



United States Department of Agriculture



2016 Annual Report



ARKANSAS
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

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Dear Friends of Arkansas Conservation,

It is an honor to present to you our annual report. This document summarizes our fiscal year 2016 accomplishments. The conservation progress that has been made this past year reflects the hard work and commitment of the many conservation professionals who care and work putting conservation on the ground. Those include our many Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees, volunteers, local conservation districts, and many other conservation partners.

The first Soil Conservation Service Chief, Hugh Hammond Bennett, had a strong conservation ethic. His message was clear: “take care of the land and the land will take care of you.” The conservation movement that started back in the 1930s with his efforts and many other early conservationists, is alive and well today. NRCS worked with Arkansas farmers, ranchers, and foresters this past year to assist in conservation efforts with the goal of high quality, productive soils; cleaner, abundant water; healthy plant and animal communities; cleaner air and an adequate energy supply.

Fiscal year 2016 was another great year for conservation in Arkansas. More than \$138 million in financial assistance was obligated during FY 2016 through Farm Bill conservation efforts. Working together with dedication, hard work, and extra effort allowed us to enhance technical assistance addressing irrigation water management, water quality and conservation planning, watershed coordination, soil health, organic farming, and cropland.

We added several positions this year in program support and contract specialists to provide more

contract management assistance and allow our field staff to have additional time for conservation planning. With sound technical assistance, more producers are moving to prescribed grazing systems on pastureland to improve their soil, plant, and animal health. Foresters are improving their timberland and benefiting wildlife and water quality. More time is being spent on irrigation water management for irrigated cropland as the key component of an effective irrigation system. With good conservation plans and sound technical assistance, farmers, ranchers and foresters are able to maintain or increase production in a sustainable manner.

I want to say “*Thank You*” to our NRCS employees and our conservation partners. We continued to manage one of the country’s heaviest conservation workloads to service existing contracts while providing conservation planning assistance and servicing new Farm Bill requests. We’ve helped Arkansas’s producers implement conservation practices on their land for over 80 years. Arkansas has some of the best and most innovative producers in the country. Working together, we’ll help more producers get conservation on the ground better and quicker than ever before!



Mike Sullivan, ARKANSAS STATE CONSERVATIONIST



(left to right) Mike Sullivan, state conservationist, Tony Kramer, deputy chief for programs, Keith Scoggins, Cross County district conservationist listen to producer Robby Bevis about cover crops.



