

From: [alice andrews](#)
To: [ImpairedWaterbodies_Comments](#)
Cc: [Alice Andrews](#)
Subject: Impaired Waterbodies Comments
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2016 4:29:40 PM
Attachments: [Comments 303\(d\) list 2016 Alice.docx](#)

Attached are my comments

Alice Andrews

Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
Water Division
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To whom it may concern:

Subject: Public comment period on Proposed 2016 Impaired Waterbodies List, called the 303(d) list

As stated in the first paragraph of the notice of public hearing, comment period - ADEQ develops the 303(d) list every two years under provisions of Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act.

“ADEQ assesses water quality monitoring data from numerous locations around the state, based on a comprehensive assessment methodology to determine which waters are not meeting their water quality standards and/or designated uses” as listed in the Arkansas Water Quality Standards (Regulation 2 of the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission) and the second paragraph states that “Water quality data from stream and lake sampling sites were considered during the development of the proposed 2016 303(d) list. The evaluated water quality data were collected by multiple entities including ADEQ; other state, federal and local government agencies; and private entities in Arkansas and from surrounding states.”

I would like to focus on the fact that there are at least three streams that need to be added to the 2016 303(d) list of impaired streams. The Buffalo National River, (BNR) administered by the National Park Service, a federal agency, requested that Mill Creek be added because of exceeding the geometric mean of 5 samples within the 30 day period allowed for E. Coli during July, August and September 2015 and exceeded the one time grab sample limit in Regulation 2.507 six times within the same period. This will likely place the Buffalo National River out of compliance for primary contact recreation.

This information will likely result in NPS posting signage along Mill Cr. advising against swimming in this stream because of the increased risk of contracting an illness from unsafe levels of harmful bacteria. There is a locally popular swimming hole at the confluence of Mill Creek and the Buffalo River. Mill Creek should be added to the 2016 303(d) list of impaired streams

The National Park Service monitors the U. S. Geological Survey, another federal agency, sites that collect dissolved oxygen (DO) data on tributaries to the Buffalo River. Two of these sites have chronically been below the allowable DO limits in Regulation 2.505. They are Bear Creek, near Silver Hill, (USGS site 07056515) (ADEQ site – BUFT12) and Big Creek at Carver (USGS site 07055814) (ADEQ SITE – BUFT06). According to a letter from BNR Superintendent, dated October 6, 2015, these two streams have had minimum dissolved oxygen values of 3.9 and 4.5 mg/L, respectively, well below standards. Bear Creek has previously been on the impaired list for Total Dissolved Solids, but should now be added for low DO.

Big Creek at Carver should also be added to the impaired list for the same reason of low DO. Low DO in both Big Creek and Bear Creek were below acceptable standards to support healthy aquatic life. It is well documented that bacteria in water utilize oxygen as organic material decays, algal blooms develop further lowering dissolved oxygen and directly impact aquatic life, especially fresh water mussels that live in Big Creek and the Buffalo River.

* The reason given for not adding these three streams (by the ADEQ Water Division) is that the data collected by the National Park Service and the USGS were collected over the summer of 2015 but the streams were not added to the 2016 303(d) list of impaired streams because the deadline for submitting data was March 31, 2015. Further, they asserted that the NPS was not a “certified testing lab” although ADEQ received test samples from NPS and even quoted from BNR test data. This makes no sense - ADEQ has received monitoring data and test samples from NPS for many years (NPS provided samples, ADEQ does or did some of the testing).

* USGS has monitored dissolved oxygen, upstream in Big Creek, since 2014, well before the March 31, 2015 deadline. ADEQ had only to look at the online data. Back to paragraph one – “ADEQ addresses water quality monitoring data from numerous locations around the state” and “the *evaluated water quality data were collected by multiple entities*”.

* Complicating the issues, EPA has not approved the ADEQ list of impaired streams since about 2008. Reason is related to Arkansas ADEQ utilizing “narrative standards” rather than “numeric standards” for the many parameters tested. It would seem that numeric standards should have been developed years ago or at least be in the process.

Therefore, I request:

(1) In the interest of the Public Health of Arkansans and our more than 1.5 million visitors to the Buffalo National River annually and

(2) and the threat of low dissolved oxygen to aquatic life in the Buffalo River tributaries of Big Creek and Bear Creek, (especially endangered mussels in the Buffalo River) and the elevated levels of *E.coli* in Mill Creek (referenced above), these three major tributaries to the Buffalo River should be added to the 2016 303(d) list of impaired streams regardless of the March 2015 deadline.

Respectfully,

Alice B. Andrews
Conservation Chair
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