

ARKANSAS CONSERVATION NEWS

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

1st Quarter
2022

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2022



Carroll County RCPP Project Improving Water Quality, Environment

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Josh Scott, Carroll County Conservation District (CCCD) technician assistant; Johanna Edwards, CCCD district secretary; Anna Powers, NRCS soil conservation technician; Tamara Armer, CCCD water quality technician; and Kristin Whittmore, NRCS district conservationist; meet with Jessie Smally (back toward camera) to discuss the Smalley Family Farm in-vessel.



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Helping People Help the Land

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From the State Conservationist

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Arkansas continued its conservation work across the state despite 2021 being marked with a pandemic and natural disasters in the form of winter storms. We have much to be proud of because Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 was another great year for NRCS assisting farmers, ranchers and foresters implement conservation practices addressing natural resource concerns on their operations.

NRCS "helps people help the land" in the good times as well as in challenging times. I have heard from across the state about how our team often uses creative means to assist producers meet their conservation and business goals. Additionally, we continued our efforts to streamline program delivery to best serve the needs of Arkansas producers.

Thanks to the extra efforts of all our Arkansas NRCS employees and our conservation partners, we continued to manage our workloads during the pandemic, servicing existing Farm Bill contracts while improving conservation planning and technical assistance. Here's an example of some of our accomplishments:

- o FY 2021 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - 1358 contracts; \$51,535,890 obligated; 200,354 acres contracted
- o FY 2021 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) - 197 contracts; \$22,892,313; 148,610 acres contracted

- o FY 2021 Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) - FY21 Obligated \$9,445,680; Total Obligated 141; Acres 24,502; Historically Underserved Producers (HU) Contracts 49, HU Acres 7,319; HU Obligation \$ - \$3,771,735; % HU Obligated \$ - 40%
- o FY 2021 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)-EQIP - FY21 Obligated \$435,903; Total Obligated 16; Acres 1,767; HU Contracts 8, HU Acres 601; HU Obligation \$ - \$152,891; % HU Obligated \$ - 35%
- o FY 2021 RCPP18 - FY21 Obligated \$383,693; Total Obligated 14; Acres 2663; HU Contracts 4, HU Acres 418; HU Obligation \$ - \$160,234; % HU Obligated \$ - 42%

We are proud of the strong conservation partnership NRCS has here in Arkansas. Through FY22, we will work closely with our partners to continue progress accomplishing our goals above and beyond what we could ever achieve on our own. Through hard work and extra effort, we will continue to deliver high-quality service, assisting customers address their most pressing natural resource concerns.

NRCS also offers climate-smart solutions through voluntary programs to help producers build soil health, sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate the impacts of climate change while building resilience to strengthen agriculture operation. NRCS offers financial and technical assistance to



support farmers, ranchers, private forest landowners, and partners in implementing climate-smart management solutions. These programs include EQIP, CSP, and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. NRCS also offers RCPP and the Conservation Innovation Grants program that support climate-smart conservation efforts through partnership and grant opportunities. For additional information, log on to www.farmers.gov/conservation/climate-smart or contact your local USDA Service Center.



Mike Sullivan, State Conservationist

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Agriculture

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Please send submissions to [Reginald L. Jackson](mailto:Reginald.L.Jackson@ar.nrcs.usda.gov), State Public Affairs Specialist, or [Creston Shrum](mailto:Creston.Shrum@ar.nrcs.usda.gov), Public Affairs Specialist at: Room 3416, Federal Bldg.; 700 W. Capitol Ave.; Little Rock, AR 72201
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Programs

USDA NRCS Accepting 2022 CSP Applications through Jan. 21

Farmers and landowners have until Jan. 21, 2022, to apply for funding consideration during the 2022 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Classic enrollment period. Producers in portions of Chicot and Desha counties will also have the opportunity to apply for CSP in the MRBI-Canal 43 project area.

CSP offers additional opportunities to expand on existing conservation efforts by offering conservation practices, enhancements, bundles, and other conservation activities.

