

1 State of Arkansas
2 93rd General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2021
4

A Bill

SENATE BILL 536

5 By: Senator Irvin
6

For An Act To Be Entitled

8 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE BUFFALO RIVER CONSERVATION
9 COMMITTEE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
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Subtitle

11 TO ESTABLISH THE BUFFALO RIVER
12 CONSERVATION COMMITTEE.
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17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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19 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 15, Chapter 23, is amended to add an
20 additional subchapter to read as follows:

21 Subchapter 10 – Buffalo River Conservation Committee
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23 15-23-1001. Legislative findings.

24 The General Assembly finds that:

25 (1) The Buffalo National River holds distinction as the first
26 national river in the United States of America and is a vital landmark to the
27 people of the State of Arkansas and to the nation;

28 (2) The Buffalo National River is one of the state's and indeed
29 the nation's premier rivers and is a source of scenic beauty, a unique
30 habitat for local biota, an agricultural resource to the state as a whole,
31 and a preeminent tourism destination in the State of Arkansas;

32 (3) The State of Arkansas is committed to the protection and
33 preservation of this irreplaceable natural and cultural resource for all
34 future generations of Arkansans and for the many tourists the Buffalo
35 National River brings to the state;

36 (4) The State of Arkansas recognizes the valuable contributions



1 made by agricultural producers, the tourism industry, and the individual
2 landowners within the Buffalo River Watershed;

3 (5) There is an ongoing need for the state to partner with local
4 stakeholders to proactively manage the Buffalo River Watershed in order to
5 ensure the Buffalo National River is maintained to the highest level of water
6 quality;

7 (6) On September 30, 2016, the Beautiful Buffalo River Action
8 Committee was formed by directive from the Governor to more comprehensively
9 address conservation and environmental concerns in the Buffalo River
10 Watershed;

11 (7) The Beautiful Buffalo River Action Committee successfully
12 developed a watershed management plan and identified areas of need within the
13 watershed, laying the foundation for future partnership with local
14 stakeholders, federal partners, and other partners to leverage funding for
15 projects to improve the Buffalo River Watershed; and

16 (8) The establishment of the Buffalo River Conservation
17 Committee is necessary to establish measurable objectives and lead
18 partnership projects to benefit water quality and resource management in the
19 Buffalo River Watershed.

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21 15-23-1002. Buffalo River Conservation Committee.

22 (a) The Buffalo River Conservation Committee is created to establish
23 measurable objectives and lead partnership projects to benefit water quality
24 and resource management in the Buffalo River Watershed.

25 (b) The committee members shall be appointed by and serve at the
26 pleasure of the Governor.

27 (c) The committee shall be composed of the:

28 (1) Secretary of the Department of Energy and Environment or his
29 or her designee;

30 (2) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture or his or her
31 designee;

32 (3) Secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism
33 or his or her designee;

34 (4) Secretary of the Department of Health or his or her
35 designee;

36 (5) County judge of Newton County; and

1 (6) County judge of Searcy County.

2 (d) The chair of the committee shall be designated by the Governor.

3 (e) The committee shall:

4 (1) Work in cooperation with each member to identify
5 opportunities to leverage each member's respective department's unique
6 expertise, relationships, focus areas, and funding mechanisms in support of
7 the vitality of the Buffalo River Watershed;

8 (2) Conduct an annual review of the Buffalo River Watershed
9 Management Plan and include recommendations for updates of the plan and a
10 report on successes during the year, as identified by the committee, to be
11 submitted to the Governor;

12 (3)(A) Establish subcommittees to lead various aspects of
13 implementing the Buffalo River Watershed Management Plan.

14 (B) The subcommittees shall identify opportunities for
15 training, relationship building, and specific projects, all of which shall be
16 in service to preserving and enhancing water quality within the Buffalo River
17 Watershed;

18 (4) Further develop the concepts from the Buffalo River
19 Watershed Management Plan to incorporate additional tools and strategies as
20 necessary;

21 (5) Consciously consider and act on the most recent pertinent
22 available data related to water quality concerns and opportunities in the
23 Buffalo River Watershed;

24 (6) Create an emphasis on action items that engage local
25 stakeholders and landowners that have both a positive impact on water quality
26 and are beneficial for landowners within the Buffalo River Watershed; and

27 (7) Consider the continued sampling and analysis of water
28 quality data throughout the Buffalo River Watershed as vital for informing
29 the work of the committee and its member agencies and organizations.

30 (f) In establishing subcommittees under subdivision (e)(3) of this
31 section, the committee shall engage and include the following key
32 stakeholders:

33 (1) Local landowners;

34 (2) Conservation organizations;

35 (3) Environmental and technical experts;

36 (4) Representatives of the tourism industry;

1 (5) Local, county, and municipal officials; and
2 (6) Federal partners.

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5 **APPROVED: 4/20/21**
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