

Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Steering Committee Meeting
 January 20, 2017
 Russellville, US National Forest Service Building
 Draft Minutes

Meeting Facilitator: Bob Morgan

The meeting was called to order and attendees stated that the objective of today's meeting was to review the 2015 Forum meeting and look at 2017 and 2018 goals. Additionally there is a need to finalize plans for a south central Arkansas forum.

Today's attendees were asked to introduce themselves and give a brief statement of their professional involvement in either drinking water or forest issues.

Attendees:

Name	Organization	email
Raven Lawson	CAW	raven.lawson@carkw.com
Joe Fox	AFC	joe.fox@arkansas.gov
Edward Swaim	ANRC	edward.swaim@arkansas.gov
Scott Meek	Green Bay Packaging	smeek@gbp.com
David Quattlebaum	Arkansas Rural Water Association	arwadq@yahoo.com
Doug Akin	AR Forestry Commission	doug.akin@arkansas.gov
Benjamin Gilley	Ar Dept of Health	Benjamin.gilley@arkansas.gov
Darcia Routh	ADH - Engineering	Darcia.routh@arkansas.gov
Arnold Hameister	AFC	arnold.hameister@arkansas.gov
Reed Green	USGS	wrgreen@usgs.gov
Randy Easley	CAW	randy.easley@carkw.com
Brad Hufhines	BWD	bhufhines@bwdh2o.org
Stephanie Burchfield	IRWP	
Nicole Hardiman	IRWP	director@irwp.org
Hal Liechty	UAM	liechty@uamont.edu
George Rheinhardt	NRCS	George.rheinhardt@ar.usda.gov
Helen Denniston	NRCS	Helen.denniston@ar.usda.gov
Rick Monk	USFS	rgmonk@fs.fed.us
Rob Mendez	USFS	wmendez@fs.fed.us
VIA Telephone		
John Pennington	Beaver Watershed Alliance	John@beaverwatershedalliance.org
Hughes Simpson	Texas A & M	HSimpson@tfs.tamu.edu

Hughes Simpson of Texas A&M University gave a brief overview of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant that is funding the Forestry and Water partnership in Arkansas. The grant is a component of a landscape scale restoration involving 4 southern states. Its goal is to make the case for the management of forested watersheds to protect drinking water supplies and other uses. Specific goals of the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Drinking Water are to:

- Help maintain or expand healthy forests in drinking water watersheds
- Initiate and develop collaborative working relationships between the forestry, drinking water, and conservation sectors

- Identify watersheds and initiatives that have high potential for cooperative forest conservation, sound management and restoration
- Explore pilot projects to implement creative and non-traditional watershed protection strategies such as Payment for Watershed Services and forestry best management practices, demonstrating the interdependence of healthy forests and drinking water.

We then discussed the makeup of the steering committee and how to approach and execute the goals of the grant. A lot of good suggestions about what the project the conclusion was that we should focus on the end product and go forward. To reach the end, we need to know what we are trying to achieve.

Suggestions regarding the role of the committee:

- Keep focus on the end product,
- Maintain open communications and relationships between the various sectors to obtain optimum effectiveness and minimize contrary goals,
- Solidify a unified message, “Healthy forests = clean water”,
- Assure that we all know what different agencies are doing to avoid duplication of efforts and reinventing the wheel,
- Help smaller utilities get buy-in,
- Communicate to all sectors,
- Capture existing efforts such as the Central Arkansas Water’s new website,
- Seek financial assistance for landowners who may have interest in managing forestland,
- Focus on getting our message out, possibly a documentary film to be aired on AETN.

Helen provided information about a new Natural Resources Conservation Service program, the Conservation Innovation Grant Program that may be helpful. The program is available to entities wishing to work with private landowners to get conservation technical assistance on their property. Potentially a group of utilities, say the Arkansas River Valley, could apply for a Conservation Innovation Grant to identify forest land owners and work with them to manage their forests. A single entity would be required to apply for the grant, but several utilities and other agencies could participate. Grants may not go to individual landowners in this program, but grant recipients can work with landowners. Likely the group of utilities would then hire a contractor to implement the grant. The announcement of the program will be in early February.

