

BRCC Unpaved Roads Update
Searcy County and Newton County
July 17, 2023

Update

The Cave Mountain Road Project (to Hawksbill Crag) in Newton County was initiated in spring of 2021 (Figure 1). Tree and debris removal for road widening was completed for approximately 75% of the project area before being temporarily halted due to presence of Federally Endangered Northern Long-Eared Bat and Gray Bat. The Buffalo National River released an Environmental Assessment for the project on February 7, 2022 with public comment period closing on March 9, 2022. It is anticipated that work will be able to resume soon. This project was approved for \$397,400. Newton County has received their first disbursement of funds totaling \$215,814.



Figure 1. Cave Mountain project site in early April 2021 during debris removal.

The Cane Branch Road Project in Searcy County began in early September and was completed in mid-October 2021 (Figure 2-4). ANRD staff completed final inspection to verify completion. Project specifics included installation culverts on the site to slow the water velocity and erosion potential. This project was approved for \$231,935 of which all funds have been disbursed to Searcy County.



Figure 2. Cane Branch pre-implementation site visit on August 10, 2021.



Figure 3. Cane Branch post-implementation site visit on October 21, 2021.



Figure 4. Cane Branch post-implementation site visit on October 21, 2021.

Arkansas Unpaved Road Program Updates

Cave Creek (Newton County)

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, The Nature Conservancy, Newton County Road Department and the Arkansas Unpaved Road Program are investigating the feasibility of improving three stream crossings and unpaved roads along Cave Creek. The three crossings include Cave Creek Road (N35.888991, W -93.006162), County Road 252 in Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area (N35.967806, W -92.963853) (Figure 5-7), and County Road 264 near Bass (N35.917953, W-92.992513) (Figure 8).

Construction continues on CR 252 with an estimated completion date of late spring 2023. The Nature Conservancy sub-awarded \$100,000 to Newton County for construction of a 100 ft. span that will replace undersized culverts. Newton County will provide over \$150,000 of cash and in-kind costs. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is providing \$30,000 towards the project due to inflated material costs.

The Natural Resources Division and Newton County signed an agreement to improve stream connectivity and unpaved road conditions at County Road 5070. The project will entail replacing undersized culverts with a 28 ft. wide by 100 ft. long span and improving unpaved approaches. Newton County will provide \$176,847 to match the Natural Resources Division \$140,346 of federal funds. An initial disbursement of \$70,173 was sent to Newton County on November 1, 2022. County Road 252 project was completed in May 2023.



Figure 5. Newton county road 252 crossing on Cave Creek in Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area.



Figure 6. Newton county road 252 crossing on Cave Creek in Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area under construction.



Figure 7. Completed new crossing for Newton County road 252.

Searcy County

Searcy County was awarded a \$51,056 of 319(h) funding through the Arkansas Unpaved Road Program for a 2023-2024 project. The county will provide a \$57,180 of in-kind match for the project on Richland Road. This carry over of a previously funded AURP project that addressed smaller sections of road. This project will add seven new culverts to divert water flow and prevent sediment from entering the Buffalo River.



Figure 8. Newton county road 264 crossing Cave Creek near Bass.

Searcy County

Searcy County submitted an Arkansas Unpaved Road Program application for 2023 funding to complete Phase II of the Richland Road project which was funded in 2020. Total project cost is estimated at \$108, 236 of which \$51, 056 is being requested in grant dollars. The project will span 1.5 miles and install 7 new culverts, improve ditches and ditch outlets, road base improvements, and improve storm water management to reduce sediment inputs to the Buffalo River.