UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TEXAS 75202 – 2733

Office of the Regional Administrator

August 13, 2013

The Honorable Mark Pryor
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pryor:

Thank you for your letter of May 9, 2013, to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding your concerns related to the Illinois River Watershed in Arkansas and Oklahoma. In your letter, you specifically requested that the EPA allow both Arkansas and Oklahoma to complete a joint stressor-response study of the Illinois River prior to the development of any Total Maximum Daily Load requirements.

The EPA recognizes that communities and citizens in both Arkansas and Oklahoma have undertaken many significant actions and invested considerable resources to improve water quality in the Illinois River Watershed. The EPA also applauds these efforts focused on shared water quality goals through the 2003 Arkansas-Oklahoma Statement of Joint Principles and Actions Agreement and a three-year extension of the 2003 agreement which was recently signed by representatives from both Arkansas and Oklahoma.

The present and future quality of the Illinois River, its tributaries and the waterbodies into which they flow are not only important shared priorities for both Arkansas and Oklahoma, but for the EPA as well. The EPA plans to continue its current modeling efforts in the Illinois Basin to not only fulfill this shared goal, but to make certain that any future decisions originate from a technically sound basis. Given the time and resources required to achieve the current level of model development, the EPA believes completion of the modeling efforts and development of any TMDL(s) is likely to be a lengthy process. Therefore, it is important for the EPA to continue moving forward with its ongoing modeling work.

The EPA will work in conjunction with Oklahoma, Arkansas, and interested stakeholders throughout the remainder of this project. We remain committed to continued collaboration, coordination, and information sharing and appreciate your interest in ensuring that the model ultimately produced is scientifically sound. In the event that the completed stressor-response study yields an alternative EPA approved phosphorus criterion, the EPA would replace the current Scenic Rivers criterion (0.037 mg/L phosphorus) with the new value. The results of modeled load reduction scenarios would be reassessed at that time.

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If you have any questions, please contact me at (214) 665-2100, or your staff may contact Ms. LaWanda Thomas, Congressional Liaison, at (214) 665-7466.

Sincerely,

for Ron Curry
Regional Administrator

Identical letter sent to: The Honorable John Boozman
United States Senate

The Honorable Steve Womack
U.S. House of Representatives

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The Honorable John Boozman
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Office of the Regional Administrator

August 13, 2013

The Honorable Steve Womack
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Womack:

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