



Arkansas Conservation Partnership

What is the Partnership?

Arkansas is a state blessed with soil and water resources. Over the last century, Arkansas landowners have collectively utilized these resources to make Arkansas a national leader in agricultural and forestry production. Maintaining profitable production while protecting these natural resources is increasingly more challenging. To more effectively assist private landowners in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century, several organizations have formed the Arkansas Conservation Partnership (ACP). The ACP consists of the following:

- Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD)
- Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC)
- The Arkansas Association of Conservation District Employees (AACDE)
- Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D)
- University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service (UA-CES)
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB)

The partnership is a unique force, combining the strengths of federal, state and local organizations along with educational institutions to help preserve and protect the Natural State. The vision of the ACP is to foster a productive Arkansas that is in harmony with a quality environment.

Guiding Principles

While the tasks and services of these individual organizations are different, they share a common sense of purpose: to assist Arkansas landowners in using their land in a manner that

conserves natural resources and sustains economic vitality while protecting the environment. This common sense of purpose is the foundation of the ACP.

The guiding principals of the ACP include a shared commitment to the conservation ethic and a pledge to work together, utilizing the partnership to deliver services with more effectiveness and efficiency.

The ACP is committed to locally-led conservation of natural resources by providing a unique combination of educational, financial, and technical assistance to landowners. While each partner offers unique services, the ACP is committed to teamwork, consensus, joint decision-making, and sharing of successes and failures. The partnership strives to breakdown interagency barriers, eliminate duplication of efforts, and, improve communication so that landowners are better served.

How Does the Partnership Function?

While everyone who belongs to one of the member organizations is part of the ACP, the partnership has two interagency committees that meet regularly. The Cooperative Management Team (CMT) consists of the AACD President, AACDE President, ANRC Executive Director, the NRCS State Conservationist, the State Forester, Arkansas Forestry Commission, the Associate Vice President for Extension for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, the Dean/Director of the School of Agriculture Fisheries and Human Science at UAPB; and the RC&D President. The purpose of the CMT is to provide executive leadership for land and water conservation priorities in the State of Arkansas and to carry out the guiding principles as set by the ACP.

The Partnership Workgroup (PWG) consists of one or more representatives of each of the Arkansas Conservation Partnership members. The CMT member appoints one or more member(s) from their organization to the PWG. The PWG meets as needed to accomplish priorities set by the CMT.

A Brief History of the Partners

Arkansas Conservation Districts

Conservation districts are political sub-divisions of the State of Arkansas. They were created by popular vote of resident landowners, as authorized by Act No. 197 of the General Assembly of 1937, which was the nation's first conservation districts law. District lines generally coincide with county lines, resulting in a total of 75 conservation districts in the state.

Conservation District Directors. Act No. 197 provides for a five-member board of directors to govern the affairs of a conservation district. The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission appoints two (2) members and three (3) are elected by resident landowners.

Duties of Conservation District Directors.

As an appointed or elected government official, the conservation district director assumes a solemn obligation to the public on taking the Oath of Office.

At its core, the director's job is to furnish leadership for the local soil and water conservation program. A director must think, plan, recognize problems, examine alternative courses of action, make decisions, and set priorities for conservation work. If districts do not accept this challenge, state and federal officials will make decisions that local people should have made.

District Responsibilities. Districts have significant responsibilities. When these responsibilities are carried out fully using the range of powers given to districts, federal and state programs become more effective as a

result. Responsibilities include:

- a. Furnishing effective local leadership in the form of an organized governing body. Boards should reorganize annually, although officers may succeed themselves an indefinite number of times.
- b. Holding regular and special meetings to determine community needs for conservation and resource development, and to plan their work.
- c. Developing a long-range program for soil and water conservation as mutually agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding with the U. S. Department of Agriculture.
- d. Developing an annual work plan to serve as a guide in carrying out the long-range program.
- e. Developing an annual budget that reflects financial requirements to carry out the annual work plan.
- f. Preparing an annual report of work accomplishments that reflects the district's success in carrying out the annual work plan.
- g. Enlisting needed assistance from whatever source is available.
- h. Determining who receives services and setting priorities regarding the kinds and amount of work to be done in carrying out items in the long-range program and annual work plan.
- i. Consulting with and making recommendations to all agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission regarding conservation needs and programs to carry out conservation activities.
- j. Providing funds, services and facilities, as available, to carry out district activities.
- k. Keeping adequate records to supply needs for information by USDA agencies and the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission.
- l. Report to the public on resource conservation needs and the work of the district.
- m. Providing for the supervision of district employees.
- n. Managing funds, facilities and equipment belonging to the district.