“CSP continues to be a very effective tool for private landowners working to achieve their conservation and management goals,” said Mike Sullivan, Arkansas NRCS state conservationist.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by Jan. 21, 2022, to ensure their applications are considered for 2022 CSP Classic funding.

CSP is offered in Arkansas through continuous sign-ups. The program provides many benefits including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a tribe.

For additional information about CSP, contact your local USDA servicecenter (<https://www.farmers.gov/service-locator>).



While USDA offices are currently closed to walk-in visitors because of the pandemic, service center staff continue to work with agricultural producers by appointment and via phone, email, and other digital tools. To conduct business, please contact your local USDA Service Center. Additionally, more information related to USDA’s response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

USDA Offers Secure New Options for Signing, Sharing Documents Online

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.

“Box and OneSpan support social distancing measures while providing efficient, user-friendly options for our customers to conduct business with us without needing to interrupt the productivity of their workday,” said Mike Sullivan, NRCS state conservationist for Arkansas. “Given the critical goods and services our farmers and ranchers provide, any time saved or opportunity to streamline is a big win.”

Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.

OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile

device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed, documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer’s personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

Steps to Get Started

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you’re interested in signing and sharing documents through these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

More Information

Visit farmers.gov/mydocs to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

To learn more about program flexibilities and Service Center status during the coronavirus pandemic, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

NRCS, Partners Work to Control, Eradicate Feral Hogs

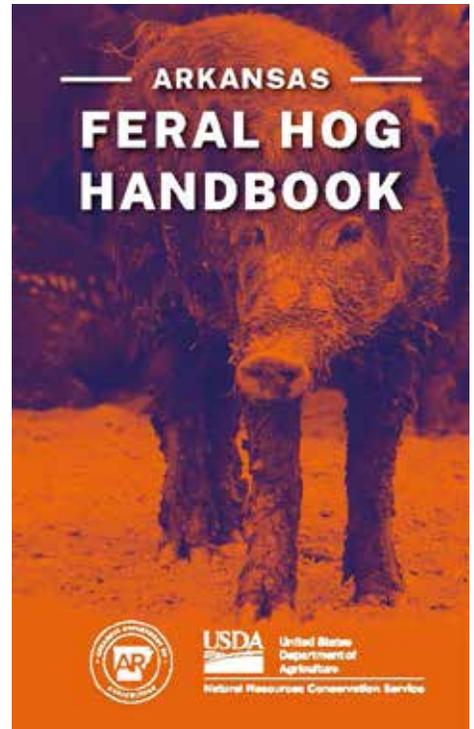
Handbook Provides Guide to Resources Available

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has partnered with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) as part of the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Project authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill. Through this partnership, Arkansas landowners can begin the process of addressing resource concerns resulting from feral swine activity.

NRCS also has several additional technical and financial assistance programs to address resource concerns across Arkansas, including agricultural areas damaged by feral swine. Those programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Conservation Technical Assistance Program.

The Arkansas Feral Hog Handbook is a guide to resources available to assist with feral hog control and eradication. The handbook was made possible through a grant funded by NRCS. Contact your local NRCS field office to obtain a copy. For more information regarding feral swine control, contact Jim Baker at 501-301-3142.

To obtain more information regarding NRCS programs, contact your local USDA Field Service Center. A listing can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/contact/local/.



NRCS Releases Arkansas Pollinator Conservation Planning Handbook

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently collaborated in a joint effort with The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Quail Forever, and other partners to produce the Arkansas NRCS Pollinator Conservation Planning Handbook. This resource is a tool for NRCS conservation planners and landowners to implement pollinator habitat on private lands.

The Handbook can be referenced when working to improve pollination and pest management on agricultural land. By creating and enhancing pollinator habitat, insect diversity increases, which benefits wildlife, increases crop yields, and improves soil health and water quality. The Handbook addresses the habitat needs of many agriculturally beneficial insects, such as those that predate and parasitize crop pests, and addresses specific habitat needs of the monarch butterfly. Enhancing habitat benefits native bees, one of Native America's most important crop pollinators, while simultaneously boosting the health of European honey bees. Increased native plant diversity provides pollination and pest management services on landowners' farms.

