

ARKANSAS CONSERVATION NEWS

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Third Quarter
2019

Room 3416, Federal Building, 700 W. Capitol Ave., Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 301-3100 • Website: www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov

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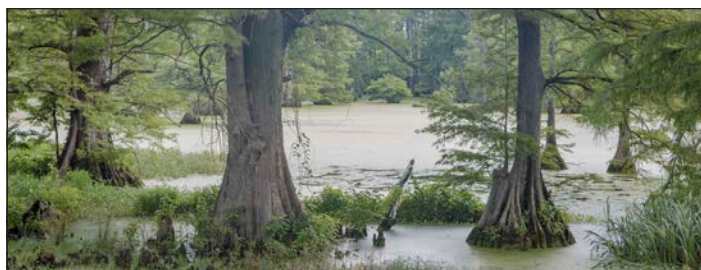


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Helping People Help the Land

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From the State Conservationist



Recent extreme weather conditions have impacted farmers, ranchers and foresters in Arkansas. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has disaster assistance programs available to help agricultural producers recover after natural disasters, including floods and tornadoes.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other conservation programs to help producers recover and build resilience to better weather future disasters. EQIP provides agricultural producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement improvements on the land. While not established specifically for disaster response, subject to availability of funds, the program can assist with recovery needs, reapply failed practices for current contract holders, and provide long-term support to help conserve natural resources.

Meanwhile, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland and conservation practices damaged by natural disasters.

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program's floodplain easement component allows NRCS to acquire permanent easements on private land, or certain land owned by units of state and local governments, that have been

damaged by flooding at least once in the last 12 months or twice in the past 10 years. Once the easements have been established, NRCS will fund conservation work necessary to restore the land to its natural state.

NRCS can be a very valuable partner to help landowners with their recovery effort. Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and develop approaches that focus on effective recovery of the land. Go by and visit one of our USDA Service Centers.

The Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) was established by the 2018 Farm Bill to respond to the threat feral swine pose to agriculture, native ecosystems, and human and animal health. USDA is focusing efforts through this pilot where feral swine pose the highest threat. Feral swine rooting, trampling, and wallowing activity damages crops and grassland, increases erosion along waterways and in wetlands, and can limit water infiltration and nutrient cycling.

FSCP is implemented jointly by NRCS and USDA's Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS). Pilot projects will consist broadly of three coordinated components: 1) feral swine removal by APHIS; 2) restoration efforts supported by NRCS; and 3) assistance to producers for feral swine control provided through partnership agreements with non-federal partners.




Mike Sullivan, State Conservationist

NRCS is directing allocated FSCP funds toward partnership efforts to work with landowners in identified pilot projects in targeted areas in Arkansas. See additional information on page 12.

We're an agency that puts people — our state's farmers, ranchers, and private foresters — first. Our NRCS team is dedicated to making this agency as effective as possible for all those people we support in getting conservation on the ground — holding them and their needs at the forefront of our work, day in and day out.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and please enjoy reading the newsletter.

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

Please send submissions to [Reginald L. Jackson](#), State Public Affairs Specialist, or [Creston Shrum](#), Public Affairs Specialist at: Room 3416, Federal Bldg.; 700 W. Capitol Ave.; Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 301-3133, Fax: (855) 681-7044

Please send image submissions to [Christopher Willis](#), Visual Information

Specialist. Phone: (501) 301-3167. All submissions are the property of NRCS and may be edited for content or limitations.

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Website: www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov
Twitter: twitter.com/arkansasnrcs
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Arkansas NRCS Public Affairs Email Addresses:
Reginald.Jackson@ar.usda.gov
Creston.Shrum@ar.usda.gov
Christopher.Willis@ar.usda.gov

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NRCS Offers Emergency Funding to Restore Flood-Prone Lands

In response to recent flooding impacting many parts of the United States, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces \$217.5 million has been reserved to fund conservation easements on certain lands damaged by flooding and other natural disasters. Currently, \$98.3 million has been allocated to 11 states.

Arkansas NRCS is set to receive more than \$2.8 million to purchase and restore easements. Landowners interested in applying for the program have until Sept. 27, 2019, to submit applications to their local NRCS office.

Funds are made available through the floodplain easement component of the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP-FPE). The 11 states currently identified for funding include: Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin.

"Landowners across the United States have faced—and continue to face—significant challenges from flooding and natural disasters," said NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr. "To provide relief and assist agricultural landowners during this difficult time, this easement program offers an option that alleviates the stress of operating in a floodplain while still retaining ownership of their property."

On June 6, 2019, President Trump signed an emergency supplemental appropriations bill providing relief and support to America's farmers and ranchers. This bill provides \$4.5 billion to the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for

agricultural-related losses, emergency timber restoration, farmland repair and watershed recovery work to help America's farmers and ranchers.

The EWPP-FPE program is a voluntary program through which eligible applicants agree to sell a permanent conservation easement to the United States through NRCS. Compensation is based on the value of the easement as determined by an appraisal or market analysis. These easements may occur on public or private agricultural land or residential properties damaged by flooding and natural disasters.

