

## Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

# Woodland Restoration

2016–2018



Completed forest health work in a glade complex in the White River Hills

Spanning the border of two states, two national forests, and 29 counties, the Woodland Restoration Joint Chiefs' project addressed multiple regional forest health concerns. The project was centered around the Ouachita and Ozark-St. Francis National Forests. Over time, land fragmentation and fire exclusion in the region has led to uncharacteristic high-density closed-canopy forests. The conservation practices carried out to improve forest health included returning fire to the landscape with controlled burns, reducing accumulated woody fuels, and removing non-native invasive species. Forest health is also inextricably linked with water quality and quantity. In rural western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, like many other places well managed forests help reduce the treatment costs for public drinking water. In particular, controlling the amount of excess sediment that enters the landscape's waterways has been a key concern. While clear running waterways are good for water supply, they are also good for native fish species like the federally threatened leopard darter. The Ozark Ouachita Highlands Collaborative partnership has played a prominent role in this project's success and is looking forward to more on-the-ground conservation.

### PROJECT IMPACT:

**15,078 acres**

Acres of native forest plants established or enhanced on public and private lands.

USFS & NRCS JCLRP funds awarded 2016–2018: \$6,348,596

Total USDA and partner project funds: \$6,348,596



## PROJECT RESULTS



New upgraded bridge across Big Hudson Creek in Oklahoma



### Water quality protection:

replaced eroding stream crossings, repaired roadways, and removed feral hogs.



### Landowner outreach:

77 workshops, field days, and meetings about conservation practices and NRCS programs.



### Restoring rare and declining habitats:

2,000 acres of glade and 40 acres of rivercane were improved on the national forest.

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.

Photos in this document are public domain or stock imagery unless otherwise noted.

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## WOODLAND RESTORATION



Scott Simon, Director of the Arkansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, discusses partnerships with the USDA Forest Service Southern Regional Leadership Team (Credit: The Nature Conservancy)

## Protecting and Improving Water Quality, Environment Through Partnership

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership project on the Ouachita and Ozark National Forests and neighboring private lands covers portions of the Interior Highlands, a diverse region spanning large portions of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri. Its ecosystem of shortleaf pine and oak forests, woodland, savannas, and related communities forms the largest contiguous remnant of this ecosystem type.

On the Ozark Highlands, the 20,000-acre White River Hills has become choked with eastern red cedar due to fire suppression. Restoration of the glades began in 2011 to restore large continuous oak woodland and calcareous glade habitats for suitable structure and species composition at the Sylamore Ranger District.

The Ouachita National Forest rehabilitated an acquired 320-acre tract that was used extensively for OHV/ATV trails. The project restored the mountainside of the deeply eroded OHV trails to reduce erosion within the Board Camp Watershed. The watershed flows into the Ouachita River where the federally listed mussel, Arkansas fatmucket exists.

For McRee Anderson, director of Interior Highlands and Fire Restoration Programs for the Nature Conservancy, the focus is on glade restoration. "The Sylamore Ranger District has over 20,000 acres of the largest glade complexes on the Ozark National Forest," Anderson said. "Restoring open glade habitat across the Sylamore Ranger District is critical to improving habitat of oak woodland and calcareous glades for a large number of diverse dependent species-at-risk in this area."

Restoration activities like those within the Ouachita National Forest's Board Camp Watershed also benefit those who live in the local communities.

"Having work where I can hire locals in my community and improve the habitat in the forest is a win-win situation," said Carl Potter, a contractor who works with the Forest Service. "It keeps money in the local community and benefits the forest and the wildlife."

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



A Fire Learning Network (FLN) Tour put on by The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas

### Key Partners

Oklahoma Conservation Districts  
Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts  
Oklahoma Forestry Service  
Arkansas Game and Fish  
Beaver Watershed Alliance  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Nature Conservancy  
Central Hardwood Joint Venture  
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
Native Expeditions  
National Wild Turkey Federation

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