

**Buffalo River Conservation Committee (BRCC)
Public Health, Welfare, and Labor Committee
Progress Report and Funding Proposal Update
August 20, 2020**

Background:

On September 30, 2016, Governor Hutchinson created the Beautiful Buffalo River Action Committee (BBRAC) to develop an Arkansas-led approach to identify and to address potential concerns in the Buffalo River Watershed.

On September 23, 2019, Governor Hutchinson signed Executive Order 19-14 establishing the Buffalo River Conservation Committee (BRCC) which replaces the Beautiful Buffalo River Action Committee (BBRAC).

Funding:

November 15, 2019: following approval by the Arkansas Legislative Council, a total of \$2 million was available for the BRCC efforts. \$1 million from the Governor's discretionary fund, and \$1 million from private donors.

Timeline of Efforts:

December 12, 2019: a 17-member subcommittee was established that is comprised of local landowners, local city and county government officials, and stakeholders in the areas of agriculture and tourism. The subcommittee is tasked with identifying opportunities for training, relationship building, and specific initiatives to preserve and enhance water quality in the watershed.

January 23, 2020: The first meeting of the BRCC members and subcommittee members scheduled to take place in Marshall, Arkansas was cancelled due to inclement weather.

February 13, 2020: BRCC members and subcommittee members convened in Marshall, Arkansas for the first meeting. During this meeting the discussion centered around four main topic areas that will be the focus for future BRCC action and funding proposals. These four topic areas include: unpaved roads; cost-share programs for agriculture; water and wastewater system infrastructure; tourism and tourism impacts.

March 11, 2020: The first coronavirus case in Arkansas prompted the cancellation of scheduled subcommittee meetings on March 19, 2020 and April 2, 2020.

April 29, 2020: BRCC members and subcommittee members convened by conference call to get an update on the work of the four subcommittees and discuss efforts to move forward.

June 2, 2020: BRCC members and subcommittee members convened to review proposals submitted for funding as well as receive updates from the four topic areas. Requests for funding included four unpaved roads sites as well as three water and wastewater proposals. During the meeting the four unpaved roads sites and funding of \$250,000 to the City of Jasper for wastewater treatment facility

improvements received recommendations for funding. The full proposals for funding are included below.

June 9, 2020: Presentation to the House and Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee. The presentation including an update on the BRCC efforts and the current status of funding requests. Secretary Ward stated that the BRCC members and subcommittee members would continue to refine the funding proposals that were received and will work with partners in order to maximize the use of state funding on projects within the Buffalo River Watershed.

August 6, 2020: BRCC members and subcommittee members convened to review updated proposals submitted for funding and received updates from the four topic areas.

BRCC members and subcommittee members decided to table discussions regarding funding for Marble Falls and Feral Hogs until additional information was provided. The BRCC approved the following updated requests for funding:

(1) maintaining the funding amount of \$250,000 to the City of Jasper for wastewater treatment facility improvements;

(2) revising funding requests for Unpaved Roads to reflect \$231,935 for Cane Branch Road in Searcy County and \$397,400 for Cave Mountain Road (to Hawksbill Crag) in Newton County. The total funding for Unpaved Roads equates to a \$570,979 once contingency costs are added and funding from the federal nonpoint source management program are subtracted.

If these funding proposal requests are approved by the House and Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee, there will be funding of \$179,021 remaining for distribution by the BRCC moving forward.

Moving Forward:

BRCC members and subcommittee members will continue to work with partners in order to maximize the use of state funding on projects within the Buffalo River Watershed.

BRCC members and subcommittee members will continue to meet as needed on the four topic areas of: unpaved roads; cost-share programs for agriculture; water and wastewater system infrastructure; and tourism and tourism impacts.

BRCC members and subcommittee members will continue to review and refine funding requests for the remaining fund balance of \$179,021.

The BRCC members and subcommittee members will convene as a whole at least once per quarter with the next meeting anticipated to occur between the months of October and December 2020.

Enclosures:

- (1) Unpaved Roads Subcommittee Update
- (2) Water and Wastewater Subcommittee Update

**Buffalo River Conservation Committee
Unpaved Roads Subcommittee**

The unpaved roads subcommittee met on August 4, 2020 and recommended the following two sites to the full BRCC for funding consideration:

Site#	County	Road Name	Project length	Cost Estimate
1	Searcy	Cane Branch Road	3,493	\$231,935
4	Newton	Cave Mtn. Road (to Hawksbill Crag)	10,560	\$397,400
Project Subtotal				\$629,335
Federal \$'s from the Nonpoint Source Management Program				(\$110,263)
Revised Subtotal				\$519,072
Contingency 10%				\$51,907
Grand Total				\$570,979

Upon BRCC and legislative approval “agreements” will be developed for both counties. “Agreements” are necessary due to the fact federal dollars from the Nonpoint Source Management Program will be utilized.