"Once the easements have been established, NRCS will fund conservation work necessary to restore the land to its natural state," said Mike Sullivan, NRCS state conservationist in Arkansas. "Restoring floodplains to a natural state ensures they function properly—conserving and improving fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge, and open space; reducing long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguarding lives and property from floods, drought, and erosion."

Individuals and communities in any state are encouraged to contact their local NRCS field offices for more information on these floodplain easement opportunities.

Property owners interested in applying for EWPP-FPE can review program information on the Floodplain Easement webpage on the NRCS web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov. More information about the EWPP-FPE can be obtained from your local USDA NRCS Field Office.



Applications Must be Submitted by Sept. 27

Emergency Watershed Protection Program Floodplain Easement (EWPP-FPE)





LiDAR and GIS Tools Accelerate Conservation in Arkansas

Arkansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accelerating the planning and implementation of conservation practices because of the acquisition of LiDAR and easy to use Geographic Information System (GIS) tools.

LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances to the Earth. These light pulses, combined with other data recorded by the airborne system, generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics.

Arkansas NRCS was one of the early purveyors of LiDAR in the state. Now, due to multiple agencies including NRCS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Park Service, and various state agencies, the state has border to border coverage of LiDAR. LiDAR allows planners, scientists, and engineers to use these digital elevation models to do large-scale planning with great accuracy without having to spend extensive time collecting topographic surveys.

“LiDAR, combined with GIS tools, has been a great asset for all areas of conservation planning, but nowhere has it been more beneficial than for planning irrigation water management systems and livestock watering systems,” said Walt Delp, state conservation engineer.

Shawn Brewer, irrigation project engineer, has developed several GIS tools (for ArcMap) that enable field office personnel to plan earthwork intensive practices. The outputs are a mapping-scale representation of the practice and a text-based result file that provides volume estimates, area estimates, and linear estimates, that are suitable for use in financial assistance contracts. These tools have been well-received by the Arkansas field office staff and increased Arkansas NRCS’ ability to deliver high-quality conservation plans and

earthwork estimates.

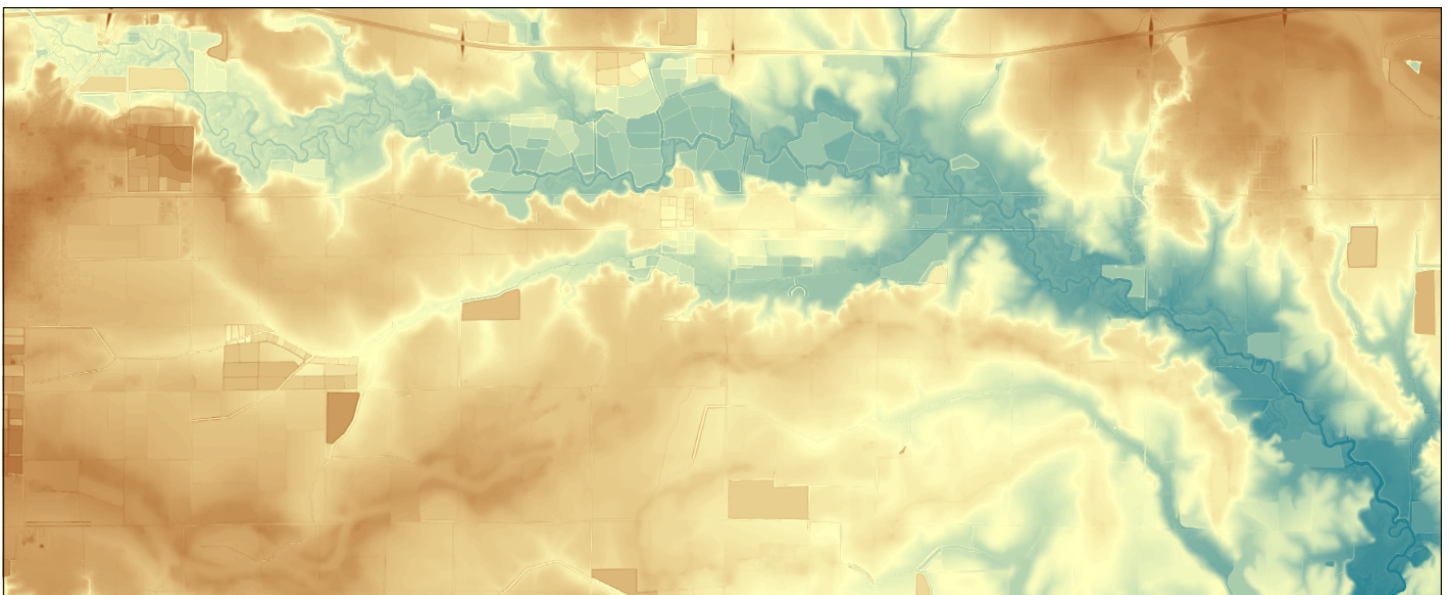
“By using the LiDAR tool, NRCS engineering staff and the local district conservationist designed a reservoir in a location a producer suggested,” Brewer said. But, thanks to LiDAR, the planners were able to try multiple other locations and configurations to determine if there was a better location for the reservoir. Within two minutes they were able to find a location which not only decreased the amount of earthwork but also increased the amount of acre-ft. of storage.