CONSERVATION PLANNING AND ASSISTANCE

Conservation Planning – First Step When Considering NRCS Programs



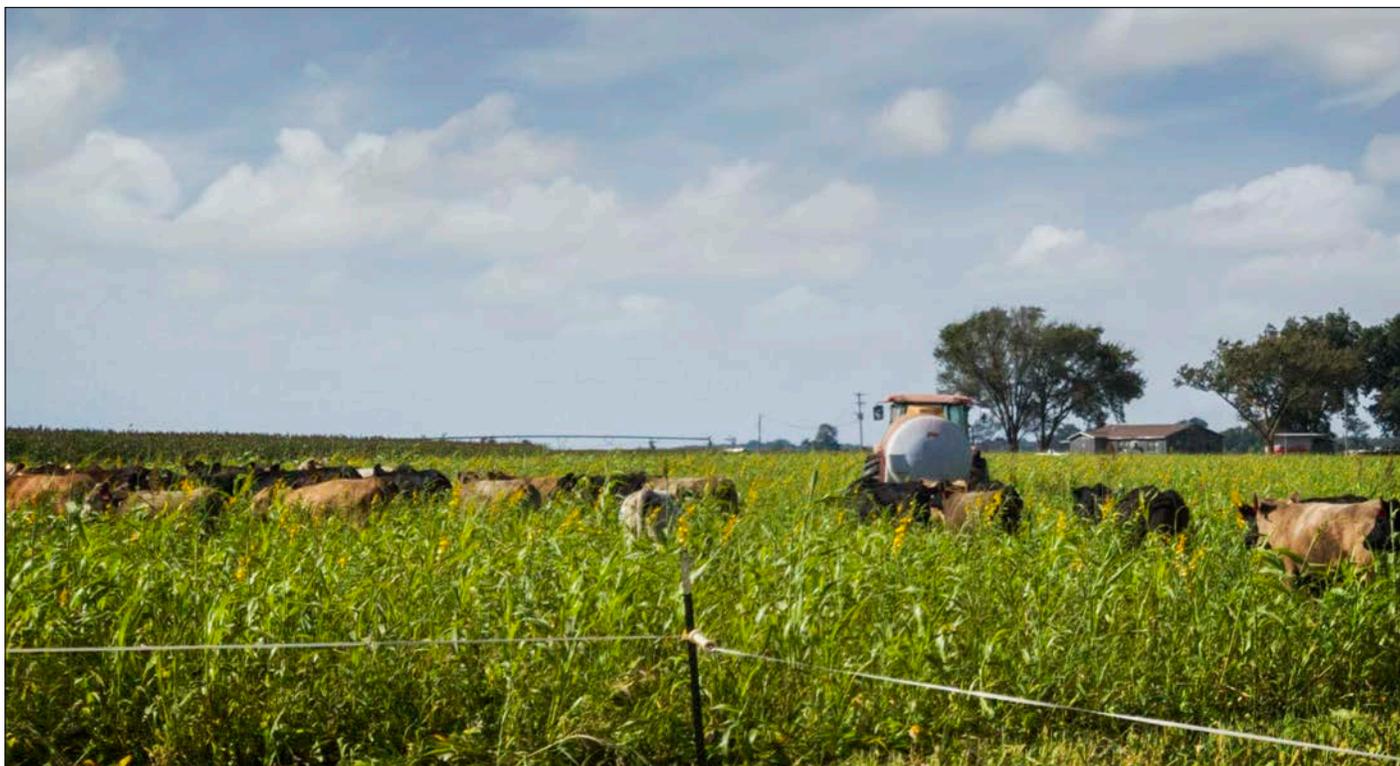
TraRain Harris and Earnest Larry, Phillips County producer.

A conservation plan is the first step in managing natural resources on a producer's operation. A landowner works with our conservation technical assistance professionals to select the best combination of conservation practices to meet both natural resource needs and his or her individual land management goals.

The plan may include component plans that address one or more resource concerns. Example component plans include: Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, Grazing Plan, Integrated Pest Management Plan, Wildlife Management Plan, etc.

In FY 2016, Arkansas NRCS helped producers develop conservation plans on 190,000 acres for Arkansas producers. We utilized 30 program support assistants to provide Farm Bill assistance so that conservationists could provide more conservation planning assistance to foresters, farmers and ranchers. We also hired approximately 10 dedicated conservation planners.

Conservation planning is a complex and dynamic process. Successful planning results in the right conservation practices installed in the right locations. Good conservation plans can also lead to good Farm Bill Program contracts ensuring wise use of financial assistance.



Mob Grazing at Long Lake Plantation, Helena



TECHNICAL TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE

Conservation Technical Assistance Addresses Resource Concerns

Conservation technical assistance is the help NRCS and our partners provide to land users to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources and to help land users make sound natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands.

Irrigation Education Area Specialist Mike Hamilton works in the Jonesboro NRCS Technical Service Center, with NRCS employees to help producers better manage their irrigation water. Arkansas NRCS and the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service collaborated to hire Hamilton in 2015.

During his time working with NRCS, Hamilton has used his technical expertise in the use of computerized hole selection for irrigation with polypipe, including in both PHAUCET and PipePlanner software, to help producers develop Irrigation Water Management plans in several counties. Those counties include Mississippi, Poinsett, Craighead, Green, Clay, Independence, Lawrence and Jackson counties. He has also worked with producers in the White River Valley area to help design a furrow irrigation system for about 20,000 acres of farmland.

Working collaboratively to provide conservation technical assistance is another a great way NRCS can partner with other agencies to help solve our natural resource problems and get conservation on the ground faster and more efficiently.



FARM BILL IMPLEMENTATION

Conyer Reaps What He Sows

After a career with the U.S. Army, Lawrence Conyer returned to Jefferson County. His plan was to grow hay on 23 acres of family land since as a youth he had helped his father grow and harvest hay around the county.

Instead, he started growing green beans, sweet corn and greens for his family and the local community to use. Since 1999, Conyer has expanded his operation and now grows rice, corn and soybeans on about 1,500 acres in Jefferson and Lincoln counties.

