



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Buffalo National River
402 N. Walnut, Suite 136
Harrison, AR 72601

IN REPLY REFER TO
1.A.2 (BUFF)

June 24, 2014

Doug Szenher
Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
Public Outreach and Assistance Division
5301 Northshore Drive
North Little Rock, AR 72118

Dear Mr. Szenher:

I am the Superintendent of the Buffalo National River, a unit of the National Park Service. I am writing this letter to express our support for the proposed changes to Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission (APCEC) Regulation No. 6, Regulations for State Administration of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Docket No. 14-003-R. The proposed change to Regulation No. 6 would prohibit Arkansas from issuing Regulation No. 6 permits within the Buffalo River watershed for medium and large swine Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

The Buffalo National River is a unique resource that will benefit from this added protection. The Buffalo National River was established by Public Law 92-237 on March 1, 1972. The preamble to the law states in part:

“That for the purposes of conserving and interpreting an area containing unique scenic and scientific features, and preserving as a free-flowing stream an important segment of the Buffalo River in Arkansas for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, the Secretary of the Interior may establish and administer the Buffalo National River.”

Congress intended to conserve the Buffalo National River for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. It is part of my duties as Superintendent to ensure this mandate is carried out.

The Buffalo River drains a watershed of approximately 857,000 acres (USGS Hydrologic Unit Code 11010005). Buffalo National River itself is only 95,730 acres (11% of watershed), mostly in and adjacent to the river bottom. Many activities outside of the boundary have the potential to affect the natural, aquatic, scenic, recreational and scientific resources of the park. Activities that could compromise those values include operating CAFOs within the watershed.

The latest available data for National Park System visitation shows that Buffalo National River was visited by nearly 1.17-million people in 2011. They came for many reasons including to drive the scenic roads, camp, hike, canoe, hunt, fish, and horseback ride. These figures show

that visitors to the Buffalo National River spent approximately \$38 million and generated over 450 jobs for the local economy. Part of its appeal is related to water quality. The Buffalo River is designated an "Extraordinary Resource Water" and a "Natural and Scenic Waterway" by ADEQ (Reg. 2, Appendix A). With this designation comes the "Antidegradation Policy" (Reg. 2.201 – 2.204). This policy states "Existing instream water uses and the level of water quality necessary to protect the existing uses shall be maintained and protected."

The river is particularly susceptible to contamination carried through karst aquifers. Karst is a landscape of soluble rock and is characterized by caves, springs, sinkholes, and sinking streams. Karst aquifers are very poor at filtering contaminants. Karst areas are very prone to contaminated groundwater as a direct result of activities on the surface. As you know, CAFOs generate large volumes of animal waste which can seep into the groundwater under certain circumstances, including flooding. Such contaminants are readily transported through the aquifers, and eventually contaminated groundwater is released to surface waters.

Because of the unique resource values and the geologic vulnerabilities that characterize the Buffalo National River and the Buffalo River watershed, the National Park Service fully supports proposed changes to Regulation No. 6. APCEC will help preserve the Buffalo National River for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations by prohibiting Regulation No. 6 permits for medium and large swine CAFOs within the watershed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Cheri Acting". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the word "Acting" written in a slightly larger, more legible font than the name.

Kevin G. Cheri
Superintendent