Pollinators are responsible for approximately one of every three bites of food we eat. But pollinator populations are declining. In 2008, the USDA prioritized pollinator habitat by promoting pollinator friendly practices in the Farm Bill. The Secretary of Agriculture was given the authority to use conservation practices that support pollinators, both native and managed. In Arkansas, NRCS is working to make pollinator habitat a priority by becoming an official partner of the Arkansas Monarch Conservation Partnership and creating technical resources.

For additional information about the Arkansas NRCS Pollinator Conservation Planning Handbook, contact Leslie Cooper, Arkansas monarch and pollinator coordinator, at lcooper@quailforever.org or Helen Denniston, Arkansas state resource conservationist at helen.denniston@usda.gov. To learn how you can benefit pollinators on your property, receive free technical assistance, and learn about cost-share programs you may be eligible for contact your local USDA service center (<https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>).



Conservation On the Ground



Johnnieshia Frazier, Pulaski County soil conservationist, Shanon Griffin, an NRCS engineer, and Kennard Williams, Pulaski County district conservationist, assist Margie Raimondo, an urban farmer.

From California Dreamin' to Urban Farming, Little Rock Chef Grows Produce Locally with NRCS Assistance

*Story and photos by Reginald Jackson
State Public Affairs Specialist, NRCS Arkansas*

Urban farmer, chef and restauranter Margie Raimondo grew up in Lynwood, California. Her family immigrated to southern California from Sicily before she was born. When she was growing up, her family grew their own food and she loved helping tend to their garden. She always had a love for fresh grown produce and carried that love into adulthood.

Raimondo worked several years as an information technology (IT) executive at a software company in Silicon Valley. Even as an IT exec, she always wanted to be a chef. One day, following the events of September 11, she decided she was going to escape the hustle and bustle of the big city and corporate life to pursue her dream of becoming a chef. Following the recommendation of a friend, she moved to Arkansas, first landing in the northwest part of the state, before moving again and settling down in Little Rock.

She opened a restaurant (and a Farmers Market) in the Capital City but found she could not get the fresh ingredients that she needed for many of the Italian and Sicilian dishes she served. She loved to serve fresh food from the field to the plate. She was

committed to providing a variety of locally grown produce that her recipes called for.

Raimondo decided to start farming on her property to raise many of the ingredients that she needed after she learned about high tunnels from a local farmer whom she bought lettuce and heirloom tomatoes from. She loved the fact that she could get these items fresh, even during the winter months. He told her about the assistance he received from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and she wanted to learn more.

A High Tunnel System, commonly called a "hoop house," is a conservation practice for farmers, and is available with financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). High tunnels protect plants from severe weather and allow farmers to extend their growing seasons – growing earlier into the spring, later into the fall, and sometimes, year-round. High tunnels also offer farmers a greater ability to control pests and can even protect plants from pollen and pesticide drift.

Raimondo contacted the USDA Service Center and talked with Pulaski County District Conservationist Kennard Williams. He

(Continued on Page 6)

paid a visit her at her operation to discuss a conservation plan to install a high tunnel on her urban farm. He also assisted her with information on pollinators and specialty crops she could grow.

Once Williams received the information he needed from Raimondo, she worked with Soil Conservationist Johnnieshia Frazier who assisted in developing her conservation plan.

“They saw the vision with me,” Raimondo said. They worked with me and we’ve come a long way. This this is my team now.”

Williams and Frazier also consulted with NRCS Water Management Engineer Shannon Griffin, who designed a water system to irrigate Raimondo’s crops in the high tunnel. Because high tunnels prevent direct rainfall from reaching plants, farmers can use precise tools like drip irrigation to efficiently deliver water and nutrients to plants.

“Ms. Raimondo is an innovator,” said Griffin. “She already knew what she wanted to do when I first talked with her. She was bringing so many new ideas to the table, I had to do some research (at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service) for the wide variety of crops and raised beds that she wanted to implement.

