



Member Meeting Notes
Arkansas Department of Agriculture
October 4, 2023 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Vision: Healthy Managed Forests and Clean Water

Mission: The mission of the Forest and Drinking Water Steering Committee is to facilitate conservation and better management of forested watersheds within Arkansas to protect sources of public water supply through improved understanding and communication between the forest and water sectors.

In-Person:

Chandler Barton, Ar. Dept of Ag – Forestry Division – Division Forester
Joy Wasson, Ar. Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative – Coordinator
Doug Akin, USDA NRCS - State Forester
Roy Richards, Arkansas Rural Water Association – Source Water Protection Technician
John Beasley, Ar. Dept. of Ag. Division of Forestry – BMP Coordinator
Bob Fowler, Ar. Dept. of Ag. Division of Natural Resources – Environmental Coordinator
Ryan Benefield, Ar. Dept. of Ag. – Deputy Director
Jane Hurley, Central Arkansas Water - Outreach Coordinator

Virtual:

Shannon Bione, Ar. Dept. of Health - Geologist
Becky Roark, Beaver Watershed Alliance – Executive Director
Tate Wentz, Ar. Dept of Ag. – Natural Resources Division – Water Quality Section Manager
Scott Meek, Green Bay Packaging – Safety & Environmental Manager
Kathy Hawes, Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water – Coordinator
Pam Nelson, Northwest Arkansas Land Trust – Director of Land Protection
Dr. Brian Haggard, U of A – Arkansas Water Resource Center – Professor/Director
Jane Hurley, Central Arkansas Water – Education Outreach Specialist
Bill Bartush, Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture – Coordinator
Hal Halvorson – University of Central Arkansas – Professor, Dept. of Biology
Haley Racioppo - University of Central Arkansas – Graduate Student
Taylor Dye – Ozark Land Trust - Conservation Specialist
Joe Friend – University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff – Forester
Julia Schmidt – Texas A&M Forestry – Water Resources Forester
John Pennington – Univ. of AR Div. of Ag. Cooperative Extension - Water Quality Instructor/Educator
Helen Denniston – Natural Resource Conservation Service – SRC
Roger Cousins – Natural Resource Conservation Service – State Partnership Programs Specialist

Trey Lieblong – Conway Corporation – Environmental Coordinator

AGENDA

10:00 -10:15 am

Introduction/Collaborative Update:

- Introductions
- Agenda/Collaborative Update

Chandler Barton, Div of Forestry

10:15 – 11:00 am

Partner/Program Updates:

- Dept. of Ag. – Natural Resources Div Updates
- War Eagle RCPP/Beaver Watershed Urban Forestry Grant
- NWA Land Trust RCPP Proposal
- Brewer Lake Monitoring Effort
- NRCS Program Results for FY23
- Forestry BMP Survey Update
- ARWA Source Water Protection Plans, 2024
- Four States Water Conference, Feb, 2024
- Other updates

Partners

Tate Wentz, NRD
Becky Roark, BWA
Pam Nelson, NWALT
Hal Halvorson, UCA
Roger Cousins, NRCS
John Beasley, Div. of Forestry
Roy Richards, ARWA
Julia Schmidt, Texas A&M Forestry
All

11:00 – 11:45 am

Discussion:

- Arkansas Water Resources Conference '23 Follow up
- AR Water Resource Partners 2024 Webinar Series Topics
- 2024 meetings schedule/format/Steering Committee
- Other opportunities

Joy Wasson
Brian Haggard/Joy Wasson
Joy Wasson
All

11:45 – 12:00 pm

Wrap Up

Partner/Program Updates:

Ar. Dept. of Ag. – Natural Resource Division, Tate Wentz:

- The Non Point Source Request For Pre-Proposals for FY24 complete. 26 preproposals submitted, \$7.1M requested, \$3.3 M approximately to allocate.
- AR Unpaved Roads Program in FY23 had a record of 15 applications, funded 13 with \$300,000 in state funds and \$600,000 in EPA funds.
- Gov announced update to State Water Plan. US Army Corp of Engineers will be contracted to do the plan
 - o PH1 – identify areas of interest/needs since 2014 (last plan)
 - o PH2 – update the plan

Beaver Watershed Alliance – Becky Roark, Director

- In year 2 of War Eagle RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) Project
 - o 1600 acres getting a TSI plan
 - o 2 workshops – Forestry @ Withrow Springs, Sediment & Unpaved Roads
- 2 Paths in forestry practices in NWAR: pollinators & wildlife, commercial. Trying to get resources to these landowners to help them move forward.
- \$2.76M Town Branch Stream Restoration w/ 80 acres of invasives removal and forest restoration practices.
- City of Fay Pick Me Up Program – BWA will partner to add invasives removal
- 4 Stream Barrier Removals

Dept. of Ag. Forestry Division - Chandler Barton, Division Forester

- Will announce application for funding through IRA, Urban and Community Forestry Projects (\$1.4 mil available)
 - o Projects could have water quality focus, but projects must benefit underserved/disadvantaged communities.

Northwest Arkansas Land Trust – Pam Nelson, Director of Land Protection

- RCPP Grant application submitted, 1st time to submit as a program lead.
- Farmland Program, focuses on entity held easements.