“Once the final survey and construction was completed the final amount of earthwork was within a few 100 cubic yards of the LiDAR design. This saved more time by eliminating the need for a contract modification,” he said.

“This design along with several other improvements allowed the first rice farm in Arkansas to become 100% independent of groundwater and use 100% surface water,” Brewer said.

Livestock watering systems are almost entirely planned using GIS tools and LiDAR. Todd Stringer, project engineer, developed a tool to extract elevation and distance data for use in design software for livestock watering pipelines. This tool saves an average of three hours of survey work in the field and increases the accuracy compared with using topographic maps to plan and design pipeline routes.

“LiDAR and GIS tools are increasing our efficiency as an agency while providing higher levels of customer service,” said Edgar Mersiovsky, state soil scientist. “These tools have endless capabilities when it comes to conservation planning and developing quality planned quantities for the irrigation storage reservoirs, ponds, tailwater recovery systems, landleveling and all types pipelines. This allows NRCS to save time in planning and surveying, provide a better plan to the producer and better manage our Farm Bill funding.



LiDAR map is centered between Lonoke and Carlisle, showing White Oak and Skinners Branch as flowing into Two Prairie Bayou, Bayou Meto in lower left, and a great many fishponds and reservoirs.



Making Data from the State Resource Assessment Geographic Information System Model More Accessible

The currently used Arkansas State Resource Assessment Geographic Information System (GIS) Model was last updated in 2015. Information on the model can be found on the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) website at:

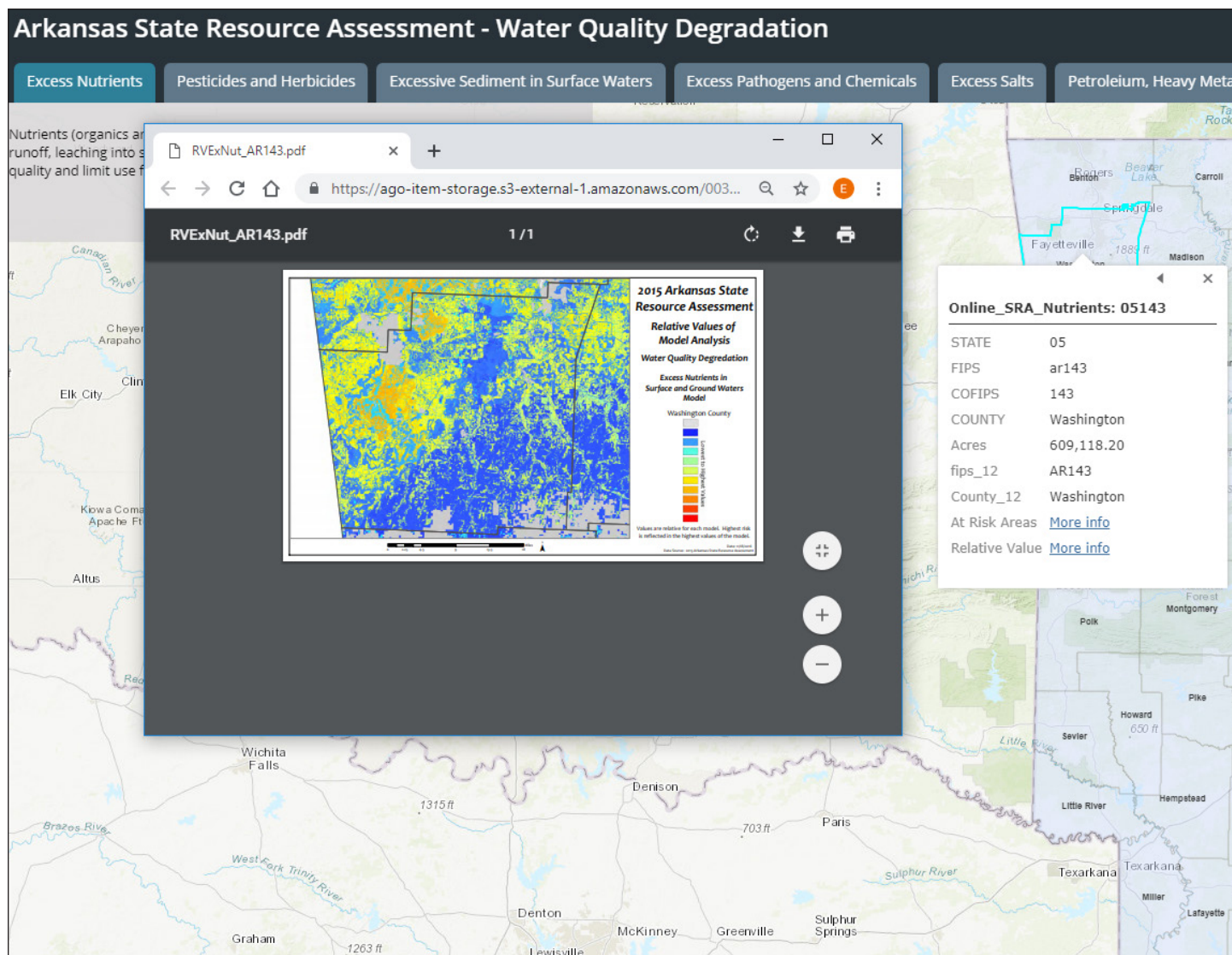
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/technical/dma/NRCSEPRD1140008/>.

