

**WHITE RIVER****IRRIGATION  
DISTRICT****NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**IRRIGATION PROJECT WILL SAVE EAST ARKANSAS AQUIFERS**

Helena, Arkansas – During a speech before the Helena Rotary Club at the University of Arkansas Phillips County Campus, John C. Edwards, Executive Director of the White River Irrigation District, challenged a news release issued by American Rivers, claiming that the Grand Prairie Irrigation Demonstration Project will harm the White River. American Rivers is a non-profit river advocacy organization based in Washington, D. C.

The purposes of the Grand Prairie Project include increasing the use of the abundant surface water in the region, improving water conservation measures with the construction of water conserving reservoirs located on farms, and increasing habitat for waterfowl. Edwards noted “current water use of the Grand Prairie relies too much on ground water, which is getting more expensive to use each passing year, and not enough on surface water and conservation measures.” The result, Edwards stated, “is a lack of balance in utilizing our precious water resources. We are sacrificing our aquifers in the region while over 7 trillion gallons of water flow past Clarendon in the White River on average.” The water from the White River that would serve the Grand Prairie Project represents less than 1.8 % of the 7 trillion gallons, according to Edwards.

“American Rivers says it has programs that focus on water quality and quantity. If this is so, I will be urging them to provide the White River Irrigation District with credible scientific data and studies that supports their contention that the Grand Prairie Project will harm the White River,” Edwards stated. “Arkansas is nearing a crossroads as to how we are going to treat water resources. If we are not careful, and don’t balance our water resources, domestic drinking water, fish and wildlife, and the overall economy of Arkansas will suffer greatly,” Edwards predicted.

The Grand Prairie Demonstration Project is a partnership of federal, state, and local entities that have the support of elected officials, farmers, and business organizations, like the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce. Project sponsors are the White River Irrigation District, and the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission.