



Reply to
Attention of:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MEMPHIS DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
167 NORTH MAIN STREET B-202
MEMPHIS TN 38103-1894

For Immediate Release

Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project

Partners/Supporters Organizational Profiles

Partners

Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission

The mission of the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ASWCC) is to manage and protect our water and land resources for the health, safety, and economic benefit of the state of Arkansas. The ASWCC functions through four divisions. These are Administrative, Conservation, Water Resources Development, and Water Resources Management. Daily operation of the agency including budgetary, fiscal and personnel matters are under the control of the executive director. Commitment of funds for projects such as from the Water Development Fund or the bond programs, and establishment of policy, and approval of rules and regulations are reserved for the Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

Since July of 1995, staff of the ASWCC has performed the administrative, technical, and investigative functions of the Water Well Construction Commission. The Water Well Construction Commission has named the executive director of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission as its executive secretary. Approval of applicants for contractor, driller, and pump installer licenses, establishment of policy and approval of rules and regulations for well drilling are reserved for the Water Well Construction Commission.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service-Arkansas

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that works hand in hand with farmers, ranchers and private landowners to preserve and protect natural resources. The mission of the NRCS is to provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, improve, and sustain natural resources and the environment.

The NRCS draws on a tradition of principles in working with private landowners that is as relevant today as when it was a dream to Hugh Hammond Bennett in the late 1920s and early 1930s. A career soil scientist in the USDA, Bennett became convinced that soil erosion was a national menace and that its solution lay in tailoring conservation practices to fit the capability of the land and the desires of landowners.

Simple solutions for all situations would be fruitless. The crops, the land, and the climate were so diverse that specialists in agronomy, forestry, soil science, biology, engineering, and social sciences contributed to conservation methods. They worked with farmers to find solutions that benefited the land and fulfilled the landowners' aspirations.

In 1933, the Soil Erosion Service, predecessor to the Soil Conservation Service and the NRCS, began working with farmers in the Coon Creek watershed of southwestern Wisconsin to transform the square, eroding fields into what one sees today—a conservation showplace of contouring, stripcropping, terracing, and wise land use that benefits the soil, air, water, as well as the plant, animal, and human life of the whole watershed.

The carpeting of the land with soil conservation works nationwide was hastened with the passage of the Soil Conservation Act in April of 1935. Recognition of the first conservation district, bounded by the Brown Creek watershed in North Carolina, on August 4, 1937, established a method for the service to assist farmers in the conservation districts. Locally elected citizens established priorities and plans for the district's work.

The following principles are the NRCS's heritage and still guide its work:

- Assess the resources on the land, the conservation problems and opportunities.
- Draw on various sciences and disciplines and integrate all their contributions into a plan for the whole property.
- Work closely with land users so that the plans for conservation mesh with their objectives.
- Through implementing conservation on individual properties, contribute to the overall quality of the life in the watershed or region.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District

The mission of Memphis District, United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), is to provide flood control, navigation, environmental stewardship, other authorized civil works, military programs support, and emergency operations within its area of responsibility, in order to

benefit the region and the nation. The Memphis District is part of the USACE, Mississippi Valley Division and Mississippi River Commission (MVD/MRC). The Mississippi Valley Division is a dual-mission organization with principally civil works and some military program responsibilities in the Mississippi Valley. The division is one of eight Corps regional offices in the United States. The Mississippi River Commission, a unique organization created by an act of Congress in 1876, helps oversee projects and programs for river improvements.

The USACE is made up of approximately 34,600 civilian and 650 military men and women. Its military and civilian engineers, scientists and other specialists work hand in hand as leaders in engineering and environmental matters. The USACE's diverse workforce of biologists, engineers, geologists, hydrologists, natural resource managers and other professionals meets the demands of changing times and requirements as a vital part of America's army.

The Corps carries on a proud heritage that began in 1775 when the Continental Congress authorized the first chief engineer whose task was to build fortifications near Boston at Bunker Hill. In 1802, a corps of engineers was stationed at West Point and constituted the nation's first military academy. The United States Military Academy was under the direction of the Corps of Engineers until 1866. With the founding of West Point, the Corps began a tradition of military and civil works missions that continues to this day.

