



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2018

Mr. Daniel Smith
Acting Director
National Park Service
1849 C St NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Mr. Smith:

Recently, news reports have highlighted the increased appearance of algae growth along portions of America's first national river, the Buffalo National River. We have enjoyed the Buffalo River all of our lives and are so proud of the wisdom of our predecessor, Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt, the Ozark Society, and the thousands of Arkansans and Missourians who work so hard to protect this watershed and this beautiful free-flowing extraordinary resource.

Not only is the Buffalo National River the ultimate icon of the Natural State, it is an essential economic engine for the Ozark region. The river attracted more than 1.7 million visitors in 2016, supporting 1,200 jobs and generating benefits in excess of \$90 million. One can understand our natural concern about the recent media reports.

Please find below some questions, the answers to which will aid us in our understanding of the long-term health of this natural resource:

- 1) Regarding recent media reports, we are curious as to what data the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Geological Survey have regarding water quality and the seasonal appearance of algae. Additionally, we would like to know your opinion regarding whether, since the river's protection in 1972, the seasonal algae problem is better or worse in quantity, time, and impact?
- 2) What best practices has NPS put in place to minimize the seasonal algae? For example, 50 years ago, the river watershed had significantly more family farm and livestock operations, but fewer visitors. Today, one presumes there would be less livestock production along the watershed, but tens of thousands more visitors.
- 3) Does NPS still spread poultry litter on its hayfields inside the park boundaries?

Mr. Daniel Smith
October 2, 2018
Page 2 of 2

- 4) What education do floating and canoeing visitors receive before spending time on the water regarding the proper disposal of their waste? Could NPS procedures at other national parks be applied to the Buffalo to ensure its protection?
- 5) From the standpoint of increased phosphorus levels in reduced oxygen, what is NPS's view on the impact of general erosion from roads or other activities within the river watershed? How has this changed over the years since the river has been in federal hands?
- 6) Given the significant agricultural production surrounding the river, what steps is NPS taking to partner with local producers to ensure greater watershed health for the long-term?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We respectfully request a response to these questions by November 1, 2018. Our contact for this enquiry is Matt Karvelas, who may be reached at Matt.Karvelas@mail.house.gov, or Jessica Powell at Jessica.Powell@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



French Hill
Member of Congress



Steve Womack
Member of Congress