

Transcript of Testimony

RE: Regulation 2, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality

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Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission Meeting

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is John Hall. As many of you know, I served in the State Legislature for six years and have since returned to my farm in west Arkansas. My purpose for testifying is to highlight an aspect of Regulation 2 that I have yet to hear anyone discuss—the process for obtaining a waiver or exemption for building future water supplies.

You can pickup the newspaper on any given day and immediately recognize that water supply, water quality and protecting our environment are critical issues facing our state. Many of our state's cities and towns are facing water shortage and quality problems; If not today, certainly within the next 30 to 50 years.

Yes, some parts of our state are rich in water, but others, such as Central, Northwest and West Arkansas, have seen such rapid growth that existing supplies will not sustain current growth trends.

This imminent shortage is precisely why many here today are petitioning to have ERW's wiped off the books. But the primary concern that I foresee is not the actual list of ERW streams, but rather the inflexibility of Regulation 2 with regard to developing future water supplies.

At present, Regulation 2 does NOT provide a process by which a city, county or water district can follow to create an additional water supply as current sources become insufficient. Absent action by the Commission, the opportunity for greater discord will increase, which would only serve to stifle Arkansas' growth and tax base.

My purpose here today is to ask the commission to consider steps that can be taken to implement a fair and balanced process that communities can follow to develop future water supplies. One such option might be to require those seeking to develop an additional water supply to obtain a favorable Environmental Impact Statement.

While I'm sure that many would rather the bar be set much lower by requiring only an Environmental Assessment, the more thorough and exhaustive EIS, which typically takes two years to complete, would be more judicious.

Mr. Chairman, we desperately need a thoughtful process by which new, safe and clean water supplies can be developed. Thank you again for taking the time to consider this suggestion.