I also commend Johnnieshia on putting together the design for this project,” Griffin continued. “I kind of stood over her shoulder, and watched as she created the maps, put together the design sheets and did the conservation planning. This is her project, I checked it and signed off on it and I’m very proud of the work that we did.”

Included in Raimondo’s plan are micro-irrigation, drip tables, water lines, spray emitters, mulch and cover crops. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to growers in soil health, irrigation and water conservation, weeds and pests and high tunnels. Such projects have the potential to address important issues such as food access and education and to support innovative ways to increase local food production in urban environments.

Raimondo started growing flowers before she planted any crops to attract pollinators. Then she planted radishes, cucumbers, parsnips, spring peas, fava beans, strawberries, herbs, beets, Asian greens, swiss chard, and fennel in her high



(Above) Kennard Williams, Margie Raimondo and Johnnieshia Frazier check out some of the produce. (Below) Williams and Raimondo look at her tomatoe plants.



tunnel. She sells much of the produce that she grows at her Urbana Farmland Farmers Market in southwest Little Rock. She also lets patrons pick their own vegetable right from the ground in the high tunnel. She cans and sells many of the products she grows, as well.

“Most people think you need acres and acres of land to grow a farm but you don’t,” Raimondo said. “You can grow a farm in your backyard. That’s how I grew up. Most people can’t imagine a farm in town.”

Kennard, Johnnieshia and Shannon saw the vision with me,” Raimondo said. They

worked with me and we’ve come a long way. This this is my team now.”

NRCS serves all agriculture – large to small, conventional to organic, rural to urban. As agriculture continues to grow in new directions, NRCS conservation assistance is growing along with it.

Starting an urban farm comes with a unique set of challenges and opportunities. NRCS can help with the challenges of conservation and support urban farmers in their efforts to achieve local, healthy, sustainable food for their communities. You can start by contacting your local USDA Service Center.

Conservation On the Ground

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Project Improving Water, Air Quality in Carroll County

by Johanna Edwards
Carroll County Conservation District

Owning a family farm is a matter of pride and accomplishment John and Jessie Smalley know all about. John's father, Robert, owned and operated the Smalley Family Farm for the better part of 50 years. When John's father passed away in 2017, John and his wife Jessie were more than happy to continue the tradition.

The Smalley Family Farm runs cattle and several poultry houses. They have experienced lots of changes over the years, but one of the biggest changes with their poultry operation has been the margin narrowing between profit and loss.

"Keeping the houses up to date and trying to keep the latest technology has been a struggle over the years, but it is very important to continue to try to find better and more efficient ways to operate the farm," John said.

That is where the Carroll County White River Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) comes in, according to Tamara Armer, Carroll County Conservation District water quality technician.

The Carroll County White River RCPP Project is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agriculture producers for addressing water and air quality concerns in the entirety of Carroll County. "The project goals are to address critical watershed water quality by implementing conservation plans that address dead bird disposal and encourage the adoption of in-vessel technology," Tamara said.

The Smalley's say the project will provide a cleaner way of disposing of their birds which makes an in-vessel more environmentally friendly when compared to an incinerator or composter. Their eight houses have four flocks a year with 34,000 birds per flock. John's wife, Jessie says that "One of the biggest benefits we've seen is the economical savings," Jessie said. "The in-vessel uses only electricity, so no fuel is needed to dispose of dead birds, which means big savings year around."

In-vessel composting isn't without challenges. John says the biggest challenge was getting the drum set and positioned right. "The in-vessels are big and take planning to get placed right, but the benefits out way the difficulties by far," he said.

When asked how the project has helped their operation overall, the Smalley's said that it all comes down to the bottom line. "Every producer is always looking for ways to improve expenses on their operation and for us this project is a big improvement," John said. "We are saving between \$600 and \$700 dollars a month. Besides the economic factor, the in-vessel is cleaner and more environmentally pleasing."

