

# National Water Quality Initiative Fact Sheet

## Arkansas: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and tailwater recovery systems. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

## Arkansas

### Priority Watersheds

- Cousart Bayou - Little Cypress Bayou
- Upper Deep Bayou
- Lower Deep Bayou

Arkansas's three watersheds were selected based on the high amount of sediment and total phosphorus concentration that flow into tributaries of the Bayou Bartholomew watershed. Deep Bayou and Jacks Bayou, which flow through the watersheds, have been identified as impaired waterways because of excessive levels of siltation primarily from agricultural practices. The three watershed total 62,473 acres in parts of Jefferson and Lincoln counties.

□ Cousart Bayou-Little Cypress Bayou – This 23,763 acre watershed has 27 miles of streams and 51 miles of canals and ditches. The watershed has mixed land uses of crops (74.8 percent), forest (12 percent), grass (9.4 percent) and urban (2.3 percent).



NRCS photo by Creston Shrum

*Residue management is one of several conservation practices available to producers in the selected watersheds to help improve water quality.*

Based on results from the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT), Cousart Bayou is listed by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC) as high priority based on sediment concentration.

land uses of crops (68.7 percent), forest (16 percent), grass (13.4 percent) and urban (1.2 percent). Based on SWAT results, the watershed is listed by ANRC as high priority based on total phosphorus concentration.

*The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.*

□ Upper Deep Bayou – This 16,593 acre watershed has 33 miles of streams and 3 miles of canals and ditches. The watershed has mixed land uses of crops (46.1 percent), forest (30.4 percent), grass (17.4 percent) and urban (3.2 percent). Based on SWAT results, the watershed is listed by ANRC as high priority based on total phosphorus concentration.

□ Lower Deep Bayou – This 17,177 acre watershed has 23 miles of streams and 42 miles of canals and ditches. The watershed has mixed

## Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land and meet your objectives. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

## Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies.

Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

## Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural

economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

## Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

## How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a *USDA Service Center*. To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2012, must be received by June 15, 2012.

## For more Information

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NRCS map by Pam Cooper