

Additional facts on Pine Tree station sale and proceeds

Fast facts

- Sales contract pending in Congress
- Expected proceeds would benefit farmers, hunters, wildlife

COLT, Ark. — Large investments in precision agriculture, rice and wildlife habitat research are among the plans for proceeds from the sale of acreage at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's Pine Tree Research Station.

Proceeds from the planned sale of acres at the St. Francis County location will be invested into public research that will benefit all of Arkansas, including:

- \$5 million to benefit northeast Arkansas rice growers through establishment and operation of the Northeast Rice Research and Extension Center south of Jonesboro.
- \$6 million to expand Division of Agriculture research into smart farming and precision agriculture.
- \$1 million to improve the facilities at the Pine Tree Research Station and a
- \$1 million endowment to provide recurring funds to enhance waterfowl and wetlands research and education in the Mississippi flyway in Arkansas and the mid-south.

"In listening to our agriculture stakeholders around Arkansas, these subjects came up again and again and are seen as greatest needs now for the people we serve," said Mark Cochran, vice president for agriculture for the University of Arkansas System. "Funding is never easy to come by. The decision to sell this land was very difficult, but it was the only way for us to find the funds we needed to serve our stakeholders, especially in the current financial climate."

Agriculture, forestry and wildlife provide a multi-billion benefit to Arkansas' economy. Farming, ranching and forestry alone are valued at more than \$21 billion to Arkansas, with about one in six jobs in state related to agriculture.

Correcting misinformation

The sale has generated multiple media reports and some false claims on social media, including:

Claim: The land was donated to the Division of Agriculture for hunting.

The land was purchased by the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture in 1960 to fulfill its mission of land-grant research and extension. An experimental, non-revenue agreement with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission allowed public access for hunting and fishing between 1999 and 2005 on specific acreage. Under the agreement, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission administered this tract of land as a wildlife demonstration area.

Claim: Arkansas Game and Fish offered \$20 million to purchase the land.

The Division of Agriculture had ongoing discussions with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for more than a year. AGFC was interested in the property but indicated it did not have the funding to purchase it. The division also explored potential sales with the Arkansas Forestry Commission and non-profits, none of which had the resources to purchase and manage the property.

Claim: Waivers under the Bankhead Jones Land Tenant Act are not possible.

Waivers by Congress of federal deed restrictions, such as the one needed in this case, are not uncommon. In 1989, then Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter wrote to Sen. Dale Bumpers and shared procedures for getting such a waiver. With this guidance, the Division of Agriculture succeeded in obtaining a waiver in the 1996 farm bill in reference to the transfer of a parcel of land acquired through the Bankhead Jones Land Tenant Act in northwest Arkansas. This year, when speaking with Region VIII U.S. Forest Service land management officials, they noted that it was clear the Division of Agriculture knew and followed all the proper steps.

Claim: The buyers includes current or former members of the Board of Trustees and the Arkansas Legislature.

The buyers have provided a formal statement that their group does not include any current or past members of the Board of Trustees, the Arkansas Legislature or any elected officials.

Claim: The sale was conducted behind closed doors.

The sale was an open market sale, conducted in strict accordance with Arkansas state law and Board of Trustees policy. Board meetings are open to the public, with agendas and meeting times posted on the Board's website.

Find other FAQs here: https://division.uaex.edu/Pine_Tree.aspx

To learn about extension and research programs in Arkansas, visit <https://division.uaex.edu/>

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About the Division of Agriculture

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation's historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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