



Asa Hutchinson
Governor

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205
agriculture.arkansas.gov
(501) 225-1598



Wes Ward
Secretary of Agriculture

[Arkansas Department of Agriculture](https://www.arkansas.gov/agriculture)

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Contact: Amy Lyman, (501) 410-4616

amy.lyman@agriculture.arkansas.gov

Arkansas Continues to Successfully Reduce Nutrients Through Partnerships and Strategic Planning

Public Comments Accepted on the Arkansas Nutrient Reduction Strategy May 30, 2022 - June 30, 2022

Little Rock, AR – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Division will be accepting public comments on the recently updated Arkansas Nutrient Reduction Strategy (ANRS), a non-regulatory, voluntary guidance document that prioritizes watersheds with the highest need for reduction of nutrients that can affect health of streams, rivers, and aquatic life. Comments will be accepted from May 30, 2022 through June 30, 2022.

The ANRS establishes short and long-term goals and strategies for conservation partners, community leaders and agriculture producers to work together to implement conservation measures to reduce excessive nutrients from entering our streams and rivers. While nutrients come from many different sources, the ANRS primarily works to address inputs that originate during storm events from urban and rural settings. The ANRS watershed prioritization will guide implementation of non-regulatory and voluntary nutrient reduction conservation practices (e.g. septic tank remediation, urban stormwater management, pasture management, cover crops, etc.) and increase the ability to leverage existing state and federal funding sources to help offset implementation costs.

Arkansas established its first Nutrient Reduction Strategy in 2014 as part of the 2014 Arkansas Water Plan and participation in the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force. Arkansas is one of 12 member states of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force which is a combination of state and federal agencies that work together to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the Mississippi River/Atchafalaya River Basin and the Gulf of Mexico.

Implementation of voluntary nutrient reduction best management practices in Arkansas can generate cost savings for producers in addition to improving water quality. From 2017 through present, landowners in portions of Crooked Creek, Spring River, and Bull Shoals Lake watersheds retained over 2,000 pounds of sediment, 7,000 pounds of phosphorus, and 10,000 pounds of nitrogen on the land by installing over 30,000 linear feet of heavy use protection areas for cattle watering, 20 alternative watering sources, and 400 acres of grazing management practices. The development of septic tank remediation programs in the Illinois River and Beaver Reservoir watersheds assists homeowners while also providing nutrient reduction benefits.

Through the recent bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force states are eligible to receive \$60 million in grant funds over the next five years to implement nutrient reduction related projects. Each of the 12 states can request up to \$1 million annually over the next five years. The ANRS will help guide how and where these funds are spent to maximize nutrient reduction projects within Arkansas.

The ANRS and more information about nutrient reduction successes to date can be found at agriculture.arkansas.gov/natural-resources/divisions/water-management/arkansas-nutrient-reduction-strategy/. Comments may be submitted through the submission portal available through the link above or can be mailed to: Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division, Tate Wentz, 10421 West Markham St., Little Rock, AR 72205.

For additional information contact, Tate Wentz, Natural Resources Division Water Quality Section Manager, (501) 682-3914, tate.wentz@agriculture.arkansas.gov or Katie Mann, Natural Resources Division Ecologist Coordinator, (501) 682-3979, katie.mann@agriculture.arkansas.gov.

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