!

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



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Outreach, Equity, and Inclusion Sub-Committee Meeting Fall 2024



Clyde Williams
Assistant State Conservationist for
Programs



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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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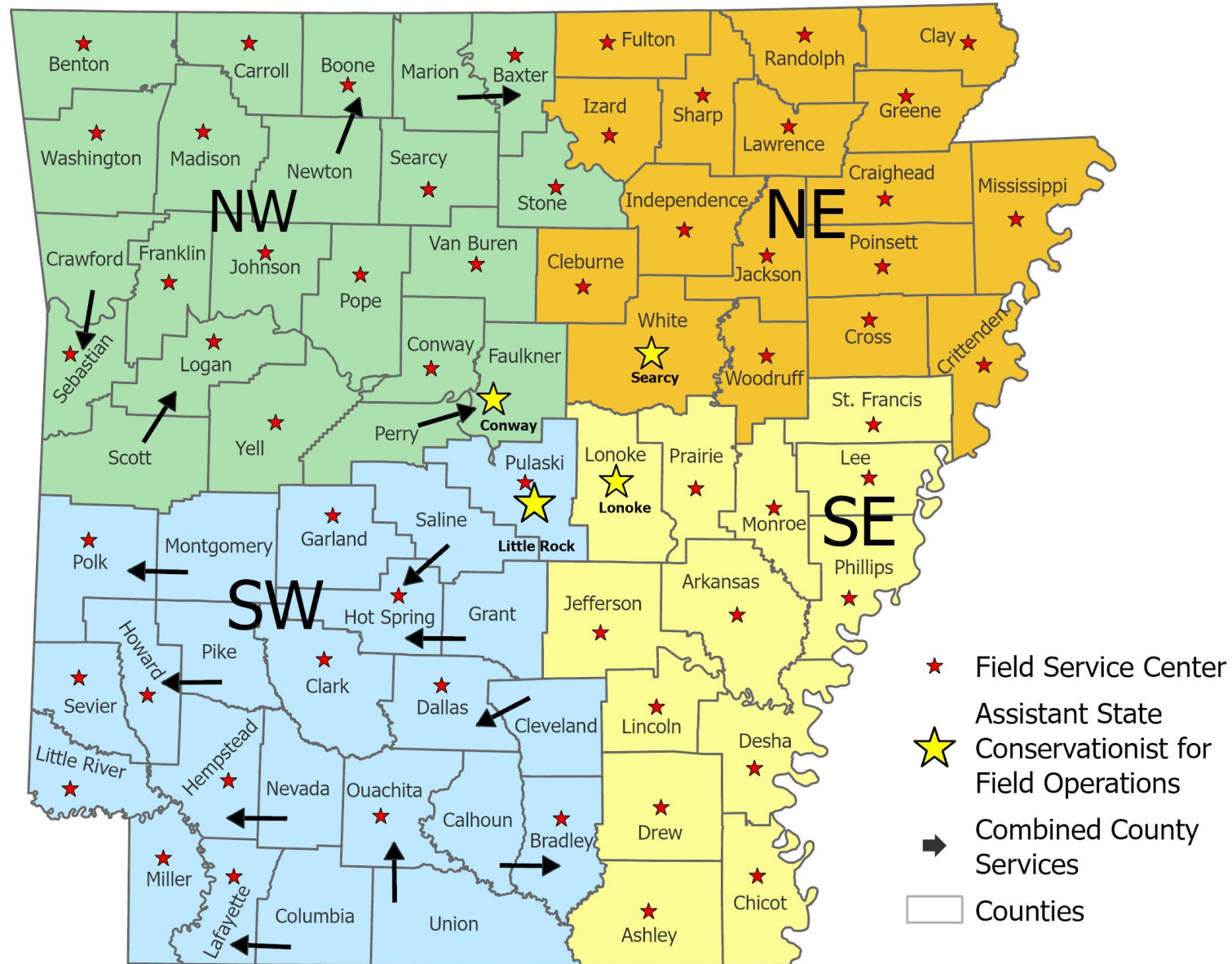


NRCS Arkansas - Area Reorganization

October 17, 2024 – Morgan Morrisett, ASTC-FO NE Area

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	NW	NE	SE	SW
Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations	Corey Farmer	Morgan Morrissett	Kevin Cochran	Alvin Peer
Administrative Assistant	VACANT	Tanya Turner	Lorelaine Hale	VACANT
Area Resource Conservationist (Programs)	Ronnach Day (Ron)	VACANT	Bryan Hollis	VACANT
Area Resource Conservationist (Planning)	Brent Clark	VACANT	VACANT	James Reynolds
Area Resource Engineer	Stan Rose	Craig Roach	VACANT	VACANT
Resource Soil Scientist	Richard Vaught	David Hargis	VACANT	VACANT
Civil Engineer		Robert Quattrone	Jonathan Toups	
Agricultural Engineer	Robin Frazier			
Area Biologist	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	

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Key Points



- **New Area Boundaries were effective 10/1.**
- **Additional technical/program support available to field offices from Area Staff by reducing coverage area.**
- **Local Field Office POCs will not change.**
- **Area Conservationist Contact Info:**
 - NE – Morgan Morrissett - 870-408-2910
 - NW – Corey Farmer – 501-681-2376
 - SE – Kevin Cochran - 501-352-7780
 - SW – Alvin Peer - 501-900-3284





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Questions/Comments?



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A photograph of a forest landscape with tall, thin trees and a dense undergrowth of green and yellow plants.

FY2024 Notice of Funding Opportunities Summary

A close-up photograph of two hands holding a clump of dark, rich soil.

Amanda Mathis
Assistant State Conservationist- Partnerships
State Technical Committee Meeting Oct 2024

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Overview



- **IRA Specific NOFO**
 - Announcement Details
 - Funded Projects
 - Funding Summary
- **General TA NOFO**
 - Announcement Details
 - Funded Projects
 - Funding Summary





IRA Specific NOFO



3

Mission Support Services

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IRA Specific NOFO



Title: Arkansas Technical Assistance Projects Supporting Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Implementation

Open on Grants.gov: January 31, 2024 to April 1, 2024

Funding Available: \$3.8M

Emphasis Areas:

- Development and implementation of outreach/communications/marketing strategies to educate the public, specifically agriculture producers, on benefits of Climate Smart practices.
- Development and implementation of outreach/communications/marketing strategies aimed at attracting new customers to NRCS.
- “Boots on the ground” staff capacity that supports planning, design, implementation or management of conservation plans/contracts funded through IRA.
- Data/information documenting the GHG reduction potential of specific conservation practices such as:
 - Irrigation Storage Reservoirs
 - Irrigation Tailwater Recovery Systems
- On site monitoring of GHG emission reductions on operations with implemented conservation practices.



