

Arkansas

2025 Impact Report



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The Nature Conservancy meets all of the Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is a national charity watchdog affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

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6

trees preserved for the future



464.7

gallons of water not used



902.4

pounds of CO₂ prevented



If you've ever watched the sun rise over the Delta or hiked through the quiet beauty of the Ozarks and Ouachitas, you know Arkansas is special. Its landscapes are diverse, resilient and deeply rooted in the people who care for them.

Since our chapter of The Nature Conservancy was founded in 1982, we've grown from a small team with a big vision into a statewide force for conservation. Today, our work is guided by bold goals for 2030 and focused on three core strategies: advancing regenerative agriculture, conserving Arkansas' lands,

and protecting the waters that connect us all. We're also staying engaged in the evolving conversation around renewable energy, ensuring that as Arkansas grows, nature remains part of the equation.

This year's Impact Report is full of stories about what your support makes possible and where we are going together. Every success is built on partnerships, and none of this work is achievable without your support. Your generosity fuels our progress, allowing us to act quickly, think boldly and invest in the solutions that matter most.

As a Legacy Club member and a father, I often think about the world we're leaving behind. Conservation isn't just about protecting what we have today, it's about shaping what we pass on to our children and grandchildren. That's why I've made a personal commitment to ensure that this work continues for generations to come, and I invite you to do the same.

Thank you for believing in this mission. Together, we're building something lasting.

Yours in conservation,

Roger W. Mangham

Director, The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas

What is the Legacy Club?

The Legacy Club celebrates those who make a lasting commitment to conservation by including The Nature Conservancy in their estate plans. By sharing your intentions with us, you ensure that your gift is used in ways that reflect your values—whether that's protecting the natural beauty of Arkansas or supporting global conservation efforts.

Members enjoy exclusive access to events, receive inside updates, and can participate in a community of passionate supporters. Most importantly, your legacy becomes a powerful force for nature, helping safeguard the lands and waters you love for generations to come.

If you're considering a legacy gift or have already included TNC in your plans, we'd love to hear from you. Please reach out to Kim Dutton at kimberly.dutton@tnc.org or (479) 439-1574, so we can honor your wishes and welcome you into the Legacy Club.



How Partnerships are Powering Conservation Across Arkansas

In conservation, no one works alone. Across Arkansas, partnerships are the engine behind progress, bringing together agencies, nonprofits and communities to tackle challenges that are too big for any one group to solve. That spirit of collaboration was on full display this August at the Drone TREX (Training Exchange), a first-of-its-kind event hosted by The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas.

Held at the Rick Evans Grandview Prairie Nature Center in southwest Arkansas on land managed by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Drone TREX united eight partner organizations and 29 participants from all across the country. The goal? To build shared capacity around drone technology and its role in prescribed fire and land management.

"Since coming to Arkansas, I've been blown away by the strength of partnerships," says Doug Schoenrock, director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. "There is a rich history here that is important to our future. I'm excited to work with TNC and agencies like the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. The future is bright."

Throughout the week, participants trained together: prepping for Federal Aviation Administration certification; mapping landscapes; and practicing aerial ignition using the IGNIS system, a drone-mounted tool designed to safely and

precisely deploy ignition spheres for controlled burns. But the real power of the event wasn't in the tech, it was in the teamwork.

"These interagency TREXs are super important," says Stephen Wasp, private lands burn team coordinator at Tall Timbers Resort in Oakland. "They're a good reminder that we're all putting down fire, and fire really doesn't know the boundaries that we set up. So we need to evolve to meet that reality and not have boundaries between our organizations."

The Drone TREX showed what's possible when partners come together with a shared vision. It wasn't just about learning to fly drones—it was about building trust, exchanging knowledge, and preparing for a future where conservation is more connected, more innovative and more effective.

Events like this underscore a simple truth: we can't achieve our conservation goals alone. From restoring ecosystems to managing fire and protecting biodiversity, every step forward depends on the strong, strategic partnerships that Arkansas is known for. These partnerships aren't just part of the journey, they are the path forward for The Natural State.

