Discovery Farm Expectations

The Arkansas Discovery Farm Program is a science-based effort to monitor, demonstrate, and validate approaches to achieve environmental and agricultural sustainability on real, working farms in Arkansas. The program is a collaboration among farmers, scientists and natural resource managers working together to jointly identify issues and potential solutions. It strives to collect feasibility and environmental data from agricultural systems to document the water quality benefits of conservation practice adoption that promote agricultural profitability and natural resource protection. The role of a Discovery Farm is to determine how to implement management recommendations and to determine how those recommendations impact operation of the farm.

What is required to participate as a Discovery Farm?

1. Must operate a functioning agricultural enterprise that is representative of farms in the area.

2. Must be willing to keep records on dates of any practices or actions taken within the study area.

3. A nutrient management plan will be developed, if necessary, for the operation.

4. Discovery Farms should be willing to share information on cropping practices, which will provide the baseline information necessary to determine the cost of proposed conservation management practices.

5. Must be willing to adopt mutually agreeable changes in farming practices and to keep records of how these changes affect labor requirement, equipment needs, increases or reductions in purchased nutrients, crop or forage yield and overall farm profitability.

6. Farms selected as Discovery Farms will be in the program for three to five years. During this time, a willingness to participate in field days or meetings to discuss their experiences with other farmers is essential.

John Maus (fourth from right), a soybean producer in Atkins, discusses his Discovery Farm operation with Senator John Boozman (third from right) and his staff.
What will participants receive?

1. A $2,500 annual stipend for their time and assistance with this project.

2. Assistance developing and implementing a conservation plan targeting the improvement and/or protection of soil, water and wildlife resources on the farm.

3. Assistance developing and implementing their nutrient management plan.

4. Technical and possible financial assistance with changes in facilities or management practices that will improve their environmental management.

5. Monitoring equipment placed on farms in order to determine the level of nutrients or sediment leaving designated fields.

6. Technical and possible financial assistance with the implementation of conservation practices.

7. Confidentially in terms of any financial information disclosed.

8. Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality’s commitment to working with Discovery Farm participants and staff to address non-compliance issues that may be encountered during the course of the project without penalty assessment.

A high school teacher (left to right) and students who received an environmental stewardship award visit with Terry Dabbs, a Discovery Farmer; Ann Mills, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, NRCS; and Nancy Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator for Water, U.S. EPA.