The NRCS Soils/GIS staff has been working with a web application from ESRI called ArcGIS Online or AGOL to serve up data and maps so that the public can view without the need to have ESRI or other GIS software installed in StoryMaps. The story map shows the 27 resource concerns in nine areas. Also included is a story map that shows the

areas for the six resource concerns that the Arkansas NRCS Leadership Team approved that the State Technical Committee determined to be their priority resource concerns. These priority resource concerns will be revisited periodically.

Links to the StoryMaps for each of the nine broad areas of resource concerns are included on the above web page. Staff at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville Center for Advanced Spatial Technology is assisting in updating to current data and even better accessibility of data by the public.

For additional information, contact Arkansas NRCS State Soil Scientist Edgar Mersiovsky at (501) 301-3163 or [edgar.mersiovsky@usda.gov](mailto:mersiovsky@usda.gov).



The above map shows the "Relative Value" of risk for Excess Nutrients for Washington County.



Creek Restoration, New Lake Planned to Alleviate Flooding

By **CRESTON SHRUM**
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

For almost 26 years, members of the Departee Creek Watershed Improvement District have been working on a way to reduce flooding along Departee Creek in Jackson and Independence counties.

Three sons and one grandson of the original board members are current board members and are seeing the work and dedication of their family members come to fruition.

A Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) project began in April to rehabilitate Departee Creek by removing dead trees and debris from a 12.5 mile stretch of the stream. The initial project also includes building a weir to ensure Lake Whitstine's water level isn't impacted.

"This project aims to alleviate flooding of cropland and grazing lands as well as improve wildlife habitat and water quality. The watershed has historically suffered from flooding," said Walt Delp, state conservation engineer for the NRCS in Arkansas. "The project will reduce the risk of flooding through a complete system which includes a floodwater reduction dam, conservation easements, selective snagging within the Departee Creek channel and a water control structure for flood control and

protection of Lake Whitstine."

In August 2000, NRCS developed the Departee Creek Watershed Plan. It was updated and revised in 2018 under authority of PL-566 watershed program. Over the years, NRCS staff has surveyed the area for the dam, performed cultural resources surveys and designed the weir, dam and spillway.

The dam will create a 180-acre lake to control flooding. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will manage the lake to provide recreational fishing for the community.

Landowners along the creek have provided both temporary and permanent easements to allow access for equipment to perform the necessary work.

"NRCS serves as the primary technical adviser to project sponsors because of its engineering and environmental expertise and ability to deliver science-base technology and knowledge about the watershed's natural resources and ecosystem," said NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan.

It is estimated the 100-year frequency flood causes damage to 12,000 acres of crop and pasture in the project area. Annually crop and pasture flooding averages an estimated \$236,000 of damage.

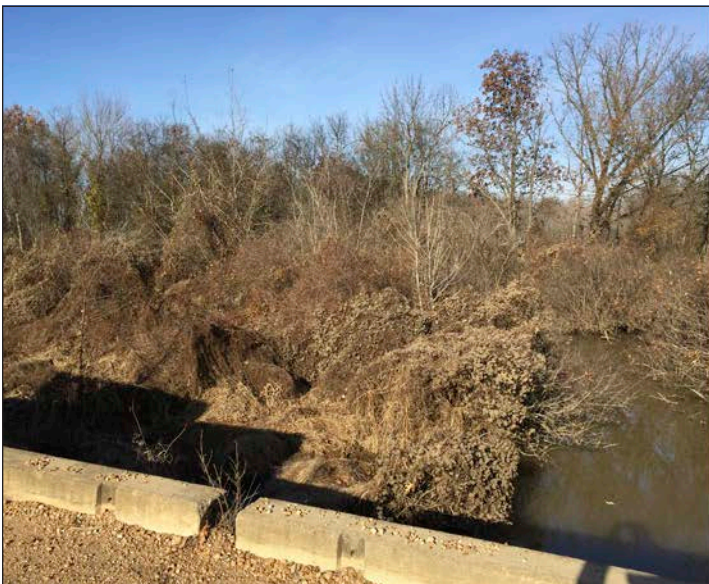
"Protecting lives and property and improving natural resources within

our state's watersheds are critical," Sullivan said. "Watersheds are nature's natural boundaries. NRCS has made much progress in reducing damages caused by flooding, sedimentation and erosion in watersheds nationwide because of our proactive approach to program implementation once we obtain Congressional funding."

