2025-2026
Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
Dave Ferguson Scholarship

Frequently asked questions and answers.

Q – What do I need to cover in my essay?
A – Essay should include all four areas.

1) Define the benefits of healthy soil. Identify the many ways that healthy soils affect the quality of life for people. Discuss the beneficial roles of soil in healthy condition which can be surprisingly far-reaching and enhance ecosystems, economic benefits, and benefits to the landscape.
2) Give an overview of activities that can be implemented by landowners, farmers, organizations, and others to enhance and improve their soil management, rotational grazing, irrigation, etc.
3) How the conservation district can help landowners address the resource concern that results from the lack of resource management; conservation practices (talk with NRCS Staff if needed)
4) Provide an actual example of a landowner/organization who has been helped by the conservation district (May use photos & videos and district will help locate landowners, if needed)

Q – Who is eligible?
A – District residents who are currently high school sophomores, juniors, or seniors, and who have a grade point average of at least 2.5 are eligible.

Q – What is the prize structure?
A – Each district that has a scholarship program is encouraged to offer a $250.00 scholarship. Areas are encouraged to offer a $500.00 scholarship. Scholarships given at the district and area level are solely at the discretion of the conservation district and area leadership. AACD awards one-time scholarships of $1,000 and $500.

Q – What are the deadlines?
A – Districts should close their entry period on **February 6, 2026**. Applications should be received in the district offices by that date. Districts will then judge and send in the name of their winner to Area Presidents no later than **April 17, 2026**. Area contests will be decided, and winners' names sent to AACD in Little Rock by **June 12, 2026**. The Area winners will be judged by an independent body of judges with expertise in the subject matter. The State Winners will be notified immediately after judging.

Q – When and how do I get my scholarship?
A – Once a student has registered at the college/university of their choice they ask the Office of Registrar to send a letter directly to the Columbia County Conservation District stating that they have been accepted for full admission. The funds are sent directly to the college/university as a credit. The funds can be used for room and board, fees, tuition, and books. Please note that we do not accept anything from the students directly. The letter must come from the Office of the Registrar and be signed by the Registrar.

Letters should be mailed to:
Columbia County Conservation District
100 E. University MSC 10154
Magnolia, AR 71753

Q – Where can I get more information?
A –There are numerous websites dedicated to watershed planning. Here are a few that might be helpful.

1) Natural Resources Conservation Service Natural Resource Concerns | Natural Resources Conservation Service (usda.gov)
2) ADA – Natural Resources Division Natural Resources - Arkansas Department of Agriculture
3) Soil Health Institute Soil Health Institute - Enriching Soil, Enhancing Life