

# ARKANSAS CONSERVATION NEWS

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

4th Quarter  
2022

Room 3416, Federal Building, 700 W. Capitol Ave., Little Rock, AR 72201  
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4th Quarter  
2022

## Secretary Vilsack Visits Arkansas, Announces Investment in Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities

Pages 3-4



NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack discusses Arkansas projects funded through the Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities with project sponsors. Pictured are (left to right) Scott Manley, Ducks Unlimited director of conservation programs; Mark Isbell, owner of Isbell Farms and a USA Rice member; PJ Haynie, chairman National Black Growers Council; Secretary Vilsack; Jude Kearney, Winrock International board chair; John Randall Tyson, Tyson Foods executive vice president, strategy and chief sustainability officer; and Dr. Deacue Fields, vice president of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.



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Helping People Help the Land

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# From the State Conservationist

Each year, we observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15 by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. I am proud to work with many great leaders of Hispanic heritage at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). At NRCS, we are very proud of the women and men who make up our diverse workforce. We also celebrate the assistance they provide to our customers in helping them get conservation on the ground.

We also honor and pay tribute to the accomplished and visionary Hispanic farmers, ranchers, and foresters who provide the food and fiber to help feed the world. Join us in supporting the many activities taking place around the Nation in commemoration of National

Hispanic Heritage Month. For more information, visit <https://hispanicheritagemonth.gov/>.

## **USDA NRCS Chief Terry Cosby**

### **Visits Arkansas**

Arkansas NRCS was fortunate to host a second visit from Chief Terry Cosby in August. The Chief was the speaker at the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts meeting. During his speech, he discussed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that was recently signed into law. The IRA represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. The IRA invests around \$40 billion into existing USDA programs promoting climate smart agriculture, rural energy efficiency and reli-



ability, forest conservation, and more. These additional funds will help farmers and ranchers implement expanded conservation practices that reduce

greenhouse gas emissions and increase storage of carbon in their soil and trees. The conservation funding is on top of otherwise available program funds, and the voluntary, incentive-based approach is targeted to support climate-smart agriculture mitigation and help producers build resilience in their operations.

During the Chief's visit, he also had an opportunity to visit with several producers and conservation partners. He saw firsthand why farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners in Arkansas are some of the best stewards of our land.

They're already leading the way in implementing conservation practices and initiatives that benefit us all.

See the article and photos on Pages 5-7.

## **USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack Visits Arkansas**

On September 16, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack visited Lonoke County Producer Mark Isbell's farm to discuss with conservation partners and producers the secretary's recent announcement that the Biden-Harris Administration, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity. Funds will be provided through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. Read the full story on Pages 3-4.

A complete list of projects identified for this first round of funding is available at

(See *State Conservationist*, Page 12)

## **ARKANSAS CONSERVATION NEWS**

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE



The Arkansas Conservation News is published quarterly by the Arkansas Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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# Secretary Vilsack Visit

## USDA Secretary Vilsack Visits Arkansas, Announces Investment in Partnerships for 70 Climate-Smart Commodities, Rural Projects

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that the Biden-Harris Administration through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity, including 20 projects that applicants indicate will impact the state of Arkansas, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year.

The Secretary visited England, Ark., September 16 to meet with farmers and to discuss the new programs designed to increase sustainability. Ultimately, USDA's anticipated investment will triple to more than \$3 billion in pilots that will create market opportunities for American commodities produced using climate-smart production practices. These initial projects will expand markets for climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. Applicants submitted more than 450 project proposals in this first funding pool, and the strength of the projects identified led USDA to increase its investment in this opportunity from the initial \$1 billion Vilsack announced earlier this year.

"There is strong and growing interest in the private sector and among consumers for food that is grown in a climate-friendly way," said Vilsack. "Through this announcement of initial selections for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, USDA is delivering on our promise to build and expand these market opportunities for American agriculture and be global leaders in climate-smart agricultural production. This effort will increase the competitive advantage of U.S. agriculture both domestically and internationally, build wealth that stays in rural communities and support a diverse range of producers and operation types."