Process Chronology

Erosion and sediment from unpaved roads are leading contributors to water quality issues within the state. The Nonpoint Source Management Program can currently commit previously secured funding for unpaved roads (\$110,263) to unpaved roads work in the Buffalo River watershed. These NPS funds cannot be utilized to “hard surface” any site.

As with all sites it is incumbent upon each respective County Judge to agree to address each road site. It is anticipated once an “agreement” has been fully developed and signed by the appropriated parties work would begin. The following was a list of sites considered by the BRCC unpaved roads subcommittee.

Site#	County	Road name	Project length	Total estimated cost
1	Searcy	Cane Branch Road	3,493	\$231,935
2	Newton	Lone Beach Church Road	14,784	\$80,600
3	Newton	CR 6450	11,088	\$84,400
4	Newton	Cave Mountain Road (to Hawksbill Crag)	10,560	\$397,400
5*	Searcy	Richland Road Phase I	3,960	\$0
6	Searcy	Richland Road Phase II	6,864	\$67,690
7	Searcy	Bakers Ford and Woolum Access	0	\$0
8	Marion	CR 6064	26,981	\$0
SUBTOTAL				\$862,025
Federal \$'s from the Nonpoint Source Management Program				(\$110,263)
TOTAL Est. Cost				\$751,762
Contingency 10%				\$75,176
Balance				\$826,938

*Searcy County applied to the Arkansas Unpaved Roads Program to fund the work on this site. The AURP committee met July 8th and this application was funded.

Site #: 1 - BRCC selected to fund pending legislative approval

County: Searcy

Location/Road name: Cane Branch Road

Project length: ~ 7/10 of a mile (3,493 ft') and is within approximately 3,000' from Cane Branch and the Buffalo River. Ditch runoff from this site directly impacts the Buffalo river

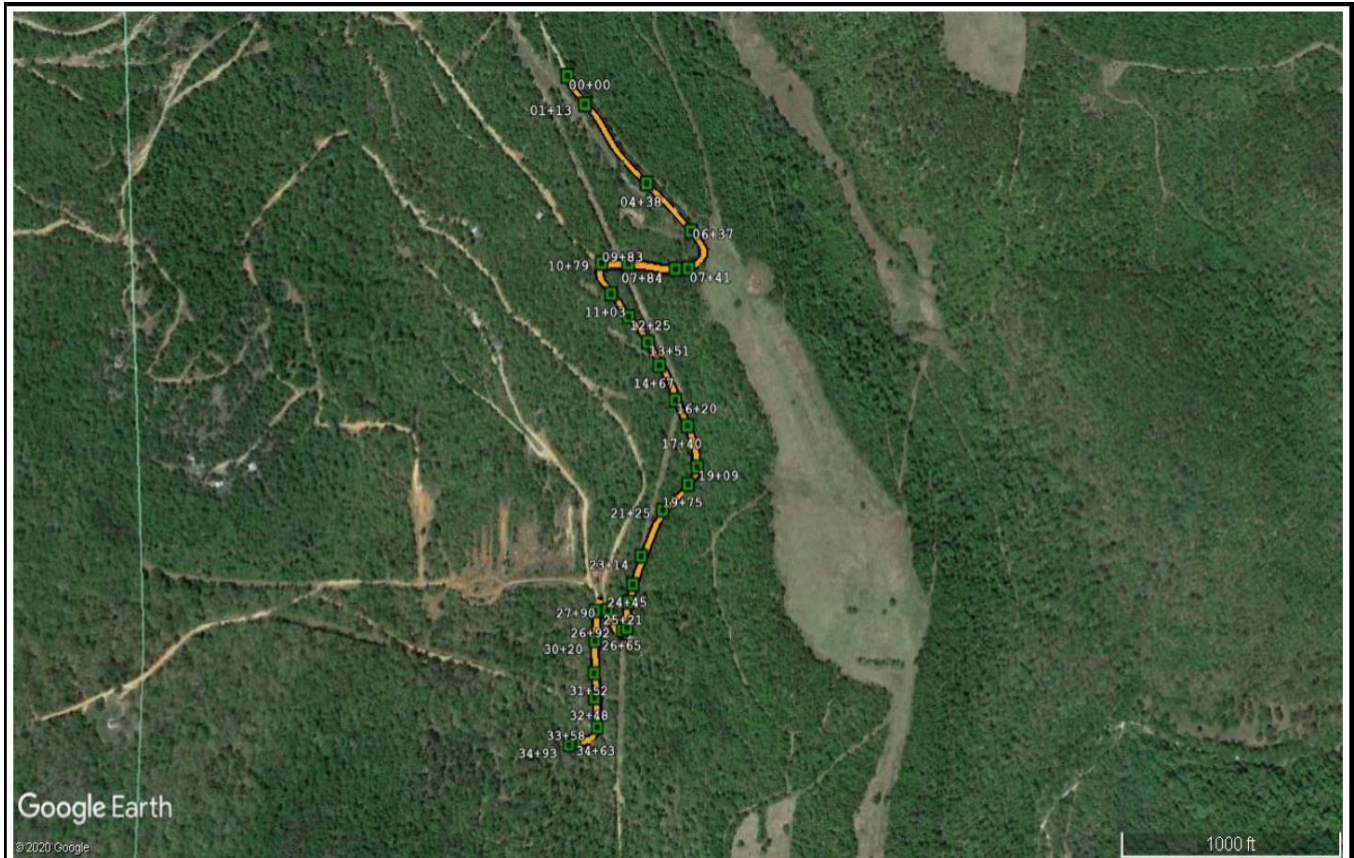
Site Description: Slopes from 3% - 14%, switch back curves, in road erosion, stone, cobble and sediment transport