While the dam will provide recreational activities, it will also provide 6,071 acre-feet of flood retarding capacity, reduce sediment by 90 percent and decrease scour damage by 65 percent. The project will reduce flooding at five road crossings and on rural school bus routes in the two counties.

The Departee Creek Watershed Improvement District is the lead sponsor of the project. Additional partners in the project include the county judges of Independence and Jackson counties, The Nature Conservancy, White River Planning and Development District, and the Independence and Jackson County Conservation Districts.

"It is great seeing this project start," said Matt Mendenhall, a current board member whose father, Sy, was on the original board. "It's because of everyone's continued support the last 26 years that we are now able to realize the fruit of our patience and perseverance."



Left, Departee Creek as it looked in December 2016. At right, Departee Creek in June 2019. The creek channel has been cleared to allow better flow of water. Photos by NRCS



Field of Dreams: NRCS Helps A Dream Come True

By **CRESTON SHRUM**
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Whitney Lord always knew what she wanted to do while growing up on 40 acres near Little Rock, Arkansas. But, figuring out how to do it proved a little challenging.

Whitney, who owns 165-acres with 20 registered Angus with her husband, Bo, started raising cattle five years ago on Lord Farms. She said she didn't know what she was getting into on her first visit to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office.

"I never owned cattle until I moved to Izard County. My family had a couple of horses when I was growing up, but I've never raised cows," Whitney said. She credits the NRCS with helping her fulfill her dream.

"It's been awesome and easy working with NRCS," added Whitney. "You figure out what you want to do on your farm, sit down with the NRCS staff and they help design a plan for you. They've come out several times to walk the fields and ensure the plan is what is best for my operation and property."

NRCS District Conservationist Monica Paskewitz describes that when Whitney first visited the office, Whitney had one open field, one good pond and

a marginal pond with low water levels. "We helped design a rotational grazing system for her and turned the available field into five paddocks with fencing and installed watering facilities," explained Monica. Whitney received conservation funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.



"Girls can do it too. It doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. Women can be right along with the best," said Lord. Photos by Christopher Willis

"As soon as I walked into the office, I felt at home, they're just everyday people," Whitney added. Moving to a rotational grazing system allowed her to graze her cattle for a couple of extra months, saving money on hay costs.

"I have a lot of fescue and it will grow as long as it gets rain and the temperature is decent," Whitney said.

"After October, I stop rotational grazing and move the cattle to a 'sacrifice' field to graze through the fall. By waiting until February to start feeding hay, I can put back quite a bit for years when we have a drought or shortage."

Whitney also has done controlled burns and firebreaks on her timberland to reduce the wildfire hazard and improve wildlife habitat. Since the burns, she says they've seen a lot more wildlife activity and an increase in browse.

Whitney, Bo and their three children recently were named the 2019 Izard County Farm Family of the Year.

"As a female district conservationist, it makes me very proud that there are other female farmers out there willing to jump in feet first and get their hands dirty to provide a better environment for our children," said Monica.

"Whitney is a positive role model, not only among her peers, but also for future generations of female farmers by setting a great example for her children and the community," Monica added.

Whitney added, "Girls can do it too. It doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. Women can be right along with the best."

To learn more about rotational grazing, landowners should contact their local USDA service center.



Cattle drink from a newly installed water tank surrounded by a heavy use area. The floats seal the water allowing it to keep the water warm even in the cooler months.



Izard County District Conservationist Monica Paskewitz, at left, looks at producer Whitney Lord's fescue and bermuda grasses on her operation.



Prairie County Producers Utilize NRCS Technical Assistance to Improve Water Conservation

By REGINALD JACKSON
STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helped with the creation of an irrigation reservoir at Seidenstricker Farms, in DeValls Bluff. Prairie County District Conservationist Gwen Hancock, State Irrigation Engineer Charlotte Bowie, and Civil Engineering Technician Shane Harrison worked with Robert and Cathy Seidenstricker on their operation's conservation plan which included irrigation water management. Irrigation water management is the process of determining and controlling the volume, frequency and application rate of irrigation water in a planned, efficient manner.

The Seidenstrickers' conservation plan includes underground pipelines, grade stabilization structures, water control structures, tailwater recovery ditches, multiple inlet side irrigation, moisture sensors, weather stations, and pumping plants.

The reservoir is formed by four tall embankments that hold 400 acre-feet of irrigation water, part of a conservation plan that includes multiple inlet side irrigation, and tailwater recovery ditches to water rice, soybeans, and corn. The system can reuse the water 22 times

before being released. There were two structures where the reservoir is now, but it was determined to be more cost-efficient for them to be demolished and used as an irrigation reservoir.

Resource conservation systems can include irrigation reservoirs to achieve one or more of the following: a) store water to provide a reliable irrigation water supply or regulate available irrigation flows; b) improve water use efficiency on irrigated land; c) provide storage from tailwater recovery ditches and reuse; d) provide irrigation runoff retention time to increase breakdown of chemical contaminants; and e) reduce energy consumption.