Earlier this year, Vilsack announced that USDA had allocated \$1 billion for the program, divided into two funding pools. Because of the unprecedented demand and interest in the program, and potential for meaningful opportunities to benefit producers through the proposals, the Biden-Harris administration increased the total funding allocation to more than \$3 billion, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year.

Funding for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities will be delivered through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation in two pools. Projects announced are from the



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*

*Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack meets with NRCS Arkansas State Conservationist Mike Sullivan, Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Doris Washington, and Rural Development State Director Jill Floyd. In the background are Jasmine Parham, NRCS public affairs specialist and Jamison Murry, NRCS soil conservationist at Hazen, Ark. Secretary Vilsack visited Arkansas to announce projects selected under the Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities and Rural Projects.*

first funding pool, which included proposals seeking funds ranging from \$5 million to \$100 million. USDA received over 450 proposals from more than 350 entities for this funding pool, including nonprofit organizations; for-profits and government entities; farmer cooperatives; conservation, energy and environmental groups; state, tribal and local governments; universities (including minority serving institutions); small businesses; and large corporations. Applications covered every state in the nation as well as tribal lands, D.C. and Puerto Rico. The tentative selections announced reflect this broad set of applicants and geographic scope, and the proposals include plans to match on average over 50% of the federal investment with nonfederal funds.

USDA will work with the applicants for the 70 identified projects to finalize the scope and funding levels in the coming months. A complete list of projects identified for this first round of funding, including the 20 projects that may impact Arkansas, is available at [usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities](https://usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities). These projects include:

- Rice Stewardship Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities – This project will build climate-smart rice markets and work to reduce methane emissions in rice

*(See Secretary Vilsack, Page 4)*



# Secretary Vilsack Visit

## Secretary Vilsack (continued from Page 3)

production through the adoption of alternate wetting and drying, furrow irrigation, and other climate-smart practices and support historically underserved producers by improving critical infrastructure necessary to implement climate-smart practices in the future. Lead Partner: USA Rice Federation, Inc.

- Tyson Foods, Inc. Climate-Smart Commodities Project – This project will expand climate-smart markets and increase carbon sequestration and reduce emissions in the production of beef and row crops for livestock feed. Small and underserved producers will receive technical assistance and incentive payments to increase their capacity to reduce emissions and adopt climate-smart practices. Lead Partner: Tyson Foods, Inc.

- Growing Value for Producers – This project will create and pilot-test a farmer-friendly system that builds capacity with institutions interacting with a range of producers, including underserved producers, to support adoption of climate-smart practices and interact with commodity buyers in climate-smart markets. Lead Partner: Winrock International Institute for Agriculture Development

- Climate-Smart Cotton through a Sustainable & Innovative Supply Chain Approach – This project will implement methods to restore soil and ecosystem health in cotton production through regenerative farming and best practices based on specific regions and needs. Lead Partner: Ecom USA, LLC

Spanning up to five years, these 70 projects will:

- Provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement climate-smart production practices on a voluntary basis on working lands;
- Pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, moni-



**Secretary Vilsack met with Arkansas USDA employees, partners and producers during his visit.**

toring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and

- Develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

The projects will deliver significant impacts for producers and communities nationwide. USDA anticipates that these projects will result in:

- Hundreds of expanded markets and revenue streams for producers and commodities across agriculture ranging from traditional corn to specialty crops.

- More than 50,000 farms reached, encompassing more than 20-25 million acres of working land engaged in climate-smart production practices such as cover crops, no-till and nutrient management.

- More than 50 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent sequestered over the lives of the projects. This is equivalent to removing more than 10 million gasoline-powered passenger vehicles from the road for one year.

- More than 50 universities, including multiple minority-serving institutions, engaged and helping advance projects, especially with outreach and monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification.

- Proposals for the 70 selected proj-

ects include plans to match on average over 50% of the federal investment with nonfederal funds.

Projects were selected based on a range of criteria, with emphasis placed on greenhouse gas and/or carbon sequestration benefits and equity. The Notice of Funding Opportunity included a complete set of project proposal requirements and evaluation criteria.