General work to be performed: Install cross pipes, ditch reshaping, water diversion, grade breaks

Practices to be implemented:

- Install 19 culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to road base,
- grade breaks
- ditch stops
- remove out slope berms
- surface materials (crushed stone and gravel)
- Road grading and ditch re-shaping

Estimated Cost: \$231,935 + 10% contingency



Site #: 2

County: Newton

Location/Road name: CR 8440 Lone Beach Church Road

Project length: 2.8 miles (14,784') and road runoff and ditches discharges to the riparian area of the Little Buffalo and the main road ditch discharges into the Little Buffalo directly

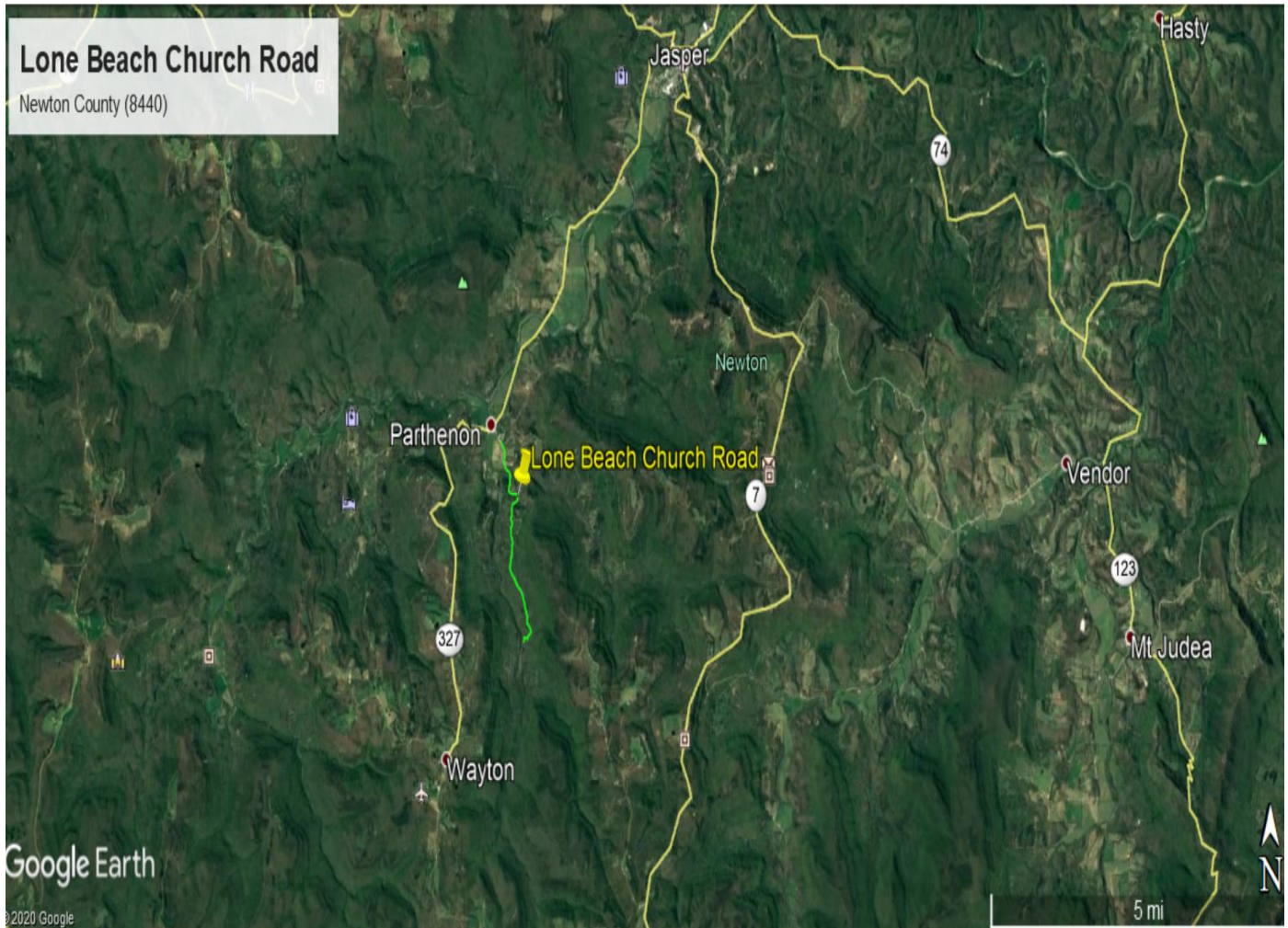
Site Description: Slopes from 3-12%, switch back curves, ditch and road shoulder erosion, stone, cobble and sediment transport

