

# ARKANSAS CONSERVATION NEWS

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

3rd Quarter  
2022

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2022



## USDA Announces \$95.9 Million Investment in 19 Arkansas Watershed Projects

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Helping People Help the Land

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# From the State Conservationist

As the nation's preeminent private lands conservation agency for over 80 years, we will continue to provide the very best customer service to our producers and to our conservation partners. Working in conjunction with our Farm Production and Conservation sister agencies, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will continue to ensure we have the information technology, business operations and technical staff to enable us to offer timely and cost-effective solutions to our customers.

Our NRCS staff provide technical assistance to thousands of landowners across Arkansas. With the tools and resources provided through the Farm Bill, NRCS and all our conservation partners continue to make a major difference not only in soil health, water quality, water quantity and wildlife habitat, but also in the lives of producers and the communities they work in.

Healthy land and waters is the foundation that ensures working farms become more productive, resilient to climate change and better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. When we target voluntary conservation efforts to places most in need, we see better results.

The Agricultural Conservation Ease-



ment Program (ACEP) is a program that aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, restoring and protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands and grasslands.

NRCS offers two types of ACEP easements:

- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE): Helps restore, protect and enhance wetlands on eligible land.
- Agricultural Land Easements (ALE): Protects farmlands and grasslands by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land.

NRCS accepts ACEP applications year-round, but applications are ranked

and funded by funding cycle, which have state-specific application ranking dates. Applications received after the ranking date will automatically be considered during the next funding.

NRCS conservation easements have a tremendous footprint in the U.S. at over 5 million acres, or 58,000 square miles enrolled. In 2021 in Arkansas, there were five easements with 5,800 acres enrolled. NRCS is the largest easement holder and steward in the nation. If you would like additional information on ACEP, contact your local USDA Service Center.

The Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP) is a state-driven, partnership and field-based program to build strong employee-producer relationships and increase NRCS employees' knowledge of production agriculture in their area.

- NRCS will match producer volunteers who are passionate about conservation and teaching with field employees who have fewer than three years of experience or who are new to an area.
- The producers will have an opportunity to mentor the employees through "on-the-land," hands-on

(See State Conservationist, Page 4)

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## Programs

# USDA Announce \$95.9 Million Investment in 19 Arkansas Watershed Infrastructure Projects

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will invest \$420 million in 132 infrastructure projects in 31 states. This includes a \$95.9 million investment for 19 projects in Arkansas. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Terry Cosby made the announcement April 21 at the Forrest City Civic Center before visiting one of the project sites in Marianna.

These projects include flood prevention, and watershed restoration projects, and they are part of the Biden-Harris Administration's implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), building on a \$166 million nationwide investment announced earlier this year.

"These investments will help protect communities and their residents here in Arkansas that are impacted by floods, natural disasters, and other watershed scale resource concerns," Cosby said. "For example, our project here will benefit three communities with residents who not only faced socioeconomic challenges, but those from flooding and the other impacts of severe weather. This project and others across Arkansas will create a more climate resilient future and will help these communities thrive in the years to come."



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*

**NRCS Chief Terry Cosby announces a \$95.9 million investment in 19 Arkansas watershed projects.**

As part of this project, NRCS is working with the Cities of Helena-West Helena, Lake View, and Marvell collectively; the Cities of Forrest City, Haynes, and Marianna collectively; the Cities of Hughes and Jennette collectively; the City of Pine Bluff; and the City of Camden for potential PL-566 projects. Flooding has caused significant problems

*(See Watershed Investment, Page 4)*



*Photo provided by Kalven Trice*

*(Above) Flooded roadway under a railroad bridge in Marianna the week of April 11. (Right) Standing under the same bridge April 21 are State Conservationist Mike Sullivan, NRCS retiree Kalven Trice, Marianna Mayor Jimmy Williams, Arkansas State Representative Reginald Murdock, NRCS Chief Terry Cosby, Lee County Judge Terry Sandefer, District Conservationist Mary Wheeler and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations Morgan Morrisett.*



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*



# Programs

## ***Watershed Investment*** (continued from Page 3)



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*

***Pine Bluff AR Mayor Shirley Washington, Chief Terry Cosby, State Conservationist Mike Sullivan and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Chancellor Laurence B. Alexander.***



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*

***Camden Arkansas Mayor and President of the Arkansas Black Mayors Association Julian Lott, State Conservationist Mike Sullivan and Chief Terry Cosby at the Forrest City Convention Center for the BIL announcement.***

for these historically underserved communities, including deterioration of highways, streets and bridges. These projects aim to alleviate flooding of suburban and rural homes, cropland, and grazing lands as well as improve wildlife habitat and water quality.

“These projects create good-paying jobs and improve economies in rural America. USDA offers several watershed programs that help communities rebuild after natural disasters and build resilience,” said Mike Sullivan, Arkansas state conservationist. “We encourage communities to connect with their local NRCS office to learn more about Watershed Program assistance.”

As part of this investment, NRCS is working with the Arkansas Black Mayors Association, East Arkansas Enterprise Community, conservation districts and others on these projects. A full list of Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program projects is available on NRCS’ Bipartisan Infrastructure Law web page.

In total, NRCS received \$918 million of BIL funding to allocate through its watershed programs. In addition to WFPO, NRCS is also using the Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB) to upgrade existing NRCS dams and the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) to help communities recover from natural disasters. NRCS will continue to assist communities as it receives disaster requests. NRCS will continue to review additional requests and compile a third round of BIL watershed funding as funds are available.

Since 1948, NRCS’ watershed programs have designed and built 11,850 dams, constructed water storage structures, flood management systems, stabilized streambanks, relocated residences, redirected stream flows, re-established wildlife habitat and more to save lives and protect watersheds.

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

learning to help them develop their knowledge.

The official rollout of CAMP occurred just as COVID-19 restrictions began. Despite the challenges in establishing in-person mentoring relationships, we have been creative in communicating internally and with our customers. Technologies such as Zoom and Teams meetings between

employees and mentors have helped us push CAMP forward.

If you would be interested becoming a producer volunteer, contact Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (South Area) Kevin Cochran at [kevin.cochran@usda.gov](mailto:kevin.cochran@usda.gov) for more information.

The purpose and passion for conservation is shared by many in

our state. As we look ahead to the rest of the year, NRCS will continue to make improvements delivering outstanding customer assistance throughout Arkansas while “Helping People Help the Land.”

Mike Sullivan, State Conservationist



# Programs

## USDA Seeks Proposals for Landscape Restoration Partnership

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is asking for proposals for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership to improve forest health on public and private lands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Forest Service are seeking the proposals from partners by Aug. 5, 2022, for fiscal year 2023.

Joint Chiefs' aligns with the Biden-Harris administration's broader effort to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. Most recently, President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law codified the initiative, showing broad support for the effort because of its inclusion in the once-in-a-generation investment to improve infrastructure and rural communities. Fiscal year 2023 projects will build on the fiscal year 2022 investment of more than \$48 million on projects that will mitigate wildfire risk, protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, restore forest ecosystems and ultimately contribute to USDA's efforts to combat climate change.

"The Joint Chiefs' will align with USDA's shared stewardship strategy by selecting projects that demonstrate a cross-boundary effort, work at the appropriate scale and have mutually defined priorities that support local communities," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "Partnerships at all levels – federal, state, Tribal and local—lead to well-developed, successful continued conservation with large scale impacts. Joint Chiefs' has a proven record of success, as further reflected in the program's inclusion in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law."

"Joint Chiefs' funding is an invaluable tool to help confront the wildfire



*NRCS photo by Creston Shrum*

crisis across all lands," said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. "Working with our partners through the Joint Chiefs' program is an important element that supports the agency's 10-year wildfire strategy by increasing the scale of our wildfire prevention efforts while restoring the health of forests, watersheds and habitats across the country."

"The health of our forests and our rural communities very often go hand in hand," said Mike Sullivan, NRCS state conservationist in Arkansas. "USDA works with other public agencies and thousands of private landowners through a range of programs and partnerships to decrease the threat of wildfire, restore forest habitat and increase economic and other opportunities for the families and businesses that make their homes near woodlands."

"The Joint Chiefs' partnership is one of the many ways USDA is working with local partners to help meet the

increasing challenge of protecting communities, watersheds, forests and woodlands from the devastating and increasingly expensive impacts of wildfire," Sullivan said.

### Opportunities to Collaborate

Joint Chiefs' project proposals are developed through a collaborative process between NRCS, Forest Service and partners. Past partners have included county, state, non-governmental, Tribal, utilities or private individual stakeholders. The collaboration process and partnerships will depend on the specific community needs of each project. Proposals are reviewed and vetted at multiple levels in the agencies based on local, state, Tribal and regional priorities.