NRCS uses science-based technology to provide conservation planning and assistance to farmers, ranchers and foresters to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animal for productive lands and healthy ecosystems.

The technical resources and references NRCS provides and uses, as well as the disciplines on which we rely, show how NRCS experts work together to help producers conserve our natural resources. And through one-on-one, personalized advice, Arkansas NRCS works voluntarily with producers and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation



Robert and Cathy Seidenstricker. Photos by Christopher Willis

and business goals. By doing so, we help ensure the health of our natural resources and the long-term sustainability of Arkansas agriculture.

To learn more about assistance opportunities, landowners should contact their local USDA service center or for more information on NRCS, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.



Left to right, Civil Engineer Technician Shane Harrison, Robert Seidenstricker, State Irrigation Engineer Charolette Bowie, and Cathy Seidenstricker stand atop a reservoir embankment at their farm in Prairie County.



Keeping It In The Family Project Provides Forestry Opportunity for Ouachita County Native Son

By REGINALD JACKSON
STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Sequoyah Browning grew up in Ouachita County. When he graduated from high school, he went to college and graduated from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) with a biology degree in the 1990s. After graduation, the bright lights of the big city of Atlanta, Ga., intrigued him and he decided to move there to further his career and to attend graduate school. The UALR alumnus was living a comfortable lifestyle in Atlanta in the early 2000s when tragedy struck his family back home.



Sequoyah Browning

"My father passed away in 2003," he said. "He willed me his property and I had a duty to try to figure out what would be the best decision to manage the assets he had left me."

Like many African Americans before him, Browning moved out of state to find better economic and career opportunities. Many African Americans moved away from Arkansas in the 20th century and left behind parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and ancestral land. Some of those lands were inherited by family members who didn't live in the area and had no plans of returning. Because of this, ambiguity on the primary ownership of inherited property ensued. This ownership ambiguity left families without the clear titles that allowed for active land management, thereby limiting any sources for income generating opportunities.

"Heir's property" refers to land that has been passed down informally from generation-to-generation. In most cases, it involves landowners who died without a will. Heir's property is the leading cause of African American involuntary land loss. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, 80 percent of land owned by African Americans has been lost since 1910 due to heir's property.

For Browning, the case was clear after his father's death. It meant moving back home to his roots and claiming what his father had left him. He decided to move back to Ouachita County to take over his father's 45 acres of timberland. His

mother also deeded him some property and over the next few years, he acquired other adjoining properties. Now he owns 245 acres and that pushed his vision to become a forester.

"Since I was now a property owner in Arkansas, I had to decide how I wanted to invest in the property," he said. "I harvested some of the timber on the land and began planting Loblolly Pine trees."

He heard out about the Keeping it in the Family (KIITF) program available through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at several outreach meetings from Kandi Williams, extension program aide and outreach coordinator for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). In 2016, UAPB was awarded the KIITF project by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, NRCS and USDA's Forest Service, to assist African American forest land owners with forest management. KIITF is a project designed to provide assistance to African American forest land owners by helping them install woodland management practices leading to economically productive and sustainable forest lands. The project introduces new forestry technologies, create trusted, comprehensive and replicable systems of landowner outreach and support, and develop income streams by connecting forest owners to traditional and emerging forest products markets.

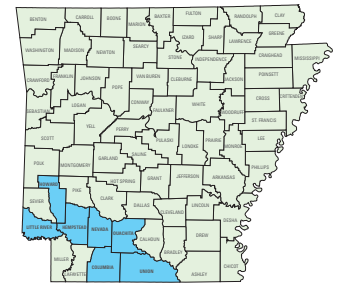
The KIITF project is offered in Columbia, Hempstead, Howard, Little River, Nevada, Ouachita and Union counties.

It offers one-on-one assistance to African American forest land owners to enhance the productivity of forest lands through the development of forest management plans, heir's property resolution assistance, application guidance to USDA technical and financial assistance programs, identification of forest produce markets and a Revolving Loan contract management program.

Browning went to the USDA Field Service Center in Camden and talked with District Conservationist Pam Billingsley to inquire more about the program.

"I talked with Pam and she told me what NRCS programs I qualified for," said Browning. "She helped me with my vision and my conservation plan. I had the assets, but never really looked at putting my forestland into production as a forester until I came and talked with her. She never tells me what to do, she just points me in the right direction on conservation practices that catch my attention."

Billingsley worked with Browning and provided conservation technical assistance to address opportunities and concerns related to the use of natural resources and to help him make sound natural resource management decisions.



Keeping It In the Family project is available in the blue shaded counties.



New Loblolly pine growth on Sequoyah Browning's Heir's Property in Ouachita County.

Photos by Reginald Jackson



Producer Profile



“Mr. Browning is signed up through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program,” Billingsley said. “He’s doing firebreaks, thinning, and prescribed burning on his forestland. Ultimately, he’d like to raise livestock through silvopasture establishment and plant native grasses.”

Silvopasture establishment is an agroforestry application establishing a combination of trees and compatible forages. The practice is applied to provide forage for livestock and the production of wood products, enhance wildlife habitat, provide shade for livestock and reduce erosion among other purposes.

