

3/14/2016
Director Keogh
Mr. Jim Wise Water Division
Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
5301 Northshore Drive North
Little Rock, Arkansas 72118-5317

Comments on Draft 2016 303(d) Impaired Waterbodies List

Dear Mr. Wise and Director Keogh,

Please consider my comments and place them in the public record, if you would.

National Park Service officials have asked the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to list three tributaries to the Buffalo National River on the department's biennial list of polluted water bodies in Arkansas (Mill Creek, Bear Creek and Big Creek).

These three tributaries supply large volumes of surface water directly to the Buffalo River. America's first National River, is currently rated as an "Extraordinary Resource Waters". This is a rating that should not be taken lightly and deserves the highest order of protection.

I believe all of the Buffalo National River (National Park Service) employees take great pride in trying to fulfill the "mission" of the National Park Service.

Mission:

"The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world."

Professional scientists and specialists of the Buffalo National River Park Service have worked jointly with ADEQ (as well as USGS professionals) in the past to insure the health of the Buffalo River and the health of the many people who wade, swim, fish, canoe, as well as many who come to

the area to visit the surrounding beauty.

Partnership:

“The Buffalo National River's water quality monitoring efforts are divided into programs and projects. The Water Quality Program was started in 1985, and is a **partnership** with Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). Water quality sites are collected by Buffalo National River staff using ADEQ methods and water chemistry samples are passed to the ADEQ Laboratory through chain-of-custody to ADEQ Water Quality Inspectors.”

So when professionals from the National Park Service sound alarms about the potential environmental impacts and possible health risk to their “**partners**”, it seems ADEQ would welcome that early warning information to correct and prevent negative impacts before things become worse for all. Both partners work on a limited budget so early detection is a **win-win** for all.

A technicality, such as a “**Period of Record**” (**missed deadline**), should not be a higher priority than the water quality and health of the Buffalo River National River system and for its human visitors.

The United States of America in 1972 asked the National Park Service employees to watch over and protect this river. How can Arkansas be more concerned about the “Period of Record” and override warnings rather than protect the river before it is too late. In other words, err on the side of caution rather than say time ran out. “You folks will just have to wait two years and hope we were wrong. If not, we will ask taxpayers to take care of something we could have prevented with hopes visitors will still want to come to the “Natural State” and visit Americas’ First National River, the Buffalo.”

More than 1.3 million people visited the river and spent about \$56.5 million at area businesses, according to National Park Service data last year.

I recently read this comment from ArkansasOnline:

By Emily Walkenhorst - This article was published March 6, 2016.

“The National Park Service has placed signs along Mill Creek and downstream on the Buffalo River, warning people of elevated levels

of E. coli.”

Doesn't this bother you? ADEQ have claimed to be in “partnership” with the Buffalo National River Parks Service and yet, a “missed deadline”, overrides all. I am not good at making analogies but I will try. Our Nation (USA - America) is asking the professionals of the National Park Service to protect and oversee all of our parks including the Buffalo National River. That agency is not responsible for what flows directly into the Buffalo River. That is the job of ADEQ. So the word “partnership” means a joint effort towards a united goal. There is a lot at stake here and State and Federal Taxpayers demand better than a squabble over a “Period of Record”. If something is wrong it needs to be checked out and warnings issued and if at a later date the quality improves, then remove it from the list.

Sincerely,
John Murdoch
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