"When we started talking about doing this project, Richard Gordon was the first producer in the county to ask about the



Jessie Smalley, owner of Smalley Family Farm, discusses the economic and environmental benefits of her in-vessel with Kristin Whittmore, NRCS district conservationist for Carroll County. (Photo by Creston Shrum)

in-vessel. He and I drove to Bentonville to look at some in-vessels and we were really impressed. They are amazing machines, but they are expensive," said Kristin Whittmore, Carroll County NRCS district conservationist.

"They will eventually pay for themselves with the amount of money that is saved energy wise, but they cost quite a bit to install. That's why I am so glad we were able to get to get extra funding in the county making this opportunity available to help all the producers with their bottom-line while being more environmentally friendly," she said.

"The late Scott Fancher was a huge asset to me not only as someone who helped our team write up this project to get the funding but a great friend and asset to the county for many years. I was glad to see the project get funded for all our efforts put forth," Kristin said.

"Family farms are near and dear to my heart. I grew up on a family farm that has been in our family for over 100 years, so it makes me happy to see us being able to help our small family farms here in Carroll County.

"We would not have been able to achieve this RCPP project without the collaborative efforts of everyone in the office and we are lucky to have such a great team," Kristin said.

The Carroll County Conservation District and NRCS will continue to monitor in-vessels that have been installed through the RCPP program to record the environmental benefits to water and air quality within the White River Watershed.

"One of the biggest benefits we've seen is the economical savings. The in-vessel uses only electricity, so no fuel is needed to dispose of dead birds, which means big savings year around."

-- Jessie Smalley, owner Smalley Family Farm

Conservation On the Ground

USDA Helps Landowners Assist Monarch Butterflies, Pollinators through Conservation Practices to Create Native Habitat

Story and photos by Leslie Cooper, Arkansas Monarch and Pollinator Coordinator

Over the past two decades, monarch butterfly populations have decreased. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance to landowners to create monarch and pollinator habitat. Landowners may also be eligible for financial assistance through Farm Bill Programs to implement voluntary conservation practices creating important native habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

In Arkansas, landowners are creating habitat and seeing positive responses from wildlife. Newton County producers Garland and Robin Matlock shared their experiences utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

"Our property wasn't large enough to be a commercial farm and the soil was poor, but it is ideal for native plants," Garland said. "One day I said to Robin, 'why don't we support other farmers in the area by supporting the pollinators? We have to give back to the pollinators. They help put food on our tables'."

They went to the local USDA Service Center and discussed a conservation plan. Then they began implementing conservation practices on their property in 2020. They have utilized forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, and conservation cover to create habitat on their property. Their farm is also certified through the Arkansas Forest Stewardship Program and the Arkansas Tree Farm Program.

"We had monarchs come through our property last fall and I once saw over 200 monarchs migrating," said Mr. Matlock. "It was exciting to see the migration take place on a project helping benefit monarchs and other native species."

Sharp County Producer Gaylon Cooper began working with Farm Bill programs in 2013, including the Conservation Steward-



ship Program (CSP) and EQIP.

"We've got butterflies and hummingbirds everywhere, but you see a lot more of them when you start leaving the habitat," Cooper said. "I know the habitat is already there, we're just enhancing it and getting it to do better. If we don't start letting the habitat come back, we're going to eventually lose all that stuff. I enjoy riding around my property and seeing quail, turkey, and deer using the wildflower fields."

Cooper has encouraged other landowners to contact their local NRCS offices for

conservation assistance, as well.

"All the NRCS employees in Sharp County have been super nice and super helpful to work with," he said. "I can't say enough about my district conservationist and the office staff, how they help walk you through the process," he added.

If you'd like to learn about what you can do on at pro your farm, ranch or home to benefit monarch butterflies, contact your local NRCS office or visit: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/plantsanimals/b0c0bd19-f8f1-48fc-9f2a-bd66fd7277ae/>.

