

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Buffalo National River
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Statement before the Arkansas Joint Senate and House Committees on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development, Tuesday, March 29, 2016

Chairman Caldwell, Chairman Douglas, and committee members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding the 2016 Impaired Waterbodies List. We would like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to visit Buffalo National River, or any of the other 410 units of the National Park System as we celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service in 2016. Our agency was established to preserve the uniquely American idea of National Parks by providing stewardship to these places that are essential to telling the story of America, and ensuring that they will remain undiminished for future generations.

As the stewards of America's first National River, the staff at Buffalo National River is concerned with the quality of the water within the river, and by extension the river's tributary streams. The water in the Buffalo River is the accumulation of all the waters within the watershed, both within and outside of the boundaries of the park, and we work cooperatively with other Federal, State, and local agencies and organizations to manage the water in the tributaries.

Buffalo National River received 1.36 million visitors, who generated \$56 million dollars in spending in 2014. Many of our visitors come to float, fish, and swim in the river and the National Park Service has an obligation to monitor water quality within the park and to determine, as best we can, the prevalence and sources of possible contamination, such as *E. coli*, which has the potential to put human health at risk. In addition, we monitor dissolved oxygen levels in the river and its tributaries because of its importance to the health and survival of aquatic life, such as smallmouth bass and freshwater mussels.

The National Park Service relies upon the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) as the delegated authority for implementing the Clean Water Act in Arkansas to ensure that the resource of clear, clean water is not diminished. We have been working cooperatively with ADEQ for more than 30 years to collect and analyze water samples from the Buffalo River and its tributaries. In recent years, we have become concerned about the water quality from three streams in particular: Mill Creek, Big Creek, and Bear Creek. We have asked that ADEQ place Mill Creek and Big Creek on the Impaired Waterbodies list, and add Bear Creek for dissolved oxygen, pursuant to Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

We do have handouts with additional information about each stream and we are happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

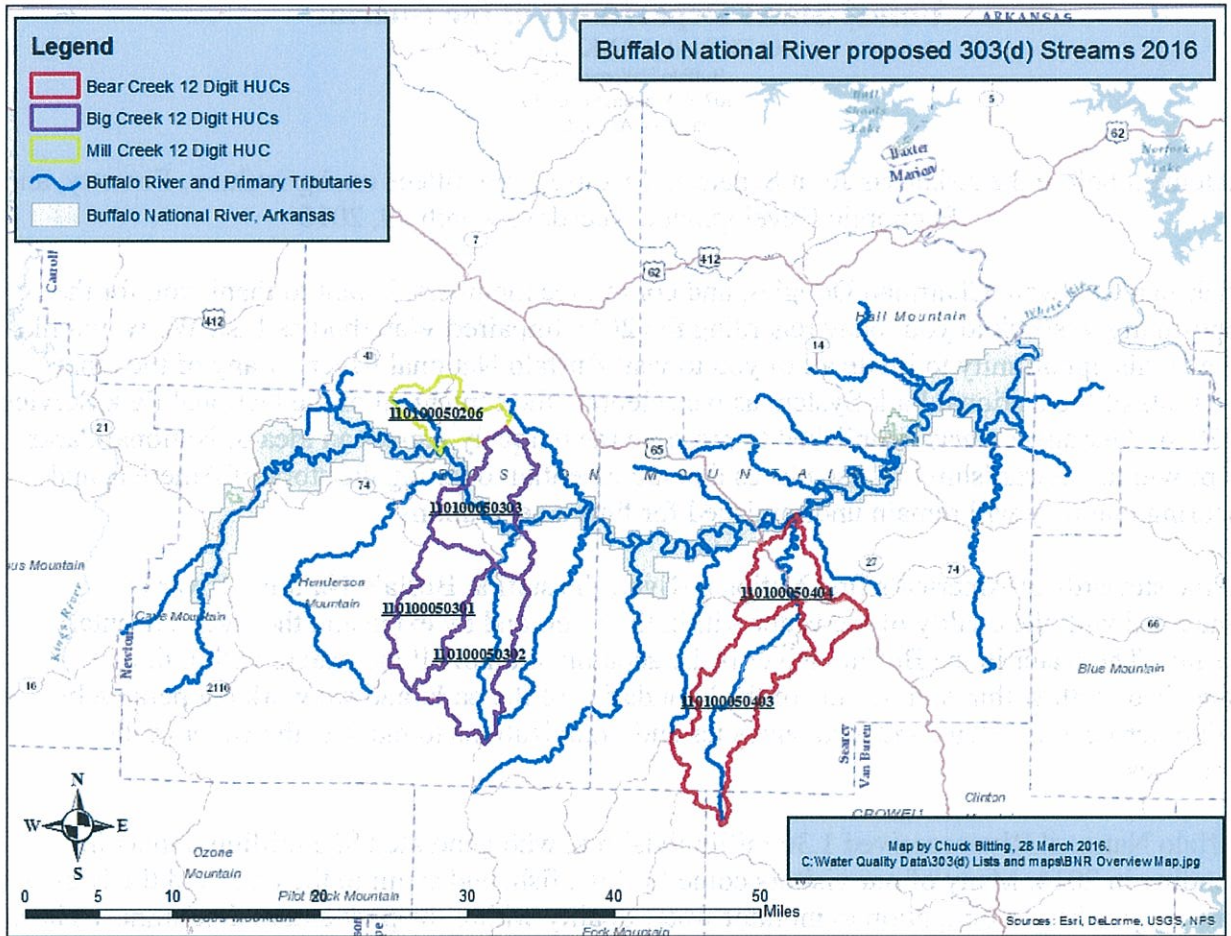


Figure 1: Overview map of the Buffalo River