

# PRESS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Alison Zemanski Heis, Associate Director of Media Relations, National Parks Conservation Association C: 202.384.8762 | [aheis@npca.org](mailto:aheis@npca.org)

Stephen Koenigsberg, For Earthjustice, C: 303-915-7301 | [skpublicrelations@gmail.com](mailto:skpublicrelations@gmail.com)

## **Arkansas Groups Find Draft Environmental Assessment of Industrial Hog Facility in Buffalo River Watershed Significantly Flawed**

*Buffalo River Coalition submits comments to federal agencies calling for thorough environmental review that does not ignore facts and science*

Little Rock, Arkansas – Today the Buffalo River Coalition submitted [comments](#) detailing significant flaws and omissions in an Environmental Assessment prepared by two federal agencies to determine impacts of an industrial hog factory located in the Buffalo River watershed. In December 2014, an Arkansas federal court found that federal loan guarantees approved by the Farm Service Agency and Small Business Administration that enabled the C&H Hog operation to be built just six miles *upstream* of the Buffalo National River -- the country's first national river and a beloved national park -- violated laws to protect our nation's natural resources. The court ordered the two agencies to revisit their process and prepare a new Environmental Assessment within a year.

The new draft Environmental Assessment is substantially flawed. The Buffalo River Coalition, which includes the Ozark Society, the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance, the Arkansas Canoe Club and the National Parks Conservation Association, note in their comments that the assessment ignores key facts and science showing the potential for significant adverse impacts from this 6,500-swine facility. The assessment fails to consider the facility's impacts on water resources, air emissions, and on the public health and quality of life of local communities and the nearby Buffalo National River.

The coalition comments call for the Farm Service Agency and Small Business Administration to go back to the drawing board and conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement that considers ALL available science and data. The coalition is calling for the agencies to take a hard look at the impacts of what more than 2.6 million gallons of waste a year from the massive hog operation, in karst setting and in a sensitive watershed, is having on the region. Additionally, the agencies must consider the odor and air quality impact on human health and the local communities and the impacts on national park resources at the Buffalo National River, which attracts nearly 1.5 million visitors annually who spend more than \$50 million in nearby communities.

**View the Buffalo River Coalition's submitted comments here: <http://bit.ly/1L9J5zA>**

## **Concerns from the Buffalo River Coalition include:**

“I believe that the draft Environmental Assessment erroneously asks us to take a “Don’t worry, be happy” approach to the negative impacts of the C & H factory on water quality in Big Creek and the Buffalo National River.” **stated Alan Nye, President of the Ozark Society.** “There are serious problems with the draft report, including its failure to appreciate the karst geology of the factory location and the fields to which the hog waste is applied. Further, we view the Big Creek Research and Extension Team’s Big Creek water testing indicating higher nitrate concentrations downstream of the C & H factory to be a potential water quality impact from the factory.”

"This assessment cherry-picks data which supports its no-impact conclusions while ignoring contradictory information," **said Gordon Watkins, President of the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance.** "The Big Creek Research and Extension Team (BCRET) is claimed to be "the best available scientific information," yet the assessment selectively ignores BCRET data indicating possible contamination of well water, ground water and Big Creek, and the presence of porous karst subsurface features. Most glaringly, it ignores extensive scientific data from other sources, such as the National Park Service, Dr Van Brahana and other experts in the field - - data that strongly suggest that C&H is indeed potentially impacting surface and groundwater including both Big Creek and the Buffalo River. This assessment barely gives a passing glance at potential environmental impacts, much less takes the "hard look" required by the court."

“This assessment ignores water quality data that the National Park Service has been monitoring and collecting for more than two years, showing that potential impacts to water resources near the Buffalo National River are evident,” **said Emily Jones, senior program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association.** “We must continue our work to keep the water quality safe for people to swim, fish, and float at Buffalo National River.”

“The assessment is not only incomplete but also incorrect,” said **Bob Allen, President, Piney Creeks Chapter of the Arkansas Canoe Club.** “Data from the Oklahoma State University resistivity testing clearly show that the facility and spray fields are underlain with karst, and Big Creek Research and Extension Team studies show both nutrient and bacterial pollution of Big Creek. Combined, this shows a threat to the health of the Buffalo National River downstream and several endangered species in the area.”

**Hannah Chang, attorney with Earthjustice,** the public interest environmental law firm that represented the Coalition in court and on the comments: “All eyes are on these two federal agencies as they go back and engage in the public process and undertake the consideration of impacts that the court found they had failed to do in the first place. There is ample scientific evidence showing potential significant impacts from this hog facility, and the agencies must consider that in order to comply with the law.

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