NRCS and Forest Service national offices will evaluate the proposals and will announce the selected projects in late fall 2022.

*(See Joint Chiefs', Page 6)*



# Programs

## Joint Chiefs' (continued from Page 5)

### Evaluation

In selecting proposals, NRCS and the Forest Service will prioritize:

- ❑ Clear descriptions with goals and objectives, deliverables, timeline and measurable desired outcomes.

- ❑ Reduction of wildfire risk in a municipal watershed or the wild-land-urban interface (WUI). A municipal watershed is a watershed from which municipal water is provided by a utility. The WUI as defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511).

- ❑ Development of the proposal through a collaborative process with participation from diverse stakeholders.

- ❑ Increase of forest workforce capacity or forest business infrastructure and development.

- ❑ Leveraging existing authorities and non-federal funding contributions from partners.

- ❑ Support of established state, Tribal and regional priorities. Proposals should describe how the eligible activities were prioritized across the landscape and the source of the state or regional priorities (e.g., firehatched analysis, wildfire risk assessment, state technical committee watershed prioritization, Endangered Species Act recovery plan, state wildlife action plan, etc.).

- ❑ Alignment with USDA priorities and the Justice40 initiative, including

benefits to historically underserved communities and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

- ❑ Partner participation in proposal development or project implementation.

- ❑ Coordination (i.e., pre-planning) with individual landowners within the proposal footprint.

- ❑ The geographic distribution of individual project activities across the landscape demonstrates a focus on resource conditions and a balance between land ownerships.

- ❑ Education and outreach to local communities about the project.

### More Information

USDA has invested more than \$349 million across 110 projects in nine years through Joint Chiefs' projects, which focus on areas where public forests and grasslands intersect with privately-owned lands. Since 2014, these projects have delivered important forest and rangeland funding to 41 states and Puerto Rico. NRCS and the Forest Service also collaborates and coordinates to advance shared priorities through other programs and funding mechanisms and will continue to build on this collaboration to respond to disasters, address climate change, and advance equity.

Landowners should contact their local NRCS and Forest Service office for more information.

## Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey Underway

The Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey is now underway. This survey is a joint project between USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) aimed at assessing the adoption rates of different conservation practices. Survey data will be used to guide the implementation of NRCS programs in the future. The data collection period runs from May 30 to August 19.

There are four different conservation categories which are surveyed: crop practices, grazing practices, confined livestock practices, and forestry practices. Each category will have a questionnaire that has been designed to gather information specific to the practices involved in each category.

NASS is sending questionnaires for crop practices and confined livestock practices in 2022. Questionnaires for grazing practices and forestry practices will be sent in 2024.

If you receive a survey, please respond securely online at [agcounts.usda.gov](https://agcounts.usda.gov), using the 12-digit survey code mailed with the survey. Producers responding online will now use NASS's new Respondent Portal. On the portal, producers can complete their surveys, access data visualizations and reports of interest, link to other USDA agencies, get a local weather update and more. Completed questionnaires may also be mailed back in the prepaid envelope provided.

Results from both versions of the survey will be available Sept. 15, 2022, at [nass.usda.gov](https://nass.usda.gov) and in NASS's Quick Stats database at [quickstats.nass.usda.gov](https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov).



NRCS photo by Creston Shrum



## Jefferson County Producer Hosts NBGC Model Farm Field Day

by **Samantha McKinnon**  
*NRCS Arkansas Public Affairs Intern*

The National Black Growers Council's 2022 Model Farm series kicked off June 17 with a field day hosted by Jefferson County Producer Lawrence Conyer on his farm in Pine Bluff. The event focused on the effects of new products and methods for soybean, wheat, rice and corn growth.

"Field days are another method for farmers and ranchers, who have not used some of the newer agricultural technology, to actually see it on the ground," said Alvin Peer, outreach coordinator with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Arkansas. "It also provides an opportunity to see how it may work on their operations without the cost of doing it themselves."

Agricultural field days provide an opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and foresters to witness trials on crops and agricultural processes, such as using chemicals on crops, or when using a new conservation practice or initiative. Field days also feature speakers, presentations and tours covering a diverse array of topics.

"At today's field day, we had an opportunity to witness where Mr. Conyer took an area of a field where chemicals were not applied, and an area where chemicals were added to compare the results side by side," Peer said. "The producers who came to witness the outcome had an opportunity to see the 'with' and 'without' results. They were able to see how the effects could benefit their operations."

This method was displayed at the day's first stop,



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*

**Arkansas NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Coordinator Corey Cornelius making a presentation on NRCS Programs and Initiatives at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.**

Conyer's soybean field, where Dr. Loston Rowe, with Indigo Ag, Levell Foote, USDA NRCS retiree and conservation consultant, and Brian Catlett, with Syngenta Global, demonstrated the effect of chemicals on soybean growth and development. By using this method on his soybeans, Conyer produced a healthier and more plentiful crop. These methods were demonstrated again on wheat and corn fields, where Brandon Doggett and Chris Leon, with Food Machinery and Chemical Corporation (FMC), and Dr. William Johnson, with Corteva Agriscience, presented the impact of chemicals on the health and growth of these crops.

On the rice field, Jerrett Ross, with Nutrien Ag Solutions, and Mike Hamilton, with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, demonstrated how drone technology could be utilized to measure critical metrics such as water permeability, dryness throughout the rows and even elevation differences in the field, which can help to identify where water may build up.

"Mr. Conyer has worked diligently with NRCS and other conservation partners to prepare his operation for the future with technology while utilizing NRCS practices to help conserve his natural resources," Peer said. "Producers were able to see different practices being utilized on his operation during the demonstrations as well."

The field day was followed by presentations at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences. NRCS Arkansas Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Coordinator Corey Cornelius made a presentation on NRCS programs and initiatives. USDA Farm Service Agency National Outreach Specialist Kanika Davis also provided information on heirs' property.



*NRCS photo by Reginald Jackson*

**(left to right) NRCS State Outreach Coordinator Alvin Peer; NBGC President PJ Haynie; NBGC member Torre Anderson; NBGC board member Dr. Hazell Reed; NBGC board member Ronald Bunton, NBGC board member Lawrence Conyer, Masherrl Conyer and Kelsey Conyer.**



# Partnerships

## Partnerships Work: State Conservationists, State Foresters Deliver Assistance to Arkansas Forestland Owners

by James Wright and Whitney Foreman-Cook  
National Association of State Foresters

State forestry agencies are the primary deliverers of forestry technical assistance nationwide. When they team up with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—the leading federal source of financial assistance for forestland owners—great things happen for America's forests.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture Forestry Division provides technical and financial assistance to more than 345,000 family forestland owners through multiple agreements with NRCS. From 2019 to 2021, this agency-to-agency partnership helped Arkansas NRCS distribute \$20.8 million to Arkansans for forestry practice implementation across more than 200,000 acres. During the same three-year period, the state NRCS also provided support for the installation of firebreaks across 900 miles.

Coupled with technical assistance from the state forestry division, NRCS financial assistance helps private forestland owners provide public benefits—like cleaner air and water, enhanced wildlife habitat, and sustainable wood products—all by actively managing their forests.

To further enhance its successful partnership with NRCS, the state forestry division collaborates with the USDA Forest Service to administer the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP). FSP directly benefits Arkansas' non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) owners by supporting the technical assistance work of state forestry agencies.

Landowner assistance through FSP can take different forms, but generally starts with a field forester from a state forestry agency creating a forest stewardship plan for a participating woodland owner. Forest stewardship plans can be very detailed, mostly topical, or more general depending on the individual landowner's needs and management goals for their property. Between 2019 and 2021, the Arkansas Forestry Division wrote 525 forest stewardship plans for woodland owners, in total providing management prescriptions for over 92,500 acres of forest across the state.

In addition to delivering technical assistance directly to



NRCS photo by Creston Shrum

forestland owners, state FSPs often serve as entry points for landowners to access financial assistance programs. The NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program, for instance, is vitally important to keeping forests working and intact nationwide.

Nationwide, the Forest Stewardship Program has big impacts...

- State forestry agencies routinely provide technical assistance to upwards of 300,000 private forestland owners annually through state Forest Stewardship programs.
- With FSP dollars, state forestry agencies can provide management plans to private landowners at a discounted rate or free of charge.
- NIPF owners that have forest management or stewardship plans are 2.7 times more likely to harvest timber.
- On average, state forestry agencies match federal investments in Forest Stewardship programming at least 2:1, which means the impact of federal dollars delivered through FSP have amplified on-the-ground results.