“America’s farmers, ranchers, and forest owners are leading the way in implementing climate-smart solutions across their operations,” said Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mike Sullivan in Arkansas. “Through Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, USDA will provide targeted funding to meet national and global demand and expand market opportunities for climate-smart commodities to increase the competitive advantage of American producers. We want a broad array of agriculture and forestry to see themselves in this effort, including small and historically underserved producers as well as early adopters.”

Visit [usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities](https://usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities) to learn more about this effort, and [usda.gov/climate-solutions](https://usda.gov/climate-solutions) for climate-related updates, resources and tools across the Department.



## Chief Cosby Visit

### NRCS Chief Terry Cosby Speaks at AACD meeting, visits Arkansas Leaders, Partners and Producers

For the second time this year, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Terry Cosby visited Arkansas. He was a featured speaker at the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) meeting in North Little Rock, August 11-12. Approximately 300 people were in attendance, including U.S. Senator John Boozman and National Association of Conservation Districts President Michael Crowder.



*Arkansas State Conservationist Mike Sullivan, Chief Terry Cosby, AACD President Jerry Don Clark, Arkansas Department of Agriculture (ADA) Natural Resources Division Director Chris Colclasure.*



*ADA Forestry Division Director Joe Fox, Mike Sullivan, Chief Cosby, ADA Secretary Wes Ward, Chris Colclasure.*

Following the plenary session, Chief Cosby, USDA Senior Advisor for Racial Equity to the Secretary of Agriculture Dr. Dewayne Goldman, NRCS Regional Conservationist James Tillman, and Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan met with Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, Arkansas Department of Agriculture (ADA) Secretary Wes Ward, and Natural Resources Division Director Chris Colclasure. The Chief discussed agriculture and conservation efforts in Arkansas, drought issues including two PL 83-566 watershed projects under construction to address significant ground water decline that are funding priorities for the State, the recent watershed BIL funding announcement, and workforce hiring efforts. The group also discussed NRCS's great partnership working with the ADA and local Conservation Districts.



*James Tillman, Chris Colclasure, Wes Ward, Governor Asa Hutchinson, Chief Cosby, Mike Sullivan, Dr. Dewayne Goldman.*



*Governor Hutchinson and Chief Cosby.*

*(See Chief Cosby, Page 6)*



# Chief Cosby Visit

*Chief Terry Cosby (continued from Page 5)*



*(Above and below) Chief Cosby meets with NRCS Employees meeting during the AACD meeting August 12.*



Chief Cosby also participated in several site visits around Arkansas including two Bipartisan Infrastructure Law related meetings in Camden and Forrest City, visits to urban agriculture farms in Little Rock and North Little Rock, discussions with and about Conservation Districts as well as Equity; a visit to a working rice farm in DeValls Bluff that recently has experienced wells go dry due to declining ground water levels, and a visit to the Grand Prairie Irrigation Project, that is helping agriculture producers use excess surface water in lieu of unsustainable ground water.



*Camden Mayor Julian Lott, Chief Cosby, Mike Sullivan, NRCS Ouachita County District Conservationist Kaitlyn Maloch and Ouachita County Conservation District Board member Josh Barkhimer.*



*Chief Cosby, Arkansas Black Mayors Association President and Camden Mayor Julian Lott and Mike Sullivan.*



*(Above) Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (NW) Corey Farmer, Mike Sullivan, Pulaski County District Conservationist Kennard Williams, James Tillman, Chief Cosby, Urban Ag Producer Margie Raimondo at Urbana Farmstead & Restaurant in Little Rock. (Below) Margie Raimondo, Kennard Williams, James Tillman and Chief Cosby.*



*(See Chief Cosby, Page 7)*



# Chief Cosby Visit

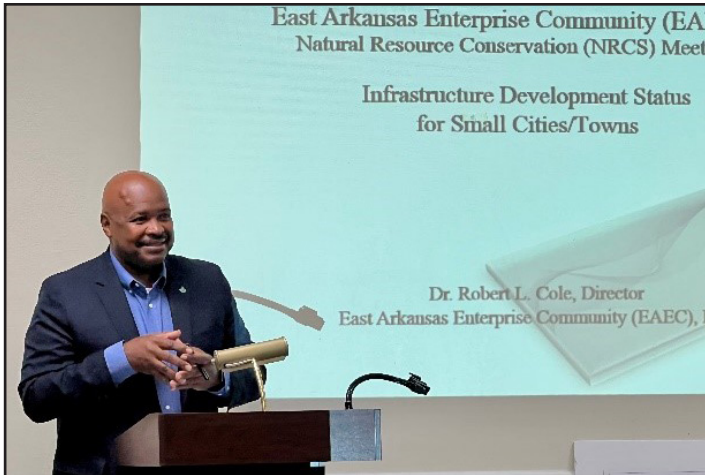
*Chief Terry Cosby (continued from Page 6)*



**Urban Ag farm at St. Joseph Center in North Little Rock, August 15. Pictured are Chief Cosby, Mike Sullivan, State Outreach Coordinator Alvin Peer, James Tillman and St. Joseph Center Executive Director Sandy DeCoursey.**



**Meeting at Grand Prairie Irrigation District, August 16. Pictured are Mike Sullivan, Chief Cosby, and White River Irrigation District Director Dennis Carmen.**



**(Above) Chief Cosby meeting with Arkansas Black Mayors Association at East Arkansas Enterprise Community (EAEC) in Forrest City, August 16. (Below) Hughes Mayor Lincoln Barnett, Forrest City Mayor Cedric Williams, Mike Sullivan, Camden Mayor Julian Lott, Chief Cosby, Arkansas State Representative Reginald Murdoch, James Tillman, Madison Mayor Bobby Hardrick, Wheatley Mayor Larry Nash, and EAEC Director Robert Cole.**



**(Above and below) Meeting with Robert and Cathy Seidenstricker in DeValls Bluff, reviewing irrigation reservoirs to support their row crops.**





# Programs

## NRCS Accepting 2023 EQIP Applications through Nov. 4

Farmers and landowners in Arkansas have until Nov. 4, 2022, to submit applications to receive financial assistance to implement conservation activities through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the 2023 program year. Applicants can sign up at their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Service Center <https://www.farmers.gov/>.

Assistance is available to help farmers and landowners plan and implement conservation practices to improve water quality, build healthier soil, improve grazing and forest lands, conserve energy, enhance organic operations, establish or improve wildlife habitat and achieve other environmental benefits on the landscape. NRCS accepts program applications continuously. However, to be considered for funding during this signup applications must be received by Nov. 4, 2022. Applications received after this date will be considered in later funding periods, subject to funding availability.

EQIP contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices to improve soil health, water quality, improve grazing and forest lands, and establish or improve wildlife habitat. EQIP can also assist Arkansas producers meet Federal, State, and local environmental regulations.

Additionally, NRCS offers special initiatives, including:

- **Organic Initiative** – helps producers install conservation practices on certified organic operations or those working toward organic certification.
- **On-Farm Energy Initiative** – helps producers conserve energy on their operations.
- **StrikeForce Initiative** – additional assistance for underserved



producers in 48 persistent poverty counties: Arkansas, Bradley, Chicot, Clark, Colombia, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Hempstead, Howard, Jackson, Lafayette, Lawrence, Lee, Mississippi, Monroe, Nevada, Newton, Ouachita, Phillips, Randolph, Searcy, Sevier, St. Francis, Woodruff, Ashley, Clay, Conway, Craighead, Crittenden, Franklin, Fulton, Independence, Izard, Jefferson, Johnson, Lincoln, Madison, Miller, Montgomery, Poinsett, Polk, Scott, Sebastian, Sharp, Stone, Union, and Van Buren.

- **StrikeForce Healthy Forest (Keeping It In the Family) Initiative** – additional assistance for underserved producers to improve forestlands with forestry conservation practices in 18 counties: Bradley, Calhoun, Clark, Cleveland, Columbia, Dallas, Drew, Hempstead, Howard, Jefferson, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, Pike, Sevier, Union.

- **Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative** – provides financial and technical assistance to producers to enhance early successional habitat to aid in bobwhite quail recovery.

- **Arkansas Groundwater Initiative (AGWI)** – targeted approach to address critical groundwater decline issues in the Arkansas Delta, providing assistance to agricultural producers in seven counties: Arkansas, Prairie; and portions of Craighead, Cross, Lonoke, Poinsett, and St. Francis.