Joe Fox brought us back to the purpose of our discussion which was to determine the makeup and function of the committee. He said that we need to formalize ourselves. Then he suggested that our initial task should be to develop a Mission Statement and a Strategic Plan. The plan should have a limited number of goals and objectives and for each objective a couple of action steps. We should keep scale in

mind and avoid scope creep. We need to identify the gifts/talents of each committee member and take advantage of what we have and our existing networks. Nicole suggested that the NW Arkansas Open Space Plan may be a good go-by.

Discussion of makeup of the steering committee

It was decided that our official name would be the, "Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Steering Committee. It was agreed that everyone at the table was an essential member plus we should include:

- The new water quality person a Weyerhaeuser (Joe Fox will get name),
- Max Braswell from the Arkansas Forestry Association,
- Scott Simon from the Nature Conservancy (or his assignee),
- A representative of the Arkansas Water Resources Center (Bob will contact Brian Haggard for name),
- A representative of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission,
- A representative of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Joe Krystofik was mentioned),
- Kitty Weismann from the US Endowment and Amy Camacho from EPA Region 6 are also possibilities,
- We discussed a legislator but decided it would be better to keep them informed informally and possibly invite them to the next forum.

Bob will be contacting those organizations and securing additional members.

Frequency of meetings: Twice per year or as needed.

Progress since the initial Forum on Petit Jean in 2015:

We briefly discussed progress made in the Forestry and Water Collaboration since our initial forum in 2015. Our direction coming out of that meeting were to develop a unified message, start spreading the word, and to maintain our network. Progress on those goals include:

- Conducting a regional forum in NW Arkansas
- Holding panel discussions at the Arkansas Forestry Association's annual meeting, the American Water Works Association Southwest Section's annual conference and at the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality's bi-ennial watershed conference.
- John Pennington from Beaver Watershed Alliance shared progress that they have made since the NW Arkansas Forum in meeting with landowners regarding the value of managed forests and conservation plans. They also have conducted forest tours and worked with a landowner on a demonstration farm. Discussion continued concerning the possibility of a U of Ark. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service Discovery Forest similar to the Discovery Farm program.

- Scott Meek from Green Bay Packaging provided details of the relationship that Green Bay and Conway Corporation are developing in the Brewer lake watershed.
- Bob discussed efforts that are being made between the Mulberry River Society and the City of Mulberry to secure a watershed management plan for the Mulberry River watershed.
- An extensive mailing list has been generated.

Priorities for the current Landscape Scale Restoration Grant:

The budget for contracts in the LSR grant is a bit over \$43,000. The estimated cost of 2 forums (statewide and south central) was in the neighborhood of \$20,000 to \$25,000 leaving 18 to 23 thousand for other projects. Suggestions included:

- Web site (also suggested that a facebook page may be a good start at less expense)
- Landowner workshops possibly matching local entities contribution or providing funds for speakers/lunches etc,
- Demonstration projects (focus where other grants may be available and align with agencies). There was continuing discussion of what a demonstration project would look like,
- Developing a discovery forest,
- Paired managed vs un-managed forest plots,
- Clarify that conservation forests and well managed forests are one and the same,
- Create a directory of existing forest/water projects and demonstrations.

It became clear that we needed better direction. An adhoc committee to develop mission and strategic plan was determined to be the highest priority. Bob will seek representatives for the committee. There are to be 5 – 6 members including a private land representative, a public land representative, large and small utilities. The group is to meet and come back to a full committee meeting in late April/early May with drafts for discussion.

Future forums: The steering committee agreed that a follow up statewide forum in 2017 was the desire of those in attendance at the 2015 forum. So we decided to focus on the statewide effort this year with a target date in late October/early November. Possibly a south central forum could follow in 2018, or we could hold the statewide meeting in a south central location. A signup sheet was passed around for volunteers to serve on the forum planning committee. Volunteers were:

- Raven Lawson
- Scott Meek
- Ben Gilley
- Arnold Hameister
- Nicole Hardiman

- BWD (Brad Hufhines or Amy Wilson)
- Hal Liechty
- Bob Morgan

Locations suggested:

- Henderson State
- Hot Springs
- Mt. Magazine

Action Items:

- Form adhoc sub-committee to develop draft Mission and Strategic Plan, report back April/May,
- Convene forum planning sub-committee,
- Look into establishing a Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Facebook page,
- Establish google doc for future communication.