

POLK COUNTY GRAZIER

December 5, 2024



An eNewsletter by the Rich Mountain Conservation District

What Pastures Need

When thinking about how to make our pastures more productive we need to understand what grasses and other forage plants need to in order to grow. Generally, it all comes down to sunlight, air, water, soil, and space. We have little or no control over some of these factors but they are all interrelated and connected. Because they are all related there are management strategies we can use that can help reduce any deficiencies. Let's look at each one of these to see why they are important:

- **Sunlight** – Like we learned back in grade school, plants utilize chlorophyll in their leaves to convert sunlight into sugars. If you think about it, plant leaves are like tiny solar panels, taking in sunlight and making it into a more useable form of energy. Unfortunately, in order to utilize the energy created by plants for livestock feed we must graze the plant's solar panels (leaves). Consequently, when a pasture is overgrazed each plant must try to regrow more solar panels (leaves) using its root reserves of stored energy. The pasture then needs rest so that the plants can rebuild those depleted root reserves and become productive again. If the plants are overgrazed again too quickly the plant productivity may severely decline. There's a saying that "it takes grass to grow grass" meaning that if you leave some leaves on your plants they will be more productive.

- **Air** – Plants mainly need two things from the air, a proper temperature and Carbon Dioxide (CO₂). Although different types of forage plants prefer different temperatures most of them grow in temps between 45F and 95F. Some of these forages like it on the cooler side (like Fescue, Ryegrass, and White Clover) and some like it warmer (like Bermudagrass, Bahiagrass, and Crabgrass). Thankfully, we live in a climate where the temps are moderate for most of the year so we can grow both cool season and warm season forages and have an extended growing season. Also, lucky for us, we have plenty of CO₂ in the air which plants need for photosynthesis.

- **Water** – Lack of water is usually the most common deficiency preventing production in our pastures. Of course there can be a lack of sunlight (due to cloudiness) or the air temp may be too cold or hot for high production, but a drought can be devastating to forage production. A lot of times droughts come with those hot temperatures so a double whammy. Too much water can be a problem sometimes too but usually only in lower areas of a pasture that are prone to flooding or saturation. The Ouachita Mountains region receive more rainfall per year on average (50-70 inches) than anywhere else in the Arkansas. Although it seems like we're either having floods or droughts, generally our rainfall is spread fairly evenly throughout the year compared to other places. Maintaining grass cover allows more of this rainfall to soak into the soil rather than runoff.

- **Soil** – Out of sight - out of mind, but as much as half of a plant is below ground in the root system. Most farmers understand that there are different types of soils based on the texture (Sand, Silt, Clay, Loam) that affect plant growth, but many may not understand the term soil tilth. Soil tilth is the overall condition of the soil as it relates to its suitability to grow plants and takes into account the physical, chemical, and biological features of the soil. All of these features are interrelated and some of them can be improved. For example, rotational grazing allows more organic matter in the soil which improves the soil biology and will increase the availability of nutrients to the plants. The added organic matter also allows more rainfall to be stored in the soil for later use. Other improvements, like maintaining cover can reduce the soil temperature in the summer by providing shade which provides other benefits as well.

- **Space** – Plants must have room to grow and this is where we as land managers probably have the most control over production. Not enough space to grow causes deficiencies in the four other plant growth factors above due to competition for these resources. Just like an overcrowded forest with too many trees results in lots of small stunted trees and needs to be thinned, we must "thin" our pastures to achieve maximum growth and production. We do this by grazing our pastures to achieve the desired spacing (height). Overgrazing pastures too short causes a loss in production but so does undergrazing and letting the pasture grasses get too mature. When the grasses mature, the plants spend their energy making seed heads and not new leaves. An undergrazed pasture is less productive because growth slows but is also lower in nutritional value to the livestock.

Scholarship Opportunity!!!!!!

Please see attached announcement about the 2025 Rich Mtn Conservation District Scholarship and help us spread the word to Polk County high school seniors who are intending on majoring in a natural resources related field at college (agriculture, conservation, forestry, wildlife, soils, vet science, ag business, etc.). The local county scholarship winner can receive \$500 and be eligible to compete for an additional \$1,000 from the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts. The deadline to apply is February 7, 2025.

