

**U.S. Congressional Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I serve District 18, which includes the following counties: Stone, Marion, Baxter, Searcy, Cleburne, Faulkner, White, Van Buren, and Fulton. I often casually refer to my district as the Great Lakes and Rivers District due to the inclusion of the White River, Lake Norfolk, the Buffalo River, Greers Ferry Lake, the Red River, Mirror Lake, and the many creeks and tributaries that run from these bodies of water and from the Ozark Mountains.

Serving the people of the state of Arkansas is my primary responsibility. In order to best serve, it is critical for me to do my homework, research each issue, and most importantly, to listen to my constituents. For me to serve to the best of my ability, it is essential that I am intricately involved in issues that primarily affect my district. The National Blueway Designation of the White River Watershed amassed my entire district. I was never considered a stakeholder, never involved in any discussions prior to the designation or throughout the process of creation of the MOU, and never consulted about the very specific language in the designation in regards to the goals, specifications and recommendations for specific bodies of water, dams, watersheds and contributing properties. As someone elected to the office that represents the 86,000+ people of my district, I found this utter disregard for this office – for them – unbelievable and astonishing.

An outcry from constituents, property owners along the White River, local elected officials with whom I have the honor to serve with ranging from Mayors, Quorum Court Members and County Judges, prompted me to call a hearing on the issue. I currently serve as Chair of the City, County and Local Affairs Committee. County Judges and Quorum Courts were on the front lines of this issue with

constituents urging them to pass ordinances opposing the Blueway. However, like me, they had no clue about what it was, how it came about, whose authority it was under, what exactly it would or would not mean for their counties, what regulatory changes it would bring to their counties, businesses, and property owners, how it would effect their local economies, tourism, water supply, generation of electricity...the list goes on and on. Elected officials, at any level, cannot effectively do their jobs with limited or misinformation. I felt it was imperative to call the hearing for the benefit of local elected officials and the people who are the real stakeholders – the property owners and taxpayers of Arkansas.

The result of the hearing was crucial, I believe, to the Blueway Designation being removed from the White River Watershed, along with the joint letter from most of the Missouri and Arkansas Congressional Delegation to the Secretary of the Interior. All of the organizations and state agencies who had originally provided support for the program, withdrew their support. The very specific language in regards to the goals and desired outcomes for the area, the waterways, the structures, levies, farmland, etc. gave many of us in the state legislature, both Republican and Democrat, a strong opposition to the Blueway Designation and Program. I applaud the decision of our state agencies and organizations in recognizing the concerns, for listening to our legislature and withdrawing their support.

There are far too many specific problems and concerns within the Blueway designation document for me to address. It was clear that it was written from a third party perspective that had an environmental fantasy vision separate and apart from the history of the area, the economic and social realities of the region, and the property owners, farmers, businesses, cities, towns, counties and states that own this area. This was, and still is, repugnant.

As a state elected official serving in the legislature, I am extremely protective of the Legislative process and of the Legislative branch of government. The overreach of executive administrations, particularly at the federal level, has eroded the public's trust in government. Coupled with the complete disregard for the legislative process that SHOULD be the primary process through which policy is created, debated, and approved, through our committees of elected officials, has left the citizens of our country with little confidence in government.

Executive Orders giving way to Secretarial Orders, resulting in the creation of unelected commissions and sources of funding that creates, promulgates, and executes policy has unfortunately replaced the legislative process. We must diligently and courageously restore the authority of the Legislative Branch of Government at both the state and federal Level. We must restore the legislative process and restore confidence in our government. We must reject this perversion of our democracy where checks and balances cease to exist, where policy is created and executed in the dark of night by unelected bureaucrats,

commissions, and third party organizations, and where funding becomes the mechanism for ultimate control and the implementation of dictated policy without regard to the committee process, state boundaries and constitutions.

Finally, I was elected to do a job for my state. I am aggravated and resentful of the heavy handedness of the federal government treading upon the sovereignty of my state. I reject the attitude of "father knows best" from our federal executive administration on practically every issue. Instead of spending my time creatively trying to improve my district and my states' economy, job markets, roads, education, public health, and laws, I am working hard to find ways to protect our state from the federal governments' decisions resulting in unfunded mandates, increased taxes, fines, increased rules and regulations, and severe practical consequences of behemoth legislations' rules and regulations. I imagine there are a lot of state Representatives and state Senators who feel the same way.

I implore you to take back the reins for the sake of our citizens and our country. It is time for Federal Land and Water grabs to cease. It is time for policy to be created through transparent debate within committees of elected officials. It is time for property owners to be regarded as the number one stakeholders. Restore the status of the American citizen and the Constitution, and you will restore the trust in government.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today. May God bless you and may God bless our country.