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EPA Highlights West Fork White River Water Quality Improvement Success

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Division is pleased to announce that water quality improvement efforts on the West Fork White River that resulted in the river’s removal from the state’s impaired waterbodies list are featured in the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) July 2022 Success Story publication. The success story highlights the efforts of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, Watershed Conservation Resources Center, Beaver Watershed Alliance, Beaver Water District, and the Arkansas Water Resources Center, with funding from the Natural Resources Division. The article and short videos highlighting this accomplishment can be found at agriculture.arkansas.gov/natural-resources/divisions/water-management/nonpoint-source-management/

To be eligible as an EPA success story, there must be documentation of a waterbody’s improvement or removal from a state’s impaired waterbodies list. A total of 27.2 miles of the West Fork White River has been impaired since 1998 due to high levels of sediment and turbidity. As of 2018, the uppermost 16.5 miles of the river met the state’s water quality criterion for the first time since 1998.

The West Fork White River along with the Middle and East Fork White Rivers are among the major tributaries to the upper portion of Beaver Lake. Beaver Lake serves nearly 1 in 6 Arkansans with drinking water. With increased loss of vegetated stream buffers comes an increased streambank instability and erosion. This erosion increases suspended sediment downstream which poses a significant risk to surface water intakes. Erosion and sediment are the leading source and cause of water quality pollution in Arkansas and across the nation.

Draft lists of impaired waterbodies within Arkansas are submitted to the EPA by the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment which is currently working to submit the draft 2022 list. Once a new list is approved by the EPA, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture will continue to work with all partners to implement conservation practices and water quality monitoring effort to better inform future water impairment listings and to highlight water quality improvements.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit 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.