

PROTECT THE BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER
Call for Public Comments
May 9, 2014

The Ozark Society and the Arkansas Public Policy Panel seek your support for their third-party rulemaking petition to ban new medium and large confined swine operations in the Buffalo National River watershed by amending Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission Regulations 5 and 6. The rulemaking documents can be found at:

http://www.adeq.state.ar.us/regs/drafts/draft_regs.htm

Note that these amendments, if adopted, will not affect existing swine operations in the watershed and will not prevent small family farms from being constructed.

You can help by providing written comments to support the changes by **July 1, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.** to Doug Szenher, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, Public Outreach and Assistance Division, 5301 Northshore Drive, North Little Rock, AR 72118 or by e-mail to reg-comment@adeq.state.ar.us

While written comments are preferred, you can make oral comments at a public meeting to be held on June 17, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Durand Conference Center, Room A, North Arkansas College, 303 N. Main St., Harrison AR 72601. You may also deliver your written comments at this meeting.

There may be a number of reasons why you think that banning swine operations near the Buffalo River is important and making comments in your own words is encouraged. Some points that you may wish to consider are the following:

GEOLOGY:

- The Buffalo National River watershed has the feature of porous limestone “karst” topography that allows rapid transport of pollutants. The karst pathway connects surface water, groundwater, wells, springs, streams, and tributaries into the Buffalo River.

- The area is not suited for waste ponds with leakage rates of up to 5,000 gallons per day per acre of surface area allowed by current regulations or for the land application of millions of gallons of hog waste. The risk of transporting nutrients, bacteria, and other pollutants to the Buffalo River is too great.

WATER QUALITY:

- Leakage from waste holding ponds as well as run-off, infiltration into the karst sub-layer, or flooding of the spray fields all pose significant threats to the high quality waters of the Buffalo.
- A catastrophic failure of a hog waste pond (as has happened a number of times in North Carolina) would create irreversible damage to the aquatic life of the Buffalo and downstream in the White River.

ECONOMICS:

- The Buffalo River is an extremely valuable piece of Arkansas's tourism engine. Protecting the Buffalo, protects jobs in Arkansas.
- Tourism in the Natural State in 2012 accounted for a \$5.76 billion positive economic impact and employed 58,452 people.
- In 2012, the Buffalo National River attracted 1,093,083 visitors who spent \$43.78 million in communities surrounding the river.
- Direct spending from visitors to the Buffalo employed 610 people in 2012.
- In other states, landowners adjacent to large swine operations have often seen dramatic losses in property values.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

- The major public complaint about large swine operations is odor but air emissions go well beyond the smell.

- Three of the gases emitted—ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and nitrous oxide—are toxic and methane is a potent greenhouse gas. Entrained fecal bacteria and other pathogens can be carried by the winds from the barns, ponds, and spray fields to local residences, schools, and towns.
- In a letter dated March 21, 2013 from the Arkansas Department of Health to ADEQ the statement was made that for the large hog farm in the watershed nearing completion at that time “we have concerns that water-borne pathogens—including e. coli and cryptosporidium—from the proposed land application sites may pose a risk for body contact on the Buffalo National River, a popular recreational destination.”

OTHER STATES

- A proliferation of large swine operations degrades watersheds. Iowa and North Carolina, for example have suffered major water pollution and public health crises as a result of swine operations. These problems in North Carolina have resulted in a moratorium for new swine farms and expansions of existing hog farms.
- As an example of what can happen, in North Carolina in 1995 due to heavy rains the dike around an 8-acre hog waste pond failed spilling 26 million gallons of manure into the New River. The spill killed 10 million fish and closed 364,000 acres of coastal wetlands to shell fishing. At the time it was the biggest environmental spill in US history, more than twice as big as the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Contacts for further information:

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