Comment on the CAFO Permit # 5264-W on Big Creek

From observing the behavior of State agencies concerning the Hog CAFO on Big Creek it seems doubtful that even an avalanche of public comment will sway them defending the CAFO to the end. This weighs heavily on the hearts of those of us grew up loving this river.

From the very start, it has been frustrating because all one must possess is common sense to know that much of this waste will end up in the lower Buffalo. It is simply a matter of scale. Sure, there are cows and hogs and chickens, fertilizer run off, and septic tanks in the watershed but the waste produced by a CAFO is monumental in comparison. The figures of manure being spread in close proximity to Big Creek are staggering. Nitrogen levels in the creek are going to skyrocket in the wake of each heavy rain event. Further, the karst geology there will allow contamination in an even wider area.

This will end in one of two ways. One outcome- you do your job and protect the river and deny the permit (and become heroes). The other outcome- tourist start to avoid swimming below Big Creek for fear of pollution and the park becomes a disgrace. No one wants to swim in algae blooms. I have heard locals in Gilbert that are already warry of swimming in the river. Besides that, Mt Judy stinks to high heaven! One of Arkansas's greatest tourist destination will soon become an huge embarrassment. This ending is right around the corner. Next, the state will be forced to clean it all up.

I listened to a state representative of the new Governor's Beautiful Buffalo River Commission speak on the radio last week after their first meeting. My heart sank as I realized that it was just a smoke screen to protect the CAFO. More song and dance. She only mentioned the CAFO only once in passing. It was mostly about septic tanks and landowner buffer zones. Important things but trivial in comparison to the impact of the CAFO.

Even more disgraceful is the UofA agriculture department colluding with the State to bolster the validity of a CAFO 6 miles upstream of a major tributary. It is appalling that an esteemed institution of higher learning would get involved in such corporate inspired misbehavior. I am personally working to make sure that the other departments of the UofA realize what is going on in their name. I believe the Agri Dept. should be exposed for their role in what basically amounts to a cover up. The students deserve to know this.

Fortunately, the BRWA has assembled scientist to actually do the job that the UofA is supposed to be doing. I hope you will respect this important data. These are very serious scientist and they are not beholding to the needs of the industrial interest involved.

Finally, the state will need to compensate the family that runs the operation and took out the loans. It is not their fault that the ADEQ inappropriately fast tracked such a thing.

I realize that this is only a formality. Just another component of the smoke screen to enable the CAFO a renewal of its permit. The State seems determined to champion the CAFO right into the disaster it will surely become. Still, I appreciate being given an opportunity to comment. I also hope that somehow the employees of the ADEQ might muster some backbone and stand up for what you know is right. You are scientist- please act as scientist. Imagine if the department were to actually do its job actually become the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality!

Sincerely,

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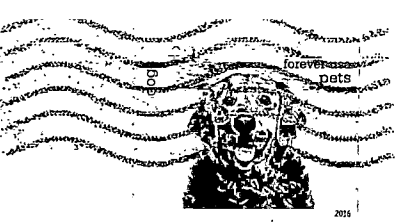

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