

2015 Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum

Final report

June 2015

On May 26 and 27, 45 stakeholders from Arkansas's forestry and drinking water sectors (Attachment A) convened at Camp Mitchell on Petit Jean Mountain at the first-ever Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum to explore the connections between forests and drinking water, and to brainstorm ways to work together to continue to sustain these two very important and interdependent resources (see Attachment B for Forum background and planning information).

The Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum was convened with the knowledge that forests and drinking water are strongly connected and dependent on each other. Southeastern forests that are actively managed can help protect and increase drinking water supplies while also providing economic benefits. The Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum was intended to begin a collaborative relationship between the forestry and drinking water sectors, and to think creatively about Arkansas's future to help ensure the viability of both sectors. The Forum's key goals and objectives were:

- **Information sharing and learning** about forestry and drinking water stakeholders, including:
 - The connection between forestry and drinking water
 - Important details about each sector, including operations, challenges, and what drives their work
 - Information about forestry-drinking water collaboration examples
 - Information about available resources including existing initiatives, potential funding sources and technical assistance
- **Start a conversation between forestry and drinking water stakeholders.** Discuss and brainstorm:
 - How to enhance communication and develop relationships between drinking water and forestry stakeholders
 - Options for managing forested watersheds for both sustainable drinking water and forest production
 - Opportunities for forestry and drinking water collaboration in Arkansas
- **Networking**
 - Participants will meet and talk with at least five new people at Forum – could lead to over 250 new relationships being built
- **Next Steps**
 - Develop a short list of next steps participants and other stakeholders can take to further the ideas and energy of this Forum
- **HAVE FUN!**

Most Forum participants gathered the day before the Forum to go on a watershed restoration site tour sponsored by Central Arkansas Water. Participants toured the Winrock Grass Farm Forest Legacy Restoration Project, which highlighted water utility and landowner collaboration, land acquisition, stream bank restoration, and a tree planting demonstration/research site. The primary project outcome is reduced sediment loads to the water treatment plant, which Central Arkansas Water is currently trying to quantify in terms of water treatment cost savings. The tour fostered much discussion about the connection between forests and drinking water and set the stage for the Forum the next day.

After the tour, participants gathered for dinner and a social at Camp Mitchell. The purpose of this gathering was to introduce participants to each other, begin informal collaborative discussions, and foster a collegial atmosphere. The Forum agenda the next day focused first on presenting and discussing the drinking water and forestry sectors, forestry-drinking water collaboration examples, funding sources, and public outreach, education, and messaging tools. The afternoon was devoted to breakout sessions focused on the three key themes identified as needs in the survey responses participants provided when they registered for the Forum (see next section for breakout group topics).

Forum Outcomes and Next Steps

Forum participants demonstrated strong passion and commitment to the Forum's key objectives and a willingness to listen to each other. The Forum identified the unique issues and challenges of the forestry and drinking water sectors, as well as the rigorous standards that each sector follows. Participants worked together to develop a broad vision of how the forestry and drinking water sectors can work together, build partnerships and collaboration, and learn how to pool resources to achieve common goals. Participants agreed that this initial gathering and effort has the potential to grow. Forum planning leaders challenged participants to take the messages of the Forum back to their respective organizations, and to seek ways to include the relationships built at the Forum in their daily work.

Follow Up and Next Steps Identified by Breakout Groups

Breakout sessions identified the following specific needs and next steps to continue the momentum of the Forum:

Group 1 - How to address public education, outreach and messaging needs for drinking water, forestry and the connection between the two?