Learn more at nature.org/ardronetrex.



By 2030, TNC will implement and influence regenerative agricultural practices on 1.7 million acres of land and improve management practices on 100 miles of river in Arkansas.

Advancing Regenerative Agriculture in Arkansas

In the Arkansas Delta, farming is more than a livelihood, it's a legacy. For generations, families have cultivated rice and other crops in this fertile region, feeding communities and fueling the economy. But today, the land faces compounding pressures including eroding soil, nutrient runoff and dwindling groundwater. These challenges threaten not only farms, but the ecosystems and communities that depend on them.

That's why The Nature Conservancy has set some ambitious goals to advance regenerative agriculture in Arkansas. This farming approach is a set of techniques that restore soil health, conserve water and strengthen resilience for both nature and the farming communities who depend on it. With your support, we're walking alongside farmers to implement sustainable solutions that protect their livelihoods and ensure that agriculture remains a cornerstone of our communities.

We're scaling up tools like irrigation well timers that can reduce water use by 20%, while saving farmers time and keeping them safe with automated shutoffs during storms. We're partnering with drainage districts to install innovative

agricultural ditches that prevent erosion and protect soil during floods. We're helping landowners return frequently flooded fields to forest, and reconnecting the land to its natural rhythm by offering financial incentives that make this transition possible.

This work is about more than conservation. It's about collaboration. Farmers, conservationists and communities are coming together to share knowledge, test ideas and build a future where agriculture and nature thrive side by side.

Thanks to your support, regenerative agriculture is taking root in the Delta. It's a strategy grounded in tradition, powered by innovation, and guided by a shared vision—one where farms remain productive, water is protected and the land stays resilient for generations to come.



10 billion gallons

Water saved annually by farms using well timers on 60,000 acres in Arkansas

Healthy Drainage Ditches are Essential for Productive Fields

Most people don't think twice about ditches—but here in Arkansas, they're essential. When they fail, farms and ecosystems suffer. This year, TNC Arkansas will complete a nearly two-mile, two-stage ditch near Delaplaine in partnership with the Beaver Dam Drainage District. These redesigned ditches mimic natural floodplains, slowing water and allowing sediment to settle—resulting in stronger banks, cleaner water and less maintenance for farmers.

This project is part of a broader effort to show how regenerative practices can boost agricultural productivity and improve watershed health—with the goal of making sustainable ag drainage the standard. By combining science-based design with local partnerships—and thanks to your support—we're building solutions that benefit people, farms and the ecosystems that connect them.

“

[A two-stage ditch] holds firm the bank, and it takes a little more ground, but if you don't have to mop them every 10 years, it's an advantage because it costs less.”

—Joe Christian, board member, Cache River Drainage District of Craighead, Jackson, and Lawrence counties, on how two-stage ditches can help a farmer's bottom line.

Smart Irrigation is Saving Billions of Gallons for Arkansas Farmers

Automation is giving Arkansas farmers more than just control over their water use—it's giving them time back. With aquifers facing severe depletion, TNC launched the Well Timer Program, allowing farmers to remotely shut off wells, reducing water waste and saving an estimated 10 billion gallons annually. And thanks to your support, momentum continues to grow.

In response to landowner interest, TNC partnered with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service to launch a Master Irrigator course in winter 2025. Building on the success of installing over 600 smart timers across 60,000 acres since 2019, the course will help farmers improve water efficiency and protect soil health. With smarter tools and deeper knowledge, farmers are making every drop count—and gaining the freedom to spend more time with family, attend community events and enjoy the moments that matter most.



Learn more

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, regenerative agriculture is taking root in the Delta. Explore the strategy and stories fueling regenerative agriculture in Arkansas. Scan the QR code or visit nature.org/arkansasag to learn more.





By 2030, TNC will reforest 20,000 acres, restore and maintain 2.6 million acres and permanently protect 30,000 acres in Arkansas.