- **National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Existing Projects** – provides financial and technical assistance to improve water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. Projects include: Brush Creek-Roberts Creek in Washington and Madison counties.

- **Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) Existing Projects** – provides assistance to improve water quality in the following project areas: Cache – portions of Woodruff, Jackson and Cross counties; Middle Cache – portions of Jackson, Woodruff, Poinsett and Craighead counties; Lower St. Francis – portions of Crittenden, Cross and St. Francis counties; Upper Lower St. Francis – portions of Clay and Green counties; Cadron Creek Brewer Lake – portions of Conway and Faulkner counties; Candy Creek – portions of Cross, St. Francis, and Woodruff counties; Canal 43 – portions of Desha and Chicot counties; Twin Creeks – portions of Cross and Woodruff counties; Izard Lower Strawberry – portions of Izard and Sharp counties; County Line Strawberry – portions of Lawrence and Sharp counties; Flat Hills – portions of Poinsett and Cross counties; Glade-Raft-White Oak Creek – portions of White and Prairie counties; Lee County – portion of Lee county;

*(See EQIP Applications, Page 11)*



# Conservation On the Ground



*Kent Martin checks the water level in the 1,500 gallon tank at the highest point on his farm. From there, water is gravity fed to water tanks across the farm.*

NRCS photos by Creston Shrum

## Spring Development Provides Water for Cattle During Drought



*A solar-powered pump moves water from the bottom of a valley to the highest point on the property, approximately 1,500 feet.*

*by Creston Shrum  
Public Affairs Specialist*

After an aircraft mechanic career, that took Kent and Oleta Martin from a Boeing plant in Melbourne, Ark., to the east and west coasts, they returned home to the Ozark Mountains in Baxter County, Ark.

Kent's family has farmed on property surrounded by the Ozark National Forest in Stone County for more than 100 years.

After his father's passing, Kent and Oleta took over the Stone County farm, six miles from their Baxter County property.

The Martin's manage a cow/calf operation on the 91 acres of pastureland and rely on several ponds throughout the property to provide water. However, most years in the summer, the ponds dry up or the water becomes too polluted for the cattle to safely drink.



*The spring on the Martin's property.*

"For three or four months a year we were hauling 1,000 gallons of water a day from our Baxter County property to the cattle in Stone County," said Kent. "Although we have a spring in one of the valleys, the cattle won't use it because of bears in the area and the steep terrain."

Looking for a solution to their water issues, the Martin's visited the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Mt. View. In 2018, they signed up for the Environmental

*(See Spring Development, Page 10)*



# Conservation On the Ground



*Wendy Hendrix, Stone County district conservationist, and Oleta and Kent Martin check the water in one of the tanks. (Right) Kent Martin shows where the water comes from the spring before flowing into a 1,000 gallon tank to be pumped to other parts of the farm.*



## **Spring Development** (continued from Page 9)

Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to develop the spring and add water tanks.

After applying for several years, without getting selected for funding, they asked Wendy Hendrix, NRCS district conservationist in Stone County, would help them compete better for funding.

“Working with the Martin’s, we developed a conservation plan utilizing the spring for water with a solar pump to move water from the bottom of the valley to a tank at the highest elevation on the property,” Hendrix said. “From there, the water is gravity fed to water tanks across the farm.”

The plan also called for cross fencing for prescribed grazing and controlling briars and weeds to reduce competition of the forages. After the plan was developed and used for

ranking the Martin’s EQIP application, they received funding in 2021.

“It was a relief when we found out we were getting funding, knowing we’d eventually be able to stop hauling water daily,” said Oleta. “It not only makes it easier on us, but provides fresh, cool water for the cattle, which in turn should keep them healthier.”

The Martin’s EQIP contract includes: 91 acres of brush management, 3,031 feet of cross fencing to create four paddocks for prescribed grazing, four heavy use areas, 3,765 feet of livestock pipeline, a pumping plant, spring development and six watering facilities.

“With the spring being in the bottom of a valley, we had to figure out how to lift the water about 1,500 feet to a storage tank at the top of the hill,”

Hendrix said. “There also wasn’t any electricity in the area.”