Specific follow-up actions and next steps include:

- Keep the dialogue going and build trust with follow up meetings, calls, using email and other means using trusted representatives in stakeholder organizations
- Figure out the best avenues for connecting the two sectors (conferences, trainings, publications, other events) – build awareness of each other's missions and technical challenges.
- Identify the audiences for specific messages, and pay attention to where objectives might overlap (common ground)

- Following good outreach examples such as Beaver Water District’s outreach effort - “Secchi Day on Beaver Lake” – which can be replicated by other water utilities:
 - 25 shoreline activities each year that don’t change
 - Family-oriented – lots of the same families come every year
 - Engaging, hands-on activities
 - Shape public opinion – perception is reality
 - Free
 - Provide food
- Use recognition programs and publicize the program and results in various media
- Determining the best means for getting water groups involved in forestry sector messaging and vice versa – forestry field days and events can include water messages
- Develop a joint Public Service Announcement about the value of managed forest land for protecting drinking water
- Invite the Arkansas Forestry Association to present sessions on the relative value of managed versus unmanaged forests at future American Water Works Association, Water Environment Association, Rural Water Association and other relevant conferences
- For existing and future outreach and messaging:
 - Choose words carefully (following the principles of Water Words That Work or similar tools)
 - Make follow-up calls to verify and improve the messaging
 - Start small and local
 - Incentivize
 - Give people actions they can take that they can see a benefit from
 - Connect message to something that’s important to your audience
 - Target messages to kids to take home information and engage parents

Group 2 - How to address resource needs for forestry and drinking water, including collaborative efforts?

This group agreed on the following needs:

- Both the forestry and drinking water sectors, and other partner organizations such as land trusts, need funding to achieve the collaboration goals of the Forum.
- Ongoing communication between these sectors and groups is needed to continue to strengthen the connections and determine collaborative efforts and priorities.

Specific follow-up actions and next steps include:

- Attend key sector meetings to continue building partnerships
- Identify funding sources for Arkansas forest and drinking water projects, and update/distribute the funding resources manual that has been out of print for some time.
- Work within our Forum contact framework to discuss how to effectively include drinking water sector stakeholders in selecting priority watersheds for funding, and making funding guideline, eligibility, and award decisions for Clean Water Act funding, NRCS funding, and other funding programs.
- Identify priority areas for forestry-drinking water collaborative projects. Priority areas cover many watersheds and have already been identified in:
 - NRCS’s watershed priorities plan

- Arkansas Forest Action Plan
- Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan
- Arkansas Water Plan
- Local Conservation Districts help to set watershed priorities for NRCS. Water utilities can participate and vote in this priority-setting. Get the word out to water utilities so they know they can participate.
- Keep building relationships – one idea is for water utilities to host an annual fish fry or similar gathering and invite all the watershed landowners. City of Mulberry is doing this with great success.
- Consider conducting a follow-up survey of Forum participants to ask about/confirm next steps
- Develop a mentoring program for small forest landowners to learn from others who are already practicing a conservation and stewardship ethic

Group 3 - What would successful Arkansas forestry-drinking water collaborations/efforts look like? What results do we want to achieve?

This group agreed on the needs and next steps identified by the other two groups. They also agreed that successful forestry-drinking water collaboration efforts in Arkansas would:

- Communicate a unified message – reduce or eliminate sedimentation to drinking water treatment plants while also protecting and conserving managed forests
- Address real-world issues, and identified threats and risks to both sectors
- Change perceptions within each sector, as well as change perceptions external to the forestry and drinking water sectors (such as the public and conservation sectors)
- Bring partners to the table to discuss necessary policy changes that might help foster collaboration and partnership
- Provide each sector a voice in the other sector – seek mechanisms and avenues to make this happen
- Foster ongoing collaboration, rather than one-time only efforts or projects
- Identify internal and external resources (funding, personnel, other resources) to help build collaboration (internal to each sector, and external to forestry/drinking water sectors). Find existing resources and also determine if new resources need to be created. Use built-in avenues to maximize existing resources if possible.
- Leverage funding through partnerships – one example would be the Arkansas Forestry Commission Woodland Restoration Program – how can we leverage these funds in counties outside of their 29 priority counties? Also, USFS has competitive grants for landscape-scale projects, NRCS funding, USDA Rural Development funding, Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF's), Clean Water Act Section 319 funding, Ross Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Weyerhaeuser Foundation, etc.
- Build relationships between stakeholders – base success on people knowing people
- Use a regional approach to any follow-up discussions, meetings and forums – focus on priority regions/watersheds to focus discussion and convening (northwest Arkansas, Ozarks, River Valley – see above bullet for plans that prioritize watersheds)
- Have measureable results
- Report back results and successes to the larger group