"Take Care of the Land and the Land will Take Care of You"

---Hugh Hammond Bennett, First Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service

WE ARE HIRING - Rich Mountain Conservation District is now hiring a part-time Business Administrator.

We are seeking a part-time business administrator to support our team. In this role, you will perform various administrative tasks, including payroll, human resources, bookkeeping (QuickBooks Online), grant management, and general office functions.

To qualify for this position, you should have previous office experience, be able to multitask and prioritize, be detail-oriented and have excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Benefits include medical, dental, and life insurance, vacation and paid holidays, and a retirement plan. The work week is Monday through Friday, and the hours are 24 hours/week. The rate is \$15.00/hour, and pay is biweekly.

Please submit your resume for consideration to Rich Mountain Conservation District, 508 7th Street, Mena, AR 71953 or email to: rmcdistrict2023@gmail.com.

Rich Mountain Conservation District (Polk County) is taking resumes for a part-time Conservation Technician Assistant position. Work duties include but not limited to: assisting landowners with installation of conservation practices & programs, working knowledge of agriculture, and working with GPS equipment & computers. Flexible hours of work will be between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Work involves various outside jobs and some office duties. *Ideal for a college student interested in conservation, agriculture, or forestry.* Contact us at 479-394-6054. Bring resume to 508 7th Street, Mena between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. or email to rmcdistrict2023@gmail.com before January 31, 2025.

The Rich Mountain Conservation District has equipment available for rent to landowners in Polk County:

SUNFLOWER NO TILL DRILL

\$10 ACRE, \$50 MINIMUM

TYE NO TILL DRILL

\$10 ACRE, \$50 MINIMUM

RHINO POST DRIVER

\$150 PER WEEK (5 days) with a \$100 deposit

3 POINT CYCLONE SEEDER

\$75.00 per week (5 days) with a \$50 deposit

Please contact RMCD at (479) 437-6054 for more information or to make a reservation.

Building electric fence?

We have a spinning jenny & electric fence tester available for landowners use

Know someone who would enjoy receiving this newsletter?

Please feel free to forward it to them and have them contact our office to be on the mailing list in the future!

Rich Mountain Conservation District

Web: www.rmcd.org

Email: rmcdistrict2023@gmail.com

Phone: (479) 437-6054

Mail: 508 7th Street, Mena, AR 71953

Sent on behalf of the Rich Mountain Conservation District.
Thanks for your interest in grazing management and conservation,

Steve Swall

District Conservationist
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
Mena Service Center (Polk & Montgomery counties)
(479) 437-6054

Please reply to unsubscribe if you do not wish to receive this newsletter.

Memo To: **Teachers, Counselors and Youth Leaders**

From: Rich Mountain Conservation District

Date: December 1, 2024

Subject: Conservation Scholarship

Enclosed is information on the 2024-2025 Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts "Dave Ferguson" Scholarship Contest. This contest will give a young person in our county the opportunity to win up to **\$1,000** towards college expenses when they choose a conservation-related course of study at an accredited Arkansas college or university. The winner will also be eligible to compete for scholarship funds at the area and state level contests.

The essay should include all four items of the following components:

2024-2025 Theme & Criteria:

Theme: "*Home is Where the Habitat Is.*"

A habitat provides the essential plants and animals need to survive, like food, water, shelter, and space. Protecting habitats helps maintain healthy ecosystems.

- 1) Define the benefits of healthy habitat. Identify the many ways that healthy habitat affects the quality of life for people. Discuss the beneficial roles of forests in healthy condition which can be surprisingly far-reaching and enhance ecosystems, economic benefits, and benefits to the landscape.
- 2) Give an overview of activities that can be implemented by landowners, farmers, organizations, and others to enhance and improve their habitat.
- 3) Provide an actual example of a landowner/organization who has been helped by the conservation district. (May use photos & videos and district will help locate landowners, if needed)

Note: Resources are listed on the Frequently Asked Questions sheet

AACD Scholarship Awards:

1st Place - \$1,000 (one time award)

2nd Place - \$500 (one time award)

The enclosed information sheet and entry forms should be distributed immediately to any eligible student so they can return their entries by the deadline. The closing date for entries at the district level is February 7, 2025.

