

Arkansas Governor Hutchinson Executive Order 19-14: Buffalo River Conservation Committee Established



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Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson signed Executive Order 19-14 (“EO”) on September 23rd establishing the Buffalo River Conservation Committee (“BRCC”).

Governor Hutchinson also announced that \$2 million in state and private funds will be allocated for conservation and water quality grants within the Buffalo Watershed.

The \$2 million in funding is provided from the Governor’s discretionary funds to the grant program. Such funds are subject to legislative approval. In addition, \$1 million is being provided from the Nature Conservancy and the Buffalo River Foundation.

Governor Hutchinson is quoted as stating:

We want the protection and enhancement of water quality in the Buffalo River Watershed to continue as a state-led effort. Now that the watershed management plan is in place, it is the right time to engage with stakeholders and landowners to start implementing projects that make a difference. The Buffalo National River is an irreplaceable resource, both for Arkansas and the nation. Protecting its quality and enhancing its value as a driver of economic development will require a unique cooperative effort. The Buffalo River Conservation Committee comprises the state departments with the most engagement in the watershed, and I am confident in their ability to connect with other engaged leaders to coordinate this effort.

The Governor named the following Cabinet Secretaries or their designates as committee members:

- Wes Ward, Secretary of Agriculture – Chair
- Becky Keogh, Secretary of Energy and Environment
- Stacy Hurst, Secretary of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism
- Dr. Nathaniel Smith, Secretary of Health

Subcommittees may be established and identified stakeholders include:

- Local landowners
- Conservation organizations
- Environmental and technical experts
- Representatives of the tourism industry
- Local county and municipal officials
- Federal partners

An additional function of the BRCC shall be an annual review of the Buffalo River Watershed Management Plan. This review will include recommendations for updates and identified successes.

A copy of the press release can be found [here](#) and the EO [here](#).