

# thinking ahead

## Water is critical to Arkansas's identity and essential to our future

Arkansas celebrates world class trout waters, Hot Springs National Park, Buffalo National River, duck hunting in the Delta and 600,000 acres of lakes. Water enables a unique Arkansas lifestyle.

Water is also essential to our livelihood, fueling agriculture, industry and communities. And that's where problems may arise. No one owns surface water, groundwater or precipitation in Arkansas, but landowners have the right to reasonably use the water. Despite this fact, we often view water with an ownership mentality rather than a stewardship ethic. Conflict and litigation have been the historic result.

## Collaboration can solve water problems

Although water conflict may take parties by surprise, in most cases it can be foreseen and conflict forestalled. Hammering out complex water issues in advance allows all stakeholders to consider the issues and participate in the process.

*No one owns the water.*



## Goals for our water future

Our water future is a shared future, and most of us can agree on common goals:

- Sustain a healthy economy
- Sustain a healthy environment
- Provide abundant, safe, good-quality drinking water
- Reduce catastrophic flooding

In order to meet these goals, individuals and institutions need to

- Manage water comprehensively through a participatory, democratic process
- Empower stewardship
- Value water and its contribution to Arkansas identity, lifestyle and livelihood.

## Challenges

Water issues facing our state are many and complex. Included in the list of problems that could threaten Arkansas's water future are

- Groundwater depletion
- Inadequate water quantity / quality for people and wildlife
- Nutrient pollution (nitrates / phosphates)
- Inadequate insitutional capacity to address water issues
- Conflicting or incomplete laws and regulations; inconsistent enforcement
- Lack of advance planning
- Diffuse or distracted leadership
- Outdated management of water and aging infrastructure, particularly under budgetary constraint.

Arkansas needs clear leadership now for our water future.

## Arkansas is at a critical juncture in water management.

Decisions we make now can move the state toward or away from crisis. Citizens and institutions have the opportunity to participate in those decisions now and in the next few years, or risk being left high and dry after decisions are made by others.

Arkansas' Water Future Coalition maintains that well-managed water, both now and in the future, must start with the protection of water quality, water quantity, healthy natural habitats and the recharge of groundwater aquifers.

The **Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation** commissioned the following efforts to promote policy options that achieve sustainable water resources in Arkansas.

### **Water Issues in Arkansas: An Unfinished Story, 2008**

A summary report and a larger companion report include references, literature review and multiple perspectives on Arkansas water use.

### **Troubled Water (2008 AETN)**

This documentary film summarizes water issues and aired in April 2008.

### **Arkansas' Water Future Coalition (2008)**

The Coalition includes Audubon Arkansas, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, and The Nature Conservancy. The Coalition will assist the Foundation with strategies that engage Arkansans in efforts that focus on improving water policy.

## **Thirsty for more?**

### **Water Issues in Arkansas:**

**An Unfinished Story** can be found at [www.wrfoundation.org](http://www.wrfoundation.org)

Other websites of interest:

[www.anrc.arkansas.gov](http://www.anrc.arkansas.gov)  
[www.adeq.state.ar.us](http://www.adeq.state.ar.us)  
[www.arkansaswater.org](http://www.arkansaswater.org)  
[www.awag.org](http://www.awag.org)  
[www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu](http://www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu)

Arkansas' Water Future Coalition Members:

[www.ar.audubon.org](http://www.ar.audubon.org)  
[www.arpanel.org](http://www.arpanel.org)  
[www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/arkansas](http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/arkansas)



A Coalition of Audubon Arkansas, Arkansas Public Policy Panel & The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas Field Office. Funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

## **Water Glossary**

### **Watershed**

A watershed is an area of land that drains rain and snow into a particular lake or river. Arkansas has 57 "coded" watersheds, sometimes called hydrologic units, and seven regional watersheds. Decisions made by stakeholders in a watershed will affect others.

### **Aquifer**

Groundwater is contained in aquifers, underground beds of saturated soil or rock. Arkansas is the fourth largest user of groundwater in the U.S. Water level declines and other measures indicate that aquifer withdrawals in the state are occurring at an unsustainable rate.

### **Riparian Zones**

A general term for land areas directly influenced by a body of water. Stream banks, lake borders and marshes are typical riparian zones. A healthy riparian zone contains native plants that filter sediment and other contaminants from water and provide wildlife habitat. Loss of healthy native riparian zones reduces water quality.

### **Runoff**

Runoff, as the term suggests, is any amount of water that runs off a surface, either into a waterway or absorbed by the soil. Runoff can transport sediment, nutrients and contaminants into surface and groundwater, and is a major culprit in loss of water quality.

### **Sedimentation**

Sediment is the largest pollutant of water worldwide. It's the deposit and accumulation of eroded soil into waterways. Erosion from deforestation, urbanization, roads and agriculture can contribute.

### **Point and Nonpoint Pollution**

In order to manage pollution's impact on a body of water, we must determine its starting point. If a pollutant can be traced back to a particular source, it's referred to as "point" pollution. If not, the pollution is referred to as "nonpoint."