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March 7, 2013

Dr. Susan Hedman
Regional Administrator and Great Lakes National Program Manager
The United States Environmental Protection Agency
Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Re: The Buffalo River

Dear Dr. Hedman:

We were disappointed to learn that plans to put the next and most substantial portion of the ongoing Buffalo River Restoration out to bid have been delayed as a result of the budget sequestration and uncertainty about the level of appropriations that will be made available for the remainder of fiscal year 2013.

While we cannot yet know the amount of funding which will be available to the Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) through the rest of this federal fiscal year to advance important initiatives like the Buffalo River cleanup, we write today to respectfully request that as soon as funds become available to GLNPO, that GLNPO fully fund the Buffalo River Restoration.

Because your office has been an integral part of the planning for the restoration project, we know that you are very familiar with this important initiative. Even so, we must take this opportunity to emphasize just some of the aspects of this initiative which commend it for full funding as soon as possible:

- After 150 years of environmental degradation, this project will significantly improve the health of the Buffalo River. It will dramatically improve the habitat for animal and plant species, will markedly reduce risks to human health, and will make substantial progress toward the de-listing of the River as an Area of Concern.
- After twenty years of planning, the project is finally shovel-ready; 100% design of a consensus plan has been achieved.
- The private component of the funding (50% of \$44 million) is in place.
- The Buffalo River Restoration Partnership has been a model of cooperation between private, federal, state and non-profit organizations and the general public.

The consensus plan is based on a vast body of sediment and water samples and other technical data gathered from the field. We fear that if too much time is allowed to slip, and this technical data is allowed to age, this data will less and less reflect the actual conditions in the river and its bed. In that case, years of planning and the government's tremendous investment in gathering this data will have been wasted.

We hold the work of the Great Lakes National Program Office in the highest regard. Please know that we will continue to vigorously advocate for the robust funding for the various and important programs which GLNPO administers.

Thank you very much for your leadership and your service to the United States and the communities of the Great Lakes watershed. We are grateful for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress