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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 14, 2018

Arkansas and Oklahoma State Agencies Announce Agreement
on Illinois River, Commitment to Collaboration

NORTH LITTLE ROCK—Today, Arkansas and Oklahoma state agencies announced the completion of a Memorandum of Agreement committing the states to future collaboration in addressing water quality concerns related to the Illinois River.

The agreement—signed by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC), the Oklahoma Secretary of Energy and Environment, and the Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture—charts a path forward on science-based regulatory actions and permitting, and that jointly commits the parties to collaborative efforts in developing a watershed improvement plan. The parties also commit to coordinate in making data and other information about water quality improvements more readily available.

“For the past several months, ADEQ and ANRC have worked closely with their counterparts in Oklahoma to develop an innovative, state-based approach to address challenges in the Illinois River Watershed,” Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson said. “I applaud the efforts on both sides, and I believe this agreement will allow us to leverage our collective resources to greatly improve the water quality in the Illinois River for future generations.”

“Governor Hutchinson and I have worked together on many things, and I’m proud that our agencies have taken on this challenge and developed such a collaborative solution,” Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin said. “Recognizing the value of our water resources, we should all be working together to improve the beauty and quality of the Illinois River.”

“During the past few years, we have built a strong working relationship with our peers in Oklahoma. This agreement creates a lasting framework to facilitate cooperation to advance continuous improvements and protections of scenic waterways,” ADEQ Director Becky W. Keogh said. “This recognizes a positive outlook for growth and increased agricultural development in Arkansas and Oklahoma.”

“We appreciate the cooperation between Oklahoma and Arkansas as well as support from the Cherokee Nation, industry, communities, and environmental advocacy groups that make this agreement even better,” Oklahoma Secretary of Energy and Environment Michael Teague said. “The agreement supports growth for both states through working groups and a steering committee to ensure that cooperation continues and water quality improves.”

“It is important for us to recognize the progress that has been made in the Illinois River Watershed and to praise all who have taken part in that progress,” ANRC Executive Director Bruce Holland said. “It is also important to acknowledge the work of the study group and their findings to set the stage for progress yet to come. This agreement is

necessary and appropriate and makes it clear to all that we are committed to many more years of protecting and improving the water quality in the Illinois River Watershed.”

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