Conserving Arkansas Lands

Arkansas is known as The Natural State for good reason. Its forests, prairies and glades are more than scenic, they're essential. These landscapes support wildlife, fuel local economies and shape the identity of communities across the state. But today, they're under growing pressure from development and shifting land use. The stakes are high, and so is the opportunity.

The Nature Conservancy's Healthy and Resilient Lands strategy is designed to meet this challenge head-on. With your support, we're restoring native forests, protecting sensitive habitats and using science-based tools to make Arkansas' lands more adaptive and resilient.

And we've set ambitious goals: reforesting 20,000 acres, restoring and maintaining 2.6 million acres, and permanently protecting 30,000 acres of vital land. Achieving these goals takes hands-on work, influence, innovation and strong partnerships. Across the state, we're working side-by-side with partners to implement prescribed burns, plant native trees and secure lasting protections for the lands that sustain us all.

This work is powered by people. Our burn crew leads cooperative fire efforts across the state, while our

ecologists monitor long-term changes to guide restoration. We're bringing together landowners, agencies and conservation partners to identify and protect the places that are most at risk and critical to a future that supports people and nature.

Public grants help sustain this work, but they don't get us all the way there. It's the generous support of TNC members that gives us the flexibility to move forward, innovate and invest in the opportunities that will make the biggest impact.

With your continued support, we're building a legacy of stewardship that reflects the strength and spirit of the Natural State.



Learn more

Thanks to your support, we're preserving Arkansas' natural heritage through reforestation, restoration and permanent protection. Scan the QR code or visit [nature.org/arkansasland](https://www.nature.org/arkansasland) to learn more.

Conservation Easements: A Lasting Legacy for Nature

One way to achieve our goals is through conservation easements that protect the lands and waters most critical to biodiversity and resiliency. Easements can also be a powerful tool for landowners who live in and love these places.

Across Arkansas and beyond, families like Cindy and Tom Rimkus are stepping up to preserve forests, rivers and wildlife habitat for future generations. By working with TNC, Cindy and Tom ensured that their land along the Kings River will remain protected forever.

These kinds of easements help safeguard clean water, biodiversity, and natural beauty—even as development pressures continue to grow. When conservation-minded landowners and organizations come together, they create lasting impact: protecting critical habitats, preserving the character of special places and ensuring that they remain intact for wildlife and for people—now and for generations to come.

Data that Drive Impact

Across Arkansas, restoration practices like prescribed fire and invasive species control are helping improve ecosystem health—and the data we collect are essential to guiding land management and securing grant funding for ongoing restoration efforts. Until recently, these data were gathered manually, using pen and paper.

With your support, we're modernizing how we monitor restoration through digital tools and field-ready apps. These technologies are increasing efficiency, enabling real-time analysis, and allowing us to layer multiple datasets for deeper insights. They help us meet ambitious goals and make smarter decisions for the land.



Cindy and Tom Rimkus: Protecting a River, Preserving a Legacy

Cindy and Tom Rimkus moved to the Ozarks in 1975, drawn by the natural beauty and the peaceful lifestyle it offered. "We came here for the quality of life and the beauty of the land," Tom says.

Their property along the Kings River quickly became a cherished part of their lives. Wanting to ensure that it remained protected and inspired by The Nature Conservancy's efforts to conserve the Kings, they partnered with TNC to place a conservation easement on it. "We've always known this is a special piece of land," Tom says. "Protecting the land is important to the health of the river, and we feel good knowing we are a part of that."

For others considering a conservation easement, Tom says, "I'd tell them to explore the options and see what fits with their goals and values. Working with TNC was an asset for us. It aligned with our values and helped us protect the land and the river."

For Cindy and Tom, conservation is about legacy. "We want this to be a place where our grandchildren—and one day, great-grandchildren—can come to connect with nature and call home," Tom says. "That's what matters most."