- Utilize the participants of the Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum, or a subgroup of the Forum participants (such as the planning team) to continue the momentum of the Forum and move forward on achieving follow-up actions.
- Follow up with relevant organizations and agencies to get buy-in and support for moving forward
- Make a special effort to reach out to water utilities and municipalities to get them to the table, using our current contact list and annual meetings of the Arkansas Water Resources Association, American Water Works Association, Arkansas Forestry Commission, Arkansas Rural Water Association, Water Environment Federation Association, local and Annual Conservation District meetings, and other avenues.
- Go for the “low-hanging fruit” and build on that success - select collaborative demonstration or pilot projects in South Arkansas watersheds where there is already an active forest management plan with willing forest landowners. Start with these successes and build on them before tackling more resistant or difficult landowners and watersheds.

Other Ideas, Issues and Opportunities Emerging From the Forum

- The forestry and drinking water sectors each collect water quality data for different reasons. Forestry sector data is collected primarily for research purposes to determine silvicultural effects on water quality, and to understand sediment loads especially after storm events, while drinking water data collected is for a variety of operational and human health criteria including turbidity, nutrients, microbiology, and chemical compounds. Therefore, the data collected by each sector may not be directly compatible or comparable. There may be a need for a mutual agreement between the sectors regarding data collection that includes the timing of collection, constituents monitored and tracked, and purpose of data collection.
- Forested watersheds have their own set of unique impacts to water quality (for example, high organic loading, or inputs from gravel road systems) that must be understood and accounted for prior to claims of impairment due to forestry activities.
- There may be a need for increased understanding and support of the claim that managed forests (including timber harvest) are better for water quality than unmanaged forests. Data supports this claim, but there is a perception that harvesting trees is bad for water quality. Expanding understanding about the benefits of managed forests may be necessary for people to fully embrace the connection between forests and drinking water. Entities outside of the forestry industry can help emphasize this claim.