Funded Projects



PROJECT TITLE	RECIPIENT
Addressing the Disparity for Assistance and Program Service Delivery(ADAP-SD)	ARKANSAS LAND & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP
Technical Assistants to Manage IRA Plans/Contracts	BOONE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Irrigation Water Management Assistance	Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas
Arkansas Hay Land Resource Conservation Program	Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas
Climate Smart Irrigation Technical Assistance for Rice	Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas

IRA Specific NOFO Funding Summary

Received- 15 proposals

Requesting \$17,563,000

Funded- 5 proposals

Obligating \$2,400,000.00

**1 projects specifically targeted toward
advancing technical assistance to
historically underserved communities and
youth**





General TA NOFO



7

Mission Support Services

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General TA NOFO



Title: FY 24 Arkansas Technical Assistance Projects

Open on Grants.gov: March 4, 2024 to May 3, 2024

Funding Available: \$4 M

Emphasis Areas:

1. Outreach- Projects must address at least one of the following:

- a. Promote public awareness of NRCS programs and further develop NRCS relationships with historically underserved agricultural producers. Work should include engaging participants such as women, Veterans, minority producers, limited resource producers, beginning farmers, and/or any other historically underserved agricultural producers or communities and/or addressing program participation barriers.
- b. Establish an Arkansas based program to reduce barriers to program participation by Historically Underserved. The Program should utilize concepts similar to those being used by the Oklahoma CARE Program <https://www.okconservation.org/care>.
- c. Implement strategies to broadly communicate key conservation messages that heighten public awareness of conservation measures being implemented in Arkansas and better connect the concept that conservation practices have become a regular part of producers' portfolios and are vital to agricultural operation vitality.
- d. Development and implementation of communications/targeted outreach strategies aimed at attracting *new* customers to NRCS.
- e. Development and implementation of communications/targeted outreach strategies to connect with communities and municipalities to increase awareness of the benefits of urban agriculture conservation.
- f. Development and implementation of communications/targeted outreach strategies to accelerate the adoption of urban agriculture conservation within Pulaski County.

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General TA NOFO



Emphasis Areas (cont.):

2. Direct Technical Assistance- Projects must address at least one of the following:

- a. Provide direct technical assistance to producers in Arkansas by conducting the following: on-site inventory/analysis, formulation of conservation alternatives, preparation of conservation plans, assistance with conservation practice survey, design, layout, checkout and/or implementation or support for farm bill program management. Priority will be placed on projects impacting areas of high conservation planning/implementation demand.
- b. Provide specialized/advanced direct technical assistance in support of one or more of the following resource concerns in Arkansas; water quantity, water quality, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing systems, soil health, and wildlife/pollinator habitat. Work may include technical services directly to producers or technical services in support of implementation of conservation programs.
- c. Provide specialized/advanced direct technical assistance to address conservation practice implementation barriers resulting from the cultural resource review process.

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Emphasis Areas (cont.):

3. **Conduct water quality monitoring in identified Mississippi River Basin Initiative and National Water Quality Initiative watersheds to provide data on the effects of conservation practices.**
4. **Assist local governments with the development/adoption/implementation of Farmland protection plans which seek to inventory important farmland, set goals for its protection, and identify strategies for implementation. Plans should support the growth and expansion of the Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) program within Arkansas or portions of Arkansas.**

5. **Organic**

Technical assistance for producers interested in or actively pursuing organic certification through use of a demonstration site at a farm actively in the organic transition process. Site should be used to host educational events and provide support to growers on transitioning to organic production in Arkansas. Project should include one-on-one support, development and distribution of Arkansas-specific resources, and technical support for the organic transition that aligns with NRCS conservation practice 823, organic management.

6. **Agroforestry**

Technical assistance to support the implementation of agroforestry practices in Arkansas, specifically, alley cropping (311) and forest farming (379). Technical Assistance services should include partner support to help train NRCS staff and assist producers with implementing practices. Assistance is also needed from partners and landowners interested in serving as demonstration sites for agroforestry practices, which must include public events.

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General TA NOFO



Emphasis Areas (cont.):

7. Soil health: Projects should include at least one of the following:

- a. Pest Management training with a focus on urban ag, organic, and natural growers. Must include an overview of common pests so producers are able to identify/scout in horticultural crops, how to manage for these pests, and proper IPM (PAMS) techniques. Course needs to include handouts and guidance documents and must align with NRCS 595 practice standard.
- b. Compost (excludes animal mortality generated compost)
Seeking a testing system with results that can be combined or accompanied with a soil test to develop a Nutrient Management prescription that will follow the 4R method for compost use in horticultural situations. Compost nutrient analysis reports are needed that align with soil tests, documenting specific conditions for: C:N Ratio, Macro and Micronutrients, Organic Carbon, pH, amino acid level.
- c. Soil Carbon Amendments – Biochar
 - i. Technical assistance to support biochar management and application in combination with compost, organic fertilizers, and inorganic fertilizers at varying rates and the ratios available in existing 336 soil carbon amendment scenarios.
 - ii. Technical assistance to compare current approved biochar sources available in Arkansas and determine their agronomic value.

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Funded Projects



PROJECT TITLE	RECIPIENT
Programmatic and technical assistance to advance acquisition, restoration, and monitoring of conservation easements,	CENTRAL ARKANSAS RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.
To secure additional archeological technical assistance to landowners and farm bill participants within Arkansas.	DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ARKANSAS
Continuation funding of discovery farm coordinator	DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
Programmatic and technical assistance to advance northeast Arkansas conservation	EAST ARKANSAS RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT INC
Arkansas Monarch and pollinator coordinating wildlife biologist- a cooperative partnership	PHEASANTS FOREVER, INC.

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Funded Projects



PROJECT TITLE	RECIPIENT
Arkansas State coordinator- a cooperative partnership for farm bill program delivery and support	PHEASANTS FOREVER, INC.
Putting boots on the ground for Arkansas' historically underserved communities	THE KKAC ORGANIZATION
Conservation Education for Historically underserved producers	UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SYSTEM- UAPB
Water quality monitoring and parameter load estimations for 12-digit HCU's in the St. Francis watershed of Arkansas	EQUILIBRIUM INC
Conservation Through cultivation: supporting Arkansas' agricultural future	WSBZ FARMS

Funded Projects



PROJECT TITLE	RECIPIENT
Statewide technical assistance for Micro irrigation systems in High tunnels and urban agriculture	DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
Water quality and loading extrapolations, cache river watershed in Arkansas citations and declarations	EQUILIBRIUM INC
MIC NRCS Youth Engagement and outreach Awareness Program	MINORITIES IN CONSERVATION
Arkansas Beginning Farmer Climate SMART specialty crop training	DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
2024 NRCS technical support- Riparian Buffer Project	ARKANSAS FORESTRY COMMISSION

Funded Projects



PROJECT TITLE	RECIPIENT
Macedonia Baptist church technical assistance project central Arkansas	MACEDONIA MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
Technical Assistance Project	LEARN TO GROW ARKANSAS INC

Funded Projects



PROJECT TITLE	RECIPIENT
Conservation Technician Assistant	ARKANSAS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	BAXTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	FAULKNER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	LAWRENCE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	MADISON COUNTY CONSERVATION
Conservation Technician Assistant	OUACHITA CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	RICH MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	STONE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	VAN BUREN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	CROOKED CREEK CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	LOGAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Conservation Technician Assistant	BOONE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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General NOFO Funding Summary

Received- 45 proposals

Requesting \$28,779,000

Funded- 29 proposals

Obligating \$11,065,000.00

**5 projects specifically targeted toward
advancing technical assistance to
historically underserved communities and
youth**

Questions?



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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Corey Cornelious, EQIP Program Manager

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FY 2024 EQIP Recap & Successes

- **\$57 Million obligated with EQIP Classic funds – 1284 contracts**
- **\$45 Million obligated with EQIP IRA funds - 689 contracts**
- **\$102 Million obligated total – 1973 contracts – 319,000 acres treated**
- **\$51 Million obligated to HU participants with \$19 Million of those funds obligated to SDFR**
- **\$16.5 Million obligated to Local Led Conservation**
- **\$6.6 Million obligated to Migratory Bird Resurgence Initiative (MBRI) – 98 contracts – 31,000 acres**
- **\$3.9 Million obligated to Urban Ag/Small Scale and High Tunnel producers – 195 High Tunnels contracted**
- **\$4.7 Million obligated to Arkansas Groundwater Initiative with 21 contracts**

FY 2025 EQIP Sign-Up Announcement

- **FY25 EQIP signup announcement and news release is scheduled for October 21, 2024.**
- **Application cutoff deadline will be November 22, 2024.**
- **This will include all EQIP Classic funding categories, Initiatives, and IRA funding categories.**
- **FY25 Act Now opportunities will also be scheduled to be released on those dates also. Act Now Opportunities will include Cover Crop Initiative and On-Farm Energy Initiative.**



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Miche'La Martin, Acting CSP Program Manager

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Final Obligation report FY 24 CSP

Program	Obligated	Contracts	Acres
IRA CSP	\$12,021,466	86	101,378.2
FB CSP	\$51,575,614	391	343,220.50
CSP-GCI	\$30,722	13	341.1

Top Enhancements and Acreage amounts (FY 2024)

E590A	Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses	851	858,057.2	Ac
E345A	Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion	723	825,435.5	Ac
E595A	Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques	604	699,287.9	Ac
E595B	Reduce risk of pesticides in water and air by utilizing IPM PAMS techniques	484	329,152.5	Ac
E646A	Close structures to capture and retain rainfall for waterfowl and wading bird winter habitat	417	130,120.6	Ac
E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion	366	93,532.9	Ac
E328D	Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife	261	101,384.8	Ac
E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation	238	213,327.8	Ac
E647A	Manipulate vegetation on fields with captured rainfall for waterfowl & wading bird winter habitat	219	82,489.2	Ac
E590B	Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies	211	181,586.8	Ac



Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Lori Barker, Resource Conservationist

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2024 Conservation Innovation Grants

University of Arkansas: Fish in Fields: A Novel Climate Smart Practice for Reducing Methane Emissions from Rice Production: total \$ 302,965.00

Description: Fish in Fields (FIF) introduces fish into winter-flooded rice fields to reduce methane emissions, enhance biodiversity, and provide farmers with a second crop, presenting a novel climate-smart practice that can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to customary rice farming practices.

The Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas: Assessment of Biochar in Mitigating Nutrient Runoff and Promoting Soil Health and Carbon Sequestration in Southeast Arkansas. Total : \$169,178.00

Description: Biochar is a charcoal-like substance that has been shown to supply and retain nutrients in the soil, increase soil carbon, thus significantly reducing nutrient and sediment runoff along with fostering soil health in enhancing facets of soil structure and promoting the soil microbiome.

2024 Conservation Innovation Grants

University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture : Investigating the Utility and Availability of Compost as a Soil Carbon and Nutrient.
Total \$199,888.00

Description: The main goal of this project is to characterize physical and nutrient characteristics of compost from Arkansas facilities and to generate best management practices for using compost in specialty crop production

2025 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, in-field nutrient management) in reducing nutrient leaching and runoff and document benefits in small watersheds.



2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Irrigation

- Develop innovative irrigation water management techniques with irrigation systems in Arkansas.
- Develop an irrigation and/or crop management strategy with aerial imagery. Aerial imagery can be collected by any method such as planes, drones, satellite, etc.
- Energy savings on pumping and other farm operations related to irrigation.
- Demonstrate the use of moisture meters in high tunnels and specialty crops, especially as it pertains to energy and/or water savings.



2025 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.
- 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 health in specialty crops and inside high tunnels.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Soil Health

- The 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.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Soil Health

- Promote methods that further develop soil carbon amendments to improve soil health.
- Demonstrate soil health systems in high tunnels
- Demonstrate the use of different composted materials. Utilize compost analyses and soil health tests to evaluate effectiveness on soil health and fertility.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Soil Health

- Demonstrate the effectiveness of various cover crops.
- Evaluate optimal planting dates for high tunnels in various locations in AR.
- Develop rotational strategies for ruminants and non-ruminants in cropping systems and identify benefits.

2025 CIIG Areas of Concern: Pasture

- Forage gaps in a seasonal forage system.
- Reassessing rates of nutrients, sources, and effectiveness
- The economic benefits of grazing management.
- Demonstrate and evaluate virtual fence technologies for Arkansas livestock producers.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Climate Smart

Seeking projects that investigate our current practices and new, innovative practices that may support land users' adaptation to climate change and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

- Applications that quantify how management practices address climate change are needed, e.g. how irrigation projects such as converting groundwater use to surface water (pumping hp requirements), diesel to electric conversion, land leveling, tailwater recovery, and practices that increase irrigation efficiency can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Other novel climate smart practices that reduce GHG emissions compared to customary farming practices are encouraged.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Urban Agriculture

To 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.

- Investigate plant productivity and health and irrigation water use efficiency in hydroponic crop production compared to soil-based crop production for multiple specialty crop types in a high tunnel.
- Demonstration of resource concerns and conservation practices associated with controlled environment ag methods such as hydroponics, aeroponics, aquaponics, and vertical farming.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Urban Agriculture

- Evaluation of conservation adoption and approaches for urban and small farms and how they are like 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 benefits of conservation practices in a small farm or urban setting that could be added to the list of approved NRCS conservation practices.

2025 CIG Areas of Concern: Urban Agriculture

- 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.

2025 CIIG Areas of Concern: Energy

- Demonstrate and test energy efficiency upgrades to poultry operations that can be transferred to other producers such as ventilation, insulation and lighting.
- Quantify the reduction in CO2 emissions from innovative operation upgrades or carbon capturing.
- Determine if off-grid irrigation pumps efficiency can supply sufficient water supply to a variety of crops.
- Demonstrate the benefits of solar energy on poultry operations.