He owns 200 acres and leases the rest. He has land enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, National Water Quality Initiative and Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

“These programs help me improve my land and farming operation,” Conyer said. “I can protect wildlife habitat while preserving the land.”

Conyer has installed at least one conservation practice on most of the 200 acres he owns in Jefferson County. Practices such as water management structures, wells, cover crops, nutrient and residue management and land leveling are not only helping Conyer, but also the environment.

“Land will only put out what you put in it,” he said. “Through Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) assistance, I’ve decreased water use, increased my yields and saved time and money.”



Lawrence Conyer



FARM BILL IMPLEMENTATION

Capturing Water Conserves Resource, Saves Money on Century Farm

Four generations of the Chlapecka family have made a living off the rich soils of the Grand Prairie since 1897, when Steve Chlapecka Jr.'s great-grandfather immigrated to the area outside of Hazen from Czechoslovakia. While the cropland in the area is abundant, many years water can be scarce.

In the 1940s, Chlapecka Jr.'s grandfather, saw the need for more water and dug a reservoir. The reservoir is still in use. However, over time Chlapecka Jr. has seen the water flow out of his fields and off his farm.

Thanks to the Grand Prairie Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) offered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in partnership with the White River Irrigation District he is now able to catch the water and reapply it as needed.



MRBI Resource Conservationist Planner Kevin Cochran, left, Prairie County District Conservationist Bryan Jacobs, and producer Steve Chlapecka, Jr.

Chlapecka Jr. signed up for a pit reservoir, irrigation pipeline, pipe drops, a tank car and levee work on the existing reservoir to address water quality and quantity on 296 acres.

Through the contract, an irrigation water management plan was developed to ensure water is supplied to the crops when and where needed and to reduce erosion from runoff.

An existing ditch on the farm was expanded for the pit reservoir and a tank car installed to control the water level in the pit. Now water that used to flow off the farm can be captured and stored.

The water can then be pumped through irrigation pipelines to pipe drops located across the farm.

"We are really proud of our new reservoir and appreciate the assistance from NRCS, said Steve Chlapecka Sr., who started farming in the 1940s and cut his 67th crop last year on his Century Farm.

While the new reservoir and pipelines haven't completely removed the need to pump from the two wells on his farm it has drastically decreased the amount of water being removed from the aquifer. Chlapecka Jr. estimates he has saved 128 acre feet or 41.7 million gallons of water since 2014 using the pit reservoir.

He is also seeing a savings in his bank account. "Pumping out of the pit costs about \$300 a month versus the \$200 a day it costs to pump from a well. I have saved about \$8,000 since installing the pit."

FARM BILL IMPLEMENTATION

MRBI Work Showing Results

Since 2012, landowners with the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and conservation partners have been installing conservation practices to address water quality concerns in three Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative project in Arkansas.

Practices installed in the Middle Cache River, Bayou Meto (Arkansas) and Bayou Meto (Middle) watersheds serve to avoid, control and trap nutrient runoff, prevent erosion and provide wildlife habitat.

Through the application of voluntary conservation practices such as irrigation reservoirs, grade stabilization structures and nutrient management, the data shows a reduction of the nitrogen load by 413,805 pounds and phosphorus load by 285,172 pounds in the watersheds. The work has also resulted in a water savings of 10.3 billion gallons of ground water conserved per year.



Monitoring Water Quality



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals.

It provides financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

The majority of general EQIP funds provided to Arkansas are used to support priority resource concerns identified by conservation districts through local work groups.

Arkansas farmers received more than \$45.2 million in EQIP financial assistance in FY16, funding 1,496 applications. This financial assistance will help install conservation practices to reduce soil erosion, use water more efficiently and improve grazing land, wildlife habitat and water quality on more than 207,945 acres.

