



United States Department of Agriculture

## JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

# It Takes a Watershed

### WOODLAND RESTORATION PROJECT



Ouachita River Watershed © Steve Duzan

With meandering streams flowing year-round, the Ozarks and the Ouachita Mountains of western Arkansas are blessed with diverse, wondrous landscapes, enjoyed by kayakers, hikers, hunters and others from across the region. And it isn't just recreation enthusiasts who rely on the area—almost 500 active public water sources in the region deliver water to homes and businesses. However, land converted to other uses, fragmentation of forests and uncoordinated development are pushing this watershed to its limits. The forests, mountains and glades of the Ouachita, Ozark and St. Francis National Forests are under assault from invasive species, such as feral hogs and bark beetles, and a legacy of suppressing natural fire has led to changes in how the forests and surrounding lands function. The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP) project in this watershed tackled these issues in multiple ways, all while driving toward long-term health in providing freshwater resources for today and in the future.

#### PROJECT IMPACT

**\$2.13 : \$1.00**

#### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Total awarded through the JCLRP from 2014-2016: \$9 million

A study by the University of Arkansas shows that for every dollar spent on similar work here, \$2.13 in economic growth was realized in jobs and tourism.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.



ARKANSAS

### Western Arkansas Woodland Restoration Project

## GOALS



Eastern collared lizard © Casey Brewster



**Reduce wildfire threats:** Wildfire threats to communities and

landowners were reduced using a variety of tactics, including the creation of more than 1.3 million feet of firebreaks and applying prescribed burns on more than 21,000 acres. This effort is supporting species, such as the Indiana bat and the eastern collared lizard.



**Maintain water quality:** To keep cattle out of waterways, 102,000 feet of fencing was

installed along streams. This effort improves wildlife habitat by reducing erosion and maintaining water quality.



**Enhance wildlife habitat:** A road crossing on Cedar Creek, a priority tributary

in the watershed, was improved to enhance wildlife habitat. During rain events, high levels of sediment washed into the creek, so a culvert was constructed to significantly reduce erosion while also allowing for fish passage and better vehicle access.



Local high school volunteers, Traildog members, Forest Service staff and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's stream team.

There are no traffic lights in Montgomery County—not one. The Ouachita National Forest and the rivers and streams that nourish dense pine and hardwood forests dominate this large, sparsely populated county in rural Arkansas.

“People come here to enjoy the woods and waters of our area,” said Robert Cavanaugh, a member of Traildogs, a volunteer organization formed to help maintain and improve local public land. “The outdoor recreation market is our bread and butter.” In 2016, outdoor recreation generated \$9.7 billion in consumer spending and put 96,000 people to work in Arkansas.

As part of the Joint Chiefs’ project in western Arkansas, Cavanaugh and the Traildogs helped improve the Fulton Branch Landing, a recreation area on the Ouachita River, frequented by locals and tourists.

“The bank had washed out to where the water was often far below the bank,” Cavanaugh said. “The improvements include stairways made of stones so that make it possible to retrieve and launch boats without getting muddy or falling down.”

The Traildogs are retired construction workers, former Forest Service employees, teachers, college presidents, doctors, executives and others. For this project, they worked alongside high school students who volunteered to plant native grasses, shrubs and trees. “The students were hard workers and seemed to be enjoying learning about the project and the different types of trees and bushes they were planting,” Cavanaugh said. “I came away with a good feeling about the future of volunteerism in our community. This project has transformed this area and resulted in lots of happy fishermen, canoers and kayakers.”



Robert Cavanaugh

## Key Partners

Arkansas Forestry Commission  
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
Montgomery County  
Mount Ida High School  
Native Expeditions  
The Nature Conservancy  
Traildogs



The Nature Conservancy supports the Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership through technical expertise and coordination in support of our mission to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends.

For more information, please visit [nrca.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports](http://nrca.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports)