

# GARLAND COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT 2024



*Jim Pofford*



GARLAND COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Over 80 Years of Conservation



# CONSERVING THE NATURAL STATE



Arkansas has earned the name 'The Natural State' due to its vast and diverse natural resources, including forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, and wildlife. It's imperative that we continue to conserve and preserve these invaluable resources to maintain Arkansas' unique identity as 'The Natural State'. Failure to do so would result in the loss of what defines Arkansas and its natural heritage.

## MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Garland County Conservation District (GCCD) to plan and carry out programs to protect, maintain and enhance the soil, water and other related natural resources for now and the future. We strive to guide all residents of Garland County in the efficient and wise use of our natural resources.

The Garland County Conservation District is located at 600 Main St. Suite Q, Hot Springs, Arkansas 71913. We are open Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

We can be reached by telephone at 501.545.4016, email at [garlandcountycd@gmail.com](mailto:garlandcountycd@gmail.com), through our website [garlandcountycd.org](http://garlandcountycd.org) and our Facebook page.

***The Lake Hamilton Soil and Water Commission  
was organized on June 10, 1941.***

***On October 15, 1971, the name was changed to  
Garland County Conservation District.***

***The district has and will continue to assist local landowners  
with natural resource conservation issues.***

Cover Photo: Taken by Jim Pafford.  
Hay being baled in Garland County.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Garland County Conservation District is led by a board consisting of five local landowners known as directors. The qualified electors in the district elect three directors to three-year terms and the two others are appointed by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Division (ADA-NRD). These are local citizens who are familiar with the county's soil and water problems. Board meetings are held once monthly where directors run the district's business without pay.



Tommy Sorrells  
Chairman



David Parker  
Vice Chairman



Davin Anderson  
Treasurer



Kayla Hardage  
Director



Brad Phillips  
Director

# OFFICE PERSONNEL

Hesper Hortman

***District Manager***

Terry Hunter

***Retiree Technician***

Kristen Kalaja

***NRCS District Conservationist***

Erica McCracken

***Soil Conservation Technician***

Larry Gray

***NRCS MLRA Office Leader***

Trevor Crandall

***NRCS MLRA Ecological Site Specialist***

Vi Nguyen

***NRCS Civil Engineer***

Trevor Iliff

***Cultural Resources Archeologist***

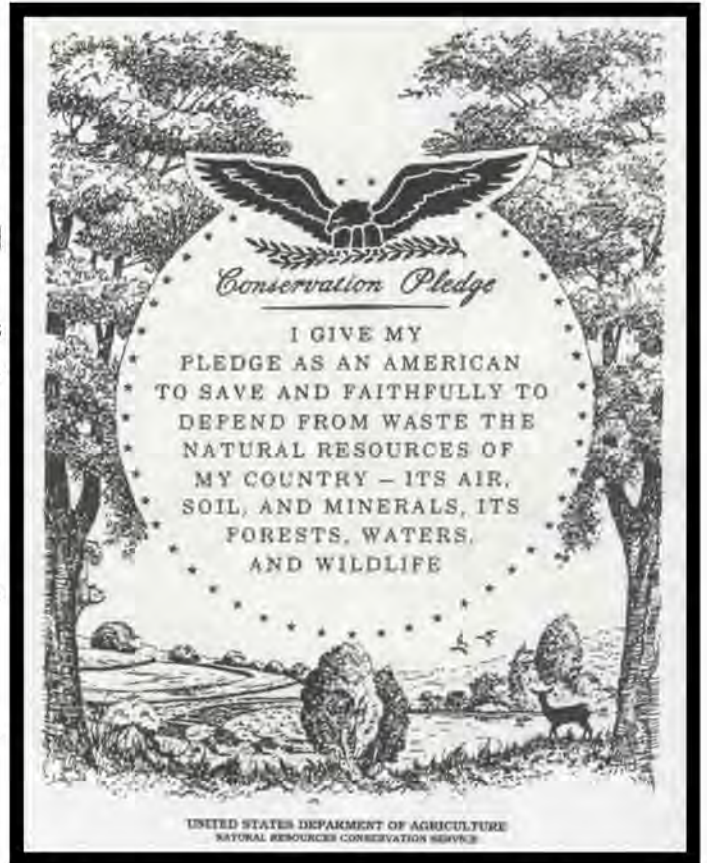
Anna Grace White

***Farm Bill Biologist, Quail Forever***



# WHAT IS A CONSERVATION DISTRICT?

In the 1930's, the ecology and agriculture of the American prairies were greatly damaged by severe dust storms and drought. This period of time, ranging from 1934-1939, is referred to as the Dust Bowl. Insufficient understanding of the ecology of the plains, led to deep-plowing of topsoil, displacing native deep-rooted grasses. Normally, these grasses trapped soil and moisture even during periods of high winds and drought. Following the devastation of the Dust Bowl, then President Roosevelt recommended the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Act be signed into law by all state governors. This act provided a step-by-step guide to create conservation districts along with listing their powers and responsibilities. The first conservation district, Brown Creek Soil and Water Conservation District, was organized in North Carolina on August 4, 1937. Arkansas became the first