General work to be performed: Install cross pipes, ditch reshaping, and remove outer road berm

Practices to be implemented:

- Install 8 culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to the road base
- Reshape ditches
- Add clay and compact
- Surface materials (crushed stone and gravel)

Estimated Cost: \$80,600 + 10% contingency



Site #: 3

County: Newton

Location/Road name: CR 6450

Project length: 2.1 miles (11,088') a portion of the road runs parallel approximately 1,584' from the Left Fork of Lower Big Creek

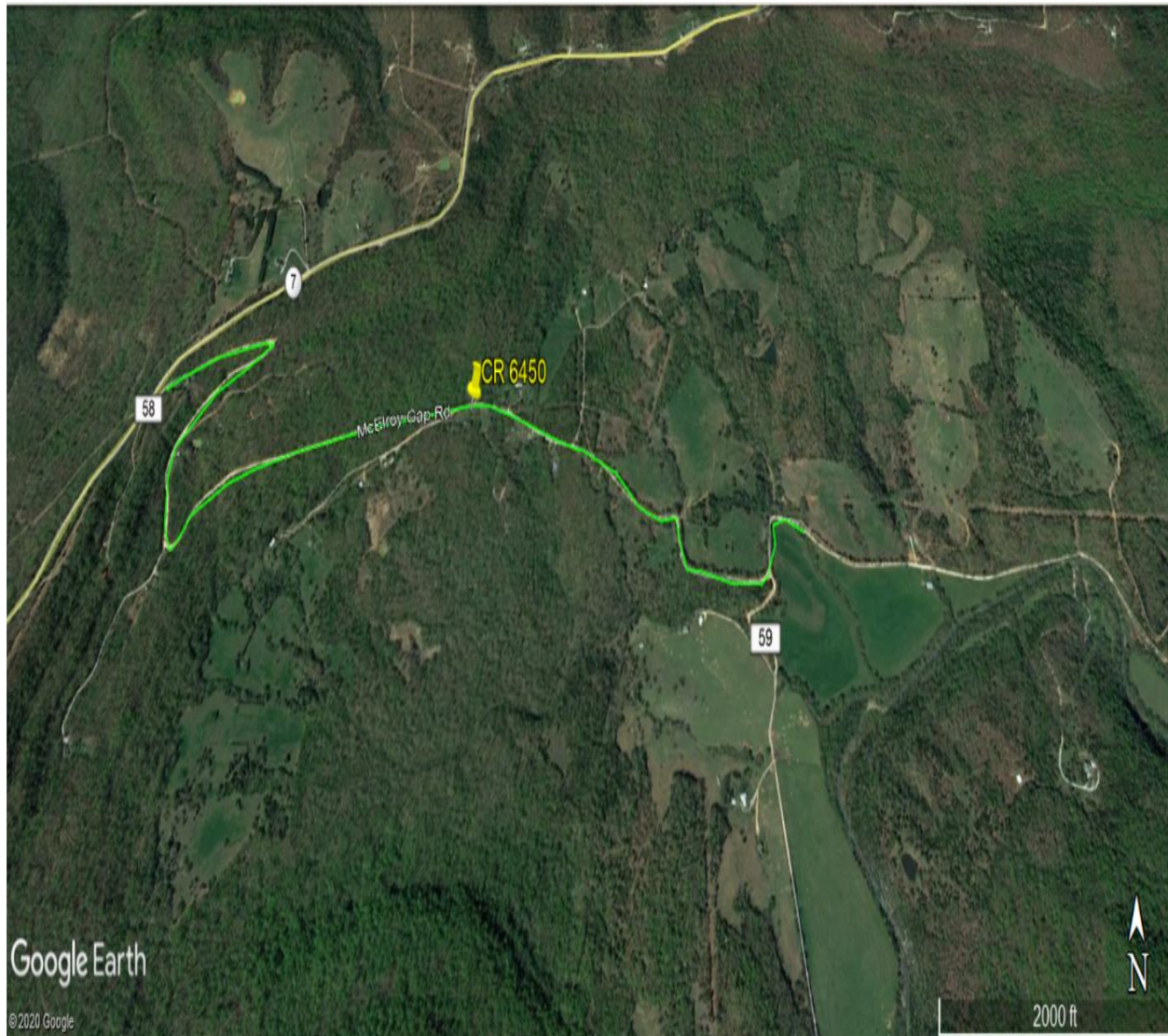
Site Description: Slopes from 3-12%, switch back curves, ditch and road shoulder erosion, stone, cobble and sediment transport

General work to be performed: Install cross pipes, ditch reshaping, and remove outer road berm

Practices to be implemented:

- Install 12 culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to the road base
- Reshape ditches
- Add clay and compact
- Surface materials (crushed stone and gravel)

Estimated Cost: \$84,400 + 10% contingency



Site #: 4 – BRCC selected to fund pending legislative approval

County: Newton

Location/Road name: CR 9560 Cave Mountain Road (goes to Hawksbill Crag)

Project length: 2 miles (10,560') averages 1,500' or less from discharging into the Buffalo River

Site Description: Slopes from 3-15%, switch back curves, ditch and road shoulder erosion, stone, cobble and sediment transport. Due to grade and volume of traffic the road “washboards”

General work to be performed: Removal of trees, install cross pipes, enhance base with clay and crushed stone and roll with smooth drum roller, chip and seal and install guard rails

Practices to be implemented:

- Install 27 culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to the road base
- Remove trees, ditching, add clay, surface materials (crushed stone and gravel), compact and chip and seal
- Install guard rails (2,640')

Note: Once funding is secured the NPS will initiate an assessment for the project site. It is estimated the assessment will take 9-12 months. This assessment must be completed, and any issues noted adequately addressed before work can begin.

Estimated Cost: \$397,400 + 10% contingency for road base and drainage work only



FUNDED BY AURP

Site #: 5*

County: Searcy

Location/Road name: Richland Road Phase I

Project length: ~ of a mile .75 mile (3,960 ft')

Site Description: Slopes from 3% to 10%, in road erosion, stone cobble and sediment transport.

General work to be performed: Install cross pipes at 30 – 40 degree angle to road base, raise road base, reshape ditches, water diversion and seeding

Practices to be implemented:

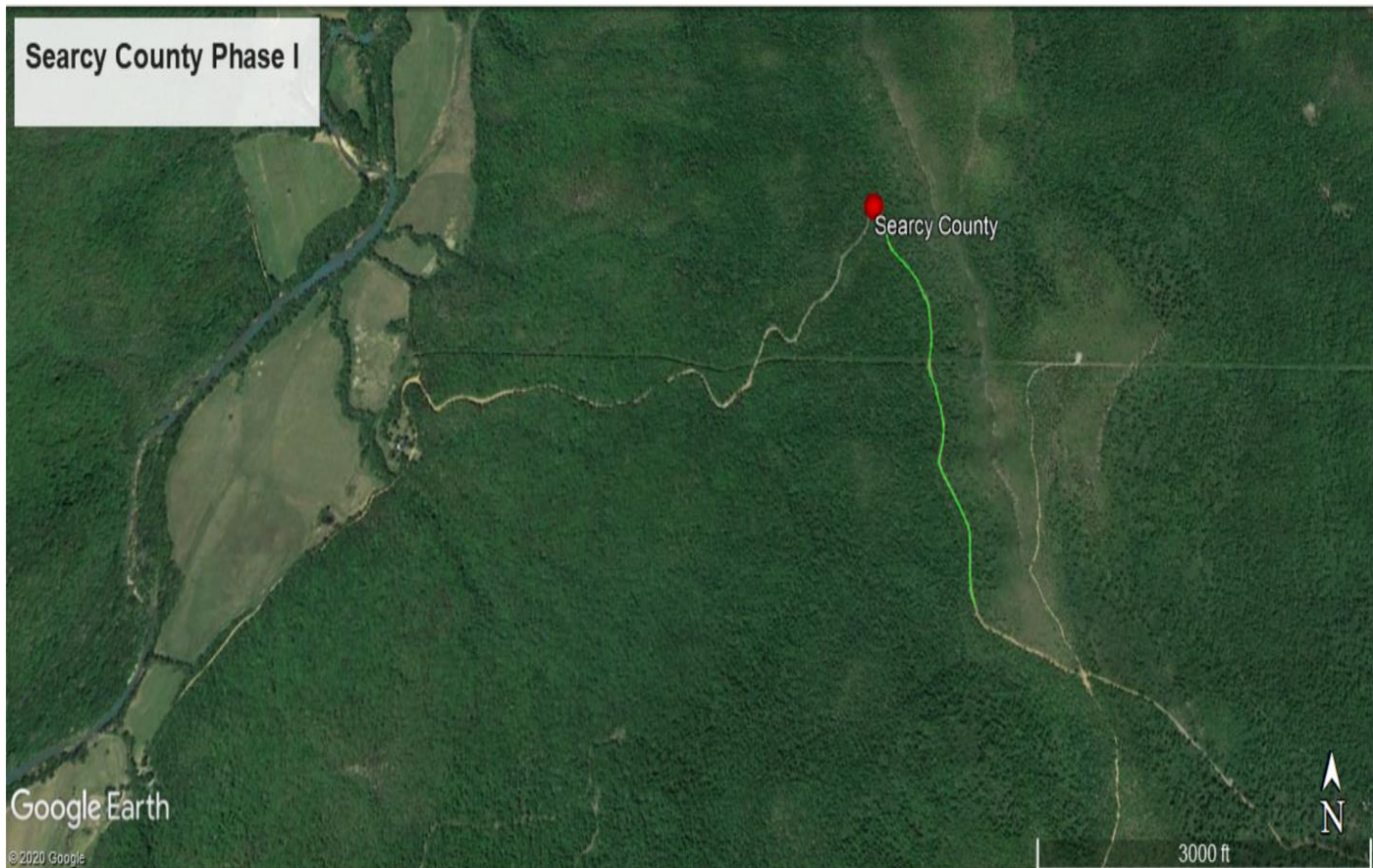
- Install (7) cross pipes of various sizes and lengths with end wall and head wall protection
- Approximately 4,050 yd³ of dirt base to raise road profile and pack in with smooth drum roller
- Top road profile with approximately 1,000 yd³ of SB2 and compact
- Sod and seed ditches to reduce velocity, lessen erosion and help retain sediment