The top practices applied (by the number in contracts) in 2016 are:

- Fence
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Forage and Biomass Planting
- Watering Facility
- Irrigation Water Management
- Structure for Water Control
- Irrigation Pipeline
- Nutrient Management
- Irrigation Land Leveling
- Livestock Pipeline
- Amendment for Treating of Agricultural Waste
- Cover Crop

EQIP SUB ACCOUNT	CONTRACTS	ACRES TREATED	OBLIGATIONS
Air Quality	45	10,987.70	\$2,334,463
Beginning Farmer/Rancher	45	3,609.10	\$1,183,425
Climate Change	10	168	\$2,477,146
Feral Swine Pilot Project	21	9,669.50	\$108,851
Forest Service Partnership	105	11,788.80	\$1,817,262
High Tunnel System	90	933.70	\$916,117
Illinois River (Eucha/Spavinaw)	24	1,208.20	\$1,455,945
Limited Resource	3	201.60	\$58,753
Locally Led	637	83,383.40	\$17,604,535
Mississippi River Basin Initiative	134	27,167.50	\$9,405,619
National Water Quality Initiative	28	6,328.50	\$995,369
On-Farm Energy	68	3,922.30	\$1,278,903
On-Farm Energy CAPS	112	7,332	\$246,329
Organic Certified	3	8.80	\$30,727
Organic Transition	7	838.60	\$183,620
Planning	34	27,407.50	\$106,088
Socially Disadvantaged	31	2,812.60	\$1,155,662
State	21	2,047.90	\$692,548
StrikeForce Initiative	70	6,591.30	\$3,000,591
Wildlife	8	1,539.20	\$240,458
TOTAL	1,496	207,945.20	\$45,292,411

Data Source: REAP/Protracts – 12/23/2016



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Arkansas NRCS enrolled 18 easements totaling 4,827.19 acres of wetlands through the ACEP Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE). Obligations in FY16 totaled more than \$11.4 million.

ACEP	OBLIGATIONS
Wetlands Reserve Easements	\$11,489,701
Wetlands Reserve Easement Restoration	\$3,440,133
TOTAL	\$14,929,834

Data Source: REAP/NEST – 12/23/2016

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP encourages agricultural and forestry producers to undertake additional conservation activities to improve and maintain the existing conservation on their land.

The program provides financial and technical assistance to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources.

In FY16, 719 new contracts were developed enrolling 679,889.90 acres. The contracts will provide more than \$17 million in financial assistance to participants over the five-year contract agreements

Total CSP payments for existing contracts were more than \$75.1 million.

CSP	CONTRACTS	ACRES TREATED	OBLIGATIONS
Agriculture Lands – Beginning Farmer	87	62,597.20	\$1,674,086
Agriculture Lands – General	519	571,126.00	\$14,742,583
Agriculture Lands – Socially Disadvantaged	53	14,271.00	\$479,000
Forestland – Beginning Farmer	7	2,590.00	\$12,145
Forestland – General	49	28,746.80	\$166,289
Forestland – Socially Disadvantaged	4	558.90	\$5,500
New FY16 Contract Totals	719	679,889.90	\$17,079,603
Payments in FY16 for Previous Years Contracts	--	--	\$58,068,483
TOTAL			\$75,148,086

Data Source: REAP/Protracts – 12/23/2016

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

RCPP promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance through partnership agreements and Farm Bill programs.

RCPP encourages partners to join in efforts with producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources

on regional or watershed scales.

The top five practices (by the number of contracts) in 2016 are: irrigation water management, nutrient management, shallow water development and management, pumping plant, and amendments for the treatment of agricultural waste.

RCPP	CONTRACTS	ACRES TREATED	OBLIGATIONS
Illinois River Watershed	13	354	\$521,449
Red River	5	1,448	\$393,977
Rice Stewardship Partnership	72	22,186	\$2,330,582
TOTAL	90	23,988	\$3,246,008