state to enact legislation regarding conservation districts. By July 1, 1945, all 48 states had passed district-enabling acts. Conservation districts are political subdivisions of the State of Arkansas. They are a creation of popular vote of resident landowners for the purpose of conserving our land and water resources as authorized by Act No. 197 of the Arkansas General Assembly of 1937; the Nation's first conservation district law. Conservation districts are local governments at work. The purpose of this district is to plan and carry out programs for the conservation and efficient use of the land, water and related natural resources of Garland County. In doing so, it serves as the medium through which all individuals, agencies, organizations and institutions with conservation interest can efficiently work together to solve local natural resource concerns and help forecast future needs. The idea behind the formation is to keep decision making on soil and water conservation matters at the local level. Conservation districts serve the county by identifying the specific natural resource concerns then coordinating with various agencies and stakeholders to work together to support and implement conservation practices. Through a unified approach, conservation districts are able to address local soil and water issues and insure conservation decisions are made with the county's best interest in mind.



# USDA-NRCS

In 1935, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was established as a permanent agency in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) when congress passed public law 74-46, in which it recognized that "the wasting of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands...is a menace to the national welfare". In 1994, SCS's name was changed to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency's concerns. NRCS provides guidance and standards on conservation priorities through a partnership effort with GCCD.

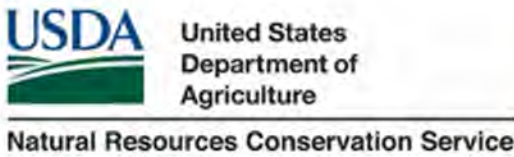
# TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Technical Service Providers (TSPs) offer services to agricultural producers such as farmers, ranchers and private forest landowners on behalf of NRCS. TSPs help these producers plan, design, and implement conservation practices or develop conservation activity plans to improve their operations. GCCD employees participating in this program earned the district over \$5,000 in TSP funds for 2024.

# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP) FOR FY2024

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and private forest landowners to address natural resource concerns. Financial resources and site specific assistance is given to implement conservation practices. Using these practices can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving operations.

# OUR PARTNERS





# HOW DO WE HELP LANDOWNERS IN GARLAND COUNTY?



## CONSERVATION DISTRICT BEAVER CONTROL PROGRAM

The rising number of beaver have caused serious damage for forest landowners, crop farmers and county governments which maintain roadways and culverts. The need to control beaver populations in these areas has become increasingly necessary. The beaver control program is administered through the Arkansas Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Division and Arkansas conservation districts. Funding from

ADA-NRD, along with Garland County Quorum Court, provide the \$15 per tail bounty. The district paid trappers for the eradication of 55 nuisance beaver this year.



## THISTLE AWARENESS PROGRAM

The GCCD along with the local University of Arkansas Extension Service, continue to monitor the problem of thistle in the county. Thistle is known to be an invasive, noxious weed that can render land useless to native plants and wildlife. We report yearly to the State of Arkansas, citing the specific thistle species present in the county and what measures are being taken to control and/or eradicate them.



## LOCAL LED WORK GROUP MEETING

The local led conservation effort is the foundation of the USDA's program delivery process. Through Local Led Work Group (LLWG) meetings, landowners, agencies, organizations, and any other interested individuals, are given an opportunity to help identify natural resource concerns within Garland County. The information gathered provides USDA and GCCD with conservation needs, resource concerns, priorities, and recommendations

regarding programs that can be used as tools to address those needs and implement conservation programs. The LLWG meeting is hosted yearly by GCCD. Forestry improvement, water quality, pasture establishment, soil health, and prescribed grazing were among the resource concerns identified this year.



## ASSESSMENTS AND PROPOSALS

Having a conservation district in the county helps to facilitate water and sewer grants to be awarded to the city and county. The ADA-NRD can use the district as a contact for gathering information from the Quorum Court and the County Judge. The district uses local connections and resources to prepare proposals for grants and assessments for other projects that benefit the county.



## AGFC TACKLE LOANER PROGRAM

GCCD is proud to participate in the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Tackle Loaner Program. In an effort to make fishing more accessible to everyone, the AGFC provided GCCD with rod-and-reel combinations for anyone to "check out" free of charge, just as one would a library book.



## RENTAL EQUIPMENT



35 TON  
LOG SPLITTER



300 GALLON  
PASTURE SPRAYER



7 FT. NO-TILL  
SEED DRILL



BROADCAST  
SPREADER

**APPROXIMATELY 300  
ACRES IN GARLAND  
COUNTY WERE  
SEEDED IN PASTURE  
GRASSES THIS YEAR  
BY RENTERS**

## ANNUAL NUT SALE FUNDRAISER



Nuts from Paw Paw's Pecans, located here in Arkansas, are available for pre-order during the month of October. Nuts arrive for pickup just in time for Thanksgiving.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

Our newsletter, *News and Views*, is published and delivered via mail and email to over 200 subscribers quarterly. Here we share information on programs, community involvement, and current events. Anyone can sign up to receive their copy by contacting the district office or visiting our website.