By 2030, TNC will achieve 1,000 miles of rivers connected and 52 miles of river corridor protected that are important to biodiversity and clean water in Arkansas.



Protecting Arkansas' Freshwater

Across the Ozarks and Ouachitas, water connects everything. Rivers and streams wind through forested hillsides. Springs bubble up from the ground, feeding creeks and nourishing wildlife. Deep underground, caves and karst systems hold rare species found nowhere else in the world. These freshwater systems are part of Arkansas' identity and they're essential to our future.

The Nature Conservancy is working to protect these waters through a strategy that's focused, flexible and built for impact. With your support, we're teaming up with landowners, communities and local governments to take on the most urgent and complex challenges to meet our ambitious goals.

Our work includes restoring and protecting streamside forests, improving unpaved roads to reduce runoff and reimagining old and failing stream crossings that block natural flow.

Underground, our karst program is expanding to explore and protect some of the most biologically rich cave systems

in the country. A recent assessment identified 45 high-priority sites across northern Arkansas that support rare and sensitive species, including cavefish, crayfish, bats and other species found only in this region. We are working with landowners to assess these habitats, offer conservation support and improve conditions for the unique life that depends on them.

Your support helps us move quickly, respond to new opportunities and protect the waters that keep Arkansas strong. Together, we're making sure these rivers, springs and caves remain clean, healthy and full of life for today and for generations to come.



5 river miles

in Arkansas permanently protected by TNC and partners in 2025, with six more miles underway.

Arkansas' Hidden Biodiversity

More than 13,000 caves and numerous springs have been documented across the Ozarks. These habitats are rich in biodiversity, and more than 100 cave-dwelling species call them home. While much of TNC's Interior Highlands Karst Initiative focuses on ensuring healthy underground habitats and clean groundwater for these species, staff occasionally discover something new while crawling around underground.

Hotspots such as the Ozarks are a prime region for discovering new species, and TNC works closely with scientists to name these species and understand how to conserve them. Recently, Mike Slay, TNC's Ozark Karst Program manager, helped discover a new spring isopod. This new Arkansas species was named *Lirceus slayorum*, or Slay's spring isopod, to honor his conservation efforts.

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“Though caves are underground, protecting them often begins with conservation practices on the land above. In this way, our freshwater and land goals are deeply intertwined.”

— Mike Slay, TNC's Ozark Karst Program Manager

Community-driven Conservation

In 2024, TNC partnered with Madison County to design a bridge over War Eagle Creek, near Aurora, that would replace an aging slab crossing to enhance stream health and resilience. But record-breaking rainfall in 2025 overwhelmed local infrastructure, prompting the county to shift priorities.

TNC responded quickly to Madison County's request, pivoting to a new priority: two failing culvert crossings on Fritts Creek, a tributary of the White River. These crossings had blown out multiple times in the past year, as seen in the photo to the right, sending sediment downstream, threatening water quality in Beaver Lake—a vital drinking water source for northwest Arkansas—and requiring constant, costly county maintenance. TNC worked with the county to design flood-resilient, wildlife-friendly crossings to reduce erosion and protect clean water. Your support enables TNC to be nimble in our approach to conservation, meeting communities' most pressing needs and delivering lasting environmental impact.



Learn more

With your support, The Nature Conservancy is advancing efforts to safeguard Arkansas' rivers for people and wildlife. Explore the strategy and dive into the projects. Scan the QR code or visit nature.org/arkansaswater to learn more.





Forged in Fire: Reflections on a Career in Conservation

BY: DOUG ZOLLNER

This year saw the retirement of Doug Zollner, our director of science and strategy, after 33 years of dedication to The Nature Conservancy.

Doug has had an outsized and enduring impact on conservation in our state. His legacy includes bringing more than \$30-million in public funding to Arkansas for forest management, the training of more than 700 fire professionals, and helping bring the red-cockaded woodpecker back from near extinction. We invited Doug to reflect on his remarkable career and share the memories and lessons that stand out.