To learn more, visit [www.ar.usda.gov](http://www.ar.usda.gov) or

[stateforesters.org](http://stateforesters.org); or contact Doug Akin at [douglas.akin@usda.gov](mailto:douglas.akin@usda.gov) or James Wright at [jwright@stateforester.org](mailto:jwright@stateforester.org).

**Forests in Arkansas cover nearly 19 million acres (that's 56% of state's land area). Of this acreage, families own and manage the vast majority—a total of 12.5 million forested acres.**



# Conservation On the Ground

## 1980s Reservoir Gets “Makeover” Through AGWI

by Creston Shrum  
NRCS Arkansas

For the first time in more than 20 years, Jonathan Ashlock is able to water more than 500 acres from a 110-acre reservoir on his Poinsett County farm.

Over the years, the reservoir built in the 1980s silted in and became unusable for irrigation. To add to the problem, willows and other vegetation had taken root in the reservoir.

In 2019, Ashlock visited the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Harrisburg to apply for land-leveling on 100 acres to help with his water needs. As part of the process, Chris Culver, Poinsett County district conservationist and Robbie Harpole, an NRCS soil conservation planner for Northeast Arkansas, started working on a conservation plan for the Ashlock farm.

“While I was in the office I asked if anything could be done with the ‘eye sore’ (the 110-acre reservoir) on my property,” Ashlock said. “The geese were using the reservoir so much the water was also becoming toxic from their droppings.”



*(left to right) NRCS employees Chris Culver, Nic Fowler and Shane Harrison meet with Jonathan Ashlock (second from right) and the contractor.*

The reservoir was designed to gravity flow to irrigate the surrounding fields, said Culver. “But, since it had silted in to about 3-feet deep, the gravity flow was no longer working. The reservoir should be 8- to 10-feet deep.”

So, Culver, Harpole and Shane Harrison, who was an NRCS civil engineering technician at the Lonoke

Technical Service Center who now works at Searcy, developed a plan to reconstruct the reservoir and return it to a useable irrigation source. The plan used:

- Flow meters and irrigation water management devices to aid in better scheduling and use of irrigation water.

*(See Ashlock Reservoir, Page 10)*



*The contractor cleans up the reservoir after it was drained.*



# Conservation On the Ground

## *Ashlock Reservoir (continued from Page 9)*

- Pumping plants designed to take surface water from nearby ditches and canals to fill the reservoir and to transport the water from the reservoir to the fields.

- 200 feet of irrigation pipeline to connect the reservoir water to existing pipeline;

- Critical area planting and mulching to control the erosion on the newly constructed reservoir levee; and

- An irrigation water management plan designed to improve the efficiency and utilization of irrigation water.

The Ashlock farm currently uses 100 percent groundwater. “I’d like to be able to reduce my groundwater use and periodically turn off my wells,” Ashlock said. “This will save on pumping costs and wear on my pumps.”

According to Harpole, the reconstructed reservoir gives Ashlock 1,000-acre feet of water. “He should be able to irrigate about 1,000 acres from the reservoir.”

The project is in the Arkansas Ground Water Initiative (AGWI). The AGWI is a targeted approach to address the critical groundwater decline issues in the Arkansas Delta. Through this voluntary program, financial and technical assistance is provided to agricultural producers in seven counties: Arkansas, and Prairie; and portions of Craighead, Cross, Lonoke, Poinsett, and St. Francis.

The goal of AGWI is to address critical groundwater decline by:

- Implementing conservation practices that convert to surface water usage;
- Implementing management plans that create water savings through innovative equipment technology and management techniques;



*Riprap is used to protect the levee on the “new” reservoir.*



*The contractor removes trees and brush from the levee.*

- Installation of permanent flowmeters on wells and reliefs;
- Monitor and collect accurate well water use within the critical groundwater areas creating a comprehensive network of measured wells; and
- Addressing soil health concerns

through implementation of cover crops in order to build and retain soil moisture throughout the soil profile.

Producers in AGWI counties interested in learning more about the initiative should contact their local field office.





## Dams Serve Multiple Purposes, Require Periodic Inspections

by Stephen Smedley  
Dam Safety Engineer  
NRCS Arkansas

When's the last time you enjoyed a day of recreation on a beautiful lake or observed a reservoir's vast ecosystem where the animals, plants, and aquatic life were thriving? Did you think about the dam providing that recreation and creating that ecosystem? Dams are often overlooked. They quietly protect downstream land from torrential rainfall, which otherwise would wash away.

