



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1500 Museum Road, Suite 105
Conway, Arkansas 72032



September 7, 1999

Colonel Daniel Krueger
District Engineer
Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
167 North Main Street, Suite 590
Memphis, TN 38103-1894

Dear Colonel Krueger:

Our agencies have recently become aware of a groundwater conservation proposal, entitled "Agricultural and Industrial Partnership for the Preservation of Arkansas Groundwater", developed by a coalition of Arkansas County Farmers and the International Paper Company. The proposed plan was submitted to the White River Irrigation Water Distribution District and the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission at a meeting in Stuttgart, Arkansas on August 9, 1999. Though not accepted by the Irrigation District, this plan has drawn a great deal of attention and support from local farmers and other conservationists.

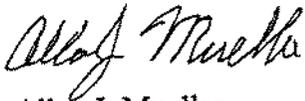
The preliminary water conservation plan developed by the group addresses groundwater conservation through a partnership between agriculture and industry. The group's three phase approach begins with a reduction in the amount of water withdrawn from the Sparta aquifer by the International Paper Company. It includes reduction in the amount of water withdrawn from the alluvial and Sparta aquifers by farmers through on-farm water recycling and conservation, and finally addresses potential diversion of surface water from both the Arkansas and White Rivers.

The proposal is conceptual and lacks detail, however, the ideas presented warrant further evaluation. We request, therefore, that the Corps include this proposal in the suite of alternatives for the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project currently being evaluated through the NEPA process. We recommend that this new alternative receive a complete evaluation of costs, benefits, and impacts.

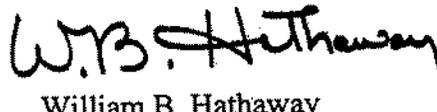
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The citizen involvement that generated this proposal demonstrates the level of interest in water resource development issues in eastern Arkansas. It is appropriate that we respond to this interest with a careful and complete consideration of all serious proposals.

Sincerely,



Allan J. Mueller
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Field Supervisor, Arkansas Field Office



William B. Hathaway
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 6, Director,
Water Quality Protection Division

c/Mr. Sam Hamilton, RD, FWS, Atlanta, GA
Mr. Greg Cook, RA, EPA, Dallas, TX
General Phillip Anderson, DE, USCE, Vicksburg, MS