- o. Cooperating with other districts and governmental bodies in matters of mutual concern.
 - p. Actively encouraging all landowners and operators to become cooperators of the district.
 - q. Providing information assistance to educational institutions and other organizations on subjects related to soil and water conservation.
 - r. Developing a systematic method of follow-up work needed to carry out individual and group conservation plans.
- i. As a condition to extending benefits on private lands, the district may require contributions in money, services, or materials, except that no charge may be made for technical services provided by NRCS, or other agency providing technical assistance.
 - j. To develop land use regulations within the district when needed to conserve soil and water resources, as provided in Act No. 197
 - k. To cooperate with other districts in the exercise of any of these powers.
 - l. To organize an irrigation, drainage or watershed development district to install, operate and maintain works of improvement such as dams, levees, ditches and pumping stations, as provided in Act No. 329 of 1949.
 - m. To form improvement project areas to assure local obligations in installing, operating and maintaining structural measures in watershed projects and Resource Conservation and Development measures, as provided in Act No. 197, as amended.

District Powers. Conservation districts are given the following specific authorities by Act No. 197, as amended:

- a. To carry out preventive and control measures for better utilization of soil and water resources on public and private lands with the consent and cooperation of those in charge of such lands.
- b. To enter into agreements and furnish financial or other aid to any private or public agency or land user within the district for better utilization of soil and water resources, and for disposal of water as the directors deem necessary.
- c. To obtain by purchase, gift or otherwise, any real or personal property to accomplish goals of the district.
- d. To make available to land users any equipment and materials needed to carry out soil and water conservation programs.
- e. To construct, improve, operate and maintain works of improvement as needed.
- f. To develop comprehensive plans for soil and water management in the district, and bring this information as needed.
- g. To accept contributions in money, services or materials from any source for use in carrying out the district program, except that forest tree seedlings must be obtained from the Arkansas Forestry Commission's nursery when available.
- h. To sue and be sued in the name of the district; to have an official seal; to have perpetual succession unless terminated as provided in Act No. 197; to make and execute contracts; to borrow money, issue

notes and bonds, and mortgage property; levy taxes based on specific benefits; and to make and amend regulations as needed.

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts

The Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD)

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts serves as an umbrella organization for Conservation Districts (see description above). An Executive Board gives direction and sets policy for AACD programs. The Executive Board is comprised of five officers, elected by Conservation Districts at the annual meeting, and seven Area Presidents, elected at area meetings. Conservation Districts participate in a resolution process that provides guidance to the Executive Board and Program Coordinator. For more information on the AACD and conservation districts, visit the AACD website at <http://www.aracd.org/default.htm>.

Arkansas Association of Conservation District Employees

Arkansas Association of Conservation District Employees

The Arkansas Association of Conservation District Employees (AACDE) facilitates the professional development of district employees through educational and training opportunities. AACDE serves as a valuable networking and communications tool to help conservation district employees meet the challenge set forth by the local district boards to expand the influence of conservation on the land and environment. AACDE is a part of the *Conservation Team* that is dedicated to strengthening Conservation District programs through local leadership with state leadership support. The employee newsletter can be found on the AACD website at <http://www.aracd.org/default.htm>



Arkansas Natural Resources Commission

An integral part of Arkansas' conservation district enabling legislation was the creation of the

"State Soil Conservation Committee." The main purpose of this committee was to oversee the establishment and operation of Arkansas' conservation districts.

As districts became established, the committee began to provide training to district directors and to provide field staff that could visit districts and explain district law and operating procedures. Financial support was also provided (in time) for the general operation of the district and for individual district projects.

Other committee duties included developing the state program for soil conservation, facilitating a district discontinuance process, overseeing district director elections and appointments and

removing district directors for neglect of duty or malfeasance.

The "State Soil Conservation Committee" operated from within various state agencies until 1963 when Act No. 14 of the Arkansas General Assembly created the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ASWCC), today named the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC). The Act transferred all duties, powers and functions of the Arkansas Geological & Conservation Commission in relation to soil conservation and flood control to ANRC. The Act also abolished the Arkansas Water Conservation Commission and the Water Compact Commission and transferred their duties, powers and functions to the newly created cabinet-level agency.

