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October 15, 2015

Mr. Eric Gramlich
CERCLA/OPA NRDAR Section Chief
Missouri Department of Natural Resources,
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176

Subject: Comments on the proposed Southeast Missouri Ozarks Regional Restoration Plan

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today to express my opposition to the Southeast Missouri Ozarks Regional Restoration Plan (SMORRP) and specifically the attempt with this plan to acquire lands for "restoration" outside of the impact area and lack of transparency.

The proposal calls for acquiring 2,463 acres of land in Oregon County to be paid with money from a lawsuit the Southeast Missouri Lead Mining District filed against lead smelter ASARCO. The counties damaged by ASARCO are nowhere near Oregon County, and numerous projects within the impacted area of the Lead Belt would be much better suited to the purpose of the SMORRP.

Disappointingly, very little community input was sought on the public takeover of this land. Local, state, county, and city officials were not notified of plans or public meetings. No public meetings were held in Oregon County. Since I was made aware of this plan, I have been adamant that more meetings should be held and more public comment sought. The Department of Natural Resources did not make community input a priority.

The community does not believe that new lands would be managed any differently than the poorly managed lands already under that state's purview in Oregon County. The explanation for this mismanagement is consistently a lack of funds. Further, Oregon County is located in an impoverished area of the 8th Congressional District. Removing an additional 2,463 acres would reduce school and county tax revenue in an area that needs it the most.

Public trust has been violated because of the secretive nature of these proposals. Pushing this purchase through would do a disservice to the Oregon County community and the damaged counties being bypassed for funding and truly in need of repair. I urge you to rethink this proposal and genuinely seek input from the community that would be so gravely affected.

Sincerely,

Jason Smith
Member of Congress