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## **\$1.7 Million To Fund Local Projects in Cache River Area**

**LITTLE ROCK, AR**—The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) is pleased to announce the approval of \$1.7 million in funding to implement nutrient reduction related projects that support the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force’s program. The goal of the Task Force’s program is to assist states in implementing nutrient loss reduction strategies through voluntary, non-regulatory programs.

The Department’s Natural Resources Division has partnered with Arkansas State University, The Nature Conservancy, and local drainage districts in Northeast Arkansas to restructure channelized ditches to allow for more natural assimilation of nutrients. Additional benefits to local producers include reduced localized flooding and on-farm sediment loss. Ditch construction and water quality monitoring is slated as a five-year project. An additional \$3.7 million will be awarded for fiscal years 2024 through 2027. Future projects will focus on innovative, voluntary conservation practices that benefit producers and water quality.

Arkansas is one of twelve states participating in the Task Force working to reduce the size of a hypoxic zone, an area with reduced oxygen levels, in the Gulf of Mexico. The hypoxic zone is formed by excessive nutrients causing algae blooms and when these blooms decay, micro-bacteria consume the oxygen. This ultimately results in an area approximately one-tenth the size of Arkansas that is unsuitable for aquatic life.

To learn more about the Arkansas Nutrient Reduction Strategy and voluntary efforts that local producers are actively implementing, visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/natural-resources/divisions/water-management/arkansas-nutrient-reduction-strategy/](https://agriculture.arkansas.gov/natural-resources/divisions/water-management/arkansas-nutrient-reduction-strategy/). For more information about the Gulf Hypoxia Program, contact Tate Wentz at [tate.wentz@agriculture.arkansas.gov](mailto:tate.wentz@agriculture.arkansas.gov).

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while conserving natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit [www.agriculture.arkansas.gov](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov). The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.