“When you own property, you grow something,” Browning said. “Some of us don’t realize that what we are growing has a marketability to it, and I was one of those people. I’m trying to maximize my potential for production through assistance from NRCS.”

UAPB works with a broad network of resource providers and partners including: Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, Arkansas Forestry Commission, Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation, Center for Arkansas Legal Services, Silas H. Hunt Community Development Corporation and University of Arkansas at Little Rock Bowen School of Law, to assist forest landowners with specific needs.

“It has been a great pleasure working with Mr. Browning,” said Williams. “He is definitely one of our KIITF champion forestry landowners. He brings a wealth of information to the project through his experience as a woodland’s owner. He expresses great interest in forest sustainability and conservation, as well as policymaking to promote good stewardship and generational wealth through forestry production.



Producer Sequoyah Browning discusses his forestry practices with Ouachita County District Conservationist Pam Billingsley.

“We appreciate Mr. Browning’s willingness to share his passion for agroforestry with other Sustainable Forestry and African-American Land Retention Initiative landowners and forestry specialists, and his contribution to promoting healthy forestland as a landowner,” she added.

“The KIITF project is an innovative approach supported by USDA NRCS that seeks to eliminate barriers that restrain historically underserved and limited resource landowners from receiving USDA program assistance,” said Arkansas NRCS Outreach Coordinator Alvin Peer.

Forest landowners can apply for financial assistance through NRCS for the voluntary installation of forest land conservation practices to help restore, maintain and enhance more open woodland.

“This project enhances the assistance NRCS is providing African American foresters in the seven-county project area,” said NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. “The health of our forests and our rural communities very often go hand in hand. NRCS works with thousands of private landowners through a range of conservation programs and partnerships to increase economic and other opportunities for the families and businesses that make their homes near woodlands, decrease the threat of wildfire and restore forest habitat.”

For additional information on the Keeping It in the Family project, contact UAPB professor Dr. Henry English at 870-575-7246 or englishh@uapb.edu, Alvin Peer, Arkansas NRCS Outreach Coordinator, at 501-301-3112 or alvin.peer@usda.gov. To learn about technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted or your local USDA Service Center.



“She [Pam Billingsley] helped me with my vision and my conservation plan. I had the assets, but never really looked at putting my forestland into production as a forester until I came and talked with her. She never tells me what to do, she just points me in the right direction on conservation practices that catch my attention.” said Browning.



Jefferson County Producer Hosts NBGC Model Farm Field Day in Altheimer

The National Black Growers Council (NBGC) held their Model Farm Field Day on July 18 at Dell-Cam Farm in Altheimer. Dr. Dewayne Goldmon, owner of the farm and Arkansas Farm Bureau 2019 Jefferson County Farm Family of the Year recipient, hosted the event.

The event was held to improve the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of African American row-crop farmers. Producers from across the country came to the event to see demonstrations of efficient use of technology on the farm. The field day consisted of speakers at designated stations across the operation to discuss the latest agricultural technologies and their combined usage with various United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and initiatives.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Outreach Coordinator Alvin Peer, Jefferson County Soil Conservationist Shirley Petties, retired NRCS district conservationist Levell Foote and Farm



At left, Dr. Dewayne Goldmon speaks about the importance of sustainability at his farm in Jefferson County.

Photo by Reginald Jackson

Service Agency Outreach Coordinator Rhonda O'Guinn gave presentations. NRCS Michigan State Conservationist Garry Lee and several NRCS Michigan staff members were also in attendance.

Following the field day demonstrations, attendees heard from other speakers at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff — School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences.

Arkansas NRCS Participants Complete Tri-State Leadership Program

The 2018–2019 Tri-State Leadership Program (TLDP) class recently had its close-out session in Camdenton, Mo. The TLDP is a program for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees from Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri. The program is led by State Conservationists' Mike Sullivan (Arkansas), Karen Woodrich (Kansas) and J.R. Flores (Missouri).

The Arkansas TLDP members are: State Irrigation Engineer Charollette Bowie, Irrigation Project Engineer Shawn Brewer, South Area Planner Gary Childress, Realty Specialist Alexis Cook, Carroll County District Conservationist Kristin Whittmore, and Woodruff County District Conservationist Clyde Williams.

The participants completed an 18-month program which included a session on Effective Presentations; meetings with national NRCS staff in Washington D.C.; developing a project

to improve efficiencies within the agency; and presenting their project results to the Arkansas Leadership Team and at the close-out meeting session.

The year's close-out session included presentations from NRCS acting Associate Chief Kevin Norton, Nebraska State Conservationist Craig Derickson, Missouri Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy Joe Steuber, and Missouri State Coordinator for Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever Casey Gegthold.

Arkansas TLDP Board Members, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships Amanda Mathis and State Soil Scientist Edgar Mersiovsky, assisted board members from Kansas and Missouri with designing the program. A special thanks to Grazing Lands Specialist Jeremy Huff for leading the Effective Presentations course and those NRCS staff members who mentored the participants throughout the program.



