

March 9, 2016

Mr Jim Wise
Water Division
Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality 5301 Northshore Drive
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72118-5317

Mr Wise,

These comments are in regard to ADEQ's 303(d) list.

On October 6th 2015 the National Park Service made a recommendation to ADEQ that Big Creek, Bear Creek, and Mill Creek be added to the 303(d) list of impaired water bodies. ADEQ has been non-responsive. This has been particularly surprising considering that ADEQ has worked closely with, and accepted recommendations from the National Park Service for many years. Because the Buffalo National River is such a critical tourism draw, I would think that ADEQ would be particularly sensitive to NPS concerns.

I am most familiar with the situation on Big Creek. This summer I observed first hand large algae mats scattered throughout the creek bed. It was clear then that there was something wrong. In addition, the Big Creek Research and Extension Team is recording raised nitrate levels. Having kept up with this, it is no surprise to me that NPS using USGS data would recommend listing Big Creek as impaired.

At the 303(d) meeting it was made known by Water Division representatives that although the Buffalo National River is listed as an Extraordinary Water resource (ERW), its tributaries are not. Mr Wise, this just doesn't make any sense. These are major tributaries. Is a river not composed of its tributaries? How can ADEQ possibly justify this point of view?

I also have learned that since 2008, ADEQ's recommendations for 303(d) listings have not been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) due to the inability or unwillingness of ADEQ to comply with federal standards. ADEQ needs to explain this delay to the taxpayers as the result is that streams that are on 303(d) are not receiving the attention that they need.

Mr Wise, the Buffalo National River is a 56 million dollar a year tourism engine. It is critical to the tax base of Newton and Searcy counties. As an Arkansas taxpayer I am extremely concerned that ADEQ is choosing not to act in the best interest of this critical economic resource. Whether these three tributaries are added to the 303(d) list or not, it is absolutely ADEQ's responsibility to investigate and determine the sources of pollution and enforce mitigation.

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