Attachment A Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum Participants

Name	Organization	Position	Phone	Email
Alan Edmondson	Northwest Arkansas Land Trust	Land Stewardship Specialist	(479) 966-4666	aedmondson@nwalandtrust.org
Alan Fortenberry	Beaver Water District	Chief Executive Officer	(479) 756-3651	afortenberry@bwdh2o.org
Amy Wilson	Beaver Water District	Director of Public Affairs	(479) 756 3651	awilson@bwdh2o.org
Arnold Hameister	Arkansas Forestry Commission	BMP Coordinator	(501) 472-4834	arnold.hameister@arkansas.gov
Brad Huffhines	Beaver Water District	Environmental Technician	(479) 756-3651	bhuffhines@bwdh2o.org
Bradley Jones	Arkansas Department of Health		(501) 661-2067	bradley.jones@arkansas.gov
Brandon Nelson	Waldron Waterworks	Superintendent	(479) 637-3182	brandon.n@cebridge.net
Charles Purtle	Tree Farmer	Tree Farmer	(870) 887-5662	charjanepurtle@yahoo.com
Clint Patterson	Berea College	Forester	(859) 985-3587	clint_patterson@berea.edu
Cynthia Edwards	Arkansas Department of Agriculture	Deputy Secretary	(501) 219-6362	cynthia.edwards@aad.ar.gov
Darcia Routh	AR Dept of Health, Source Water Protection Program	Geologist Supervisor	(501) 661-2856	Darcia.Routh@arkansas.gov
David Casaletto	Ozarks Water Watch/Table Rock Water Quality	Executive Director	(417) 739-5001	dcasaletto@ozarkswaterwatch.org
David Quattlebaum	Arkansas Rural Water Association	Source Water Protection Specialist	(501) 350-6078	arwadq@yahoo.com
Debbie Moreland	Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts	Program Administrator	(501) 682-2915	Debbiepinreal@aol.com
Doug Akin	Arkansas Forestry Commission	Assistant State Forester	(501) 296-1861	doug.akin@arkansas.gov
Dr. Erik Schilling	National Council for Air and Stream Improvement	Professor	(334) 524-0123	eschilling@ncasi.org
Gary D. Baxter	City of Mulberry	Mayor	(479) 462-2108	mayor@cityofmulberry.org
George Rheinhardt	Natural Resource Conservation Service	Forester	(501) 301-3143	george.rheinhardt@ar.usda.gov
Hal Liechty	Univ. of AR at Monticello, School of Forest Resources	Professor	(870) 460-1452	liechty@uamont.edu
Jane Darr	Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers	President	(870) 430-5777	jedarr@centurytel.net
Jane Hurley	Central Arkansas Water	Assistant Director of Water Quality	(501) 223-1577	
Joe Fox	Arkansas Forestry Commission	State Forester	(501) 296-1941	joe.fox@arkansas.gov
John Chapman	The Nature Conservancy	Watershed Restoration Program Dir.	(479) 422-4759	john.chapman@tnc.org
John Pennington	Beaver Watershed Alliance	Executive Director	(479) 750-8007	john@beaverwatershedalliance.org
Jonathan Shipley	City Corporation - Russellville Water and Sewer	Lead Operator	(479) 968-2105	Jane.Hurley@carkw.com
Kitty Weisman	US Endowment / USDAFS Contractor	Contractor	(360) 481-2544	kitty.weisman@icloud.com
Laurie Gharis	University of Arkansas	Assistant Professor	(870) 460-1732	gharis@uamont.edu
Len Weeks	U.S. Forest Service	Forest Soil Scientist	(479) 964-7231	lweeks@fs.fed.us
Luke Walker	Weyerhaeuser	Environmental Manager	(318) 548-6395	luke.walker@weyerhaeuser.com
Max Braswell	Arkansas Forestry Association	Executive Vice President	(501) 374-2441	mbraswell@arkforests.org
Michael Armstrong	AR Game and Fish Commission	Special Projects Biologist	(501) 681-4039	mike.armstrong@agfc.ar.gov
Michael Sullivan	Natural Resource Conservation Service	State Conservationist	(501) 301-3100	michael.sullivan@ar.usda.gov
Nancy Young	Natural Resource Conservation Service	State Resource Conservationist	(501) 301-3134	nancy.young@ar.usda.gov
Randy Easley	Central Arkansas Water	Dir. of Water Quality & Operations	(501) 210-4935	Randy.Easley@carkw.com
Richard Stich	Plum Creek Timber Company	District Supervisor	(870) 510-5254	richard.stich@plumcreek.com
Rick Monk	USFS - Ozark St. Francis National Forests	Forest Hydrologist	(479) 964-7513	rgmonk@fs.fed.us
Robert Morgan	Beaver Water District	Mgr. of Environmental Quality	(479) 756-3651	rmorgan@bwdh2o.org
Sandi J Formica	Watershed Conservation Resource Center	Executive Director	(479) 444-1916	formica@watershedconservation.org
Scott Meek	Green Bay Packaging	SFI Program Coordinator	(501) 681-2939	smeek@gbp.com
Stacey McCullough	Public Policy Center	Director	(501) 671-2078	smcullough@uaex.edu
Stephanie Burchfield	AR Dept of Health, Source Water Protection Program	Environmental Specialist	(501) 280-4428	stephanie.burchfield@arkansas.gov
Stephanie Liechty	Central Arkansas Water		(501) 682-0022	Stephanie.Liechty@carkw.com
Steve Mallett	City Corporation - Russellville Water and Sewer	General Manager	(479) 968-2105	smallett@citycorporation.com
Tamara Walkingstick	AR Forest Resources Center, UA, Division of Agriculture	Associate Director	(501) 671-2346	twalkingstick@uaex.edu
Tim Kibe	Green Bay Packaging	Land Dept. Manager	(501) 354-2461	tkibe@gbp.com
John Choate	Tri County Regional Water Distribution District	General Manager	(479) 968-6268	jchoate@tcrw.org

