

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Photo courtesy of Jim Pafford



GARLAND COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Over 80 Years of Conservation

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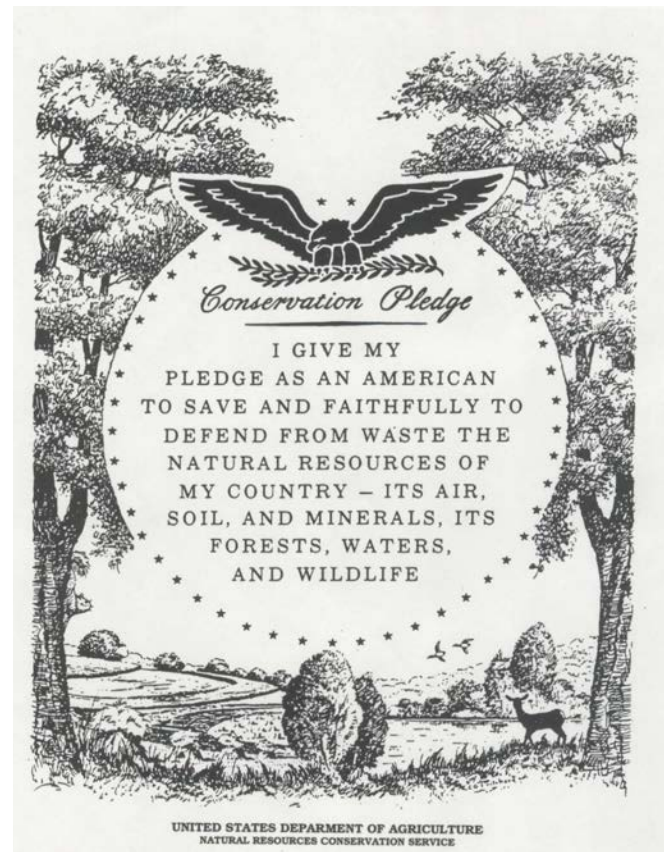
OVER 80 YEARS OF
CONSERVATION

600 MAIN STREET
SUITE Q
HOT SPRINGS, AR
71913
501.545.4016

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

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Garland County Conservation District 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.



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.

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



Doug Meredith
Vice Chairman



Melvin Daniel
Secretary/Treasurer



David Parker
Director



Davin Anderson
Director

OFFICE PERSONNEL

Hesper Hortman

District Manager

Terry Hunter

Retiree Technician

Andres Aponté

NRCS District Conservationist

Larry Gray

NRCS MLRA Office Leader

Trevor Crandall

NRCS MLRA Ecological Site Specialist

Tracy Phillips

NRCS Project Engineer

Vi Nguyen

NRCS Civil Engineer

Trevor Iliff

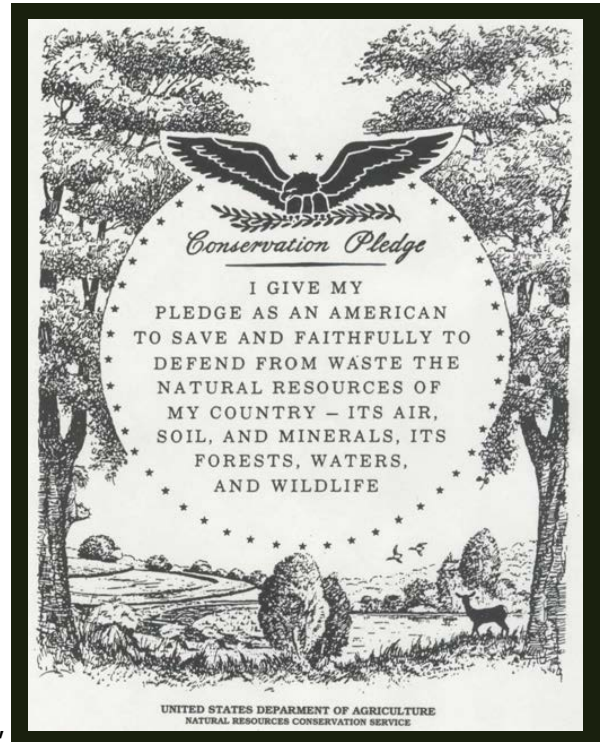
Cultural Resources Archeologist

Bob Scott

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 the 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.



