



**CHEROKEE NATION**  
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**Sara Hill**

**Secretary of**  
**Natural Resources**

Director Becky Keogh  
Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality  
5301 Northshore Drive  
North Little Rock, AR 72118-5317

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Sara E. Hill, Secretary of Natural Resources  
Marty Matlock, Chair, Environmental Protection Commission  
Cherokee Nation  
Tahlequah, OK

Director Keogh,

We are writing to express concern about the wastewater discharge situation with the City of Bethel Heights, Arkansas. We have recently been made aware of significant problems with the Septic Tank Effluent Pump (STEP) system utilized to treat residential wastewater by the City of Bethel Heights. This system is designed and permitted for land application of treated wastewater, so no effluent enters our shared waters. However, it appears that over the past several years wastewater has been running off the infiltration fields from this STEP system and into surface waters. This wastewater has been documented to have very high fecal coliform counts, and likely has other undesirable water contaminants. The discharge from this system enters Puppy Creek, a tributary to the Illinois River. The history of non-compliance concerns with this STEP system give us grave concerns regarding the precedent this creates for similar systems in our shared watersheds. The Cherokee Nation has worked with communities in Northwest Arkansas for the past 20 years directly and indirectly to protect our shared watersheds, in particular the Illinois River.

We are requesting information on corrective actions and compliance strategies for this community's wastewater treatment system. The continued growth and development of Northwest Arkansas is only compatible with our common prosperity if our shared resources are

protected. We have made great progress together, and look forward to continued collaboration in managing our shared watersheds.

Best regards,



Sara E. Hill  
Secretary of Natural Resources  
Cherokee Nation



Marty Matlock  
Chair  
Cherokee Nation Environmental Protection Commission