White River Irrigation District

The dream of providing supplemental water for irrigation began more than fifty years ago when a group of far-sighted men realized that, without measures to prevent it, the Grand Prairie area of Eastern Arkansas would be without adequate groundwater for agriculture, if not in their lifetime, then most certainly in the lifetime of their children.

The plan only dreamed of fifty years ago is now closer to becoming reality under the guidance and direction of the White River Regional Irrigation Water Distribution District (WRRIWDD). For many years, a steering committee had provided the local leadership to bring the groundwater depletion problem to the attention of the proper technical agencies in order to bring forth a solution. The WRRIWDD was legally formed in 1985 by petition to the Prairie County, Arkansas, Circuit Court. It was established to become the legal entity responsible for sponsoring the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project (GPADP).

The White River Irrigation District (WRID), as it has come to be called, is still providing the local leadership necessary to bring the dream to fruition. Upon construction of the project,

they will operate and maintain the project, under the direction of a 16-member board of directors. These directors are elected to represent the four counties served by the project.

Supporters

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission plays an important role in keeping "The Natural State" true to its name. Over the past 100 years, the agency has overseen the protection, conservation and preservation of various species of fish and wildlife in Arkansas. This is done through habitat management, fish stocking, hunting and fishing regulations, and a host of other programs conducive to helping Arkansas' wildlife flourish.

This agency is more than just managing "critters," however. An essential part of ensuring a healthy wildlife population involves people. Through agency programs geared towards the public, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission works with the human element to generate awareness of ethical and sound management principles. Whether it be educational programs, fishing and hunting regulations, or environmental awareness, the agency understands that working with people is just as important a factor in managing wildlife as any other.

In November of 1996, Arkansas taxpayers passed Amendment 75 to the state constitution. The act now directs nearly 17 million dollars annually to wildlife protection and management in Arkansas. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is committed now, more than ever, to assuring a bright future for the state's natural resources in years to come!

The commission itself consists of seven Arkansans appointed by the governor to seven-year terms. An eighth non-voting member sits as Chair of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville's Department of Biology. It is the sole responsibility of the commission to oversee the agency's function as a wildlife management entity.

Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission

Act 112 of the General Assembly of 1973 created the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC). It is a nine-member body of Arkansas citizens charged and authorized to construct a system of natural areas to be under its protection; to conduct research and publish information on natural areas; and to perform other duties relating to the use, management, and preservation of Arkansas' outstanding natural features. The governor of Arkansas appoints members to the ANHC for staggered terms of nine years each.

The commission gives general direction to the professional staff, acts on staff proposals for acquiring and dedicating natural areas, establishes rules and regulations, and adopts and amends management plans for individual natural areas. The staff members are employed by the Department of Arkansas Heritage. As the number of areas in the System of Natural Areas has grown, so has the complexity of the commission's responsibility for preserving them. Great concern and deliberation go into determining how much public use and enjoyment of a natural area and what kinds are consistent with the commission's primary goal of long-term protection.

Arkansas still has places that retain their pre-settlement character, remnants of the original landscape. Often these places are home to plants and animals that have become scarce elsewhere. The mission of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission is to identify and preserve such lands. So that it can choose potential preserves wisely, the agency maintains the information center for Arkansas' rarest biological resources. It identifies, systematically and objectively, the state's most significant natural features. Native plants, animals, and natural communities--their status, locations, and condition--are catalogued and monitored. The Natural Heritage Commission now draws on the results of more than 15 years of gathering information. The agency staff continues to enrich the database through original fieldwork, but also draws from other reliable sources such as refereed publications and collections of biological specimens.

Analyzing the data shows where conservation efforts are needed most urgently and can yield the greatest benefits. Thus carefully managed data form the starting point for biological conservation in Arkansas. The ANHC is housed within the Department of Arkansas Heritage.