CIG AR NRCS Contact

Lori Barker

Resource Conservationist & CIG Coordinator

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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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Roger Cousins
Partnership Program Specialist
Telework: 870-805-8073
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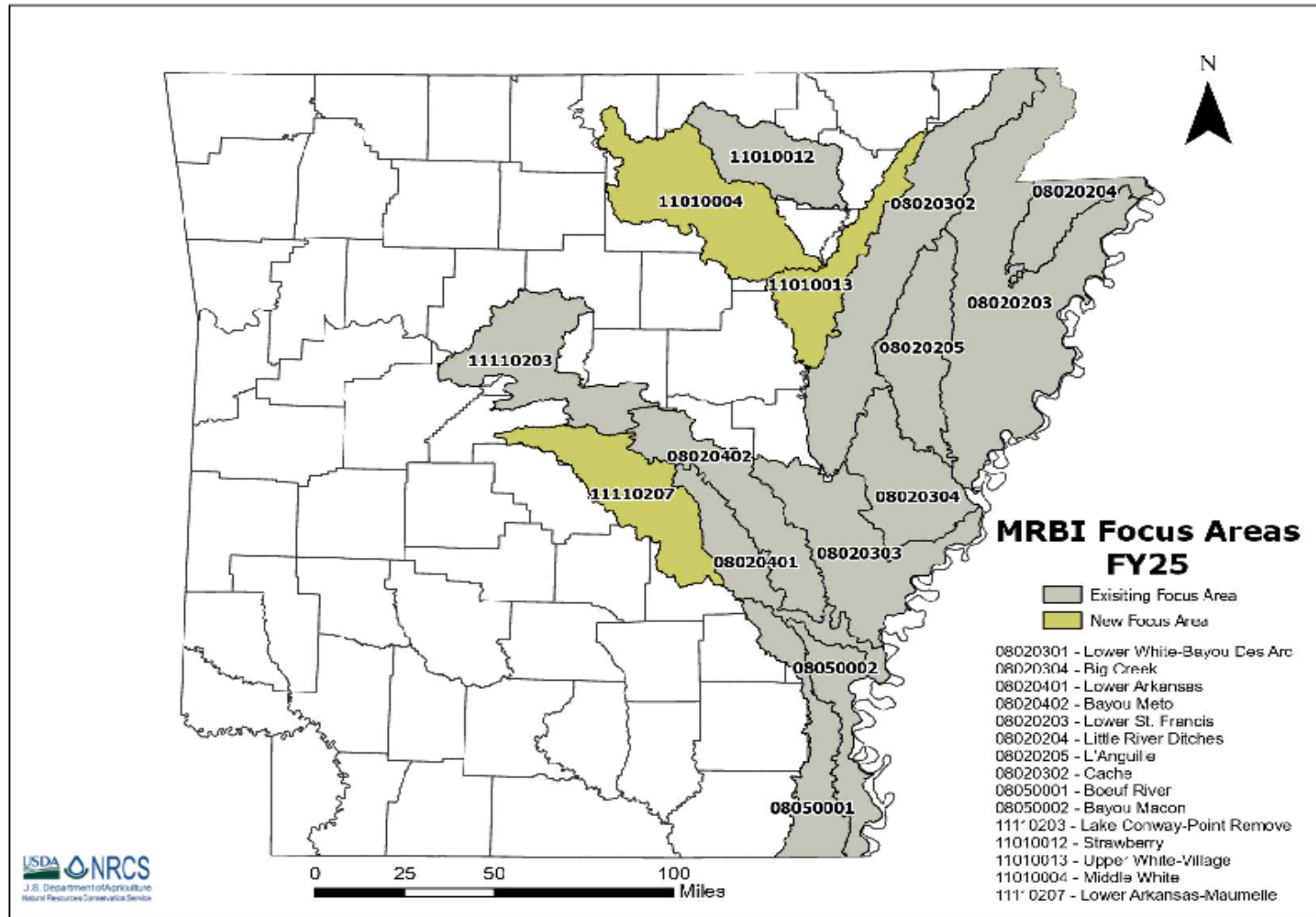


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Priority Watersheds



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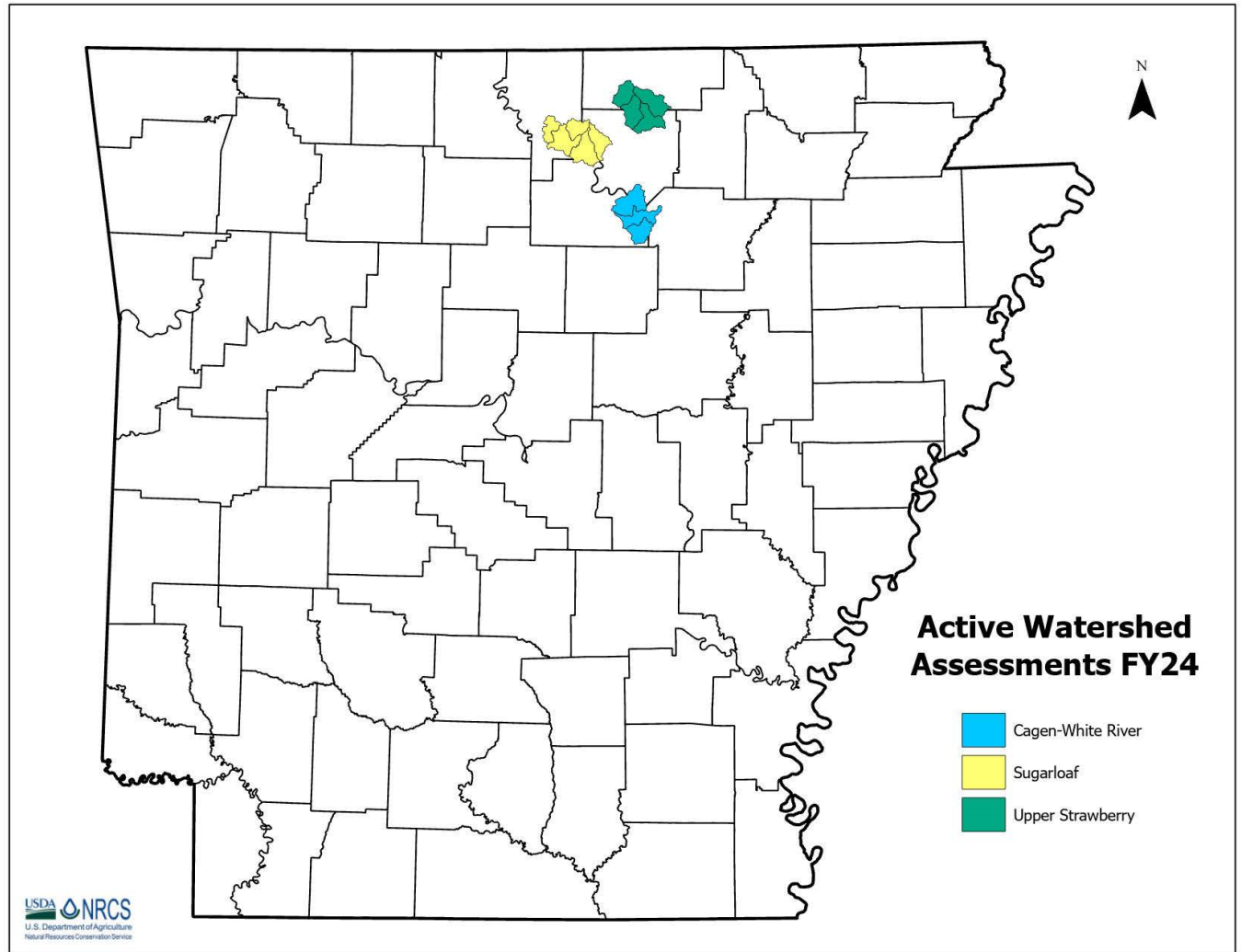
Watershed Assessments for FY24