It can be said that the state agency for soil conservation is but one of the threads that make up the cloth of the soil conservation movement. An intergovernmental program that is sometimes confusing and difficult to separate into its various relationships supports this movement. However, without the contribution of the state partner, the soil and water conservation movement would not be as successful as it has been.

The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission is a statutory body consisting of nine members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the State Senate. Two members represent each of the State's four congressional districts and one at-large commissioner. The Executive Director of the Commission is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor. The Executive Director also serves as ex-officio Secretary of the Commission, but is not a voting member.

The Commission establishes policy and makes funding and regulatory decisions relative to soil conservation, water rights, dam safety and water resource planning and development within the State.

Arkansas Natural Resources Commission W <http://www.anrc.arkansas.gov> W 501-682-1611

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts W <http://aracd.org> W 501-682-2915

Assistance to the Conservation Districts. ANRC provides direct financial and administrative assistance to the State's 75 conservation districts. This assistance directly affects the conservation districts' ability to function productively.

Natural Resources Conservation Service



Mission. To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people

conserve, improve and sustain our natural resources and environment.

Our History. The Natural Resources Conservation Service began in the Dust Bowl days of the 1930's as the Soil Erosion Service when Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act, Public Law 46, August 25, 1933. The law established the Soil Erosion Service as an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The agency was renamed the Soil Conservation Service in 1935. By 1936, the Soil Conservation Service supervised 454 Civilian Conservation Corps camps.

In 1903 Hugh Hammond Bennett joined the Bureau of Soils. A native of North Carolina, Dr. Bennett began his career with the USDA Bureau of Soils in 1903 as a soil scientist. Part evangelist, part scientist, Bennett dedicated his life to one objective: the proper use and treatment of the land. He served as the agency's first Chief from 1935 to 1951.

Bennett set up the first erosion experiment station at Guthrie, Oklahoma, late in 1929 to measure the effects of runoff. Soon, nine other stations were established, one in Batesville, Arkansas.

Arkansas was the first state to enact a model conservation district law, March 3, 1937. The first soil and water conservation district, however, began in Anson County, North Carolina, the birthplace of Hugh Hammond

Bennett. Today, more than 260 NRCS employees serve all 75 Arkansas conservation districts from 62-field service centers across the state.

NRCS field service centers are led by district conservationists, with NRCS and partner staff members of range conservationists, resource and soil conservationists, engineers, soil scientists, soil conservation and engineering technicians, water management specialists and administrative support specialists. These employees work hand-in-hand with land managers to preserve and maintain natural resources on private lands in The Natural State.

Our Services. There are 12 congressionally funded programs managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service; three are not a part of operations within Arkansas.

Conservation Operations, or CO-1, provides direct technical assistance to land users within the 75 conservation districts in Arkansas. Conservation Operations is the —bread and butter“ of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The **Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention** Act of 1954, Public Law 83-566 provides broad authority to USDA and other federal and state agencies to cooperate in watershed planning, surveying and investigations. NRCS uses the Small Watershed Program to reduce flooding problems, develop erosion control and runoff management guidelines, help landowners control erosion in high priority watersheds, and improve water quality.

The **National Cooperative Soil Survey Program** (NCSS) is an effort to inventory the nation's soils resources. Soil surveys provide information on the distribution of soils, their chemical and physical properties and information on soil behavior under various uses. Soil surveys have been published for 64 of the 75 counties in Arkansas.

The **Booneville Plant Materials Center** (PMC) serves parts of Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma and is part of a national network that provides vegetative solutions to conservation

problems. The Booneville PMC works with other agencies and groups to locate plants to meet specific needs and to develop and demonstrate vegetative establishment methods.

The *Resource Conservation and Development Program* (RC&D) is a unique USDA program to help rural areas promote wise use of natural resources, make community improvements or stimulate economic development. NRCS administers the program providing a coordinator and administrative support to each of the seven Arkansas RC&D Councils. A local council of citizens sets the priorities for each council's activities.

Grazing lands technical assistance in Arkansas is very important. NRCS has four full-time Grazing Lands Specialist on staff and another 54 employees that spend more than fifty percent of their time working on grassland projects. Partnerships are very important to promote grassland activities. The Arkansas Grazing Lands Coalition (AGLC) was formed to provide leadership and direction to the Grazing Lands programs in Arkansas. AGLC's membership is made-up of representatives of the major agricultural support groups in Arkansas.

The *Emergency Watershed Protection program* helps restore watersheds ravaged by natural disasters.