Conservation On the Ground

Water Quality Initiative Helps Gray's Balance Farm Life, Family Life

by *Katie Womac and Evelyn Nordberg*
Greene County soil conservationists

Brad Gray, like most rice farmers in the Mississippi Delta, was always chasing water.

With 35 wells across 2,000 acres, irrigation in the summer was always stressful and time consuming. Coordinating well timing can make a crew run from field to field, while always feeling one step behind. And when summer rain comes, it can be a race to shut off wells so that levees don't wash out.

The region also struggles with depleting groundwater and agriculture runoff. Gray's farm is in the Critical Groundwater Decline Area of the Alluvial Aquifer, where drawdown happens faster than replacement. As the water table drops.

Farmers are forced to deepen wells or abandon them in favor of new ones.

In 2018, Greene County's NRCS office started receiving funding (approximately \$2.6 million for the multiyear project) for the Buffalo Slough National Water Quality Incentives (NWQI) program. The goal was to partner with farmers to improve surface water quality and reduce groundwater consumption.

Gray's participation in this program helped him update his irrigation system. He leveled his fields, automated pumps, and installed two relifts to convert from

groundwater to surface water. He also put in structures to prevent erosion and uses nutrient management techniques to protect the directly adjacent Cache River.

As a result, the 800-acre project farm has cut groundwater consumption by 75%. But Gray was surprised by an additional benefit: his pump automation saves him time.

Brad has always been a family man, with wife Abby and two children, Max and Shelby. Summertime is a balance between irrigation and school vacation. The farming life can sometimes get in the way of making memories. But, when his son Max was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2017, it forced Gray to rethink his priorities.

"I'd been running wells 24 hours a day," Gray says. But with treatment, he was also running to Memphis 20 days out of the month. He would sometimes ask others to help manage wells. And that's much easier to do, "when you are running three engines instead of 15."

These days, the project farm usually uses one well, and his river pumps. He also receives telemetry to his cellphone, so he can monitor and control his pumps from miles away. It brings peace of mind during the otherwise hectic irrigation season.

"And sometimes," Gray says, "we even turn off the pumps on Friday and get to play on the weekend!"



Brad and Abby Gray with their children, Max and Shelby.



Did You Know?



Learn about USDA's Disaster Assistance Programs

When disaster strikes, USDA is here to help. From snow storms and hurricanes to wildfire, and from flooding to drought, USDA offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers and livestock producers recover.

To better assist producers, USDA has published a brochure, *Disaster Assistance Programs At A Glance*. The brochure is a quick reference guide to available Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency disaster assistance programs.

The brochure gives a short description of each program and lets you quickly identify which program(s) are available for each natural disaster event.

Also, on farmers.gov, you can learn about USDA disaster assistance programs that might be right for you. With the *Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool* (www.farmers.gov/recover/disaster-tool) you answer five questions about the natural disasters that have impacted your operation to find out which USDA programs offer assistance.

The *Disaster Assistance Programs At A Glance* brochure can be downloaded and is located on farmers.gov/recover.



New to Farming? USDA Can Help!

Are you new to farming because of the pandemic? USDA can help you get started – everything from helping you register your farm to getting financial assistance and advice. Our team members, based at USDA Service Centers across the country, are hearing from people who are interested in more space and working the land, and we want to let you know we can help.

Get Started with USDA

First, you want to make sure your farm is registered. If you purchased land, it might already be established with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) with a farm number on file. If not, FSA can help you register your farm.

To obtain a farm number, you'll bring an official tax ID (Social Security number or an employer ID) and a property deed. If you do not own the land, bring a lease agreement to show you have control of the property to your FSA representative. If your operation is incorporated or an entity, you may also need to provide proof that you have signature authority and the legal ability to enter contracts with USDA.

Access to Capital

USDA can provide access to capital through its farm loans, which is a great resource when producers aren't able to get a loan from a traditional lender. Loans can help with purchasing land or equipment or with operating costs, and FSA even offers microloans, which are especially popular among producers with smaller farms. For more information, check out our *Farm Loan Discovery Tool*.

