

Final Report
Update of the Watershed Stewardship Program in Arkansas
Project 19-1200, CWA Section 319(h)

Executive Summary

- 1. Title of Project:** Update of the Watershed Stewardship Program in Arkansas Phase I
- 2. Project Goals/Objectives:** To update the Arkansas Watershed Steward Program and materials, and determine the next steps to grow the program to increase citizen participation in water quality improvements.
- 3. Project Tasks:**
Task #1: Financial Review
Task #2: Arkansas Watershed Steward Program Review
Task #3: Arkansas Watershed Steward Recommendations
Task #4: Reporting
- 4. Measures of Success:** The Arkansas Watershed Steward Program will be updated, increased in capacity, and addressing relative concerns and obstacles that deter watershed stewardship.
- 5. Project Type:** Statewide (x) Watershed () Demonstration ()
- 6. Waterbody Type:** River (x) Groundwater (x) Other (x)
- 7. Project Location:** All 8 digit HUC Watersheds of Arkansas
- 8. NPS Management Program Reference:** Section 11 from the 2018-2023 NPS management plan
- 9. NPS Assessment Report Status:** Impaired (X) Impacted (X) Threatened ()
- 10. Key Project Activities:** Education (X) Planning (X)
- 11. NPS Management Program Elements:** Section 3 and Section 8 from 2018-2023 NPS management plan
- 12. Project Costs:** Federal: \$91,613 Non Federal: \$68,535 Total: \$160,148
- 13. Project Time Frame:** October 1, 2019 – October 1, 2021
- 14. Project Management:** John Pennington, Extension Water Quality Educator

Introduction

This project sought to help meet the goals of the 2018-2023 ANRC nonpoint source pollution reduction plan in the 11 priority watersheds of Arkansas, in addition to other watersheds in the state by continuing the development of the Arkansas Watershed Steward Program (project number 12-500). The previous project effort led to the development of the Arkansas Watershed Steward Manual and 8 targeted priority watershed education and stewardship meetings. The meetings conducted as part of the initial AWS program helped provide insight and input into the development of several nine-element watershed management plans in Arkansas. Currently, these watershed areas and other watersheds across the state of Arkansas need informed stakeholders to actively carry out management practices that are beneficial for water quality as listed in the watershed management plans. The update of the Arkansas Watershed Steward Handbook and planning for expansion of the program have resulted in a more robust resource and support system for stakeholders to conduct beneficial watershed management actions in watersheds throughout Arkansas.

Watershed Area

The two large basins of Arkansas are the Arkansas-Red-White and the Lower Mississippi River watersheds. These watersheds drain to the Gulf of Mexico, and are composed of approximately 57 eight digit HUCs, of which 11 are priorities in the Arkansas Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan. Of the 8 digit HUCs that compose the drainage landscape of Arkansas only 9 non-profit watershed groups exist, and only 5 are listed as active in the 2018-2023 nonpoint source pollution management plan, and they are all located in the Illinois and Beaver Reservoir watersheds. Sediment and nutrients are major issues in the watersheds of Arkansas, just as they are major issues to the Mississippi River watershed and the Gulf of Mexico, and more stewardship activity among citizens is needed to assist in water quality protection and improvement in the watershed area.

General Project Description

This project was intended to update the Arkansas Watershed Stewardship Handbook and to plan the continual growth and expansion of the existing Arkansas Watershed Stewardship Program to assist citizens and communities in helping to protect water quality in Arkansas and subsequently the Gulf of Mexico.

Implementation:

To follow up on the Arkansas Watershed Steward Program (project number 12-500), the project included a review of the first edition manual to identify areas that needed

updates or enhancements, and developed a plan to deliver watershed stewardship information and education. The project included formation of a steering committee of 10-12 individuals from the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research and Extension, a drinking water utility, Arkansas Game and Fish, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, Arkansas Department of Health, nonprofit watershed organizations, Arkansas Natural Resources Division, and Arkansas Forestry Division. The committee reviewed existing content and results from the Arkansas Watershed Steward Program over the course of 6 meetings and developed an updated Arkansas Watershed Steward Handbook and plan for expanding the Arkansas Watershed Steward Program.

Obstacles Encountered

The onset of Covid 19 Pandemic created an obstacle to meeting in person for all but two meetings during this Project. Workplace and public meeting space restrictions made virtual meetings necessary.

Measures of Success

The completion of the project, inclusion of public stewardship opportunities and course completion during the covid 19 pandemic was success.

Lessons Learned

The personnel from partnering organizations and agencies that participated in the review and program development process made this project successful. Their knowledge of available resources and subject matter helped to ensure the handbook is a relevant resource in Arkansas.

Technology Transfer

This project was used as an example of how a Mississippi River Basin watershed leadership training for agricultural producers could be developed and paired with state specific watershed stewardship or leadership trainings throughout the river basin.