



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
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APR 30 2013

Steve Thompson
Executive Director
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
707 N. Robinson
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

J.D. Strong
Executive Director
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
3800 N. Classen
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

RE: The Illinois River Watershed Modeling Project

Dear Messrs. Thompson and Strong:

I appreciate the recent opportunity to teleconference with you to hear and discuss Oklahoma's concerns regarding the Illinois River Watershed Modeling and TMDL project. Through our discussion, it became clear to me that miscommunication about this effort is among the greatest difficulties we have to overcome.

As I indicated during our call, the EPA has to date invested several years and substantial resources toward developing a technically sound and defensible watershed model, which will enable reliable prediction of water quality impacts resulting from a variety of load reduction scenarios. These impacts will be modeled at several key points and criteria in the basin, including Oklahoma's phosphorus standard at the Arkansas/Oklahoma State line and the chlorophyll *a* standard in Lake Tenkiller. Successful completion and validation of the model will enable the development of one or more TMDLs to achieve applicable water quality standards in the basin, including Oklahoma's phosphorus standard for Scenic Rivers and the chlorophyll *a* standard in Lake Tenkiller.

At this time, we are continuing to work with our contractor to complete development of a comprehensive model that will be representative of the entire Illinois River Watershed, from the Illinois River headwaters in Arkansas through and including Lake Tenkiller in Oklahoma. Efforts to calibrate and validate the watershed model remain a top priority; however, we are also launching a concurrent effort to devise a set of realistic phosphorus load reduction scenarios that can be simulated using the model.

As we move towards completion of the watershed model and load reduction scenario simulations, we want to emphasize the need for continued active participation from both States, interested Tribes, and other local stakeholders. Taking the watershed model and load reduction scenarios to the next level, including TMDL(s) development, will be the next major challenge, and one best faced by all of us working together.

I thank you for your agencies' support in helping to make this watershed modeling project successful. I will keep you updated if we need to make any adjustments in our schedule and approach as our FY 2013 resource situation is clarified. Barring any reductions in resources devoted to this effort, we remain committed to completing the Illinois River Watershed Modeling and TMDL project on time and without further delay. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (214) 665-7101, or Claudia Hosch of my staff at (214) 665-7170.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "WK Honker".

William K. Honker, P.E.

Director

Water Quality Protection Division

cc: Gary Sherrer, Secretary of Environment
Mike Thralls, Executive Director, OCC
Jim Reese, Secretary of Agriculture