Attachment B

Forum Background and Planning

Forum Background

The US Endowment for Forestry and Communities in Greenville, SC is using private and USDA Forest Service funding to partner with five southeastern states (Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina and Texas) on a regional project called the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water. The effort is building on the work that South Carolina Rural Water conducted in Greenville, South Carolina in 2012, hosting a collaborative forum of drinking water utilities, forestry interests, state and local agencies, and conservation groups. The gathering provided information about the importance of drinking water source protection, forestry perspectives, and creative financing tools for source water protection in forested watersheds. Participants agreed that healthy, well-managed forests are critical to the Southeast's drinking water supply, and that maintaining or expanding healthy forests in watersheds is a cost-effective and appealing strategy for helping ensure clean, abundant supplies of water.

The goals of the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water are to:

- Help maintain or expand healthy forests in drinking water watersheds
- Initiate and develop working relationships between state and local agencies, Rural Water Associations, forestry interests and conservation groups
- Identify watersheds and initiatives that have high potential for cooperative forest conservation, sound management and restoration
- Explore pilot projects to implement creative watershed protection strategies such as Payment for Watershed Services and forestry best management practices, demonstrating the interdependence of healthy forests and drinking water.

To do this the Partnership hired a contractor, Kitty Weisman, to work with drinking water, forestry, and conservation partners from March 1, 2014 through February 28th, 2016 to organize planning meetings in each of the five states with the ultimate goal of hosting a collaborative forests and drinking water forum in each state. The forums are modeled after the 2012 Greenville, South Carolina forum and are intended to share knowledge, available technical resources and assistance, and identify potential target watersheds in each state for further cooperative action.

Forum Planning

Several leaders and stakeholders representing drinking water and forestry organizations indicated an early interest in helping to plan an Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum. This core planning team initially met in person twice, and then had planning conference calls every 3-4 weeks for several months to plan the Forum.

The planning team decided several key logistical details for the Forum including:

- Ensure that invited participants and speakers were high-level decision-makers and experts who have the ability to carry forth and spread the messages of the Forum as leaders in their field
- Invite forest landowners and drinking water utilities in priority watersheds identified in the Arkansas source water protection plan
- Plan and convene a relaxed, informal gathering at a comfortable venue in a central location, providing meals and snacks with no registration fee. Participants would be responsible for covering the cost of their own travel and hotel room, but scholarships would be offered to those for whom costs might prevent participation
- Have participants complete a brief survey when they register for the Forum, answering questions about key needs and challenges
- Use survey responses to determine breakout session and discussion topics
- Have a tour the day before the Forum highlighting a successful watershed protection-restoration project to get participants thinking about the possibilities
- Have dinner and a social the evening before the Forum to introduce participants to each other and foster collaboration
- Don't be "lecture heavy" – build in lots of time for mingling and discussion, and keep presentations very short.
- Organize Forum speakers into key "themes" and limit speaking time to 15 minutes per speaker to ensure enough time for discussion and brainstorming
- Hold afternoon break-out sessions with smaller discussion groups focused on key topics identified in survey responses
- Ensure that discussion and brainstorming sessions were moderated by experienced meeting facilitators
- Plan on attendance of 45-60 participants, including 10-12 speakers

Because the planning team decided that the Forum should include free meals and no registration fee, it became clear that the group would need to raise additional funds to pay for the venue and catering. After visiting the event venue (Camp Mitchell Episcopal Retreat Center in Morrilton, Arkansas) and determining the cost for meeting rooms and meals, the group determined that they would need about \$6,000 to cover the costs of the Forum and still provide free registration to all participants, and a few travel scholarships. In a relatively short time period, the group was able to raise these funds for planning and conference costs (Attachment C)

Attachment C
Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Forum
Contributors and Supporters

Arkansas Department of Health

Arkansas Forestry Association

Arkansas Forestry Commission

Arkansas Forest Resources Center

Arkansas Rural Water Association

Arkansas Water Resources Association

Beaver Watershed Alliance

Beaver Water District

Central Arkansas Water

Multi-Basin Regional Watershed Council

Ozark-St. Francis National Forest

Ozarks Water Watch

US Endowment for Forestry and Communities

Weyerhaeuser