



Steering Committee Meeting Notes

January 26, 2021

Participating:

Doug Akin, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Breegan Anderson, Arkansas Dept. of Agriculture
Chandler Barton, Arkansas Division of Forestry
Jonathan Baxter, US Fish & Wildlife Service
John Beasley, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Forestry Division
Max Braswell, Arkansas Forestry Association
Kyle Cunningham, University of Arkansas Extension
Randy Easley, Central Arkansas Water
Jeff Fore, The Nature Conservancy
Joe Fox, Arkansas Division of Forestry
Paul Gellerstedt, US Forest Service Southern Region
Arnold Hameister, Arkansas Timber Producers Association
Jennifer Johnson, Arkansas Forestry Association
Kyle Johnson,
Clayton Knighten, Steep Creek
Raven Lawson, Central Arkansas Water
James McCarty, Beaver Water District
Scott Meek, Green Bay Packaging
Edgar Mersiovsky, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Rick Monk, US Forest Service, Ozark-St. Francis National Forest
Debbie Moreland, Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Jami Nettles, Weyerhaeuser
John Pennington, University of Arkansas Extension
Darcia Routh, Arkansas Dept. of Health, Source Water Protection Program
Becky Roark, Beaver Watershed Alliance
Erin Scott, Ozark Water Watch
Richard Stich, Weyerhaeuser
Melvin Tobin, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Patrick Travers, Arkansas Dept. of Environmental Quality
Joy Wasson, Arkansas Forests & Drinking Water Collaborative
Kitty Weisman, Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water

Meeting Follow-Up Actions

- Kitty will send Kyle Cunningham the Arkansas Forests & Drinking Water Collaborative mailing list; links to outreach materials including forests/water videos, infographic, and story map; and links to SFI's grant programs
- Kitty will send out notes from this meeting along with the meeting video and a Doodle Poll to schedule our next meeting

Updates & Announcements

- Our hiring committee offered the Collaborative Coordinator position to Joy Wasson and she has accepted. Joy sat in on this meeting and will officially start in the next couple of weeks. Joy has most recently worked with The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas on watershed project implementation (including land conservation and land management), and has a background in funding and philanthropy. Welcome Joy!
- [Arkansas Forests and Drinking Water Collaborative](#) website has meeting notes, strategic plan, Steering Committee member list, and other important information
- [Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water](#) website has new infographic, story map, fact sheet, and forests-water videos

List of Ideas for Future Meeting Topics/Presentations

- Central Arkansas Water Green Bond and Watershed Projects Update (Raven Lawson); Conway Corporation – Brewer Lake source water protection plan and watershed fund update (Natalie Arnold); Hot Springs Headwaters Acquisition Project Update (April 2021)
- Ozark – St. Francis National Forest *Forest-wide Vegetation Management Project* Update; NRCS RCPP & EQIP (including Timber Stand Improvement) assistance programs and deadlines (Chandler Barton, Doug Akin, and others – July 2021)
- Melvin Tobin and Jonathan Baxter, US Fish & Wildlife Service – talk about their work and ways to collaborate
- Brainstorm Fundraising for the Arkansas Forests & Drinking Water Collaborative (October 2021)

Presentation by Richard Stich, Weyerhaeuser

- Weyerhaeuser is the largest landowner in the US - 11.6 million acres in the US, 14 million acres in Canada, 7 million acres across the South, 1.4 million acres in Arkansas, 35 mills across North America and 9,300 employees
- The forestry sector has made tremendous drives in the last 25 years with BMPs and forest certification systems. When Weyerhaeuser looks at doing a harvest, one of the main things they look at is the streams that occur and how to implement BMPs
- Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) - SFI launched in 1994 as the forestry sector's contribution to sustainable forestry. It is a nonprofit organization run by a board that represents environmental, economic and social interests.
Standards under SFI - both the Forest Management Standard and the Fiber Sourcing Standard include protection of water quality and BMP compliance monitoring in the standard:
 - Forest Management Standard - deals with land ownership.

- Fiber Sourcing Standard - deals primarily with procurement or purchasing timber from landowners.
- Chain of Custody Standard
- Weyerhaeuser has done research with universities that shows BMPs have proven to be very effective at protecting water quality. The implementation monitoring has been showing a very high rate of implementation for BMPs. The forestry community is taking a serious look at protecting water quality and doing the work that needs to be done.