University of Central Arkansas – Hal Halvorson, Professor Dept. of Biology

- Brewer Lake Monitoring Efforts (including Cypress Creek inflow) – research is to understand how effective is the conservation work on the ground working to positively impact nutrient levels in the lake and to guide treatment recommendations.
- Lake Brewer supplies 80,000 people. Looking at taste & odor from a causal side and external nutrient loading, algal blooms
- Goal is to keep Lake Brewer as a water source
- 5 year data set currently available with plans to continue for another 5 years
- NRCS has been working with upstream landowners in the watershed on conservation activities

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Roger Cousins, State Partnership Programs Specialist

- Upcoming in 2024 – EQIP looking to double in awarded amounts through IRA (Inflation Reduction Act).

- Graphs of 2023 program summaries were presented to the group. Link to this information will be provided by NRCS and disseminated to this group.

AR. Dept. of Ag. Forestry Division – John Beasley, BMP Coordinator

- Field checking harvest tracks for update to the BMP Implementation Survey. Last BMP survey completed in 2018 (9th overall).
- Report should come in end of 2024. Objective is assure satisfactory rates of implementation are maintained and to keep loggers trained.

Ar. Rural Water Association Source Water Protection Program – Roy Richards, Source Water Protection Technician

- 3 Source Water Protection Plans are slated to be updates for 2023
 - o Booneville Development Center
 - o Danville
 - o Arkadelphia
- These plans include PSOC's (potential sources of contamination) mapping for the area's drinking water source.
- There are 63 surface systems in AR, 294 groundwater systems.
- The annual Source Water Protection Planning meeting to be held by ARWA will be in early February, dates will be sent from Roy to this group.

Texas A&M Forestry – Julia Schmidt, Water Resources Forester

- Working with a 319 grant, TX A&M Forestry will be hosting a 4-states Water Resource Conference February 29th, 2024 at the Texarkana Convention Center.
- Looking for input possible presenters and/or panel discussion to represent current events in water for each state.
- Please send ideas to Julia: Julia.Schmidt@tfs.tamu.edu

Univ. of AR Div. of Ag. Cooperative Extension – John Pennington, Water Quality Instructor/Educator

- Cooperative Extension is getting new leadership, Assoc. V.P. in January + Community Development person.
- Looking to leverage work in areas of Arkansas that are underserved or haven't had much participation in programs.

H2Ozarks

- H2Ozarks is facilitating the development of a watershed management plan for the Upper White River Watershed.
- ***Tues October 24th, 3:00 – 5:00 pm***, H2Ozarks will be hosting a landowner input meeting in ***Huntsville at the Carroll Electric Cooperative***
- Looking to hear from landowners about goals, challenges, solutions about conservation practices on the landscape. RSVP to erin@h2ozarks.org

Green Bay Packaging – Scott Meek, Safety & Environmental Manager

- GBP remaining active w/ Lake Point Remove Watershed Alliance and Saline River Watershed Alliance

- August stakeholder meeting were held w/ private landowners.
- Saline one of the fastest growing urban areas in AR, GBP wanting to take an active role as a major landowner in the watershed.
- Held a logger training in June w/ > 32 logging crews.

Discussion:

Arkansas Water Resources Conference '23 Follow up

- Total 166 participants, great feedback, audience feedback = keep it simple.
- Looking to continue to build on momentum created by the great breakout groups. Conference summary can be found [here](#). Follow up document from breakout groups sent out to participants, can be downloaded [here](#).

AR Water Resource Partners 2024 Webinar Series, Dr. Brian Haggard – UofA AWRC

- An option to keep discussions going beyond the annual AR Water Resource Conference.
- Monthly or quarterly webinar series with different areas of focus surrounding water resources in Arkansas.
- Could be an opportunity to engage a broader audience bigger than just this conference's attendees
- Would be Hosted by the Arkansas Water Resource Center, potential session organizers/hosts include Beaver Watershed Alliance, Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative, Illinois River Watershed Partnership, Dept. of Agriculture – Forestry and Natural Resources Divisions.
- What topics would AFDWC be interested in hosting?
 - o Prescribed Fire and Water Quality (cont'd from Virginia Tech. pres. At the AWRCConf)
 - o Hydrilla invasives removal, social impact and stakeholder feedback sessions
 - o Forestry BMP's – tech. look at effects on Water Quality
 - o Others? Email ideas to arforestsandwater@gmail.com

AFDWC Update a look at 2023, upcoming meetings format/schedule for 2024

- AFDWC organization overview as of Sept. 2023:
 - o 149 members (email contacts)
 - o 152 contact via website, 88 website subscribers, 19 in website members forum
- Communication:
 - o Fall newsletter: 152 emails sent, 148 delivered, 122 opened (82%), 65 clicks on newsletter links
- Created new website in 2021, added to Source Water Collaborative's website
- Conducted 2 conferences in 2022, 2023 cohosting with other organizations
- Biggest area of Potential Growth: Increased Funding and Projects
 - o Have one potential collaborative project with >5 partners, ready to submit for funding. Project will demonstrate forest health practices, riparian planting, forest and water field days/workshops statewide in drinking water watersheds.
- 2024 Goals:
 - o Build membership (200?), increase newsletter recipients by 50
 - o Host 1 webinar series, 1-2 workshops/field tours/site visits

- Continue to co-host annual Water Conference
- Acquire funding to support a multi-year collaborative effort/project.
- 2024 Meetings
 - What would you like to see in meeting cadence, format, content, steering committee?
 - Would you be willing to donate 10-20 extra hours of your time over the next year (2024) to be a part of our steering committee?
 - A survey will be sent out to members.

Please provide any additional feedback/corrections to this information to Joy Wasson (arforestsandwater@gmail.com) or Chandler Barton (Chandler.Barton@agriculture.arkansas.gov).

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.