Cagen Creek-White River

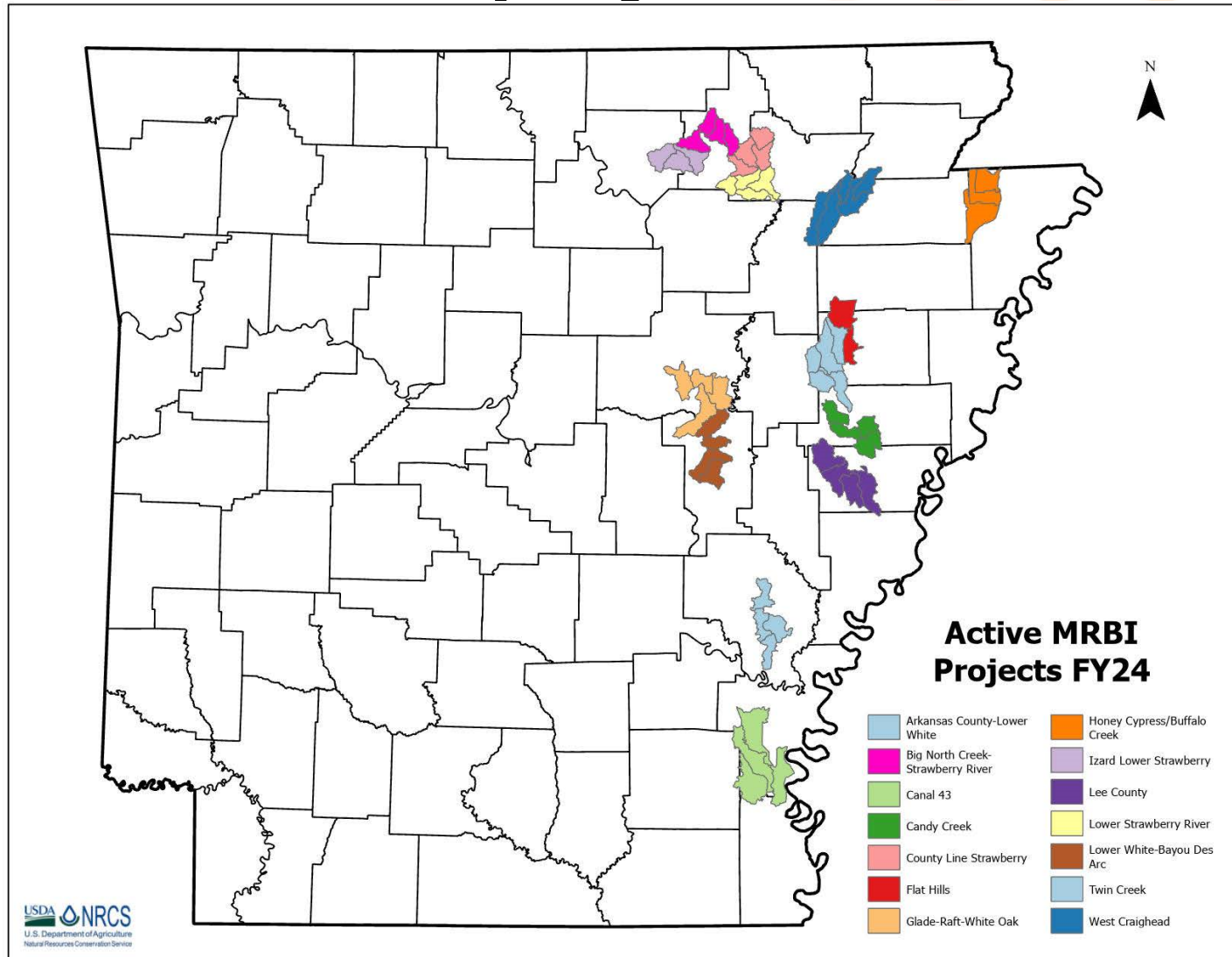
Sugarloaf

Note: Cagen Creek and Sugarloaf are from Middle White

Upper Strawberry



MRBI projects for FY24



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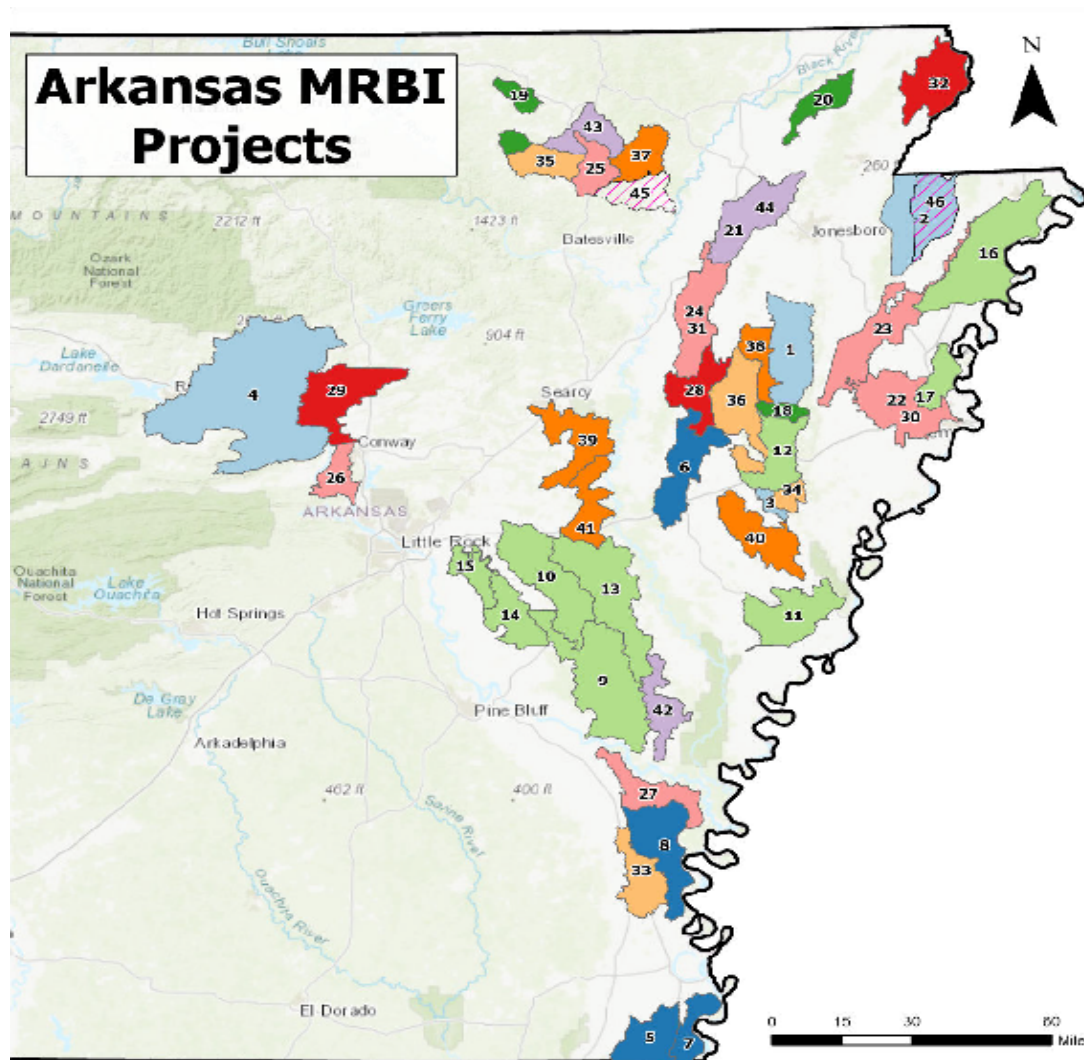
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MRBI Implementation Phase Funding