NRCS provides *technical assistance* for all 2002 Farm Bill programs. In addition, many state agencies or non-profit organizations often look to NRCS technical assistance for support of their conservation cost-share programs. EQIP, CRP, and WRP are funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Currently these programs, along with traditional conservation technical assistance, are administered through three Natural Resources Conservation Service areas in Arkansas. The top Natural Resources Conservation Service official in Arkansas is the State Conservationist. An Assistant State Conservationist heads each Natural Resources Conservation Service area

for Field Services. The ASTC(FS) answers directly to the state conservationist and is responsible for administering Natural Resources Conservation Service programs throughout his/her area.

Cooperative Extension Service

The University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service (CES) came into existence on May 8, 1914 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act and thus creating the —Bring the University to the People“ services.

Today, the CES is a unique achievement of American education. It is an agency for change and for problem solving, a catalyst of individual and group action with a history of eighty-seven years of public service. Extension brings the rewards of higher education into the lives of all segments of our extraordinarily diverse population.

The CES services, provided through land-grant universities established under the provisions of the first and second Morrill Land-Grant College Acts in 1862 and 1890 provided an opportunity for the children of the working man to secure a higher education. Then came a new concept, which cooperative extension embodied, that the knowledge within the land-grant institutions should be made available to those not attending those institutions and should continue to be available throughout one's life. Thus the university was brought to the people.

Extension was designed as a partnership of the land-grant universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, the provisions of the law were broad enough that the states were able to bring their counties into the system as a third legal partner. Today, Extension is truly a cooperative under-taking, with the county, state and federal partners interdependent, yet with

each having considerable independence in funding, staff, and programming. Each partner performs distinct function essential to the operation of the total system.

Mission. The mission of the Extension Service is to assure an effective nationwide Cooperative Extension System that is responsive to priority needs and the Federal interest and policies with quality information, education, and problem-solving programs.

Cooperation with People. Cooperation is the hallmark of extension's relations with people. Its educational programs are available to anyone who wishes to participate, but no one is forced to take part. Within this voluntary cooperative framework, extension, drawing upon research-based knowledge, teaches people to identify problems, to analyze information, to decide among alternative courses of action for dealing with those problems, and to locate the resources to accomplish a preferred action.

The educational programs it undertakes most often arise as a response to needs identified on the local level. In addition to basic educational programs, Extension staff members and volunteers meet local needs by organizing such activities as weed and insect identification clinics, providing materials on the conservation of natural resources, distributing information about diet and health, and encouraging participation, especially by youth, in the educational aspects of county and state fairs.

Extension Financing. The CES system is financed primarily by federal, state, and local taxes, although substantial sums are contributed to Extension mainly to 4-H by private individuals and institutions. Volunteer services add greatly to the effectiveness of Extension's programs. In addition, the results of research carried on by the land-grant institutions and USDA provide the foundation for Extension's educational work.

Extension poised for the future. Through two

world wars, the most severe depression the nation has ever seen, drought that sent dust storms rolling across the entire nation, and a farm depression that seriously affected a third of the nation's farms and many rural communities, Extension has been a force for sustained, rational change that improves the quality of American life. It has taken the University to the people. Today, people are concerned about the wise use of natural resources. Forged for change by past necessities, CES in partnership with ACP is poised to meet the challenges of conservation issues of today.

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff



The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is an 1890 Land Grant University. It is the second oldest state supported institution of higher learning in Arkansas. It was created by an act of the Arkansas Legislature in 1873 as Branch Normal College of the Arkansas Industrial University (now the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville). The act stipulated that the institution was being established for the convenience and well-being of the —Poorer Classes“. The Land Grant Act of 1890 charged the college to teach Agriculture, Mechanic Arts, and Military Tactics without excluding other scientific and classical studies.

The college opened on September 27, 1875, in a rented frame building on the corner of Sevier and Lindsey Streets in the city of Pine Bluff with Professor Joseph Carter Corbin in charge of three students from Jefferson County and four students from Drew county. In 1882, the college moved to a two-story brick structure in the suburbs of Pine Bluff. Between 1881 and 1894, Branch Normal College conferred ten Bachelor of Arts degrees. From 1894 to 1929 the institution operated as a Junior College. In 1927, the governor appointed an independent board of trustees for the college and the state legislature appropriated \$275,000 for the

erection of a new physical plant just outside the city limits. In 1929, the college expanded into a standard four-year degree granting institution and was known as Arkansas Agricultural Mechanical and Normal College (AM&N College). In 1933, AM&N. College was certified as a standard four year college. On July 1, 1972, a merger rejoined the two oldest public higher educational institutions in the state: Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College was merged with the University of Arkansas System and renamed the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB).

