



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor

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Wes Ward
Secretary of Agriculture

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Senator Terry Rice, Co-Chair
Representative Jeff Wardlaw, Co-Chair
ALC-Joint Budget Committee
Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol Building
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Co-Chairs:

In addition to the requests outlined in the budget manual, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture proposes merging the Arkansas Natural Resources Division, business area 0455, into the Arkansas Department of Agriculture appropriation bill. Our goal is to operate as efficiently as possible and separate appropriation bills hinder our effectiveness.

Our department provides services to all Arkansans. Specific service needs, along with the staffing required to meet them, can vary significantly due to factors such as natural disasters, changing federal mandates, and job market variations such as wildland firefighters, dispatchers, foresters, engineers, and microbiologists' shortages. These factors make it challenging for our department to accurately predict the exact needs for positions across all department appropriations throughout any fiscal year.

To respond quickly and to address our evolving needs most effectively, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture respectfully requests to consolidate to one appropriation bill and requests special language authority to reallocate resources as necessary.

The proposal includes the following changes:

- Consolidated Appropriation Bill: A single appropriation bill will combine all regular salaries and extra help sections for all divisions within the department, except for shared services. The current structure of separate appropriation sections for each division will be maintained. Specifically, Section 1, 2, and 19 of Act 47 of 2024 will be combined with Section 4 and 5 of Act 171 of 2024.
- Special Language Maintenance: The existing special language for each division will be retained. A new special language for the reallocation of resources will be added to grant the department the flexibility to utilize its resources effectively. **See attachment A.**

Our department is committed to continuous improvement. In the coming months, we will relocate the Natural Resources division to our department headquarters. This move and consolidating appropriation bills will allow further integration of shared services which should result in fewer positions, more cost savings, and better delivery of services.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. Please let me know if additional information is needed.

Respectfully,

Wesley W. Ward
Secretary of Agriculture
State of Arkansas

SECTION XX. SPECIAL LANGUAGE. NOT TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE ARKANSAS CODE NOR PUBLISHED SEPARATELY AS SPECIAL, LOCAL AND TEMPORARY LAW.

REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES. The Department of Agriculture provides a wide range of services to all Arkansans. The specific service needs, along with staffing required to meet them, can vary significantly due to factors such as natural disasters, changing federal mandates, and job market variations like wildland firefighters, dispatchers, foresters, engineers, and microbiologists' shortages. These factors make it challenging for the Department to accurately predict the exact needs for positions across its different appropriations throughout any fiscal year.

To respond swiftly to changing needs and to utilize resources effectively, the Department of Agriculture is authorized to reallocate resources as necessary. Upon determining that a reallocation is essential for the efficient and effective operation of the department, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, with the approval of the Chief Fiscal Officer of the State, may request to transfer positions between existing business areas of the department.

Transfer authority shall be limited to no more than 5% of the total authorized department positions in any fiscal year. Any amount over the said threshold shall require prior approval from the Personnel Subcommittee of Legislative Council or the Joint Budget Committee. The Department of Agriculture must provide a written quarterly report to the Office of Personnel Management and Bureau of Legislative Research detailing position transfers between the Department's business areas.

The provisions of this section shall be in effect only from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.