

Welcoming Remarks – Quapaw Wetlands Training Workshop

To be read on behalf of Craig Kreman

September 9, 2025

Good morning, and welcome to the Quapaw Wetlands Training Workshop.

Although Craig Kreman is unable to be here in person today, he asked that these remarks be shared to help open this important gathering. It's an honor to welcome tribal partners, scientists, restoration professionals, and community leaders who are committed to healing the land and water in this region.

The lands surrounding the Tar Creek Superfund Site have endured decades of environmental degradation. But today, the focus is on restoration—on transforming a legacy of harm into a future of renewal. That future begins with water.

Water is central to ecological recovery. And in this landscape, wetlands are not just a possibility—they are a necessity. The low-lying terrain around Tar Creek is naturally suited for wetland restoration. Rather than resisting these conditions, the Quapaw Nation and its partners are embracing them. Wetlands offer resilience. They filter contaminants, reduce flooding, support biodiversity, and restore balance to the land.

This workshop is part of a broader vision to restore ecological function and cultural integrity to these lands. Restoration goals include reestablishing keystone species such as river cane, bottomland hardwood forests, freshwater mussels, and the American eel. These species are not only ecologically vital—they are culturally significant to many tribal nations in the region. Their return signals the health of the watershed and the strength of community stewardship.

This work is not happening in isolation. The Quapaw Nation is actively collaborating with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Interior, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to align remediation efforts with long-term restoration outcomes. These partnerships are essential to ensuring that cleanup leads to renewal—not just removal. Together, these efforts are designing systems that restore ecological function, protect water quality, and honor the original purpose of the land.

Over the next few days, this workshop will offer opportunities to learn, collaborate, and envision what restored wetlands can look like—not just in theory, but in practice. Participants will explore wetland ecology, restoration techniques, ecological engineering, and permaculture design. They'll engage in field trips and design charrettes that bring ideas to life.

Wetlands are the future of this landscape. They are not remnants—they are foundations. And for the Quapaw, they are central to the vision of restoring lands with water as a vital, life-giving force.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for your commitment to restoration. And thank you for being part of this journey.