



Steering Committee Meeting Notes

April 13, 2021

Participating:

Doug Akin, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Chandler Barton, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Forestry Division
John Beasley, Arkansas Forestry Division
Max Braswell, Arkansas Forestry Association
Natalie Arnold, Trevor Voegele, & Brett McDaniel, Conway Corporation
Janine Book, US Forest Service, Ozark St. Francis National Forest
Joe Fox, Arkansas Forestry Division
Kyle Johnson, Arkansas Dept of Health, Source Water Protection Program
Raven Lawson, Central Arkansas Water
James McCarty, Beaver Water District
Scott Meek, Green Bay Packaging
Rick Monk, US Forest Service, Ozark-St. Francis National Forest
Debbie Moreland, Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Jami Nettles, Weyerhaeuser
Darcia Routh, Arkansas Dept. of Health, Source Water Protection Program
Becky Roark, Beaver Watershed Alliance
Tony Ramick, Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture
Richard Stich, Weyerhaeuser
Brittan Stancil, Arkansas Forestry Division
Joy Wasson, Arkansas Forests & Drinking Water Collaborative
Kitty Weisman, Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water

PRESENTATION

Conway Corporation Source Water Protection Program - Brewer Lake Watershed

Natalie Arnold/Trevor Voegele, Conway Corporation

- Brewer Lake become water supply in early 1980's, through impoundment of Cypress Creek - 23,000 acre source watershed
- 11 miles of water line to treatment plant – watershed and treatment plant supplies drinking water to Conway, Morrilton, Plumerville, Rural Conway County, Petit Jean
- In 2014 – USGS reached out to Conway Corp – had done studies and wanted to address nonpoint runoff and potential contaminants from chicken houses, hog farm, and cattle farm in their watershed
- This started an effort to evaluate the contaminants and begin a watershed management plan (currently in process) - Have a working plan but not implemented yet
- Also will be seeking funding for implementation, and then implementing the plan
- Want to monitor results and adjust the plan as necessary
- They are following these steps in planning: build partnerships, inventory watershed, set goals and solutions, design implementation, implement the plan, and measure progress, make adjustments; also following EPA elements of successful watershed planning – (nine elements)

- Contracting with Green Bay Packaging to do cutting and removal, and Arkansas Forestry Commission for prescribed burn
- Two contracts to address taste and odor problems in water supply – treatment options, preventative solutions (powdered activated carbon), tracking nutrient levels, ammonia and other contaminants that might be causing taste and odor problems
- Want to educate local farmers and residents about source water protection
- Have completed planting along riparian buffer – bank of lake (3,000 seedlings in March 2020 with container trees around seedlings)
- **QUESTION from Darcia:** Have you considered giving a presentation for AWWEA? It would be really well received! Darcia also offered to help them leverage funding for their work.
Answer: They are interested in giving a presentation and getting help seeking funding.
- **QUESTION from Joy:** What is the biggest hurdle to implementing your plan? **Answer:** Local landowner buy-in and education; chicken house litter is big issue; calculating the Return on Investment (ROI) to figure out how to determine fee on water bill; considering basing ROI on nutrient loading. Would love some input from this group (Becky or James or Raven) on how to measure ROI.
- **Becky:** nutrients are hard to measure for ROI for source water protection;
- **Raven:** if we could go back in time for Central Arkansas Water, she would have encouraged a willingness-to-pay survey; complicated calculations are difficult to determine ROI. It really comes down to your ratepayers; Arkansas generally undervalues drinking water, and it may be helpful to find out what customers are willing to pay.
- **James:** reiterated that it's a great idea to do a willingness to pay study; water is very inexpensive in Arkansas compared to other areas; they did a Triple Bottom Line study (social, environmental, economic evaluation) as a way to show the board that in the long term the return on investment of source water protection would be positive; the triple bottom line analysis didn't just factor in drinking water treatment, but also looked at recreation and loss of value to the lake as a result of sedimentation. When you look at all three factors and benefits (social, environmental, economic), it ends up working out financially to support source water protection. The triple bottom line study helps elected officials see the payout for a lot of other reasons and resources.
- **Follow-Up:** Kitty will send some willingness-to-pay survey examples, and James will send Beaver Water District's Triple Bottom Line study

Presentation

Ozark National Forest Vegetation Management Project

Janine Book, Ozark – St. Francis National Forests

- Presenting today about Ozark National Forest Vegetation Management Project (St. Francis National Forest has already completed a similar project)
- Trying to manage forests for ecosystem services they provide (water, habitat for fish & wildlife, clean air, etc.); Want to continue to maintain and improve watershed, increase resilience to disturbance, etc.
- There is a need to increase pace and scale of actions to meet objectives of their forest plan; at watershed level, environmental analyses being done but implementation isn't being done at same pace as analysis; effects of vegetative treatments on forest can be scaled to a much larger landscape; so instead of analyzing many smaller landscapes, now analyzing effects to resources on a large, national forest-wide scale.
- With practices like thinning and burning, can open the canopy, have more biodiversity on forest floor, etc.

