



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

The Honorable French Hill  
Arkansas's 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District  
Statement for the Record  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
U.S. House of Representatives  
March 25, 2026

Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Member Kaptur, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit a Statement for the Record. I appreciate the opportunity to offer my insights at today's hearing entitled *Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Member Day Hearing*.

Arkansas is a state full of beautiful rivers, lakes, and a wide variety of outdoor activities, including hunting and fishing. My home state has been blessed to share this beauty with visitors from all over the world and welcomes millions of people annually. In 2024, the Bureau of Economic Analysis estimated that Arkansas's outdoor recreation contributed \$5 billion and 43,000 jobs to the Arkansas economy.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, tail water streams in Arkansas, including the Little Red River located within my district, have not been as cold as usual in recent years, impacting local trout populations. It has become an issue of increasing concern for the communities along the river, which draw a large amount of their economy from the river. This issue was first raised to me in 2024, and I have been working with Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Little Rock District of the Army Corps of Engineers, and groups representing recreational fisheries to reach a solution. In September of 2024, all the entities involved agreed that the Little Red River would be well suited for the Sustainable Rivers Program (SRP), funded under the Operations and Management (O&M) within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

While a Forecast Informed Reservoir Operation (FIRO) has been discussed, there are concerns that a FIRO would be both costly and untimely, as the river, its fish habitat, and federally funded fish hatchery need attention now. In contrast to a FIRO, being included in the SRP would allow the Little Rock District of the Army Corps of Engineers to operate for environmental stewardship and assess water trends to make good, low risk operation decisions in a timely manner for the trout's survival.

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<sup>1</sup> [ORSA\\_Arkansas2024.pdf](#)

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Last year, my office received a letter from USACE, stating that the Little Red River would be a good selection for the program, but given cuts to the SRP's, there was only funding available for those programs that were continuing projects that had already begun, rather than those considered new, such as the Little Red River. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is committing to financial support to the strategy.

Provided this, I am asking for your extra consideration of my top requests this year – both revolving around the Little Red River and the program's funding. My first request asks that previously historical funding for the program, after 2020, be restated. My second request simply asks that some funds available for new projects in FY 2027 from what funding is approved.

I appreciate the Committee's dedication to the program's funding. I likewise recognize that this Committee provided more money for the program than was provided in the President's budget request for FY 2026. However, the amount needed to help fund and work toward saving the Little Red River (\$3 million) is little compared to the dramatic economic impact these rivers and others like it have on rural America. As such, I respectfully submit my requests before you today, both of which are listed as my top two requests this Congress.

Again, I thank you for your continued attention to this issue and you and your staff's great work on SRP appropriations. However, with nearly 59 project submissions last year, USACE was only able to preserve a fraction of those. Along with the Little Red River, many other projects were ultimately not accepted. In my view, the strong partnership with local conservation groups and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission provides are well matched.

Hunting and fishing are central to America's identity and our outdoor spaces. Working to preserve outdoor spaces not only supports rural America and wild places across the country but also preserves world class habitats for the next generation to enjoy. Again, thank you for your attention on this request. These items are important to my home state of Arkansas. I stand at the ready to work with the Committee and lend my support for these matters.