To develop the system design, Hendrix called on the expertise of Zach Avey, Izard County NRCS soil conservationist, and Brian Gawf, Team 2 NRCS civil engineering technician.

“Zach and Brian designed a system using a 1,000-gallon storage tank to collect water from the spring, and a solar powered pump to “lift” the water 1,500 feet to another 1,500-gallon storage tank at the top of the hill,” Hendrix said. “From there, water is gravity fed to watering tanks in the four paddocks.”

Once the plan is fully implemented, the Martin’s will rotate their 37 cow/calf pairs weekly through the four paddocks. There the cattle will find new grass and fresh water providing less stress on the animals and the Martins.



## Hall of Fame



*AACD President Jerry Don Clark, presents Mike Sullivan, Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist, with a plaque honoring his induction into the AACD Hall of Fame. Also pictured are NRCS Chief Terry Cosby (left) and Wes Ward, Arkansas Department of Agriculture secretary.*



*AACD President Jerry Don Clark, presents Martha Manley with a plaque honoring her induction into the AACD Hall of Fame. Also pictured is NRCS Chief Terry Cosby.*

## Sullivan, Manley Inducted into AACD Hall of Fame

Mike Sullivan, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state conservationist in Arkansas, was inducted into the 2022 Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) Hall of Fame, along with Lee County producer and past AACD President Martha Manley, at the AACD annual meeting in North Little Rock in August.

Sullivan has been state conservationist since December 2009 working leading and accelerating conservation activities helping agricultural produc-

ers to address priority natural resource concerns. During his 42-year career with NRCS, he served as Mississippi River Basin Coordinator (2004-2009) developing the Mississippi River Healthy Watersheds Initiative, an \$80 million per year initiative to improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and maintain agricultural productivity in selected watersheds in the Mississippi River Basin. He spent two years (2002-2004) as the NRCS National Science and Technology Coordinator. Prior to that, he worked for seven

years (1995-2002) in Little Rock, establishing and leading the NRCS National Water Management Center assisting NRCS employees nationwide in addressing complex water resource problems/projects.

Manley, a producer on her family farm in Lee County, has been a member of the Lee County Conservation District Board since 1994 serving as Board Chair from 2004-2014. Her service to AACD includes serving as first vice president from 2015 – 2017 and as president from 2017 – 2019.

### ***EQIP Applications*** (continued from Page 8)

and Lower White-Bayou Des Arc – portion of Prairie county.

All applications will be evaluated for funding based on local, state and nationally developed criteria to optimize environmental benefits. Applications ranking highest in a

funding category will be funded according to priority and is subject to availability of program funds.

For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact your local USDA/NRCS Field Service Center <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

# Partnership Awards



*NRCS Chief Terry Cosby, Keith Scoggins, NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan and Adam Eades presents Steven Green, Ph.D. with the 2021 Arkansas State Conservationist's Partnership Award in the Individual Category.*



*NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan along with NRCS Chief Terry Cosby (left) and Dianne Schlenker (right) present the 2021 Arkansas State Conservationist's Partnership Award (Organization) to Sandi J. Formica and Matthew A. Van Eps on behalf of the Watershed Conservation Resource Center in Fayetteville.*

## Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Selects Partnership Award Winners

The State Conservationist's Partnership Awards were presented on August 12 during the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) annual meeting in North Little Rock.

Mike Sullivan, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state conservationist in Arkansas, presented the awards during AACD's luncheon. Executive Director Sandi J. Formica and Associate Director Matthew A. Van Eps accepted the 2021 Arkansas State Conservationist's Partnership Award in the Organiza-

tion Category on behalf of Watershed Conservation Resource Center in Fayetteville.

Steven Green, Ph.D., professor of soil and water conservation at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro accepted the 2021 Arkansas State Conservationist's Partnership Award in the Individual Category.

The awards recognize a non-federal partner organization or individual who made outstanding contributions towards NRCS programs, accomplishments, and mission in Arkansas

between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021.