- Vegetation treatments they will use – thinning, regeneration harvest, timber stand improvement, wildlife stand improvement, wildlife openings maintenance, after-harvest planting and prescribed burning
- Average annual treatments = 33,500 of silvicultural treatments and 120,000 acres of prescribed burning
- What isn't covered - no new roads, taking care of roads they already have; water crossings or road blowouts – won't be covered under this project – would be covered under NEPA; this project is not addressing water bodies, borrow pits, wilderness and some other delicate areas
- Limited activities may be conducted in areas that are unsuitable for timber production (like utility line corridors, and some other more delicate areas like steep slopes, riparian corridors)
- Project activities will take place on all other non-delicate areas; Implementation = appropriate treatments across landscape depending on the health of the stand

Rick Monk, Ozark – St. Francis National Forests

- They operate under the framework of Healthy Managed Forests = Clean Water
- US Forest Service wants to create more resilient forests; US Forest Service is mandated to protect the nation's water supply; BMP's are mandated on USFS land and described in Forest Plan
- This project and their work will create forest disturbance but it's almost always temporary, so BMP reviews are very important to verify that they are being implemented effectively
- His area of expertise and focus is soils – no additional soils disturbance is anticipated
- Road maintenance, culvert replacements will be used to access forest; prescribed fire will be used as natural tool for forest management
- Another project they are working on separate from the vegetation management project is *Mulberry Super Slab* bridge crossing on Mulberry River. Purchased the property in 2015 in order to remove huge fish passage barrier 200 feet long by 16 feet wide. Still working on restoration after removing the fish passage barrier; using Joint Chiefs funding to do extra restoration work. Their funding can't cross fiscal years so have to get help sharing the load of the funding with other partners, and are working with partners to get the rest of the work done. Working with private property landowners on this project as well.
- **QUESTION from Joy:** what advice would you give utilities seeking to do forest management on their lands?

Answer: Get your larger landscape captured (using GIS analysis) and into a plan of action, use prescribed fire, use GIS modeling to evaluate best areas for focusing work, then do targeted work.

Group Polls and Discussion/Ideas on Fall Forum 2021

Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative		
Steering Committee Meeting: April 13, 2021		
Polls: Short-term focus, partner needs, future meetings		
Question	Answer	% of Votes (mult choice)
In your opinion, what is the next best action step(s) for this group to continue gaining momentum?		
	Continued development of forest/drinking water sector partnerships	56%
	Focus on future collaborative projects	50%
	Attract more corporate partners, funding	38%
	Show case existing projects	38%
	Arkansas focused outreach to public (fact sheets, case studies, videos)	31%
	Workshops for partners/landowners	31%
	More participation	0%
What do you need the most from this group?	Answer	% of Votes (mult choice)
	Brainstorming/Project Ideas	62%
	Technical expertise sharing/collaborative projects	38%
	Connection to other partners	31%
	Information on budgeting for "natural assets" and their improvements	31%
	Information on funding	25%
	More presented case studies	25%
	Access to outreach materials	19%
Do you support having a forum in fall 2021?	Answer	% of Vote (single choice)
	Yes, virtual and in-person if possible	53%
	No, the quarterly steering committee mtg is enough for now	18%
	Yes, in-person	12%
	Yes, all virtual	12%
	No, I would prefer this group to focus time/effort on something else	6%
In a forum, what do you think would serve the group best?	Answer	% of Vote (mult choice)
	Field tour of projects	47%
	Sessions on ecosystem services financing	47%
	Sessions on project challenges/success	35%
	Breakout groups to find collaborative projects	24%
	all of the above equally	18%

Announcements

Joe Fox: Chuck Leavell, keyboardist for The Allman Brothers and Rolling Stones and spokesperson for American Tree Farmers, is coming to Arkansas to film two documentary episodes for PBS, one of which is focused on forests and water.