Conservation Practices

We can help you make conservation improvements to your farm, which are good for your bottom line and your operation. We'll help you develop a conservation plan as well as apply for financial assistance that'll cover the bulk of the costs for implementing. To learn more about some of the conservation practices that we help producers with, check out our *Conservation at Work Video Series*.

If you purchase land, and you don't want to farm all of it, you can look at either a conservation easement or managing for native shrubs and grasses through either the *Agricultural Conservation Easement Program* or *Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)*. Easements are long-term, while a CRP contract is 10-15 years. These are good options for lands with land that is not optimal for production or sensitive lands like wetlands and grasslands.

Additional Resources

Depending on your farm, you may want to look at crop insurance. The USDA's *Risk Management Agency* provides crop insurance to help you manage risks on your farm.

There are many types of insurance products available for a wide variety of production practices, including organic and sustainable agriculture.

Your local communities also have great resources for farmers including conservation districts, *Rural Development*, cooperative extensions, and different farming groups. To get started with USDA, contact your local USDA service center.

Did You Know?

USDA Surveying Cattle Operations

In January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will survey about 41,000 cattle operations nationwide to provide an up-to-date measure of U.S. cattle inventories.

"This information helps producers make timely, informed business decisions and plan for herd expansion or reduction. It also helps packers and government leaders evaluate expected slaughter volume for future months and determine potential supplies for export," said Delta Regional Director Eugene Young. "Obtaining the current count of cattle will serve as an important decision-making tool for the entire agriculture industry."

During the first two weeks of January, Arkansas producers will have the opportunity to report their beef and dairy cattle inventories, calf crop, death loss and cattle on feed information. To make it as convenient as possible for producers to participate in the survey, NASS offers the option of responding via the internet, mail, or telephone interview with a NASS representative.

NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregate data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

Survey results will be published in the Cattle report to be released on January 31, 2022. These and all NASS reports are available online at www.nass.usda.gov/publications. For more information, call the NASS Delta Regional Office at (800)327-2970.



USDA Surveying Sheep, Goat Operations

Starting in late December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will measure sheep and goat inventories and wool and mohair production during a nationwide survey.

"Interest in sheep and goat data continues to grow with increased diversification in agriculture and consumer demands," said Eugene Young, Director of the NASS Delta Regional Office. "The Sheep and Goat Survey gives producers the opportunity to report the latest information on conditions and trends in the industry."

Arkansas operators surveyed will be asked to provide information about their sheep and goat inventories, counts of lambs and kids born during 2021, and production and prices received for wool and mohair. In Arkansas, NASS will contact about 300 operations to request their responses to the survey.

