Section 319(h) Clean Water Act Section Grant Program: Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division Announces $3.17 Million in Funding



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07/09/2026

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division ("NRD") announced that it has been awarded $3,175,000 through the United States Environmental Protection Agency's 2026 Clean Water Act Section 319(h) Grant Program.

NRD states that the funds will:

… support statewide projects that reduce nonpoint source pollution in the state's waterbodies through the Department's Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program.

The terms "point source" and "nonpoint source" have key jurisdictional significance under the Clean Water Act. A Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("NPDES") Permit must be obtained if five jurisdictional elements are present:

- A person
- adds a
- pollutant
- to navigable waters
- from a point source.

The term "point source" is defined under the Clean Water Act to include:

… any discernable, confined and discrete conveyance, including but not limited to, any pipe, ditch, channel, tunnel, conduit, well, discrete fissure, container, rolling stock, concentrated animal feeding operation, or vessel or other floating craft, from which pollutants are or may be discharged.

The Clean Water Act NPDES program is operated by the Arkansas Department of Energy & Environment – Division of Environmental Quality. It has been delegated such authority by EPA.

Nonpoint source pollutants are normally associated with agricultural, silvicultural, and urban runoff. Some portions of such discharges tend to be generated by soil disturbance and sedimentation.

Nonpoint source pollution generally results from land runoff, atmospheric deposition, drainage, or seepage of contaminants. A stormwater runoff or flow can mobilize various pollutants such as metals, oil and grease, and nutrients.

A nonpoint source would include any source of pollution that does not fall within the scope of the definition of “point source” in Section 502(14) of the Clean Water Act.

The NRD has programs to address nonpoint source pollution in Arkansas.

The NRD states that since 2023 its Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program has received $13,198,274 through the EPA’s Clean Water Act Section 319(h) Grant Program. It further notes that when combined with partner matching contributions, $23,692,205 has been invested in 48 projects across the state to improve water quality.

The NRD has identified 18 projects to support, which will receive sub-awards to implement projects that:

- Reduce sediment and nutrient loads.
- Improve watershed resilience.
- Expand water quality monitoring.
- Increase public education and outreach.

Projects are stated to have been selected based on:

- Federal program requirements.
- Priorities in the 2024–2029 Nonpoint Source Management Plan.
- Projected measurable improvements to water quality.

Priority areas are stated to include:

- Pollutant load reductions.
- Voluntary practices in targeted watersheds.
- Restoring beneficial uses.
- Expanding education and outreach.
- Building partner capacity.

A copy of the NRD news release which lists the 18 projects can be found here.