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.

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 2023.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP) FOR FY2023

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.



POULTRY REGISTRATION

In 2003 the 84th General Assembly passed nutrient management legislation to address water quality. ADA-NRD administers the poultry registration program for the purpose of collecting information on the type and number of poultry and practices of operations in the state. PFOs are required to register annually with their local conservation district.



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 considered 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 species present and the measures used to control and or eradicate thistle in the county.



LLWG MEETING

The GCCD hosts a Locally Led Workgroup meeting yearly. NRCS partners with Arkansas Forestry Commission, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Garland County Extension Service and Quail Forever to identify local natural resource concerns. Soil erosion, inadequate wildlife habitat and water quality degradation were among the concerns addressed.



ASSESSMENTS AND PROPOSALS

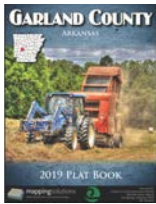
Having a conservation district in the county helps to facilitate water and sewer grants to be awarded to the city and county. The ADA-NRD can use the district as a contact for gathering information from the Quorum Court and the County Judge. The district uses local connections and resources to prepare 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 people, the AGFC provided GCCD with 16 rod-and-reel combinations for anyone to "check out" free of charge, just as one would a library book.

PLAT BOOKS AND MAPS



Garland County Conservation District is the exclusive seller of plat books and wall maps of Garland County. Flood plain information and arial and topographic photos are also available.

LICENSE PLATES



Specialty license plates promoting conservation are available at all three Garland County revenue offices. GCCD

receives \$20 from each plate sold that goes directly to conservation education through scholarships and outreach. 106 plates were sold in 2023!

ANNUAL NUT SALE



Nuts from South Georgia Pecan Co. are available for pre-order during the month of October. Nuts arrive for pickup just in time for Thanksgiving. 2,200 pounds of nuts were sold this year!

RENTAL EQUIPMENT

GCCD offers equipment for local landowners to rent for use on their property. Funds received are put back into the community through educational workshops and college scholarships.



**LOG
SPLITTER**



**PASTURE
SPRAYER**



**NO-TILL SEED
DRILL**

APPROXIMATELY 186 ACRES WERE SEEDED IN PASTURE GRASSES THIS YEAR BY RENTERS, TOTALING OVER \$1,300 IN PROCEEDS

2023 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP



GCCD was proud to award Cooper Bull, a 2023 Hot Springs World Class High School graduate, a \$500 scholarship. Cooper will attend the University of Arkansas where he will major in Horticulture. After completing his

studies, Cooper hopes to establish his own farm and laboratory facility to experiment with new and innovative farming techniques.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Our quarterly newsletter, *News and Views*, is published and delivered via mail and email to over 200 subscribers.

Through this publication 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.

GCCD WEBSITE

Making conservation information accessible to the public is essential in saving our natural resources. Through our website, www.garlandcountycd.org, individuals are introduced to our staff, programs, services, and products. Downloadable versions of our annual report, newsletter and order forms for our nut sale are available as well.

FACEBOOK

In today's world, 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.

EARTH TEAM-NRCS

Earth Team volunteers help NRCS to accomplish its mission. Volunteer opportunities are available to anyone 14 years or older; students, retirees, individuals and groups. Activities range from soil mapping to resource inventories or data entry.

PROJECTS/AWARDS

GARLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROJECT OF THE YEAR

ENTERGY PARK POLLINATOR GARDEN



This project is especially important to GCCD, as it is in honor of Kelly Bufkin-Farm Bill Biologist with Quail Forever. Kelly passed away in February of 2021 at the age of 34. Kelly was not just our co-worker; he was our friend whose passion for nature and its conservation were second to none. In March of FY23, the commemorative bench and plaque were placed at the garden in his memory.



MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Hesper Hortman, the GCCD District Manager, was named the Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year at both the county and state levels.

PROJECTS

HSCCC POLLINATOR GARDEN

In 2021, GCCD established a pollinator garden at Hot Springs Childcare Center. This year we were able to expand the garden by adding two additional beds, which were filled with swamp milkweed. The result? Over fifteen Monarch caterpillars were spotted feeding on the milkweed!



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

GCCD and NRCS staff planted wildflower seeds with children, which served as an educational opportunity to teach them about the significance of pollinators.

