

ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION
Little Rock, Arkansas

MINUTE ORDER NO: _____	SUBJECT: <u>Resolution in Support of the Draft</u>
DATE PASSED: <u>October 16, 2014</u>	<u>Arkansas Water Plan Update</u>
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WHEREAS, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is authorized by Amendment 35 to the Arkansas Constitution to exercise control, management, restoration, conservation, and regulation of the birds, fish, game and wildlife resources of the State of Arkansas; **and**

WHEREAS, waters of the State provide natural habitat features vital for maintaining the health of fish and wildlife populations throughout the state; **and**

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Water Plan is the State’s comprehensive planning process for the conservation, development and protection of the State’s water resources; **and**

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission has statutory authority for planning and regulating the use of surface and groundwater resources, and has been charged pursuant to Act 749 of 2011 with revising and updating the 1990 Arkansas State Water Plan so as to promote the efficient use of water for the benefit of the people and wildlife of Arkansas; **and**

WHEREAS, healthy rivers are important not only for fish and wildlife, but also for the livelihood and well-being of all Arkansans who depend upon them.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED this 16th day of October 2014, that the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission hereby endorse the draft Arkansas Water Plan Update as an effective planning framework for addressing water management issues facing the State. The update provides a data-driven foundation for addressing water management issues to achieve the mission, vision and goals identified in the plan. Additionally, the plan’s implementation strategy, which utilizes a collaborative procedure involving stakeholder groups and an adaptive management process, underpinned by data and best available science, is commended. For these reasons, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission supports adoption of this plan by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission as a planning and water resource management framework with the following reservations:

1. The Commission believes that changing the statutory definition of “excess water” to remove the existing 25% restriction for non-riparian landowners should be considered only after completion of a thorough review of the technical and administrative components of governing how excess water is calculated and promulgated for non-riparian permitting. Arkansas has a diverse and rich biodiversity, and flow regimes that are necessary to sustain a healthy stream in one area of the state may not be appropriate in other regions of the state. Water allocation determinations should be transparent and based on best available science that recognizes the diversity of Arkansas’s stream types and ecological conditions. Additionally, the Commission believes that maintaining the existing 25% limitation will expedite making science-based determinations of excess waters in a water body and avoid unintended destruction of riparian rights.

2. Drought contingency planning (Issue 3.2) should specifically include a recommendation to examine in-stream flows necessary to sustain fish and wildlife as a critical component when determining water allocation for riparian and non-riparian users within a basin. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission supports full examination of both the economic effects and the natural resources at risk during times of water shortages.

FURTHERMORE, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission commends the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission for its open and collaborative approach throughout the process of updating the Arkansas Water Plan. The Commission is optimistic as it looks forward to working with the ANRC during all phases of implementing the Arkansas Water Plan.

	<u>STAFF APPROVAL</u>	<u>COMMISSION APPROVAL</u>	
Submitted by:	Mike Armstrong Deputy Director	Ron Duncan Chairman	Ford Overton Commissioner
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