

**STATE OF ARKANSAS**  
**EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT**  
**PROCLAMATION**

EO 23-27

EXECUTIVE ORDER TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND REPORT  
OF ARKANSAS' WATER NEEDS AND UPDATE THE ARKANSAS WATER PLAN

WHEREAS: Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 15-22-503, The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission is responsible for the preparation and development of a comprehensive program for the orderly development and management of the state's water and related land resources (referred to as the "Arkansas Water Plan");

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Arkansas Water Plan is to conserve and protect the state's water resources, with a long-term goal of sustainable use to maximize the environmental and economic benefit of the State of Arkansas, and the health and well-being of its citizens;

WHEREAS: The most recent Arkansas Water Plan was completed nearly a decade ago and there is urgent need to update the Plan in order to meet the changing needs of communities – large and small – across this state;

WHEREAS: Aging infrastructure and population change across the state have impacted drinking water, stormwater, sanitation capabilities, and other needs;

WHEREAS: The state must investigate all possible solutions to reduce groundwater depletion and provide a sustainable source of water for household, agricultural, and industrial uses;

WHEREAS: Arkansas is susceptible to frequent floods and depends upon flood mitigation programs and components such as dams, levees, and drainage improvements for protection;

WHEREAS: A comprehensive strategy, to include an updated Arkansas Water Plan, is necessary to address water demand projections, aging infrastructure, supply depletion, and flood mitigation capabilities by incorporating the most recent science and data.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS, acting under the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Arkansas, do hereby order the following:

(1) The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (the "Secretary") and the Director of the Natural Resources Division of the Arkansas Department of Agriculture shall take the following steps to update the Arkansas Water Plan in compliance with Ark. Code Ann. § 15-22-501 *et. seq.*:

- a. Model and assess water availability, water demand projections, and water quality trends, and identify basins with projected challenges or opportunities where significant changes are known or expected from the 2014 Arkansas Water Plan;
- b. Evaluate, develop, and recommend water management strategies for all water-use sectors and develop innovative new funding mechanisms to support their implementation; and
- c. Conduct statewide engagement throughout the process to identify the most pressing current issues and develop the best practicable solutions in collaboration with representatives from all water use sectors, including, but not limited to, interested water planning groups, state and federal agencies, legislators, and local entities.

(2) The update shall be completed in two separate phases.

- a. The first phase ("Phase I") shall be a review of the most recent Arkansas Water Plan to determine areas of significant change which shall be reevaluated or updated, including a review of the visions, goals, and objectives of the plan, the policy recommendations, and a review of the available water use demands and projections.
- b. Phase I shall be completed within 365 days of this Order. Upon completion of Phase I, the Secretary shall furnish to the Governor a Final Programmatic Work Plan, Schedule, and Anticipated Cost to complete Phase II of the update to the Arkansas Water Plan.
- c. The second phase ("Phase II") shall be based on the outcome of Phase I and shall include needed updates to reflect the current demands, forecasts, supply, availability, and quality of surface and groundwater; a resilience assessment; regional and basin level water management strategies; local project and program assessments; focus basins identification and solutions; a structural analysis of flood mitigation infrastructure and proposed solutions; and a comprehensive analysis of water management policies.
- d. Supplemental reports and analyses beyond the scope of the Arkansas Water Plan may be required in conjunction with the water plan update. An interim status report shall be due to the Governor by December 31, 2024, detailing the progress of the water plan update, any supplemental reports and analyses, and preliminary needs and recommendations.
- e. Each phase should include significant stakeholder engagement.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and cause the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 21<sup>st</sup> day of August, in the year of our Lord 2023.



Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Governor



Attest:



---

John Thurston, Secretary of State