



ARKANSAS FORESTS & DRINKING WATER COLLABORATIVE

**Steering Committee Meeting Notes
December 7, 2021**

Participants:

***Chandler Barton, Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture, Forestry Division
Joy Wasson, Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative, Coordinator
Doug Akin, USDA NRCS, State Forester
Devin Orr, South Carolina Rural Water Association
Roy Richards, Arkansas Rural Water Association
Regine Skelton, Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture, Forestry Division (Garland, Clark Counties)
Julia Schmidt, Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture, Forestry Division
James McCarty, Beaver Water District, Environmental Quality Manager
Pam Nelson, Northwest Arkansas Land Trust
Becky Roark, Beaver Watershed Alliance, Executive Director
Tate Wentz, Arkansas Natural Resources Division, Water Quality Section Manager
Leif Kindberg, Illinois River Watershed Partnership
Canton Ford, USDA-NRCS, Water Quality Specialist – Conway
Daniel Hagood, Beaver Watershed Alliance, Stream and Forest Ecologist
Davis Thompson, Central Arkansas Master Naturalist, President
Paul Gellerstedt, USFS Southern Region – Atlanta, Landscape Scale Restoration & Water Resources Program Manager
Jane Hurley, Central Arkansas Water
Scott Meek, Green Bay Packaging Inc.
Trish Redus, Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists, President 2022-23
Krista Quinn, Faulkner County Extension Office/Conway Tree Board Advisor
Rick Monk, USFS - Ozark St. Francis National Forests, Forest Hydrologist
Ben Thesing, Central Arkansas Water, Natural Resource Specialist
Richard Stich, Weyerhaeuser Company, Environmental Affairs Manager
Lynn Foster, Central Arkansas Master Naturalists
Bryan Rupar, Central Arkansas Water, Land Conservation Coordinator
Darcia Routh, AR Dept. of Health – Source Water Protection***

Agenda:

- 10:00 – 10:15 am – Introduction/Overview of the meeting
- 10:15 – 10:30 am – Review of Watershed Prioritization and goals for the Collaborative.
- 10:30 – 10:45 am – Discussion of Goals/objectives, Steering Committee goals, schedule 2022 meetings.
- 10:45 – 11:15 am – 2022/23 Floodplain re-forestation collaborative project.

Review of Watershed Prioritization - Chandler Barton (Dept. of Ag. Div Forestry)

- This collaborative is a state-wide program.
- Through an NRCS grant provided to the Division of Forestry, the Arkansas Dept of Health helped to produce the “Productive Forests Protecting Water” data layer. These HUC-10 watersheds are the priority watersheds of focus that provide drinking water to Arkansans. The following data layers were incorporated into the GIS analysis to prepare this data layer:
 - population served
 - % forest within each HUC-10
 - Wildfire risk
 - Development risk
 - Forest health risk
- Highest ranked watersheds indicate the areas where this group can make the most impact.
 - 2 maps shown:
 - 1 indicating a statewide focal area
 - 1 map excluding the Nat’l Forests and industry owned property, to identify where we could have the most impact on private land.
- The Source Water Collaborative’s website shows the geographic boundaries of our statewide program (@ <https://sourcewatercollaborative.org/how-to-collaborate-toolkit/map/>). We will be adding the prioritization layer to this map to highlight our forested watersheds of focus.
- This map is available on the “about” section of our website. [About | My Site](#) (arforestsandwater.com). A one-page description of the analysis is available by clicking the map.

Strategic goals and objectives for the Collaborative - (Joy Wasson, AFDWC Coordinator)

Goals:

1. To improve communication between the forest and water sectors.

(Objectives)

- Continue to improve statewide collaboration between forest and water sectors
- Initiate collaboration of forest and water sectors in South Central Arkansas
- Establish presence on social media
- Publish articles in general interest journals related to forest and water sectors
- Make presentations at local and regional meetings and conferences related to forests and water
- Collect data on Forestry BMPs impact on Water Quality

2. To increase cooperation between the forest and water sectors

(Objectives)

- Continue discussion among forest and water sectors
- Demonstration forestry practices
- Host forest and water field days/workshops

3. To facilitate development of local projects/programs

(Objectives)

- Communicate grant opportunities
- Increase local funding
- Promote green infrastructure

- The AFDWC is currently funded by the Landscape Scale Restoration Grant. Arkansas participates in partnership on this grant with 4 other states in the Southeast.

- Metrics were developed in the most recent application to continue this grant support for this group. These include # landowners reached through technical assistance, acres of watersheds where source water protection activities are implemented, funding leveraged from local sources, conservation easements/acquisitions, and customer willingness to pay surveys.