Acting Associate Chief Kevin Norton addresses the TLDP participants and guests.



Arkansas TLDP participants (l to r) Charlotte Bowie, Shawn Brewer, Gary Childress, Amanda Mathis, Kristin Whittmore, Edgar Mersiovsky, Arkansas State Conservationist Mike Sullivan, Alexis Cook, and Clyde Williams



USDA Announces Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced recently it is offering \$75 million in funding for the eradication and control of feral swine through the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP) in a joint effort with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The 2018 Farm Bill included this new pilot program to help address the threat that feral swine pose to agriculture, ecosystems and human and animal health.



NRCS will direct up to \$33.75 million of the allocated FSCP funds toward partnership efforts to work with landowners in identified pilot projects in targeted areas. Applications are being accepted through Aug. 19, 2019, for partners to carry out activities as part of these pilot projects in select areas of Arkansas. APHIS has determined that

Arkansas is one of several states among the highest feral swine population densities and associated damages in the country.

"NRCS state conservationists and APHIS state directors, in coordination with state technical committees, have identified pilot projects that can be carried out within these target states," NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr said. "Our agencies stand ready to work with partners at the state and local levels to respond to the threat of feral swine."

Pilot projects will consist of three coordinated components: 1) feral swine removal by APHIS; 2) restoration efforts supported by NRCS; and 3) assistance to producers for feral swine control provided through partnership agreements with non-federal partners. Projects can be one to three years in duration.

"Feral swine rooting, trampling, and wallowing activity damages crops and grassland, increases erosion along waterways and in wetlands, and can limit water infiltration and nutrient cycling," said Mike Sullivan, Arkansas NRCS state conservationist. "This call for proposals is intended for non-federal partners to provide landowner assistance for on-farm trapping and provide related services as part of the pilot projects."

NRCS is now accepting proposals from non-federal partners. NRCS will provide funding for these services through partnership agreements. The funding limit for a single award is \$1.5 million. Awardees will be required

to provide at least 25 percent of the partnership agreement budget as a match to NRCS funding.

"The projects selected for funding will allow APHIS and NRCS to collectively reduce the damage and disease caused by one of the most destructive and formidable invasive species in the United States," said APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea. "Overall, this pilot program builds upon and expands work already underway by APHIS' National Feral Swine Damage Management Program to both manage feral swine and eliminate populations in partnership with local government, the private sector, industry and academia."

The four project areas in Arkansas are: Ozark Project Area (Marion, Baxter, Izard, Boone, Searcy, Fulton); Southeast Project Area (Drew, Ashley, Arkansas, Desha, Chicot); Southwest Project Area (Sevier, Howard, Hempstead, Pike, Clark, Nevada); and West RV (Sebastian, Logan, Yell, Pope, Scott) counties have been identified as eligible for the first round of funding.

Additional information about the pilot projects, including maps, project specifics, expected partner roles, and contacts for APHIS and NRCS at the state level, can be found in the Farm Bill section of the Arkansas NRCS website at www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov.

Applications were due Aug. 19.

Jacks Appointed as Assistant State Conservationist at the NRCS State Office in Little Rock

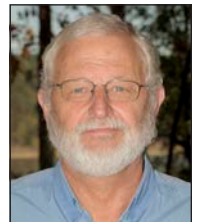
Steve Jacks, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) South Area Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC FO) in Monticello, has accepted a new assignment as Assistant State Conservationist in Little Rock.

As assistant state conservationist, Steve will lead Arkansas NRCS efforts to assess our organizational structure, workload, and staffing with input from employees and partners to identify opportunities to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and customer service. Any ideas considered will be evaluated against our current structure and staffing to compare pros and cons prior to any decisions. He will have access to and utilize local workload data, workload cycle time study results, and Optimally Productive Office data. He will develop and lead

efforts to involve employees and partners in this process. He will also assist in developing documentation required for any approvals needed above the State level.

"Steve has served as South Area assistant state conservationist for field operations well for more than four years," said State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. "I appreciate his service in that capacity as well as his 38 years of federal service. I'm looking forward to working with him in his new assignment."

Marshall Handcock, district conservationist in Arkansas County, will serve as acting ASTC FO for the South Area.



Steve Jacks



NRCS Welcomes 2019 Student Interns



Back row standing from left; Agelee Word, Kylan Williams, Garrett Akins, Kory England, NRCS Arkansas State Conservationist Mike Sullivan, Dylan Busbee, Miguel Colon Santiago, Kalycya Hawkins. Middle row from left; Bailey Darnell, Cheyenne Stice, Abigail Crawford, Angela Frederick, Ricki Gilbert. Front row from left; William Walter, and Hunter Brown.

Madison County EWP Project Wraps Up



A recently completed Emergency Watershed Protection Program streambank stabilization project in Madison County protects a county water line and sewer line that run along Wharton Creek. (Left) Flooding in 2017 eroded the bank and exposed the water and sewer lines along with telecommunication cables. NRCS funded and designed the project and oversaw construction.