Dams collect sediment, which help keep water clean. Reservoirs can be a source of hydroelectricity, creating clean and renewable energy. Many times, dams are the foundation of communities, providing a reliable and replenishable drinking water source. Dams collect rainwater to be used as irrigation, saving and slowly replenishing our aquifers. Dams are essential to our everyday lives.

In Arkansas, there are 1,267 dams with an average age of 59 years. This is slightly concerning considering that most dams were built with a 50-year design life.

Currently, 416 dams meet the State requirements to be regulated and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assists on 208



NRCS photo by Creston Shrum

of those dams. These 208 dams were funded out of the PL-566 program and were designed and built as flood control structures. As designed, these dams have allowed communities to grow and farmland to be opened. Flashy creeks and rivers have been tamed and turned into steady flowing and clean tributaries.

Take some time to think about all the benefits that the dams in your area provide and understand that these dams, like any other infrastructure, must be maintained and repaired to ensure that future generations continue to enjoy these assets. When dams fail, the damage caused can be overwhelming.

May 21 was National Dam Safety Awareness Day, a day that commemorates the failure of the South Fork Dam in Johnstown, Penn., on May 31, 1889.

The Johnstown disaster was the worst dam failure in the history of the

United States, with more than 2,200 lives lost.

So next time you're in the field take a little extra time to look at the dams in your area. If anything looks out of place, elevate the issue.

NRCS plays a key role in the National Dam Safety Program (NDSP). For over 40 years, the Federal government has worked to protect Americans from dam failure through the NDSP. The NDSP is a partnership of States, Federal agencies, and other stakeholders to encourage individual and community responsibility for dam safety.

NRCS also partners with the Association of State Dams Safety Officials (ASDSO) to promote dam safety. Visit the following link to information about National Dam Safety Awareness Day on the ASDSO website: <https://damsafety.org/NDSAD> or contact your nearest NRCS Service Center <http://offices.usda.gov>.





NRCS photo by Creston Shrum

## Celebrating Pollinators During Pollinator Month

by Leslie Cooper  
*Monarch and Pollinator Coordinator*

Every June is Pollinator Month and National Pollinator Week was June 20-26. Pollinators are globally important because of the valuable ecosystem service they provide and one in three bites of food can be attributed to pollination. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is dedicated to the conservation of pollinators by providing technical and financial assistance to producers to establish or enhance pollinator habitat on their properties.

There are six main groups of invertebrate pollinators: bees, butterflies, moths, flies, wasps, and beetles. While the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) is an important agriculture pollinator and commonly recognized as the flagship species of pollinator conservation, approximately 80 percent of native plants rely on native bees for pollination. There are approximately 4,000 species of native bees in North America alone. It's important recognize the diversity of our native bees and their unique habitat requirements.

Native bees require foraging, nesting, and overwintering habitat. Creating habitat by planting a high diversity of native plants that provide a succession of blooms throughout the growing season is one of the most impactful things private landowners and producers can do to support all pollinators. Different species of bees also have various nesting habitats. Some use abandoned beetle burrows or hollowed stems to nest in, while many of our native bees are solitary,

ground-nesters. It's important to consider the diversity of habitat needs when planning and managing pollinator habitat.

In Arkansas, it is estimated that there are 400-650 species of native bees, though experts predict that this number is closer to 600. To put this in perspective, Arkansas has 424 species of birds and there are only 49 bumble bee species in America. There are many different groups of bees including: carpenter, mason, leafcutter, cellophane, cuckoo, mining, sweat, and long-horned bees, among others.

Arkansas NRCS is currently assisting the Arkansas Monarch Conservation Partnership and its partners with expanding native bee monitoring and sampling to create a baseline inventory on species diversity. Arkansas NRCS also has a partner biologist position with Quail Forever who is conducting pollinator effectiveness surveys on Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program funded projects. It's an exciting time for pollinator conservation because many partner agencies and organizations are collaborating to increase monitoring, outreach, and acres of native habitat on the landscape.

To learn more about creating and managing pollinator habitat, please see the Arkansas NRCS Pollinator Conservation Planning Handbook <https://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/arkansas-nrcs-pollinator-conservation-planning-handbook>. For questions or more information, contact Arkansas Monarch and Pollinator Coordinator Leslie Cooper at [lcooper@quailforever.org](mailto:lcooper@quailforever.org).