The April, 2021 poll results were presented where members indicated the following next best action steps:

1. Continued development of partnerships
2. Focus on future collaborative projects
3. Attract more corporate partners, funding
4. Showcase existing projects
5. AR focused outreach to public
6. Workshops

Looking ahead 2022:

- In 2022, the AFDWC anticipates being able to accomplish a subset of the metrics proposed in the newest LSR grant including landowner outreach, riparian buffer establishment, and acquiring up to \$50k in corporate, grant, or other local funding.
- The group would like to find a way to connect. There was interest in pursuing a spring forum. Joy will be reaching out to members for assistance with the development of a forum for 2022.
- 2022 member and steering committee meetings were discussed. Subcommittee to plan the forum will likely need to meet monthly up to the time of a forum.
- Outside the forum, quarterly connections either through meetings, tours, workdays, workshops would be a good way to stay engaged with each other.

Collaborative project idea discussion:

- Riparian buffer establishment was discussed as a good intersection between members and potential area for collaboration.
- Some of the current barriers to landowners trying to implement this practice along streams, rivers, and lakes include: contracting for fencing, site preparation, and planting, pasture size reduction, lack of in-state supply of trees, high cost of potted trees, high cost for shipping out of state trees, and first growing season drought or flood mortality.
- Growing and providing potted trees locally; technical, contract, and volunteer assistance for site preparation, planting, and monitoring of trees would help to address many of these issues.
- Could this group collaborate to grow trees, identify projects to donate trees, and provide technical assistance to landowners to address barriers identified?
- BWA has 40 acre field sitting in fescue that is available to grow and water trees. BWA could also potentially contribute financially to purchase the seedlings.
- Volunteers will need to be found. Outreach and coordination efforts will need to be involved in creating demand for the trees and finding suitable locations for planting.
- there is an opportunity to work with County extension agents across the state to do demo projects. County agents can have a big influence with local landowners. One successful project can go a long way.
- Might consider working with tree boards in urban areas (Conway, Fayetteville), these projects may be small in scale, but it connects the messaging of trees to clean drinking water.

- There are funding opportunities upcoming.
 - o 319 Nonpoint source pollution grant – proposals due January.
 - o Five-star urban watershed Grant – proposals due end of January.
 - o Conservation Districts – cost share program 70/30 split up to \$7,500 for each project. Can help with contracting, alternative watering development.
 - o Infrastructure bill - \$5M over 5 years to do on the ground projects for nutrient reduction. EPA will send out, no match requirement. ANRD will be looking at projects.
 - o RCPP: cost share 60-90%, 50/50 match but maybe changing back to more appealing level.
 - o Currently MRBI project in Lake Brewer area that has cost share built into it, another 2 years of implem. Haven't been able to spend.
- Beaver Watershed Alliance is interested in starting a contiguous riparian planting program, instead of segments broken throughout, get several landowners to work together. Really excited about this potential project, interested in helping.
- A target # acres or linear feet of stream to propose in the project was discussed. Should start realistic.
- CAW interested in helping, has capacity to grow and water many trees, could go towards Lake Maumelle watershed and perhaps adjacent counties.

Finding where these trees will go will be important. Meaningful projects.

Next Steps/Follow up:

- **Website/Member communication:**
 - o All members are asked to sign up for the [private membership page](#) on the AFDWC website. Click “join” to setup an account. Updates will be posted here reducing the number of emails sent to members. This platform also provides the opportunity for group discussion and sharing of information.
 - o Steering Committee members are asked to sign up for the [private steering committee page](#). The first time you access this page you will click “request to join”.
 - o When visiting the website in the future, members will simply “login” in the top right corner of the website to access these pages, the updates, and the discussions taking place.
 - o Joy will add a list of prioritized 10-digit HUC's to the Priority map section of the “About” page on the website.
- **Outreach:**
 - o Please reach out (arforestsandwater@gmail.com) if your agency/organization has projects to highlight. The collaborative will be compiling virtual tours for the website, presentations, and other outreach opportunities. (including drone footage, pictures, video, interviews with landowners and project managers, etc)
 - o AFDWC prioritization layers will be sent to the The Source Water Collaborative to update their website with these focal areas. The AFDWC will still be shown as a statewide program, but also reflect focal areas.
- **2022 Collaborative Project**
 - o Joy will draft a proposed scope of work and budget for partner review.
 - o Partners will provide review and feedback.
 - o Joy will incorporate edits and work with partners to approach local sources for match, submit for funding to multiple sources.