MRBI Project	Life of Project	EQIP for FY24	Allocated with 21.9% Reduction
Candy Creek	FY2021-FY2024	\$500,140	\$500,140.00
Canal 43	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,500,003	\$1,171,502.34
Twin Creek	FY2021-FY2024	\$1,270,516	\$992,273.00
Izard Lower Strawberry	FY2021-FY2024	\$300,000	\$300.000
County Line Strawberry	FY2022-FY2025	\$364,408	\$364,408.00
Flat Hills	FY2022-FY2025	\$666,428	\$666,428.00
Glade-Raft-White Oak Creek	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,323,400	\$1,033,575.40
Lee County	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,500,000	\$1,171,500.00
Lower White-Bayou Des Arc	FY2022-FY2025	\$1,846,417	\$1,442,051.68
West Craighead	FY2023-FY2026	\$1,504,825	\$1,175,268.33
Big North Creek- Strawberry	FY2023-FY2026	\$421,725	\$421,725.00
Arkansas County Lower White	FY2023-FY2026	\$1,416,826	\$1,106,541.11
Honey Cypress Buffalo	FY2024-FY2027	\$1,563,610	\$1,221,179.41
Lower Strawberry River	FY2024-FY2027	\$750,000	\$750,000
Total:		\$14,928,298	\$12,317,309

MRBI 2010-2024



Number	Project	Year
1	L'Anguille	2010
2	Little River Ditches	2010
3	Duval Larkin Creek	2010
4	PL Remove	2010
5	Bayou Bozul	2011
6	Cache River Nutrient Loss Reduction	2011
7	Lower Bayou Macon	2011
8	Middle Bayou Macon	2011
9	Bayou Meto ARCO CCPI	2012
10	Bayou Meto Middle CCPI	2012
11	Big CCPI	2012
12	FARG CCPI	2012
13	Grand Prairie CCPI	2012
14	Lower Arkansas Upper CCPI	2012
15	Middle Cache River CCPI	2012
16	Tyrone River CCPI	2012
17	Wapanosau CCPI	2012
18	Caney Creek	2015
19	Strawberry	2015
20	Upper Caney	2015
21	Caney Willow Ponds	2019
22	Lower St. Francis Nutrient Loss Red	2019
23	Lower St. Francis River	2019
24	Middle Cache River CCPI	2019
25	Middle Strawberry	2019
26	Tupelo Bayou Heavardam	2019
27	Upper Bayou Macon	2019
28	Cache River	2020
29	Carbon Creek Hower Lake	2020
30	Lower St. Francis	2020
31	Middle Cache	2020
32	Upper Lower St. Francis	2020
33	Canal 43	2021
34	Candy Creek	2021
35	Lizard Lower Strawberry	2021
36	Twain Creek	2021
37	County Line Strawberry	2022
38	Flat Hills	2022
39	Glade Raft White Oak	2022
40	Lee County	2022
41	Lower White Bayou Des Arc	2022
42	Arkansas County Lower White	2023
43	Big North Creek Strawberry River	2023
44	West Calthead	2023
45	Lower Strawberry River	2024
46	Honey Cypress Buffalo	2024

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Regional Conservation Partnership (RCPP) Update



Dianne Schlenker
Initiatives Coordinator
RCPP POC

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dianne.schlenker@usda.gov

Roger Cousins
Partnership Program Specialist
Telework: 870-805-8073
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RCPP/Partner involvement

Partner Program Agreement (PPA)

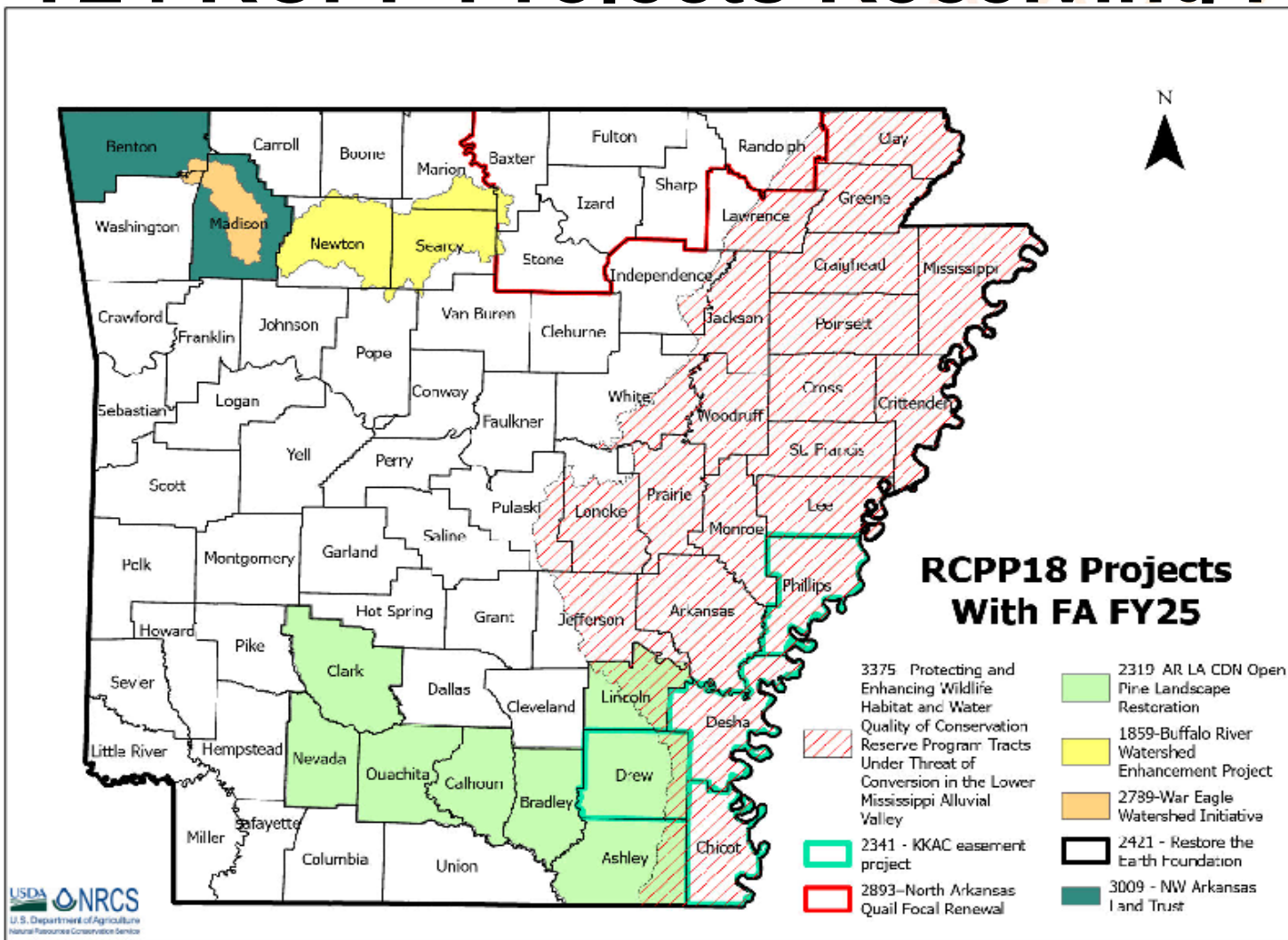
- 5 year budget
- Stand alone program
- Financial Assistance options
- Encourage system approach using core and supporting practices that meet NRCS standards and specs.
- Adaptive management
- Targets producers in the watershed
- Outreach is on going
- Goals are developed with obtainable outcomes
- Partner support through in-kind or cash
- Ranking is through CART

