

US House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Subcommittee members,

I sincerely appreciate the interest you have shown in this vital issue and your willingness to travel to our beautiful state of Missouri to discuss the disastrous federal overreach we fortunately avoided when the National Blueways designation was rescinded due to the continued efforts of our Congressional delegation.

As the state representative for the 142nd legislative district in the Missouri House of Representatives, I am proud to represent an area that is known for its immense natural beauty and majestic waterways. These waterways, such as the Jack's Fork and Current Rivers, are inexorably linked economically, culturally and historically to the success and prosperity of the people I am so very honored to represent. From the farmers and livestock owners who are dependent on unrestricted access to our rivers to the small business owners and employees who depend on the industries that have developed around these waterways, the people of my district see the White River Watershed as critical to our continued well-being.

However, despite the undeniable importance of these waterways to Missourians not only in my district but all along southern Missouri, we saw unelected federal bureaucrats threaten our way of life with the proposed Blueways designation. Especially offensive to me is the fact this decision was made by the United States Department of the Interior with no input or involvement from local stakeholders, nor with any approval or oversight from Congress. This appalling lack of transparency and accountability would have produced a policy that dramatically infringed upon the rights of property owners, done irreversible damage to the economies of our communities, and greatly impaired our ability to properly manage and conserve our lands, which is something we have done successfully for generations without the assistance of the federal government.

This clear overreach of federal authority would have produced more restrictions and more regulations that run contrary to the sound conservation practices carried out by our local governments and property owners. Sadly, it is yet another example of the efforts of the current administration to erode the rights of Americans and to implement misguided policies that would force us to rely on the federal government for decisions that should be made at the local level. We have seen similar disastrous policies with the proposed General Management Plan for the Ozarks National Scenic Riverways, which would infringe upon our rights by limiting things such as river access, boating and horse riding, and the clear-cutting policies used by the U.S. Forest Service, which serve to leave large areas of land unusable by the public for more than a generation. These are just a few of the examples where the federal government has attempted to reach into our lives to change things for the worse rather than the better.

Today, as we talk about how we can avoid these kinds of assaults on our freedoms and rights in the future, we must be mindful that local decisions are best made at the local level. If we do in fact need new regulations and restrictions to conserve our lands and waterways, the public and local officials must be key players in the discussion. And if federal agencies want to play a role in the process, they must first acknowledge that private property owners here have been, and continue to be, outstanding stewards of the land. Our federal government should be taking notes on the policies we have in place here locally rather than blindly handing down their damaging and nonsensical edicts from above. We need our federal agencies to work with landowners rather than

consistently working against them. If we can take this important step forward we can achieve the goal of preserving our natural resources without trampling on the rights of Missouri families and farmers.

Sincerely,

Robert Ross
State Representative – District 142
Missouri House of Representatives