The University operates three farm sites. The 220 acre college farm which was obtained in 1929 is located about 0.5 miles from the main campus, the 871 acre Lonoke farm site which was deeded in 1991 is located about 54 miles from campus and the 48 acre Marianna site which was obtained on a long term lease is located approximately 88 miles from campus. These sites allow the university to conduct research and demonstrations on different soil types and under slightly different environmental conditions. They also allow the university to demonstrate Best Management Practices (BMPs) in different parts of the state.

The university became a part of the Arkansas Conservation Partnership in 1997. This was another step in the university's efforts to serve the small and limited resources farmers and families in the state. Conservation and good stewardship are just as important to these groups as they are to any other group in the state. A UAPB presence will provide an opportunity for the voice of these groups to be heard and it will ensure that these groups have an opportunity to learn about conservation issues that impact their way of life. UAPB feels a special sensitivity and responsibility for working with these groups because they are a part of our mission and continue to be our clientele.

The aforementioned legislative Acts of 1873 and 1890 provide the basis for the historic mission of the University. However, the evolving mission

allows UAPB to maintain a special sensitivity to the needs, aspirations, problems, and opportunities of its historic constituents while serving a more heterogeneous clientele. The University continues to operate with the tripartite focus of student preparation through academic excellence, conducting relevant research for clientele, and providing public service to its constituents.



Resource Conservation and Development

The Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D) was first authorized by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962, Public Law 87-703.

Authority for Administration of the RC&D is delegated to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The intent of USDA is to develop a cost effective Federal Government delivery system that builds local working relationships of the conservation and development of natural resources and enhances the social, economic, and environmental conditions in the United States.

RC&D Federal Program Mission. The mission: To make available the total resources of USDA and other public-private partnerships to build relationships, create financial leverage, and increase the capability of communities to meet their regionally identified resource conservation and development needs.

RC&D Councils. Resource Conservation and Development Councils are recognized as nonprofit corporation within a state. Councils seek and utilize appropriate legal documents in building formal partnerships, and as needed, utilize local, State, and federal statutory means to accomplish the vision and mission of the RC&D Program.

Arkansas is completely covered by seven

RC&D designated areas. These seven areas make up the Arkansas Association of RC&D Councils.

- Arkansas River Valley
- Central Arkansas
- East Arkansas
- Northwest Arkansas
- Ozark Foothills
- Southeast Arkansas
- Southwest Arkansas

Each Council maintains a 501(c) 3 status to assist in obtaining funds necessary for area project implementation.

RC&D Coordinator. The RC&D Coordinator is the designated USDA representative under the administration of NRCS and serves as the liaison between USDA and the RC&D Council. The Coordinator maintains knowledge of and serves as the primary point of access to USDA programs that support the RC&D council plan.

RC&D Partnerships. A major component of the RC&D program is its ability to develop partnerships necessary to address the complexity and diversity of resources needs of Arkansas. The RC&D program maintains a Memorandum of Understanding with many USDA agencies:

- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES)
- Economic Research Service (ERS)
- Forest Service (FS)
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Rural Development (RD) Agencies
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

In 2001, the Arkansas Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils became the seventh member of the Arkansas Conservation Partnership.



Arkansas Forestry Commission

The Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) has been serving Arkansas landowners since 1931 with their forestry needs.

AFC is responsible for the protection of 19,727,978 acres of non-federal forestland in Arkansas. AFC has responsibility for four major priorities:

- **Forest Management** including landowner assistance, BMPs, forest health, forest inventories, prescribed fires, timber tax information and information on how to sell your timber.
- **Protection of Forest** which includes law enforcement of unlawful dumping, timber theft, wildfire, etc.; fire statistics, insects and diseases and rural development grant funds.
- **Community Forestry** deals with urban forestry issues, education on tree selection, planting and maintenance and grant opportunities.
- **Rural Fire Protection** – AFC was given legislative authority to help communities organize, equip, and train volunteer fire departments. Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants are available to fire departments that serve 10,000 or fewer people.
- Other activities include education and outreach to minority and/or limited resource forest land owners, students and landowners. They offer tree seedlings for sale to landowners wishing to establish or re-establish forest.