"Congratulations to all our partnership award winners," said Sullivan. "We have great support from our conservation partnership and many others working together to enhance conservation assistance to farmers, ranchers and foresters. More than 80 different partners help make NRCS landscape initiatives successful. We are blessed to work in the state of Arkansas, where the conservation partnership is alive and well."

### **State Conservationist** (continued from Page 2)

usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities. USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and will ensure that all projects benefit small and/or underserved producers.

We just recently completed the fiscal year and I want to thank our USDA NRCS Arkansas Team for their continued efforts to deliver services to our customers and partners. I greatly appreciate all the hard work they have accomplished.

Our NRCS Team at our 61 USDA Service Centers

across Arkansas stand ready to help you with one-on-one conservation planning assistance. NRCS offers programs to help you improve the sustainability of your land through conservation and recover after natural disasters.

Mike Sullivan, State Conservationist



# Outreach

## NRCS, Conservation District Staff Host Field Day in Stone County

by Wendy Hendrix  
Stone County District Conservationist

The Stone County Conservation District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Mountain View recently held a field day to showcase the annual forages they planted on the district's property.

Approximately 50 landowners attended the event. The participants learned about planting and using annual forages to extend the grazing system, how annuals improve soil health, and the best livestock practices to use for managing livestock.

Participants also learned how to build and use electric fence for managing livestock grazing, what quail need for habitat, the importance of a forest management plan, and about programs offered by the USDA Farm Service Agency.

At the end of the demonstration, the participants were provided lunch and received a 50 lb. bag of cool season annuals to plant on their land.



*Stone County Extension Agent Tyler Caston discusses using annuals for extended grazing for livestock.*



*(Above) Wildlife Biologist Dillon King explains how forages can benefit quail habitat. (Right) NRCS Arkansas State Agronomist Troyce Barnett discusses soil health.*



*NRCS Arkansas Northwest Area Grassland Specialist Claire Whiteside explains how to install electric fence for a gate.*





# Arkansas PBS Documentary “Dirt” Digs into Importance of Soil Conservation

Break through the surface to explore the living, breathing ecosystem beneath our feet. “Dirt” — a documentary from Arkansas PBS about saving our soil — delves into how Arkansas farmers, ranchers and more are improving their operations by helping the environment.

As world population and food production demands rise, this film delves into how Arkansas farmers, ranchers and others are conserving their soil, water, air and other natural resources, improving their operations and helping the environment with sustainability methods from the USDA Natural

Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS conservationists provide technical expertise and conservation planning for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners wanting to make conservation improvements to their land.

“Helping People Help the Land is what we’ve been doing at the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service since 1935,” said Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. “These success stories shine the spotlight on producers from across Arkansas who explain why they have implemented conservation practices and how they work on their land. These producers share their own conservation stories, and how practices are helping them protect and improve resources, how they save time and save money.

“It all begins with a conservation plan that NRCS offers at no cost. The plan is developed through the Conservation Technical Assistance Program to provide a blueprint to help producers achieve their objectives with personalized advice and information based on the latest science and research and to help them make informed decisions,” Sullivan added.

To view the film visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8mawEmm49o>

Featured in the film are:

- Margie Raimondo owns and operates Urbana Farmstead inside the city limits of Little Rock.



- Raymond Kelley runs a cow/calf operation in Faulkner County utilizing managed grazing and making sure the grass recovers before the next grazing rotation to maintain soil health.

- Richard White raises cattle near Royal utilizing fenced paddocks and controlled water systems for rotational grazing, installed heavy use areas to control compaction and erosion, and uses biomass plantings to improve his forage.

- Dallas and Katie Peebles produce organic specialty vegetables and honey from their on-site hives near Augusta.

- Adam Chappell, who owns and operates an 8,000-acre row crop farm with his brother Seth outside Cotton Plant, is a co-founder of the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance and has become a nationally-recognized speaker.

- Patti and Donnie Larimer, use rotational grazing, controlled water systems and heavy use areas on their small ruminant ranch in Greenwood.

- P.J. Haynie, a fifth-generation row crop farmer whose family owns and operates large farms in several states across the country, serves as chairman of the National Black Growers Council.

More information about the film is available at <https://www.myarkansaspbs.org/programs/dirt>.

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