Estimated Cost: \$47,408 + 10% contingency

Anticipated County Match: \$53,380

Total Project Cost: \$100,788

*Searcy County applied to the Arkansas Unpaved Roads Program to address Richland Road Phase I. Richland Road is within the Richland Creek watershed, a sub watershed of the Buffalo River. Richland Creek is a major tributary to the Buffalo River. The AURP committee will meet July 8th to review all applications submitted for FY20 funding. It will not be known if the Searcy County application will be funded until July 8th.



Site #: 6

County: Searcy

Location/Road name: Richland Road Phase II

Project length: ~ 1.3 of a mile (6,864 ft'). Runoff and the road work will terminate within approximately 1,000' from Richland Creek.

Site Description: Slopes from 3% - 10%, switch back curves, in road erosion, stone, cobble and sediment transport

General work to be performed: Install cross pipes, ditch reshaping, water diversion, grade breaks and seeding

Practices to be implemented:

- Install 5 culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to road base,
- grade breaks
- ditch stops
- remove out slope berms
- surface materials (crushed stone and gravel)
- Road grading and ditch re-shaping

Estimated Cost: \$67,690 + 10% contingency



Green line is Phase I application to the Arkansas Unpaved Roads Program **FUNDED**

Yellow line is Phase II

Site #: 7

County: Searcy

Location/Road name: Bakers Ford and Woolum Access

Project length:

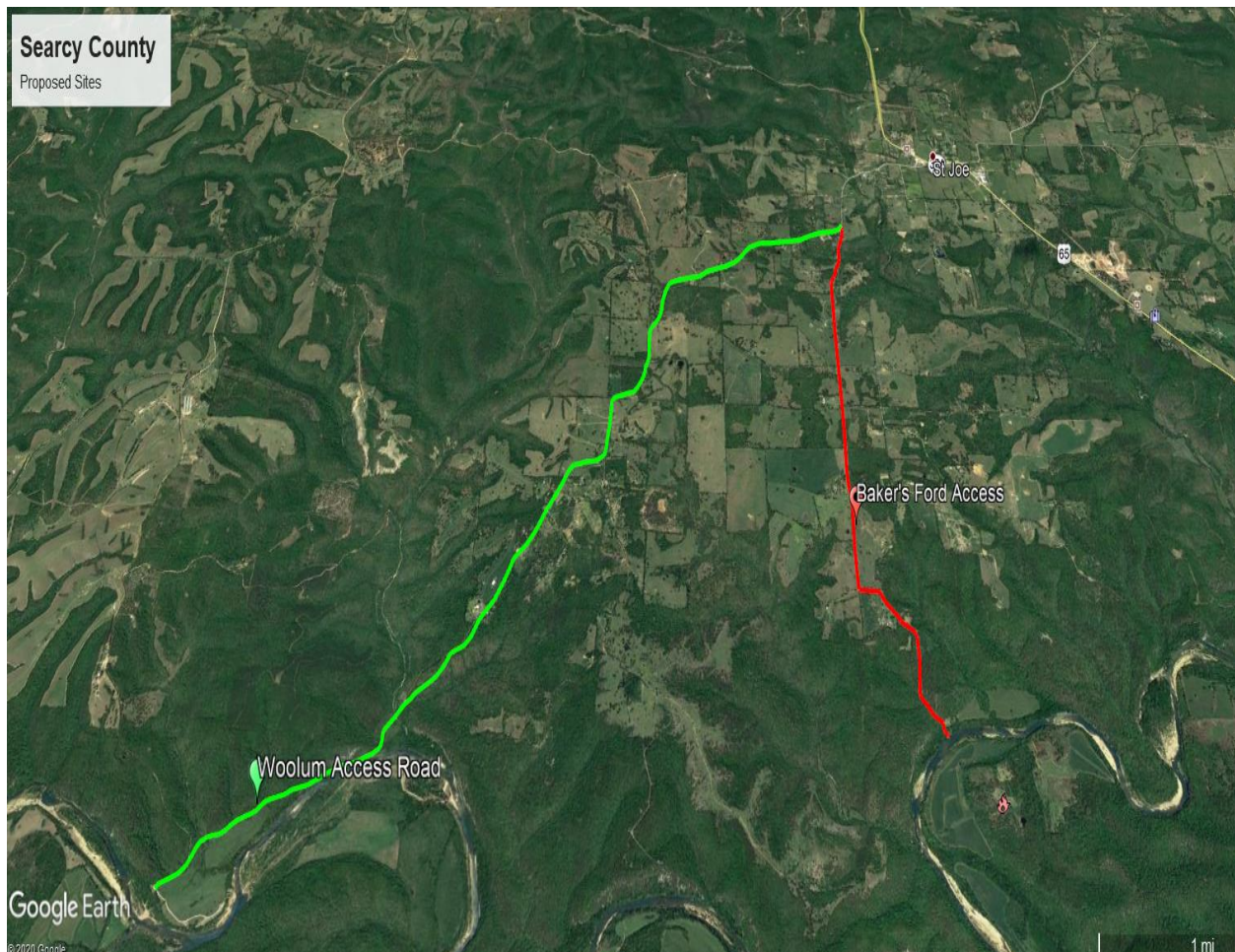
Site Description: in road erosion (washboard – one area) and sediment transport

General work to be performed: Install cross pipes, grade break and seeding

Practices to be implemented:

- Install 2 culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to road base,
- grade breaks
- surface materials (crushed stone and gravel)

On June 25, 2020, Tony Ramick and Steve Stake conducted site visits on both Baker's Ford Access and the Woolum Access to the Buffalo River. The consensus was that with exception of the area directly adjacent to the river there were only one or two spots that needed minor attention. The Searcy County Judge, Jim Harness, was contacted and was asked if either of these roads were on the docket to be repaired and he said "No". Also, Jesse Morris from the National Park Service stated that Baker's Ford was not on their docket to do work on and there had been over \$100,000 worth of work done on the road going to Woolum Access.



*** Marion County Judge John Massey has decided to withdraw this project**

Site #: 8

County: Marion

Location/Road name: CR 6064

Project length: ~ 2.2 miles.

Site Description: Slopes from 4% - 16%, in road erosion, stone, cobble and sediment transport

General work to be performed: Raise the roadbed, installing drainage pipes and grade breaks

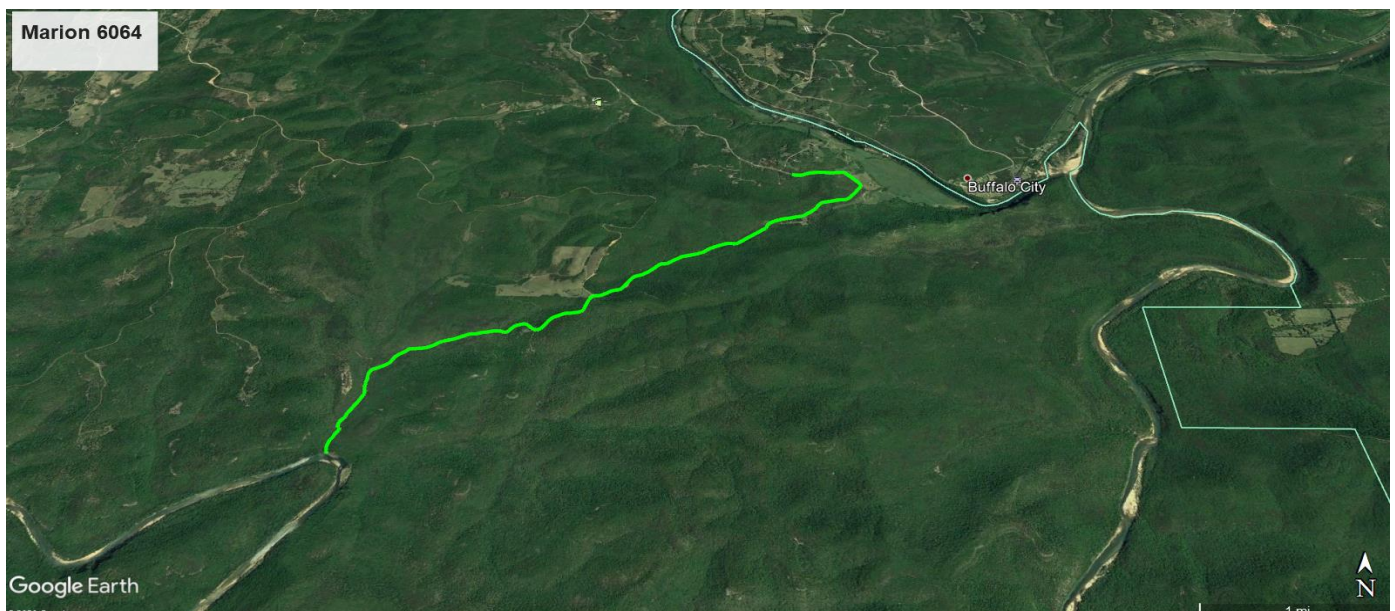
Practices to be implemented:

