

March 14, 2024

Metroplan  
Attn: Casey Covington, Executive Director  
501 W. Markham St., Ste. B  
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Letter of Commitment for Arkansas Tri-Region Coalition's CPRG application

Dear Mr. Covington:

This letter is intended to express the University of Arkansas's strong, long-term commitment to supporting the Northwest Arkansas Green Network goals outlined in the Arkansas Tri-Region Coalition's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) implementation application.

Arkansas, known as the Natural State, faces critical environmental challenges. Air quality is a pressing concern, with pollutants impacting public health and exacerbating respiratory conditions. By curbing greenhouse gas emissions, we can mitigate these adverse effects. Moreover, Arkansas boasts abundant environmental assets, including pristine forests, waterways, and diverse ecosystems. Protecting these natural treasures ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

However, our efforts must extend beyond environmental conservation. Low-income and disadvantaged communities often bear the brunt of pollution. These vulnerable populations deserve equitable access to clean air, safe water, and green spaces. By prioritizing emission reduction, we uplift these communities and promote environmental justice.

Lastly, the environmental sector offers immense potential for high-quality jobs. Investing in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation initiatives creates employment opportunities while safeguarding our planet. We recognize that reducing greenhouse gas emissions isn't just an environmental goal—it's a commitment to the well-being of Arkansans and the resilience of our state.

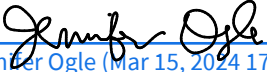
The University of Arkansas Herbarium (UARK) is a botanical research facility on the University of Arkansas campus that houses a 130,000-specimen collection of preserved plant, algal, and fungal specimens. UARK's mission is to document the flora of Arkansas and beyond through the collection, preservation, digitization, and exhibition of these specimens, and to support and advance botanical education, research, and outreach. Staff and trained students regularly provide botanical expertise in support of regional conservation and restoration activities. On the U of A campus, we conduct botanical surveys in remnant grasslands and woodlands to document the flora and provide guidance on invasive species management and native species protection. The collections housed within UARK provides a repository for genetic material and morphological data to understand the ecology and evolution of plant species, thus supporting numerous research projects on campus. We also support seed-collection efforts in these remnants to provide locally sourced native seed for restoration and conservation activities on campus.


UARK is also currently working with several federal and state agencies that support regional habitat conservation efforts. Staff are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to document plant communities and rare plant populations on Beaver Lake and provide information that will guide future habitat management and development decisions. We have partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to locate native plant populations within the Ozark-St. Francis and Ouachita national forests that will be used for seed collection and genetic testing in support of the Arkansas Native Seed Coalition. We are a partner on WildSNaP (Wildlife in Solar through Native Planting), a Department of Energy grant that is comparing wildlife occupancy and species richness in solar sites managed with environmentally friendly native grassland vegetation to solar sites managed traditionally with mown grass or gravel in Arkansas and Kansas.

In partnership with the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC), the University of Arkansas will work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality through the land and stream restoration projects outlined in our application.

I appreciate your dedication to implementing greenhouse gas reduction projects across Arkansas' three largest metro areas. We are eager to participate in the coalition's efforts to protect the Natural State and ensure environmental and economic benefits to over one half of Arkansas' population, including some of the state's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

  
[Jennifer Ogle \(Mar 15, 2024 17:05 CDT\)](#)  
Jennifer Ogle, MS  
UARK Collections Manager

  
Maribeth Latvis, PhD  
UARK Herbarium Director  
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# UofA CPRG\_UA Herbarium\_ProjectSupporters\_v2

Final Audit Report

2024-03-15

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