



# CASE STUDY

## Arkansas Game and Fish Commission



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

### Private Lands Working Group

Agriculture Conservation Committee



## STATE AGENCY PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM CASE-STUDY

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) private lands program was initiated in 1996 and was formalized into a standalone division in 2022. Arkansas's private lands program consists of a 20 member team and use four state programs to deliver private lands conservation to the state. These programs include:

### ACRES FOR WILDLIFE PROGRAM

**\$520,000 state cost share program.** FY24 – had 86 contracts for \$396,000 for Forest Inventory, TSI, Firebreaks, and Prescribed Fire. We also pay 100% for pollinator plantings. We purchase seed/herbicide (\$160,000) and landowner plants it. Ten acre minimum on establishment acreage.

### CONSERVATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

**\$3.500,000 state cost share program for nine different practices.** Waterfowl habitat, Upland Game habitat, Invasive (aquatic/terrestrial plants and feral hogs) and Water Quality are the main resource concerns. This was pilot program launched in Jan 2024.

### DEER MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**675 deer clubs managing 1.31 million acres of private land in Arkansas.** Landowners get habitat and deer management plan from a private lands biologist. Along with management plan, club receives an annual harvest report and deer tags to allow more flexible deer management options.

### ARKANSAS WATERFOWL RICE INCENTIVE CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT (WRICE) PROGRAM

**VPA grant to provide waterfowl habitat and public hunting opportunity.** Approximately 6000 acres of habitat and over 70 hunting locations were offered in 2023 for a total cost of \$625,000. These are flooded rice fields (surface/rainwater) and serve as a rest area 5 days a week and permit hunted on weekends. VPA grant expired in 2022 and was extended for one year. AGFC has budgeted \$500,000 of state funds to keep the program running in 2024.

# STATE AGENCY PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM CASE-STUDY: ARKANSAS

## FEDERAL PROGRAMS USED TO DELIVER PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION IN ARKANSAS

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission uses nine federal programs to deliver private land conservation to the state. These include the USFWS Arkansas Partnership Program, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), North Arkansas Quail Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Open Pine RCPP, Working Lands for Wildlife, Migratory Bird Resurgence Initiative (MBRI), EQUIP Wildlife Fund Pool, Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) Stewardship Funding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) .

### PRIMARY PARTNERS

- Quail Forever
- USFWS Partners
- Arkansas Wildlife Federation
- USDA-APHIS
- Ducks Unlimited
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- American Bird Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy

### EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT

- Internal hires (90%)
- College graduates (i.e Auburn, Texas A&M and Arkansas Tech)



### ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Direct marketing on Facebook in geographical area to get landowners to sign up for workshops. AGFC Podcasts has been successful reaching 300-400 people per episode. Direct emails to landowners we have worked with in the past when announcing new program opportunities. Staff enter email and phone numbers for landowners when site visits are conducted.

### PRIMARY FUNDING

- Pittman - Robinson [\$1.2 million]
- State Funds [\$3.8 million]
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)- Partner biologist positions [\$775,009]



## ARKANSAS PRIVATE LANDS CONSERVATION EFFORTS: CHALLENGES?

- **Capacity** – PLBs are covering 5-7 counties each currently. We are wanting to get to 1 PLB/3 counties eventually to have the ability to establish relationship/trust with landowners that are interested in creating wildlife habitat.
- **Training** – lots of turnover and young staff entering the field that need training on farm bill and how to deliver programs to landowners.

### Special Note

*Measuring outcomes; the only way we can measure outcomes currently is by outlining how much money is spent to implement habitat on the ground through programmatic practices. Spending money is great, but truly measuring the effect of those practices truly tells the story. If we can tell the story, it builds our credibility in what we can achieve as a private lands division. This could also provide support for funding through showing what the actual outcomes would be.*

### Supporting Information

[Arkansas's Conservation Incentive Program](#)



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