CAPITOL OFFICE
State Capitol – Room 135AA
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101-6806

Tele – 573-751-2948
sonya.anderson@house.mo.gov

Sonya Murray Anderson

State Representative
District 131

July 25, 2013

Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: "Stopping Federal Land and Water Grabs: Protecting Property Rights from Washington, DC Edicts".

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee on Water and Power,

I would like to thank the Subcommittee on Water and Power and Chairman Tom McClintock for inviting me to testify before the Subcommittee on Water and Power oversight field hearing on "Stopping Federal Land and Water Grabs: Protecting Property Rights from Washington, DC Edicts".

I represent the 131st District in the Missouri House of Representatives which includes Northern Springfield and North-central Greene County. I am a life long resident of Northern Greene County where I grew up on a cattle ranch. My husband and I currently own and operate a business in the horse industry. My farm has been in my family since the 1800's and we have taken pride in keeping this land in our family for over 100 years.   Because of this, I understand the importance of private property rights.   Private property is essential to the exercise of individual rights. Without those rights, the very foundation of our freedom is at stake.   As a state representative, I pledged to fight for a limited government which also means fewer regulations. Growing up on a farm, I know how important it was to have the freedom to grow our own food and raise our own livestock without being burdened by unnecessary regulations.

When I first learned of the White River Watershed National Blueway in early June, I was concerned that this designation could be used as a platform for onerous new regulations. My concerns were shared by many.

In May of 2012, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar issued Secretary's Order #3321 establishing the National Blueway System as a result of President Obama's Great Outdoor Initiative. On January 9th of 2013, a MOU was signed between the Department of Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Army establishing the White River Watershed as the 2nd National Blueway. The White River National Blueway was nominated for this designation by 26 stakeholder groups. This designation would also span across 17.8 million acres, 60 counties, 21 in Missouri and 39 in Arkansas. This area is home to1.2 million people.

The Department of Interior rescinded the White River Watershed National Blueways designation effective July 3, 2013 but not before extensive outcry from Missouri and Arkansas residents in conjunction with their US representatives and senators who were opposed to this designation.

I am deeply concerned by the fact that while this "Blueways" designation affects over one million people in two states, this was not brought to the public's attention until just a few weeks ago. Not only was the pubic not informed, neither were the local, county, state or federal elected officials who represent this area.

Agriculture is Missouri's number one industry and I have grave concerns that this Blueways designation would cause additional and unnecessary burdens through regulation which could be detrimental to our farmer's livelihoods. This designation is seen as a direct threat to our property rights.

According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, The National Blueways System was designed to "reward" the work of stakeholder partnerships and provides federal support to increase collaboration among diverse partners. Part of their mission sites working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people whose dedicated professionals are committed to public service. However in the process, not only was the public not informed but neither were the local county or state officials as to the plans on intentions of this proposal. Where is the reward or collaboration for Missouri property owners?

What about state sovereignty in Missouri? The legal definition says it is the supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power by which an independent state is governed and from which all specific political powers are derived; the intentional independence of a state, combined with the right and power of regulating its internal affairs without foreign interference. Individual states do have internal sovereignty such as the power to regulate the acquisition and transfer of property within its borders. The sovereignty of a state is determined with reference to the U.S. Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land.

In conclusion, I believe the failure to seek approval, involvement, input or notification by local stakeholders to be a red flag and a direct violation of federal law. Citizens and property owners alike deserve accountability and transparency which have not been present from the start of this project. These are the citizens whose properties, farms and lives will be affected and they deserve to know all the facts. Agriculture Secretary Tim Vilsack said the designation would make funds and programs available to support conservative efforts along the river. He said this project would promote tourism, economic growth and job creation in watershed communities. Since the facts and information surrounding this project have not been forthcoming or shared with local stakeholders, I find it difficult for citizens to trust any of these statements or promises to be factual or truthful. I believe it is a danger to our rights and will give control of policies that will influence water rights and private property, using taxpayer dollars to fund it. For these reasons stated, I oppose the implementation of the White River Watershed National Blueway project.

Sincerely,

Rep. Sonya Murray Anderson
Missouri House of Representatives
District 131