When I joined The Nature Conservancy's Arkansas chapter in 1992, I was only the fifth employee. My first assignment was an ecological assessment of the Ouachita Mountains to survey the plants and animals that make this area unique. That project laid the groundwork for the ecoregional assessments that would later shape conservation across North America. But one thing quickly became clear: if we were going to restore Arkansas' natural landscapes, we had to bring fire back.

At the time, prescribed burns were rare—just 5,000 acres a year, mostly for timber site prep. But our research showed that to truly restore Arkansas' ecosystems, we needed to be burning closer to 650,000 acres annually. That number felt staggering. We were starting from scratch.

We knew we couldn't do it alone. But before we could build partnerships, we had to build credibility. My own fire experience was limited, mostly from my time in Africa, and TNC hadn't yet established itself as a leader in fire management. So we rolled up our sleeves and got to work.



This page top to bottom: Current State Director Roger Mangham with Doug Zollner and former state director Scott Simon; Doug Zollner monitoring a restored prairie; Doug Zollner conducting stewardship work; Opposite page top to bottom: Station wagon used as fire engine for prescribed burns; Doug Zollner leading a hike; Doug Zollner, second from left, with early fire crew © TNC



We started small. With help from Doug Ladd, then with TNC Missouri, and Scott Simon, a volunteer burn crew member from TNC Illinois who would later become our Arkansas state director, we built a fire program on a shoestring budget. Our first crew had four people with no fire experience, a borrowed ATV and a station wagon with water jugs tied to the roof. We didn't even have radios. But in our first season, we burned 680 acres. A huge win. By 1998, I became our second burn boss, and the program began to grow rapidly.

Soon, TNC was leading the state in ecological burning. Over the next 22 years, we trained over 700 partner staff through our fire restoration workshops, helped launch the Arkansas Prescribed Fire Council, and co-founded the national Fire Learning Network with federal partners. What began as a grassroots effort became a national model.

Looking back, this fire program is the legacy I'm most proud of. We started with science and a vision, built a scrappy, determined team, and created a culture of fire restoration in Arkansas. Today, TNC Arkansas has a full-time, highly skilled crew that burns nearly year-round. Many of our burn bosses have gone on to lead programs across the country, and our work now informs fire restoration efforts in 14 countries.

How did we get here? Through partnerships, persistence, and the support of people who believed in the mission. We listened, we learned, and we proved that restoration was possible not just in theory, but in practice.

This year, Arkansas surpassed 500,000 acres managed with fire. What once felt impossible is now within reach. As I retire, I do so with deep gratitude for the people, the places and the purpose that made this journey unforgettable.

The flame we lit together will keep burning, restoring life to the land for generations to come.



Arkansas

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Enjoy Nature and Support Conservation

Tucked into the heart of Arkansas' most beautiful landscapes, The Nature Conservancy offers unique properties that are the perfect place for outdoor lovers and relaxation seekers alike.

Whether you're planning to hike scenic trails, paddle through quiet waters or simply unwind in a peaceful setting, each property provides easy access to the natural beauty that surrounds it. With cozy interiors and thoughtful amenities, our houses make it easy to explore and enjoy everything the great outdoors has to offer.

Each stay directly supports our mission and showcases the impact of our work—from forest restoration to habitat protection.

SCAN ME



Visit nature.org/arkansasrentals to learn more and book your stay.



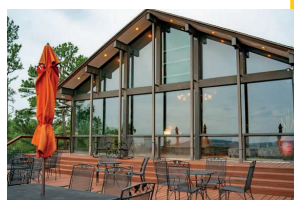
Rattlesnake Ridge House

Located in Rattlesnake Ridge Natural Area—offering amazing 360-degree views, just 15 miles northwest of Little Rock.



Bluffton Base Camp

Located on Bluffton Nature Preserve just outside Clinton, this three-bedroom house offers all you need for a relaxing stay.



Kings River Deck House

Located just south of Eureka Springs, the Kings River Deck House is a true Ozark Mountain getaway.