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FY24 RCPP Projects Receiving FA



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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 SA signed
Restore the Earth – Pilot Private Sector Investment *	Easement	\$1,973,334	PPA signed SA signed
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	

Proposals Awarded last November

Partner	Project Type	Funds Requested	Funding Pool	PPA Status
Mississippi River Trust	Easement	\$25 million	CCA	Signed PPA
Restore the Earth	Easement	\$25 million	CCA	Negotiation
Northwest Arkansas Land Trust	Easement	\$650,000	State/Multi State	Signed PPA





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**Recap:
New NFO for RCPP – April 3, 2024**

Funding availability-\$1.5 Billion



Maximum funding \$25 million

Deadline-July 2, 2024 3:59 pm CST.

**Submitted-3 AFA (Alternative
Funding Arrangement)
6 Classic**



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Recent Proposals Submitted

Partner	Project Type	Funds Requested	Funding Pool
Cold Steppe	AFA	\$25 million	CCA
The Nature Conservancy	AFA	\$25 million	CCA
Peco	AFA	\$13,300,980	CCA
KKAC Land Management	Classic	\$10 million	CCA
KKAC-easement	Classic	\$20 million	CCA
American Bird Conservancy	Classic	\$25 million	State/Multi State
The Nature Conservancy	Classic	\$6,479,855	State/Multi State
Mississippi River Trust-easement	Classic	\$25 million	CCA
WSBZ Farms-non profit	Classic	\$3 million	State/Multi State

Awaiting Chief Crosby's selection for awards.



Quick Comparison of the Landscape Initiatives

Activities	RCPP	MRBI	NWQI
Partner Involvement	yes	yes	yes
Contribution (in kind/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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Questions?



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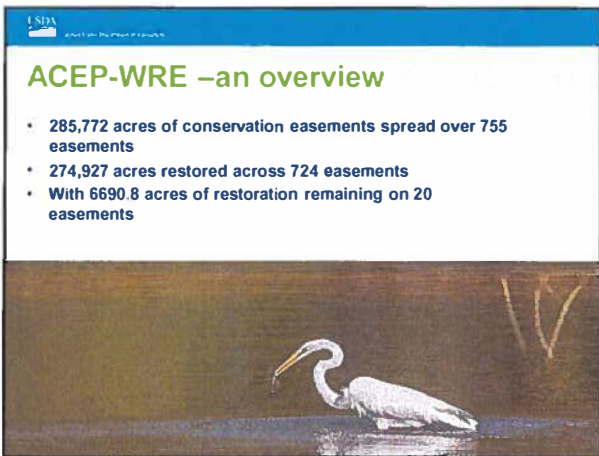


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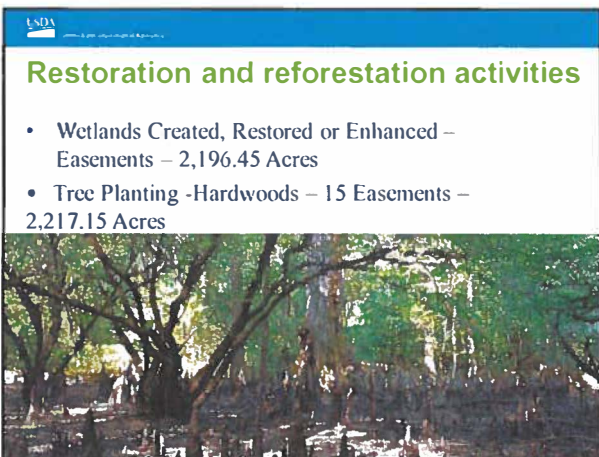
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2



3

2024 Wetland Reserve Easements – Activities

- Number of Easements that entered into Agreements to purchase- 1 Easements – WREP & 11 IRA Easements
- Number of Easement Acres Selected for Acquisition -1,375.25 Acres
- 2024 Funding to be obligated for Acquisition and restoration - \$9,761,733



4

FY24 ACEP-WRE

Number of Easements closed - 8

- Number of Easement Acres closed- 3,082 Acres

Note: of the 3 enrolled in FY23 we have closed 2

Also: only 2 easements are currently unclosed in Arkansas and one has had closing ordered

- 2024 Funding to be Obligated for Acquisition and Restoration - \$1,485,589
- Tri- state WREPs - 2024 - 1 easement, 24.5 acres, \$102,420.50
- HU enrollments - 1 easements, 22.6 acres, \$159,676




5

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.