For more entry forms, or more information, please contact the **Rich Mountain Conservation at 479-437-6054.**

This is a program sponsored by your local conservation district and the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts to assist young people interested in careers in the conservation of our natural resources. We hope you will encourage participation by those in your classes or groups.

Sincerely,

James Watkins, Chair
Rich Mountain Conservation District

**Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Conservation Scholarship
Entry Form for the 2024-2025 School Year**

Return this form, your essay and two letters of recommendation by February 7, 2025 to the Rich Mountain Conservation District, 508 7th Street, Mena, AR 71953

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ Email Address _____

SCHOOL GRADE: _____ County _____

I certify that I am a resident of Polk County, Arkansas, I have a grade point average of at least 2.5, and I have enclosed two letters of recommendation from responsible adults in my community.

Also, please find enclosed my essay on the topic, **"Home is Where the Habitat is"** (Minimum length 750 words).

I understand that if I win this scholarship, I am eligible for the Area Contest where I may have the opportunity to win additional scholarship funds. Furthermore, I agree to represent (District Name) in that contest. I understand that if I win the Area Contest, I agree to represent the Area at the State Contest. I understand that I should immediately contact AACD if I voluntarily withdraw my name from consideration due to a change of plans regarding college.

Signed _____
(Student)



2024-2025
Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Dave Ferguson Scholarship

Important Dates to Remember

February 7, 2025 – Deadline for applications to be received in District Offices

- Student essays should be submitted to their local conservation district.

April 18, 2025 – Deadline for applications to be received by the Area Presidents

- District must choose one winning essay and submit to their Area President

June 13, 2025 – Deadline for Area Winners to be received in the AACD State Office

- Area winners are submitted to AACD – one winner per Area

Mail entries to the following address:

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
8100 Bicentennial Road
North Little Rock, AR 72118

Or

Area Winners essays can be emailed to debbiepinreal@aol.com

July 2025 – Winners to be judged and announced prior to August 2025



2024-2025
Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Dave Ferguson Scholarship

Frequently asked questions and answers.

Q – What do I need to cover in my essay?

A – Essay should include all four areas.

- 1) Define the benefits of healthy habitat. Identify the many ways that healthy forests affect the quality of life for people. Discuss the beneficial roles of habitat in healthy condition which can be surprisingly far-reaching and enhance ecosystems, economic benefits, and benefits to the landscape.
- 2) Give an overview of activities that can be implemented by landowners, farmers, organizations, and others to enhance and improve their resource management; soil, water, forest, etc..
- 3) How the conservation district can help landowners address the resource concern that results from the lack of resource management; conservation practices (talk with NRCS Staff if needed)
- 4) Provide an actual example of a landowner/organization who has been helped by the conservation district (May use photos & videos and district will help locate landowners, if needed)

Q – Who is eligible?

A – District residents who are currently high school seniors and who have a grade point average of at least 2.5 are eligible.

Q – What is the prize structure?

A – Each district that has a scholarship program is encouraged to offer a \$250.00 scholarship. Areas are encouraged to offer a \$500.00 scholarship. Scholarships given at the district and area level are solely at the discretion of the conservation district and area leadership. AACD awards one-time scholarships of \$1,000 and \$500.

Q – What are the deadlines?

A – Districts should close their entry period on **February 7, 2025**. Applications should be received in the district offices by that date. Districts will then judge and send in the name of each winner to Area Presidents no later than **April 18, 2025**. Area contests will be decided, and winners' names sent to AACD in Little Rock by **June 13, 2025**. The Area winners will be judged by an independent body of judges with expertise in the subject matter. The State Winners will be notified by mail immediately after judging.

Q – Where can I get more information?

A – There are numerous websites dedicated to watershed planning. Here are a few that might be helpful.

- 1) Natural Resources Conservation Service [Natural Resource Concerns | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
- 2) ADA – Natural Resources Division [Natural Resources - Arkansas Department of Agriculture](#)
- 3) ADA – Forestry Division [Forestry - Arkansas Department of Agriculture](#)
- 4) Arkansas Game & Fish Commission [Arkansas Game and Fish Commission | The Natural State Awaits](#)