

water and wildlife

Wildlife is big business.

Wildlife-associated recreation contributes more than \$600 million to the state's economy annually. We need that money. We need those jobs. If our wildlife is healthy and happy, our budgets are likely to follow. And that takes water.

Aquatic species sound the alarm.

While many of Arkansas's species and habitats are healthy and viable, some are not. The federal list of threatened animal species for Arkansas contains 33 animals. Most are linked with water-related habitats: crayfish (2), mussels (11), fish (9), amphibians (1), birds (6) and mammals (4).

While the average voter might not miss one or two of these, they will be seriously affected by the trend they indicate: loss of water-related habitat. It's in everyone's interest — deer hunters, bird watchers, hospitality businesses — to halt that trend before it changes our way of life.

What's the problem?

To survive, animals depend on healthy natural habitats with high water quality and sufficient water quantity. A multitude of forces work against this: pollution of air and water, invasive species that crowd out

native species, destructive dredging, sprawl, overtaxing of irrigation sources and so on.

One place to start looking for damage is in **riparian zones**, land at edges of bodies of water, such as stream banks, lake borders and marshes. Vegetated riparian habitat not only hosts animals and provides food and water, it provides a filtering function for water along the way. Riparian areas also serve as corridors for wildlife.

Destruction of wetlands and loss of stream and river habitat should be of concern to all Arkansans. Careless clearing of streams for urban and agricultural use destroys wildlife habitat. The extreme weather events associated with climate change will multiply the problem.

What's the solution?

As we create jobs, grow our communities, and pursue our favorite pastimes, we can make decisions that ensure water and habitat for all of us — two legged or four legged, finned, feathered or furred. We can enforce laws and policies already on the books. We can enact new laws when they're needed. Most of all, we can be aware and pass along that awareness. The next time a hawk passes overhead or you launch the bass boat, remember that what helps wildlife helps us and what threatens wildlife threatens us, too.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DON NELMS



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

Other websites of interest:

www.anrc.arkansas.gov
www.adeq.state.ar.us
www.arkansaswater.org
www.awag.org
www.watersheds.cast.uark.edu

Arkansas' Water Future Coalition Members:

www.ar.audubon.org
www.arpanel.org
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."