6

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



7

IRA

- 11 Easements
- 1,350.75 Acres
- 1 HU landowner
- 9,659,313 Million



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8

GARC 2025

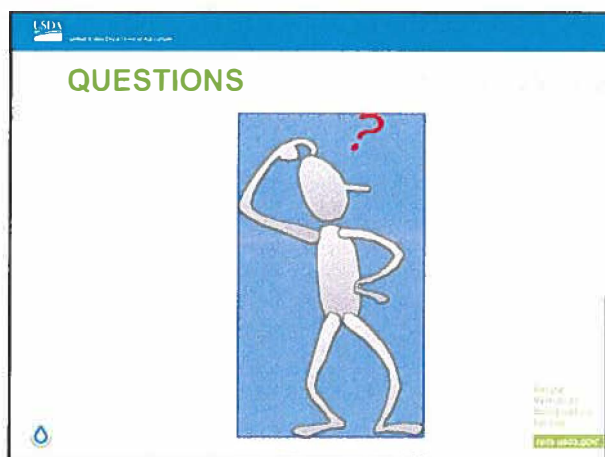
Area	Land use	2024	2025
Arkansas River Valley	Irrigated Cropland	\$2,896	\$2,890
	Non-Irrigated Cropland	\$2,186	\$2,291
	Wooded Non-CRP and Incidental Land	\$1,563	\$1,698
	Wooded CRP Planted Lands	\$1,412	\$1,530
	Pastureland	\$2,373	\$2,533
Gulf Coastal Plain	Irrigated Cropland	\$2,823	\$2,740
	Non-Irrigated Cropland	\$2,042	\$2,134
	Wooded Non-CRP and Incidental Land	\$1,309	\$1,384
	Wooded CRP Planted Lands	\$1,422	\$1,195
	Pastureland	\$2,242	\$2,362
Mississippi River Valley	Irrigated Cropland	\$3,809	\$4,054
	Non-Irrigated Cropland	\$2,602	\$2,677
	Wooded Non-CRP and Incidental Land	\$1,628	\$1,846
	Wooded CRP Planted Lands	\$1,576	\$2,370
	Pastureland	\$2,326	\$2,426

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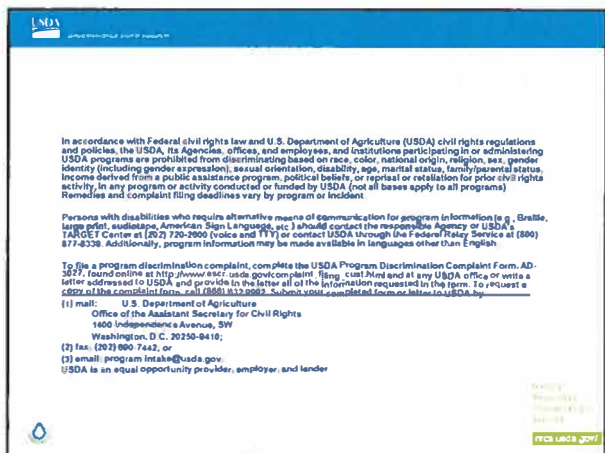
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80%

AUMMA



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11

Arkansas Watershed Program – PL566 Briefing

AR presently has 24 active PL566 watershed projects. Funding awarded since 2017 exceeds \$220 million. Projects are in differing phases of Preliminary Investigation and Finding, Planning, Design, and Construction. Below is a brief project status update for the AR PL566 projects.

BIL Projects

In 2022, Chief Cosby visited AR and announced a \$103 million dollar award for 19 projects funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. 19 projects submitted by AR NRCS for funding were awarded through the Historically Underserved and Socially Disadvantaged priority category. 5 projects were awarded funds for PIFR's only, 9 were awarded funds for PIFR and Planning, and 5 projects were awarded for PIFR,, Planning, Design, and Construction.

All PIFR's have been completed through an IDIQ contract on schedule. AR NRCS chose to enter into two cooperative agreements with the Arkansas Black Mayors Association to administer the planning efforts for the 9 projects and 5 projects for all phases. ABMA solicited, vetted, and contracted 6 Architectural/Engineering firms to develop the watershed plans. Firms were contracted in August 2022.

The 5 projects (Big Five) funded for all phases were deemed as a national priority in the spring of 2024. National HQ escalated the deadline for Chief's signature/authorization to November 1st, 2024. A plan was formulated to expedite the work which included incorporating a Technical Support Group (TSG) from the CED division plus a liaison to the Chief (Russell Morgan), plus a TSG leader (Anthony Harvey). The TSG and AR NRCS watershed planning staff are assigned all review duties on the Big 5 plus AR staff has review responsibilities for the other 9 projects.

Presently the Big 5 projects are on schedule. Draft Watershed/EA plans are due on 8/23. Section 106 is presently on track to utilize a Programmatic Agreement with the 23 tribes, SHIPO and ACHP. The PA is presently being finalized. Daily meeting and updates occur tracking progress in order to meet the Nov. 1 deadline.

The other 9 projects are currently on schedule as well and are being worked in parallel with the other 5 by the AR planning staff.

13 additional Historically Underserved communities have been identified and funding has been requested for FY 2025.

West Fork of White River

WFWR project is being implemented by the Watershed Conservation Resource Center and Beaver Lake Watershed District. Presently we are in agreement with them to design 9 streambank protection projects along with ongoing construction activities.

AR NRCS has requested an additional \$5 million for construction. Work is in progress and ongoing.

Departee Creek

Site 1 Flood Water Retention Structure is designed and scheduled to be constructed in 2025. Presently permitting/mitigation issues are being resolved. AR planning staff is working with the improvement district and USACE to finalize. Project estimated cost is \$5 million.

Kenyon Lake

Kenyon Lake is a PL566 structure that has been influenced by downstream construction, raising the dam to a high hazard classification. It has been determined and agreed to decommission the dam and remove it. AR NRCS is working with the local conservation district and designs for the decommissioning is actively being performed currently. Expected cost is \$8 million.

Lake Bennett

Lake Bennett is named for Hugh Hammond Bennett, our first Chief, the embankment was constructed by CCC during the 1930 and dedicated by Chief Bennett. A watershed plan has been developed and will be finalized by February 2025. Rehab work is to be completed to ensure life of the structure is extended. The dam is located in Wholly Hollow State Park which has over a million visitors annually. The sponsor is the Arkansas State Parks and Recreation, and project cost is estimated at \$14 million.

Grand Prairie Irrigation Project

The project is being administered through agreements with the White River Irrigation District. It is a USACE and NRCS project. Planning began over 30 years ago, and it is presently being constructed using NRCS funds. The project is the state's highest priority. It removes the dependency of ground water and changes our irrigation to be supported by surface water. The project is expected to cost \$700 million upon completion. We have been denied TA funds this year to maintain the AR staff working on the project. It is highly supported at the congressional level and therefore need help at the HQ level for funding to continue the project.

Bayou Meto Irrigation Project

The project is being administered through agreements with the Bayou Meto Irrigation District. It is a USACE and NRCS project. Planning began over 30 years ago, and it is presently being constructed using NRCS funds. The project is one of the state's highest priorities. It removes the dependency of ground water and changes our irrigation to be supported by surface water. The project is expected to cost \$700 million upon completion. Funding request will be submitted for TA funds this year to maintain the AR staff working on the project. It is highly supported at the congressional level and therefore need help at the HQ level for funding to continue the project.

State Tech Committee Meeting OCT. 17, 2024

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State Tech. Committee Meeting, Oct. 17, 2024

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