

Source Water Protection Funding/2018 Farm Bill: Darcia Routh (Arkansas Department of Health) Arkansas Drinking Water Update Article



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Ms. Darcia Routh, P.G., authored an article in the Fall 2020 edition of the Arkansas Department of Health publication *Arkansas Drinking Water Update* titled:

Source Water Protection & the 2018 Farm bill: An Arkansas 2020 Update ("Article")

Ms. Routh is a Geologist Supervisor with the Arkansas Department of Health.

The *Article* initially notes that the 2018 Farm Bill requires that 10 percent of funds (estimated at \$4 billion) authorized for conservation programs be used to:

- Protect sources of drinking water
- Increase incentives for agricultural producers to implement practices that benefit source water protection
- Authorize conservation programs to be used to protect sources of drinking water

Incentives for agricultural producers to implement practices benefitting source water protection were increased and the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service ("NRCS") was authorized to work with state water protection programs and community water systems to identify state/local source water protection priorities.

Ms. Routh states that Arkansas's NRCS source water protection group includes:

- Water utilities
- Conservation districts
- State and federal agencies
- State Technical Committee

The Arkansas Department of Health is stated to have collaborated with NRCS providing GIS analysis to:

...delineate the priority areas both for groundwater and for surface water protection statewide.

Risk factors in setting statewide priorities are stated to include:

- Excess nutrients, pathogens, and/or pesticides in source water at watershed scale,
- Reported likelihood of Harmful Algal Blooms
- Community public water system health-based (MCL) violations,
- Size of population served by water utility,

- Designated groundwater depletion or sole source aquifer areas,
- Other risks such as karst, highly erodible soils, wildfire risk.

The *Article* also discusses:

- Best management/implementation practices for the identified risks
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Conservation Innovation Grants

A copy of the *Article* with links for information can be found [here](#).