



Water levels are controlled on the property with flash-board risers.



A red-tailed hawk scans the brush for a meal.



Corn stubble provides nutrients to the field.



Photos by Creston Shrum

Levell Foote and Jack Smart discuss conservation practices used on the New Gascony Farm.

Passion for conservation proves productive for farmer

When Felix Smart began farming in 1980, his true passion was conservation. Since then, he has incorporated his conservation goals into his farming practices.

This year, his work was rewarded when two of his four farms qualified for Conservation Security Program payments.

The New Gascony Farm, 1,436 acres south of Althiemer in Jefferson County, ranked at Tier III – the highest level. The Lake Dick Farm, 1,496 acres, qualified as Tier II.

“My dad’s philosophy has always been to leave the ground better than when you started each year,” said Jack Smart, who runs the New Gascony Farm.

To do this, their operation relies heavily on no-till farming and minimizing the number of passes required on each field by using multi-use implements. By planting cover crops in the fall they decrease erosion, get the field ready for spring plantings and benefit wildlife.

“Implementing conservation practices into your farming operation makes you money,” Felix said. “Soon after I began farming, I quit plowing the fields in the fall and left the stubble on the fields to improve my soil.”

The Smarts land leveled almost their entire acreage to reduce run off and erosion and conserve water.

“We recirculate almost all the water we use during the growing season,” Jack said. “We can flood most of our fields for waterfowl during the winter.”

Although they draw a lot of waterfowl into their farm, they only hunt about five percent of the acreage. The remainder of the land is used for waterfowl rest areas.

The conservation work has also benefited other wildlife on the property.

“Last year, we saw the first wild turkeys ever on the farm,” Jack said. “The quail have started coming back, and the deer herd is benefiting as well.”

2006 Conservation Security Program

Arkansas CSP Quick Facts for 2006:

Watersheds: 2
Poteau
Lower Arkansas

Watershed Acre-
age: 769,500

Estimated Number
of Farms &
Ranches: 1,045

Cropland: 249,100
acres

Federal Land:
94,300 acres

Forestland: 214,900
acres

Woodland: 0 acres

Pasture Land:
142,300 acres

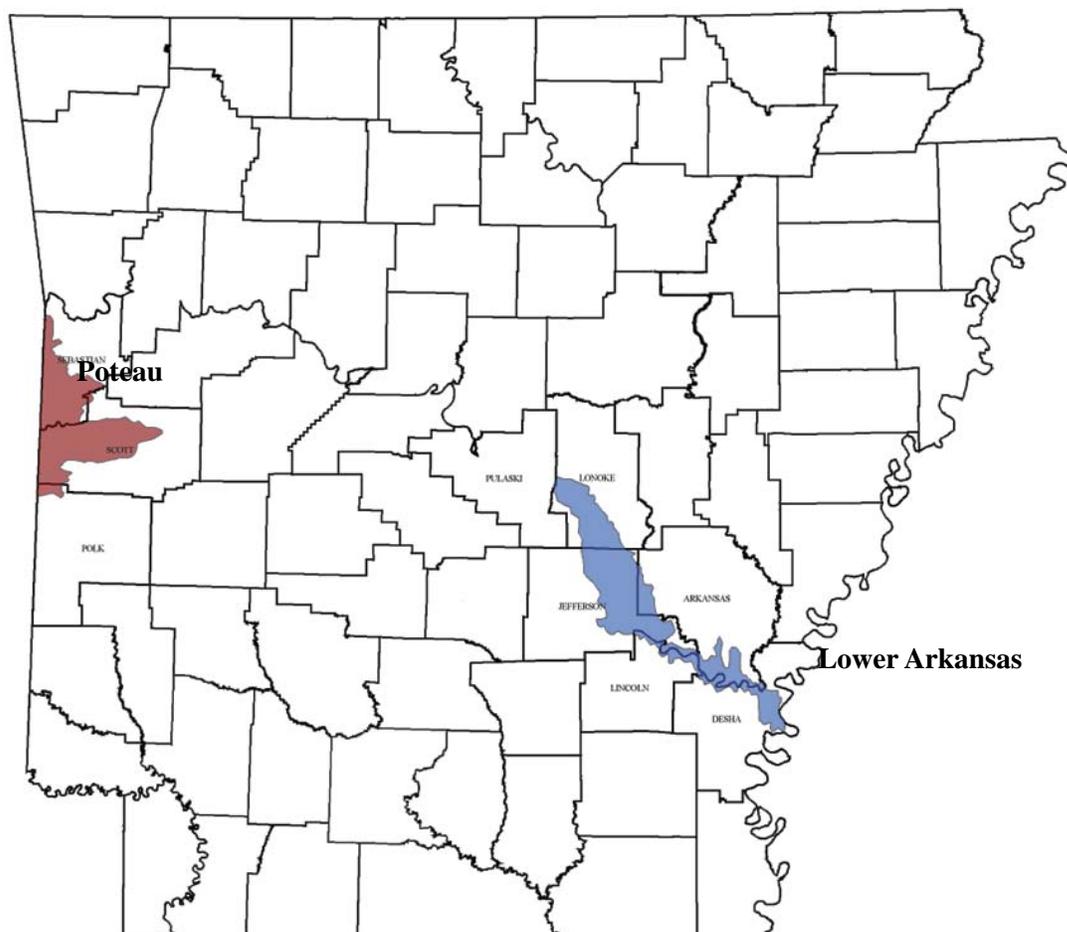
Urban: 9,800 acres

Water: 38,200 acres

Other Land: 17,500
acres

CSP Participation:
Sought info on
CSP: 201
Applied: 201
Enrolled: 94

Tier Distribution:
Tier I: 0
Tier II: 89
Tier III: 5



Watershed	Total CSP Contracts Approved	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
Poteau	0	0	0	0
Lower Arkansas	94	0	89	5
Total Contracts	94	0	89	5
Total Fiscal Year 2006 Payments	\$1,861,533	0	\$1,713,434	\$149,099

CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. Payments are made using three tiers of conservation contracts.

CSP will be available any year on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. Additional information about CSP is available from your local USDA Service Center or at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.