Data Source: REAP/Protracts – 12/23/2016



FY16 Financial Assistance by Program and County

COUNTY	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM	CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS	REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM	TOTAL FY16 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
ARKANSAS	\$3,345,718	\$9,424,230	\$923,872		\$14,617,692
ASHLEY	\$244,852	\$1,468,353	\$16,556		\$1,729,761
BAXTER	\$216,259	\$101,766			\$318,025
BENTON	\$1,373,795	\$10,374		\$103,904	\$1,488,073
BOONE	\$161,175	\$21,829			\$183,004
BRADLEY	\$168,898	\$6,703			\$175,601
CALHOUN	\$57,930	\$19,029			\$76,959
CARROLL	\$455,750				\$442,833
CHICOT	\$597,352	\$3,290,706	\$1,396,446		\$5,284,505
CLARK	\$77,290	\$2,811			\$80,101
CLAY	\$394,222	\$1,392,737			\$1,786,959
CLEBURNE	\$388,122	\$30,717			\$418,839
CLEVELAND	\$221,524	\$23,880			\$245,404
COLUMBIA	\$158,958	\$42,518			\$201,476
CONWAY	\$463,836	\$223,851	\$141,820		\$829,507
CRAIGHEAD	\$1,439,164	\$3,080,771			\$4,519,935
CRAWFORD	\$66,857	\$24,191			\$91,048
CRITTENDEN	\$267,860	\$798,181			\$1,066,041
CROSS	\$1,131,776	\$3,725,071		\$291,269	\$5,148,116
DALLAS	\$104,247				\$104,247
DESHA	\$1,293,939	\$6,578,113	\$444,969	\$52,440	\$8,369,460
DREW	\$206,921	\$1,441,727			\$1,648,649
FAULKNER	\$961,612	\$376,369	\$34,255	\$16,346	\$1,388,581
FRANKLIN	\$590,557				\$590,557
FULTON	\$1,083,414	\$70,613			\$1,154,027
GARLAND	\$55,914	\$12,361			\$68,275
GRANT	\$62,142	\$3,000			\$65,142
GREENE	\$1,418,856	\$1,607,053			\$3,025,909
HEMPSTEAD	\$113,209	\$19,391			\$132,600
HOT SPRING	\$279,964				\$279,964
HOWARD	\$148,469				\$148,469
INDEPENDENCE	\$392,498	\$669,749	\$85,390		\$1,147,637
IZARD	\$766,339	\$79,863			\$846,202
JACKSON	\$1,756,450	\$3,280,375	\$1,871,427		\$6,908,252
JEFFERSON	\$2,773,493	\$6,044,152		\$46,962	\$8,864,607
JOHNSON	\$579,394	\$15,255			\$594,649
LAFAYETTE	\$494,686	\$558,919		\$393,977	\$1,447,582
LAWRENCE	\$164,132	\$4,312,535		\$38,988	\$4,515,655

Data Source: REAP/Protracts — 12/23/2016



FY16 Financial Assistance by Program and County (continued)

COUNTY	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM	CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS	REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM	TOTAL FY16 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
LEE	\$626,652	\$2,831,258	\$12,493		\$3,470,403
LINCOLN	\$1,041,669	\$4,287,730	\$123,897		\$5,453,296
LITTLE RIVER	\$79,269	\$1,500			\$80,769
LOGAN	\$889,407	\$8,846			\$898,253
LONOKE	\$2,634,844	\$3,106,022		\$85,941	\$5,826,807
MADISON	\$265,185	\$21,359			\$286,544
MARION	\$218,915	\$166,454			\$385,369
MILLER	\$194,512	\$202,451	\$3,200		\$400,163
MISSISSIPPI	\$1,001,961	\$1,346,205	\$388,974	\$1,749,188	\$4,486,328
MONROE	\$228,018	\$2,575,233	\$148,572		\$2,951,823
MONTGOMERY	\$232,977				\$232,977
NEVADA	\$235,817	\$36,389			\$272,206
NEWTON	\$283,241				\$283,241
OUACHITA	\$168,239	\$3,421			\$171,660
PERRY	\$620,426	\$74,254	\$12,888		\$707,568
PHILLIPS	\$202,698	\$3,913,443	\$564,291		\$4,680,432
PIKE	\$282,023	\$46,102			\$328,125
POINSETT	\$760,173	\$1,296,799			\$2,056,972
POLK	\$439,327	\$3,757			\$443,084
POPE	\$1,019,267	\$108,962		\$49,448	\$1,177,677
PRAIRIE	\$1,092,837	\$1,589,905	\$739,763		\$3,422,505
PULASKI	\$239,566	\$311,752			\$551,318
RANDOLPH	\$234,825	\$426,214			\$661,039
SALINE	\$38,686				\$38,686
SCOTT	\$101,431				\$101,431
SEARCY	\$725,861	\$177,369			\$903,230
SEBASTIAN	\$160,739				\$160,739
SEVIER	\$137,527	\$98,037			\$253,564
SHARP	\$571,468	\$216,595			\$788,063
ST. FRANCIS	\$1,716,181	\$2,791,839	\$91,742		\$4,599,762
STONE	\$710,750	\$121,744			\$832,494
UNION	\$253,557	\$10,529			\$264,086
VAN BUREN	\$356,244	\$43,029			\$399,273
WASHINGTON	\$1,205,085			\$417,545	\$1,622,630
WHITE	\$712,063	\$236,144	\$2,088,840		\$3,037,047
WOODRUFF	\$262,851	\$266,936	\$5,840,439		\$6,370,226
YELL	\$870,549	\$70,541			\$941,090
GRAND TOTAL	\$45,292,411	\$75,148,086	\$14,929,834	\$3,246,008	\$138,616,264