## LICENSE PLATES



Specialty license plates promoting conservation are available at all three Garland County revenue offices. For every specialty plate sold in Garland County, we receives \$20. These funds go directly back into the community through scholarships, conservation education, and outreach.

## FACEBOOK

Social media gives us the ability to reach audiences that may not be familiar with who we are. The district's Facebook page is updated frequently with news and events making interaction easy.

## GCCD WEBSITE

[garlandcountycd.org](http://garlandcountycd.org), introduces visitors to our staff, programs, services, and products. You can also find downloadable versions of our annual report, quarterly newsletter and order forms for our annual nut sale fundraiser.

## 2024 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

GCCD was proud to award three local students with a \$500 scholarship. Each year, funds from the sale of specialty license plates are used to offer scholarships to local high school seniors who plan to study a conservation related field.



**Faith Lavender** is a graduate of Fountain Lake Charter High School. She has been a member of 4-H for 13 years. Faith also participated in FFA, National Honor Society, and BETA Club. Farming and serving others is something she has been taught go hand in hand. Faith loves to farm and to help others. She will attend National Park College while pursuing the certificates needed to become a Vet Tech in Arkansas.



**Gavin Thomason** is a graduate of Lake Hamilton High School. After spending many years working on his grandfather's cattle farm, along with volunteering for the US Army Corps of Engineers and Project Forester, Gavin has developed a passion for conserving and maintaining the land for future generations. Gavin will attend Stephen F. Austin University in the fall to pursue a degree in Forest and Natural Resources Management.



**Myia Shroff** is a graduate of Lakeside High School. From a young age she has had a deep love for the outdoors and the animals who call it home. This connection has led her to pursue a career as a wildlife biologist and researcher. Myia will attend the University of Arkansas where she will major in Biology through which she will attain the knowledge needed to achieve her career goals.



# PROJECTS

## CUTTER MORNING STAR COMMUNITY GARDEN

GCCD received a \$5,000.00 grant through the Arkansas Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Division to assist with the development of the Cutter Morning Star School District's Community Garden. Students in Heather Slay's high school EAST class designed raised beds that were then constructed with help from community volunteers. Vegetables grown will be used in the schools cafeteria, Family and Consumer Science classes, and also sent home with students as part of the school's back pack program. GCCD employees along with Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) personnel provided technical assistance to students on soil health, water conservation, greenhouse/high tunnel fundamentals, hydroponics and proper land use.



## LAKE HAMILTON SCHOOL-MELVIN DANIEL FARM HIGH TUNNEL

GCCD received an \$8,000.00 grant through Arkansas Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Division for the purchase of a high tunnel for the Lake Hamilton High School Melvin Daniel FFA School Farm. Melvin Daniel served on the GCCD board of directors for 21 years. All produce will go back to the school for use in the cafeteria, family and consumer science program, and the school food bank. GCCD will provide technical assistance throughout the entire planning, development, and implementation of the project.



## CAMP TANAKO POLLINATOR GARDEN

GCCD was awarded a \$2,500.00 grant from the Arkansas Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Division to create a pollinator garden at Camp Tanako. The garden will serve as a valuable learning tool for school-aged children, highlighting the significance of providing habitat for pollinators. GCCD will assist in the implementation and upkeep of the garden. We will also provide educational materials to encourage our future generations to conserve our natural resources.





# OUTREACH/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Lake Hamilton High School Career Advisory Panel Member
- Hot Springs Trash Bash - provided native wildflower seed packets, literature
- Assisted with The Arkansas Private Lands Stewardship Alliance's 7th Annual Private Lands Conference
- Hosted Seeder Demonstration with NRCS
- Conducted mock job interviews with area high school seniors
- Attended AACD Annual meeting and training
- Attended AACDE retreat and meetings
- Garland County Fair - provided native wildflower seed packets, fans, literature



- Assisted MLRA - NRCS with dig
- Hot Springs Garden Club - provided native seed packets
- Assisted NRCS with set up of regional land judging contest
- Provided seed packets and educational materials Diamond Lakes Master Naturalists presentation at Arkansas Math and Science School

- Hosted annual Christmas Breakfast for Quorum Court members
- Provided 550 native wildflower seed packets for Arkansas Master Gardener State Convention welcome bags
- Hosted outreach meeting with NRCS for our local legislators
- Provided plant labels for pollinator gardens on Greenway
- Yearly sponsor of the Garland County Junior Livestock Show
- Participated in Farm Bureau's "Intro to AG Day" for over 600



middle school students from area schools

- Partnered with Garland County Master Gardeners for "Saturdays in the Pollinator Garden" at the Hot Springs Farmers and Artisans Market. We provided literature, seed packets and pollinator crafts for children.



- Member of Garland County Library Wildlife Habitat Committee
- Represented AACDE at Arkansas Conservation Partnership
- Garland County Mater Gardeners Garden Show - provided seed packets
- Recipient of the AACD 2023 Outstanding Conservation Award



- Provided clay targets and shells to the Centerfork Birdbusters Youth Trap Shooting Team through the AGFC Wildlife Conservation Grant Program.