- Raising and out sloping the roadbed and trimming trees in the right-of-way
- Install culverts (cross pipes) of various size and length on 30 - 40-degree angles to road base
- grade breaks and remove out slope berms
- surface materials (crushed stone and gravel)
- Road grading and ditch re-shaping

-Tony and Steve met with Judge John Massey on June 25, 2020 along with Representative Jack Fortner in Yellville. The purpose of the meeting was to assess county road 6064. This road is a highly used to access the Buffalo National Park and the River. There are approximately 12 residences that utilize C.R. 6064. There are approximately 2.2 miles of unpaved roads with varying slopes from 4%-16%. The last ~150-200 yards of this road lies within the NPS boundary. Judge Massey and his road department will be providing cost estimates.

-Update – July 28th The Marion County Judge, Tony, Steve, Clay Knighten with TNC and the NPS met at the NPS office in Harrison. The NPS stated an assessment should take approximately 90 days once a project plan, cost estimates and confidence funding will be secured.

-July 30 – Tony, Steve and Clay traveled to the site and met with personnel from the Marion county road department. It was decided due to the current and foreseeable workload that all 2.2 miles could not be done at one time, but rather divide the project site into 4 phases. Phase 1 would be approximately 4,000 feet and address runoff entering a tributary that discharges directly to the Buffalo River. Subsequent phases would potentially be addressed by applying for funding to the Arkansas Unpaved Roads Program. A project plan was developed, the site measured and BMP locations to be implemented identified.



**Buffalo River Conservation Committee
Water & Wastewater Subcommittee
August 4, 2020 10:00 a.m.**

Review of funding and projects

1. Additional funding requests have not been received as of this date.
2. NRD Requested \$150,000 from BRCC -
Administration costs for a Septic Tank Remediation Program (Pilot program)
 - Withdrawn – this project will proceed with alternate funding

Project Description: Provide a grant to a local organization to administer a grant/loan program for septic tank remediation within specific watershed(s). Funding for approved septic tank remediation construction costs will be provided by the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

3. City of Jasper requested \$350,000 from BRCC
Total Project Cost \$2,041,750
 - BRCC approved grant funding in an amount of \$250,000 in June 2020
 - Arkansas Natural Resources approved loan funding in an amount up to \$1,791,750 in July 2020

Project description: Wastewater treatment facility improvements to include sludge processing, main pump station improvements, I/I and collection system rehabilitation.

4. Marble Falls Sewer Improvement District No. 1 requested \$100,000 from BRCC
Total Project Cost \$555,000

USDA RD is working with the applicant for balance of funding

Natural Resources is also working with applicant for possible funding

- Marble Falls is exploring alternatives including a septic tank option. The consulting engineer has determined that individual septic tanks would not work, but a community system may be viable. Additional information regarding the septic tank option should be available in mid-August. Marble Falls SID #1 continues to work with Communities Unlimited to determine the appropriate resolution
- DEQ & DOH voiced concerns about a community septic system, recommended Marble Falls or Communities Unlimited reach out to them
- Bass Pro founder Johnny Morris announced the purchase of the former Dogpatch USA theme park property on August 4, 2020. The plans for the property are not

finalized and remain in early stages. According to the press release, Morris says he is committed to preserving the historic Dogpatch property as a nature experience for future generations to enjoy.

Project description: As a result of regulatory comments indicating a general state of disrepair at the wastewater treatment facility, the installation of a new, smaller Advantex treatment facility at the same location as the existing wastewater treatment facility is proposed. All components would remain in use and in the current configuration except the existing package plant would be converted to a flow equalization basin and the existing blowers would be abandoned. Additionally, heat tracing would be installed on backwash water lines for the existing drum filters.

Aug 4, 2020 Water & Sewer Infrastructure Workgroup priority recommendations:

1. **Jasper an additional funding in addition to \$250,000 previously approved**
 - a. BRCC approved \$250,000 this project at the June meeting
 - b. Workgroup recommending additional funding for this project, if available.
2. **Marble Falls \$100,000**, contingent on DEQ/DOH approval of the project, securing funding for the balance of estimated project costs, and Marble Falls SID #1 meeting the existing debt services requirements with Natural Resources Commission