



MEDIA RELEASE

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Public Comment Deadline Looms on Buffalo River CAFO Moratorium

July 1st is final day to register opinions supporting a freeze on controversial hog confinements in watershed

LITTLE ROCK, AR—June 26, 2014—The moment has arrived for Arkansans to be heard on the hot-button issue of large-scale confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) sited on the Buffalo River watershed. Individuals have until July 1st to submit their views to the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) on initiating a moratorium to halt the future construction of industrial hog operations on the cherished watershed. The action stems from the need to protect the future of the state's crown jewel waterway. Public health and vital tourism revenues all lie in the balance.

In 2013, the ADEQ granted the state's first industrial hog confinement permit, which gave rise to concerns over the future of the Buffalo River. Industrial hog confinements can produce *millions of gallons* of animal waste each year. The very real threat of a hog waste pond failure -- either through leakage, leaching through the regions limestone geology, run-off or flooding -- would create irreversible damage to the Buffalo. Included would be destruction of aquatic life and the potential dumping of *thousands of tons* of pharmaceutical and pathogen-laden animal waste into the nation's "First National River," connected waterways, surrounding land parcels and local communities.

Also in jeopardy is a key element of the state's economy. In 2012, the Buffalo River attracted more than one million recreational visitors who spent nearly \$44 million in local communities. A mishap from a hog confinement would erase those revenues.

Can this high-risk scenario be avoided? The truth is no one knows. No expert can predict how a large-scale industrial animal facility will weather a crisis, nor can any office of the Arkansas government guarantee the safety of the Buffalo River, the environment or the public health. The proposed regulations submitted by the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and the Ozark Society will make certain no new CAFOs are sited on this fragile, valued watershed.

Comment must be sent by **July 1, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.** to Doug Szenher, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, Public Outreach and Assistance Division. Written opinions should be e-mailed to reg-comment@adeq.state.ar.us or mailed to Mr. Szenher at 5301 Northshore Dr., North Little Rock, AR 72118.

"It's a simple choice between protecting Arkansas from irresponsible polluting and giving away the health and safety of the Buffalo River to industrial agriculture. Given the facts, I believe every Arkansan would be disgusted at what its government has condoned by turning a blind-eye to the fouling of a national treasure and one of the state's important economic contributors."

– Terry Spence, farmer and SRAP regional coordinator

Socially Responsible Agricultural Project provides free, professional assistance to communities working to protect themselves from factory farms and their impact on local communities and populations, and to those who are trying to reclaim agriculture by producing and marketing sustainable agricultural goods. More information can be found at www.sraproject.org.