

Charles J. "Chuck" Bitting
HC 73, Box 182-A
Marble Falls, AR 72648

VIA electronic delivery: tori.gordon@governor.arkansas.gov

May 4, 2016

Dear Governor Hutchinson:

I am writing today to ask your assistance in protecting the ground and surface water of the Buffalo River Watershed, the crown jewel of our wonderful state. It seems that Big Creek Research and Extension Team has not been honest and forthcoming with information about potential serious leakage of the ponds at C&H Hog Farm near Mt. Judea. It also appears that the ponds have been leaking for at least a year, and probably since filling, though this needs to be verified through a drilling program and additional testing. As you may be aware, the barns and waste storage ponds sit on the Boone Formation, a limestone which was laid down as the shells and plates of tiny marine organisms during the Mississippian Period, over 325 million years ago. The limestone has been exposed to weathering in northern Arkansas for millions of years. This weathering has developed karst features throughout the Boone Formation area of outcrop. If the ponds are indeed leaking into the karst (limestone bedrock riddled with fractures, solution tubes, caves, springs, and sinkholes) which sits below the ponds, the leakage could result in a catastrophic failure of the ponds, liners and all. This would quickly result in pollution of drinking water sources such as private wells and springs in the area, and would most likely cause a massive fish kill in the Buffalo River. I am sure you would not want to see that occur on your watch.

This information comes from newly uncovered research performed by Dr. Todd Halihan with Oklahoma State University under contract with Big Creek Research and Extension Team and the Cooperative Extension Service. Dr. Halihan used Electrical Resistivity Imaging (otherwise known as Electrical Resistivity Tomography) to look at the electrical characteristics of the Earth underlying the ponds.

The data from these surveys indicate that the ponds containing waste at the C&H hog facility, near the Buffalo National River at Mt. Judea, may be leaking. Dr. Halihan was not afforded the opportunity to conduct the necessary drilling to confirm if his interpretation was correct, but is confident of his interpretation.

I ask you to direct the Department of Environmental Quality, to halt C&H operations until the necessary drilling and data analysis can be completed by Dr. Halihan to verify the results. ADEQ or Big Creek Research and Extension Team should pay for this work. If the drilling program indeed shows that the ponds are leaking, ADEQ must ensure that immediate action is taken to clean up the damage done. I think ADEQ needs to then close the facility permanently to prevent future catastrophic damage. I would like you to personally question Dr. Andrew

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Sharpley, the leader of the Big Creek Research and Extension Team when he first learned of this potential leakage, and why he did not let you and Becky Keogh, Director of ADEQ know about it immediately. His work is being paid for by taxpayers, yet he lacks transparency.

ADEQ should establish procedures to ensure they never again approve such a poorly thought out CAFO on karst topography. This can be done by implementing portions of the APC&E Regulation for landfills which deal with karst into Regulations 5 and 6. The terrible mistake ADEQ made in permitting this facility has cost Arkansas taxpayers a great deal of money over the past three years. The bleeding away of tax dollars will continue till this situation is rectified. This poor decision by ADEQ has cost me a great deal of time and money over the past three years. This is time and money I know I can never reclaim. This tragic mistake by ADEQ has also threatened the economic engine of the region, the Buffalo National River and associated tourism. The Buffalo National River alone is responsible for 969 tourism jobs and \$72,000,000 in economic benefits. It is the keystone which maintains the arch of tourism in this part of Arkansas, and must be protected for current and future generations.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chuck Bitting', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles J. Bitting