Scott Meek, Green Bay Packaging

- Green Bay Packaging (primarily a corrugated box manufacturer) started in Green Bay Wisconsin in 1933. One state of the art paper mill is being constructed currently that is one of the largest construction projects in the United States right now. The mill is going to be the most environmentally friendly paper mill in the world. It is going to be a completely closed loop system and totally environmentally friendly
- Certified to every standard that SFI has - we like to consider ourselves to be putting the green in packaging
- Green Bay has 251,000 acres in Arkansas and set aside 52,000 acres for biological diversity and water quality
- Green Bay has certified sourcing, chain of custody, and the latest is the Small Lands Group Certification Module
- Green Bay's objectives - related to water quality:
 - Adherence to BMPs
 - Use of qualified resource and logging professionals
 - Community involvement and landowner outreach
 - Promoting conservation of biological diversity
 - Avoidance of controversial sources and making sure that we don't accept any wood from illegal sources
- In 1979 we created a landowner resource program which was initially known as *Trees for the Future* but has since become *Green Bay's Landowner Resource Program*. It has gone from just a reforestation program to a turn key management program. Over the years our landowner resource program has grown to have over 820 landowners with approximately 112,000 acres that we actively help private landowners manage
- Green Bay Packaging is now second overall, and first in the pulp and paper sector, to certify to the SFI Small Lands Group Certification
- The SFI Small Lands Group Certification helps capture the largest group of landowners to encourage sustainable practices, biological diversity, the use of BMPs for water quality, and understanding of sustainable forestry. It has helped us strengthen our relationships with the landowners that we do business with
- Landowners certify through a formal agreement to adhere to SFI's principles that we help guide their management towards. Our goal is to eventually certify all of the landowners that we purchase timber from into this module
- The future for sustainable forests for Green Bay and private landowners is to promote to our partners and increase public awareness of the benefits of certified lands, and to increase adherence to BMPs for water quality. We are going to keep Arkansas' biological

diversity at the forefront of our landowners' decision making. For Green Bay, we are going to increase certified fiber into our mills and we are going to help address climate change challenges for the future

Questions and Discussion

Becky: Is there a minimum on the acreage for the small lands to be certified?

Scott: From what I understand it is from 1 to 20,000 acres per landowner. It is a pretty robust, wide variant. There are some other standards that don't allow for larger landowners, but this is one that definitely encourages all size landowners. Certification has been a cost prohibitive thing for a lot of private landowners over the years and this module is a means for addressing that scale of economy.

Kyle Cunningham - University of Arkansas Extension

- Project: *Productive Forests Protecting Water*. Funded by the NRCS. Been working on the project for three years.
- The project is focused on three key areas (one in Northern Arkansas, one in Southwest Central Arkansas, and one in Northwest Arkansas) that are surface source water suppliers and have heavy non-industrial private forest land ownership
- In 2019 we had a meeting to identify topics, concerns, and potential collaborators
- We were planning on having two rounds of meetings focused on some of those topics but in person meetings ceased and we are still not to where we can have in person meetings
- Currently pursuing getting a grant extension. The hurdle is the 15 workshops and the field tours that are a part of the grant. Depending on when in person meetings are allowed again this will be a hindrance to getting the grant completed by the dates that are set
- One idea is to do a virtual tour where we go out and do some pre-recorded field stops and take some of that to our clientele. But another issue that we run into when we start going virtual is making sure we are reaching the clientele properly.
- We still plan on getting it all done. The stage is set, we have done all of the groundwork, all we have to do is conduct the meetings
- Keep us in mind and be thinking about any topics or ideas for presenters. We are going to have to lean on quite a few people to do 15 workshops across the state to get some of these talks done. Feel free to reach out to me or Chandler if you have some ideas of how we might be able to facilitate some of these meetings.

Questions and Discussion

Chandler: The virtual Upland Hardwoods tour was a success - it would be great to bring in some partners and have some extra speakers talk about water.

Darcia: Kyle Johnson has joined our staff as a GIS analyst and he and I are happy to fill in however we can. I know you and Tyler have talked about double-teaming or having him do an introduction on drinking water in the state. I have been doing that for ten years so I am happy to help and we are comfortable with virtual, we both do quite a bit of virtual teaching.