

PRESS RELEASE

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BUFFALO RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE, INC. COMMENTS ON HARBOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

“That is not how science is done”

The Buffalo River Watershed Alliance Inc. (BRWA) has reviewed the drilling report provided by Harbor Environmental that details results of the single hole that was drilled at C&H Hog Farm on Sept 21st through Sept 23rd. The hole was drilled due to concerns raised initially by members of the Big Creek Research and Extension Team (BCRET) who noted a possible “major fracture and movement of waste” near the ponds. However, neither ADEQ, the Pollution Control and Ecology Commission, nor the public was made aware of this concern until over a year later when BRWA brought it to their attention. Only then did ADEQ decide to proceed with a limited drilling investigation.

Harbor presented a summary of the drilling report to the public on December 1st in which the public was not allowed to comment or ask questions. The 540+ page drilling report was not made available until after the presentation, allowing no opportunity for BRWA or the public to review or seek clarification. The public was directed to submit all questions or comments in writing to the ADEQ website by December 9th. ADEQ in response to public requests, did extend the deadline for submitting informed questions until December 16.

Gordon Watkins, president of BRWA noted “We are concerned that in spite of ADEQ’s assurances of improved transparency concerning the C&H Hog Farm, the public is being prevented from seeking clarification by asking questions directly of Harbor. We have submitted our questions and concerns to ADEQ and have posted them on our website : <http://buffaloriveralliance.org/resources/Pictures/Drilling%20Report%20Questions.pdf>

Ellen Corley of BRWA noted, “Thankfully, the sampling results do not appear to show contamination of ground water in this drilled hole. However, the report by geologist Tai Hubbard hired by ADEQ as an independent observer of the investigation, clearly noted multiple limitations of the study, not the least of which was that it provided for only a single drilled hole.”

“Other questions concern the apparent void detected at a depth that closely corresponds to the depths of the pond floors. The void was detected during drilling and again when difficulty was encountered while sealing up the hole above a depth of 25 feet below the ground. Water for lubricating the drilling process was lost at this depth and the final grouting of the shaft required almost 50% more in cement than what the driller had calculated. The report provided little discussion regarding this seemingly significant karst feature. The report and the cores show that karst is indicated throughout most of the 120 ft. range of the drilled shaft. Contrary to the earlier Environmental Assessment of the site, this facility and its waste ponds are clearly sitting atop karst.”

Jack Stewart of BRWA went on to say “Our questions are the result of a hurriedly prepared analysis of a fairly lengthy report. We continue to ask ADEQ why they have chosen to force the public to respond in such a short timeframe. We have communicated to ADEQ that our efforts to correlate various field notes, data, photos, and interpretation will result in questions whose answers will naturally elicit follow-on questions. We have emphatically requested that ADEQ provide for an interactive public question and answer session with Harbor Environmental. Dr. Joe Nix of Ouachita Baptist University who performed some of the investigation’s data analysis said it best: ‘When you close the door on questions, that only raises questions. That is not how science is done’.”

The Buffalo River Watershed Alliance is an all-volunteer, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization which was created in early 2013 in direct response to the discovery that C & H Hog Farm, the first and largest hog CAFO of its kind in Arkansas, had been quietly approved and was near completion at its location on Big Creek, a major tributary of the Buffalo National River. “We believe hog CAFOs simply have no place in the watershed of a National River and we continue to advocate for a permanent moratorium on such facilities.” The Alliance was organized by stakeholders living in the Buffalo River watershed but its supporters span the state and region.