Data Source: REAP/Protracts — 12/23/2016



NRCS FY16 Financial Assistance by Congressional District

Congressional District 1

COUNTY	TOTAL FY16 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
ARKANSAS	\$14,617,692
BAXTER	\$318,025
CHICOT	\$5,284,505
CLAY	\$1,786,959
CLEBURNE	\$418,839
CRAIGHEAD	\$4,519,935
CRITTENDEN	\$1,066,041
CROSS	\$5,148,116
DESHA	\$8,369,460
FULTON	\$1,154,027
GREENE	\$3,025,909
INDEPENDENCE	\$1,147,637
IZARD	\$846,202
JACKSON	\$6,908,252
JEFFERSON	\$2,216,151
LAWRENCE	\$4,515,655
LEE	\$3,470,403
LINCOLN	\$5,453,296
LONOKE	\$5,826,807
MISSISSIPPI	\$4,486,328
MONROE	\$2,951,823
PHILLIPS	\$4,680,432
POINSETT	\$2,056,972
PRAIRIE	\$3,422,505
RANDOLPH	\$661,039
SEARCY	\$90,323
SHARP	\$788,063
ST. FRANCIS	\$4,599,762
STONE	\$832,494
WOODRUFF	\$6,933,217
TOTAL	\$107,596,869

Congressional District 2

COUNTY	TOTAL FY16 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
CONWAY	\$829,507
FAULKNER	\$1,388,581
PERRY	\$707,568
PULASKI	\$551,318
SALINE	\$38,686
VAN BUREN	\$399,273
WHITE	\$3,037,047
TOTAL	\$6,951,980

Congressional District 3

COUNTY	TOTAL FY16 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
BENTON	\$1,488,073
BOONE	\$183,004
CARROLL	\$442,833
CRAWFORD	\$45,524
MARION	\$385,369
NEWTON	\$141,620
POPE	\$1,177,677
SEARCY	\$812,907
SEBASTIAN	\$80,370
WASHINGTON	\$1,622,630
TOTAL	\$6,380,007

Congressional District 4

COUNTY	TOTAL FY16 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
ASHLEY	\$1,729,761
BRADLEY	\$175,601
CALHOUN	\$76,959
CLARK	\$80,101
CLEVELAND	\$245,404
COLUMBIA	\$201,476
CRAWFORD	\$45,524
DALLAS	\$104,247
DREW	\$1,648,649
FRANKLIN	\$590,557
GARLAND	\$68,275
GRANT	\$65,142
HEMPSTEAD	\$132,600
HOT SPRING	\$279,964
HOWARD	\$148,469
JEFFERSON	\$6,648,456
JOHNSON	\$594,649
LAFAYETTE	\$1,447,582
LITTLE RIVER	\$80,769
LOGAN	\$898,253
MADISON	\$286,544
MILLER	\$400,163
MONTGOMERY	\$232,977
NEVADA	\$272,206
NEWTON	\$141,620
OUACHITA	\$171,660
PIKE	\$328,125
POLK	\$443,084
SCOTT	\$101,431
SEBASTIAN	\$80,370
SEVIER	\$253,564
UNION	\$264,086
YELL	\$941,090
TOTAL	\$19,179,358

Date Source: REAP/FIMMI — 12/23/2016

Includes: Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Wetland Reserve Easements.

Figures in blue denote counties with two Congressional Districts.





Great Blue Heron Perching on a Snag, Clark County





USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

December 2016