"Accurate data on sheep and goat

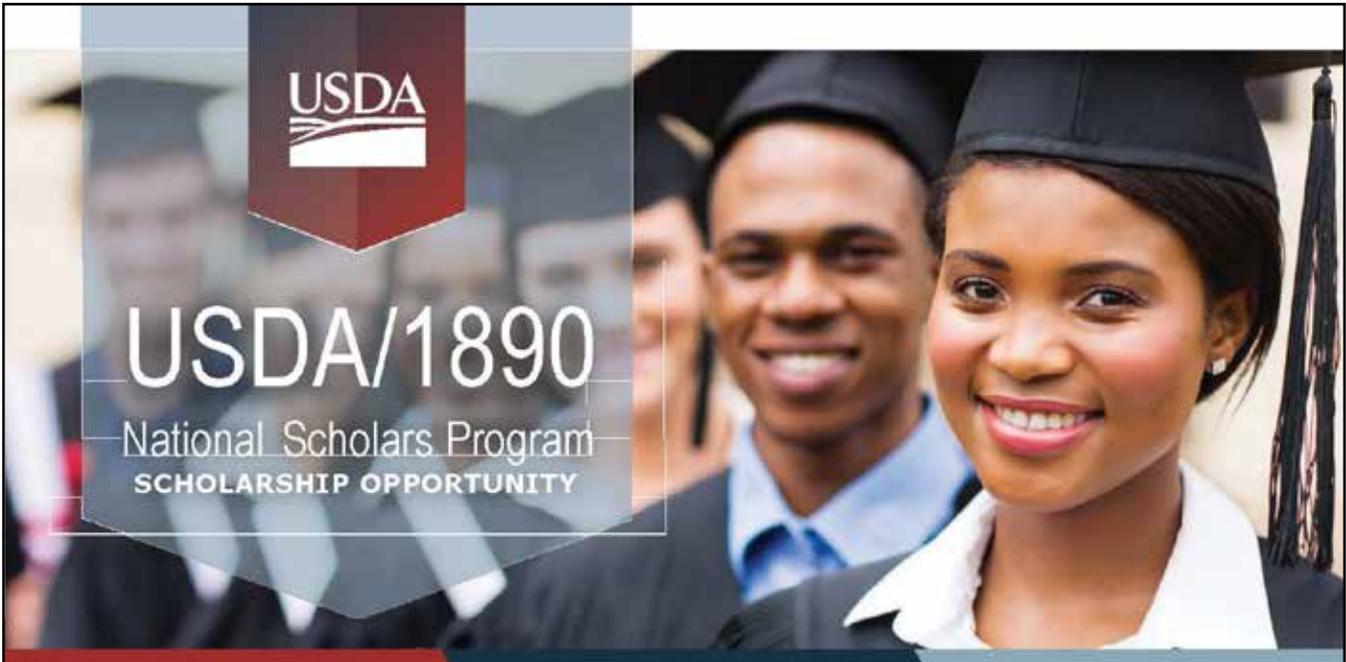
inventory and production is a significant decision-making tool for USDA and the industry to be more responsive to domestic and international markets and consumer needs," Young said. "The information can also help create public appreciation for the many benefits of U.S. sheep and goats and their needed products," added Young.

To make it as easy as possible for producers to participate in the survey, NASS offers the option of responding online, by telephone or by mail. The results of this survey will be available in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified, as required by federal law.

NASS will publish the survey results January 31, 2022 in the Sheep and Goats report.

This and all NASS reports are available online at www.nass.usda.gov/Publications. For more information, call the NASS Delta Regional Office at (800) 327-2970.

Did You Know?



The USDA 1890 National Scholars Program offers scholarships to U.S. citizens who are seeking a bachelor's degree at one of the nineteen 1890 Land-Grant Universities in the field of agriculture, food, natural resource sciences or other related disciplines.

High school and current college students are eligible to apply for the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program which provides full tuition, fees, books, room and board, and a summer internship which may convert to full-time employment with USDA after graduation. The scholarship is open to students pursuing an agriculture or agriculture-related bachelor's degree at the following universities:

- Alabama A&M University
- Alcorn State University, Mississippi
- Central State University, Ohio
- Delaware State University
- Florida A&M University
- Fort Valley State University, Georgia
- Kentucky State University
- Langston University, Oklahoma
- Lincoln University, Missouri
- North Carolina A&T State University
- Prairie View A&M University, Texas
- South Carolina State University
- Southern University, Louisiana
- Tennessee State University
- Tuskegee University, Alabama
- University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff
- University of Maryland Eastern Shore
- Virginia State University
- West Virginia State University

Eligibility Requirements

High School applicant must:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Have applied for or have been accepted for admission at one of the nineteen 1890 Land Grant Universities
- Have a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate with a high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 unweighted or better (on a 4.0 scale)
- 21 ACT, 1080 SAT scores
(Combined verbal/math score of 1,080 or more on the SAT or a composite score of 21 or more on the ACT.)
- Study agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or other related disciplines
- Demonstrate leadership and community service

College applicant must:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Be a college freshman or sophomore
- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale)
- Attend one of the nineteen 1890 Land-Grant Universities
- Study agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or other related disciplines
- Demonstrate leadership and community service

DEADLINE

JANUARY 31, 2022



For more information please contact
USDA Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement
202.720.6350 or 1890nsp@usda.gov

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www.USDA.gov/partnerships