

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's 2024 Conservation Incentive Program

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) has received approval from Arkansas Legislative Council for a grant to launch the 2024 Conservation Incentive Program. This initiative is designed to support conservation efforts across the state by offering financial assistance and incentives to private landowners who implement conservation practices to enhance wildlife habitats and water quality. Enrollment for these programs will begin Jan. 2, 2024, on a first-come, first-served basis and the program is set to conclude by December 2024. In total, AGFC is offering nine programs with a combined value of \$3.5 million. Below, you'll find a brief overview of each program or you can visit AGFC.com/habitat for more information and details on how to sign up.

Title: Winter-flooded Rice Fields for Waterfowl Habitat (\$1,000,000)

Winter-flooded rice fields mimic natural wetlands, providing essential food for waterfowl during migration and winter. Eligible lands include layout fields, harvested, harvested, and ratooned, or harvested and planted in small grain crop rice fields. Water control structures should hold water for 90 days from Sept. 1 to Feb. 15. Surface water is used, with no drying agents for ratoon rice. There are no hunting restrictions, but layout fields can't claim Preventative Planting insurance. Ratoon rice fields must be harvested by Aug. 31. Landowners can receive up to \$10,000, with two payments, for active flooding and specific crop types. Monitoring includes georeferenced photos and checks for habitat compliance by AGFC.

Title: Forest Management on Greentree Reservoirs (\$100,000)

The goal of this program is to enhance waterfowl habitat in the Mississippi River Alluvial Valley by improving bottomland hardwood forests. Eligible lands are leveed tracts flooded at least twice every five years. Timber harvest and timber stand improvement methods can be used to achieve desired conditions, outlined in an approved management plan by a registered forester. Landowners can receive up to \$10,000, including payments for timber stand improvement and 75% of water control structure costs with receipts. Monitoring ensures effective control of undesirable trees by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

Title: Wetland Habitat Management (\$50,000)

Enhancing Arkansas's shallow-water wetlands benefits migratory bird populations, particularly ducks. Managed habitats with high-seed-producing plants provide essential energy for migratory birds during migration and winter. Eligible lands are managed according to approved plans, involving drawdowns, flooding, soil work and more. These wetlands must maintain water levels between 1 to 30 inches, with fall flooding from Sept. 1 to Feb. 15. Landowners can receive up to \$10,000, including payments for disking, bush hogging, and active flooding, with a second payment

if flooding requirements are met at the contract's end. Monitoring includes georeferenced photos and checks for habitat compliance by AGFC.

Title: Upland Hardwood and Pine Forest Management (\$200,000)

Enhancing upland hardwood and pine forests aims to benefit ground-nesting birds like the Northern Bobwhite and Eastern Wild Turkey. Eligible lands include those with basal areas over 80 ft²/acre, promoting understory plants for nesting and feeding. Forests with basal areas over 120 ft²/acre are eligible but shouldn't be reduced by more than 50%. Management involves herbicide injection, prescribed burning and creating downed tree structures for cover. Landowners can receive up to \$10,000, including payments for firebreaks, prescribed burning, timber stand improvement and downed tree structures. Monitoring ensures practice completion and adherence to best management practices.

Title: Firebreak Establishment and Prescribed Burning (\$700,000)

The goal of this program is to enhance forest, woodland, savanna and grassland habitats for wildlife diversity by improving native plant quality and quantity. Eligible practices include establishing firebreaks, adhering to best management practices and following prescribed burn plans. Prescribed burns are restricted to predominantly native vegetation or approved native vegetation restoration projects. Landowners can receive up to \$10,000, including payments for firebreaks and prescribed burns, with monitoring checks conducted to ensure practice adherence.

Title: Public Fishing Access to Private Waters (\$50,000)

The goal of this program is to expand public access to water bodies like streams, lakes and reservoirs with limited access. This initiative offers fishing opportunities and allows the public to help manage fish populations through a permit system. Eligible lands provide walk-in or vehicle access to water bodies of at least 10 acres. Landowners grant access and AGFC manages signage and trash collection. Payments vary based on water body type, size and access season length. Permits are issued according to the land's characteristics. Two payments are made: one upon contract signing and access opening and the other at the contract's end. Monthly monitoring checks ensure access, signage and cleanliness.

Title: Bank Stabilization (\$100,000)

This program aims to reduce sediment input into Arkansas's waters, enhancing stream water quality and supporting the state's economy and wildlife. Eligible projects include streambank restoration and sediment-reducing practices on private lands, particularly in Conservation Opportunity Areas and Priority Watersheds. Approved actions encompass streambank restoration, riparian corridor establishment and more. Landowners can receive up to 75% reimbursement of the actual practice cost, with a maximum of \$10,000 per year. Payments are made upon practice completion and inspection to ensure adherence to approved design plans and best management practices. Monitoring involves two checks during the project and a final inspection to ensure objectives are met.

Title: Feral Hog Trapping (\$1,200,000)

This program targets feral swine eradication to reduce their environmental impact. Eligible landowners with at least 100 acres or cooperatives within the same county can apply. They must provide evidence of recent feral hog activity. Landowners can receive up to 75% reimbursement for eligible traps and control systems, with a maximum of \$10,000. Payments are made in two installments, and landowners must record hog removals and complete a technical training course. Monitoring includes tracking removals, landowner surveys, and water sampling for swine waste markers in streams.

Title: Invasive Plant Control (\$100,000)

This program aims to combat both aquatic and terrestrial invasive plant species to protect Arkansas's native ecosystems. It involves Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM), where invasive plants are managed or removed based on an approved plan. Herbicide use is allowed following an approved habitat management plan. Eligible landowners can receive up to \$10,000 in reimbursement for actual herbicide and application costs, with a minimum land requirement. Monitoring involves one on-site monitoring check by AGFC staff and proof of payment to a certified applicator.



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