



Urban Rivers Restoration Pilot Fact Sheet Fourche Creek Watershed Restoration, Arkansas

BACKGROUND—The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission in their 1992 County Ecological Assessment recognized the Fourche Creek Basin for its “great value to catch, store and release flood water from the Little Rock area.” With the city of Little Rock’s growth, encroaching urban sprawl has reduced the watershed’s ability to reduce non-point source pollution. Waste and trash have polluted the landscape and produced leachate (toxic seepage from waste sites). Sediment has clogged stream channels and choked vegetation. Fish and populations of other aquatic species have been harmed by the accelerated amounts of point- and non-point source pollution. Fourche Creek, which flows east to the Arkansas River, has a watershed of 108,800 acres that provides drainage for most of the city. Its 3,600 acres of bottomland support hardwood forests critical to filtering and cleaning runoff.

ACTIVITIES, AUTHORITY, AND FUNDING— The Fourche Creek Watershed Urban Rivers Restoration pilot involves the partnership of the city of Little Rock, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, Audubon Society, Pulaski County, and Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department. The goals of the project are to restore an urban natural area along Fourche Creek, including wildlife and aquatic habitat

enhancement, public access, and nature and canoeing trails; provide Little Rock with an improved and protected bottomland area covered with hardwoods that can restore wetland functions and reduce flooding; and educate the public on ecosystems.

USACE efforts on the Fourche Creek Watershed are authorized under Section 401 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986 (PL 99-66), as amended. Other Corps efforts include Environmental Restoration projects under Section 1135 of the WRDA of 1986, as amended, and Section 206 of the WRDA of 1996, as amended. The Little Rock District of the USACE is preparing a Limited Re-Evaluation Report to update the original studies on the acquisition of 1,750 acres of bottomland covered with hardwoods along the creek for environmental preservation and development of nature appreciation facilities. EPA is working with Audubon Arkansas to involve the public in programs to help prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide hiking and biking trails. Since a portion of Fourche Creek is located within the area of the Pulaski County Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot and within a federally designated Empowerment Zone, pilot partners also are exploring additional opportunities for collaboration with these programs, both of which encourage reuse and redevelopment of abandoned properties and promote sustainable growth practices.

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