

# Ouachita River Valley Association

## Needs and Support Requests

March 2020

The Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) is a non-profit organization that promotes development of water and land resources projects that are engineered and economically feasible, environmentally sustainable and publicly acceptable that enhance the general welfare of the people in the Ouachita River Basin in Arkansas, Louisiana and the Nation.

While the major focus is on operation, maintenance and completion of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project and associated infrastructure, the Association also supports economic development projects throughout the Basin.

Even though navigation represents a significant use of the river, there is a direct correlation between the decline in shipping tonnage and resources allocated to dredging, the removal of mud and silt to keep the Ouachita open and navigable. It's the proverbial which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Lack of dredging dollars has significantly impacted the commerce on the Ouachita resulting in the loss of commercial shipping. Likewise, the reduction of shipping on the river has generated a decline in dredging dollars. We've seen an overall decline in funding levels in recent years.

Other uses of the river include municipal water supply to residents of Monroe and Sterlington, Louisiana, and Camden, Arkansas. Along with municipal water supply is the supply of industrial water by multiple firms within the Ouachita River Valley. A fourth major use of the Ouachita River is for recreational purposes. A fifth use of the Ouachita River is for wastewater discharge.

Although the shipping tonnage on the Ouachita in recent years has exhibited a downward trend, the economic value from all uses of the river remains extremely high. The rivers' economic value generates nearly **\$5.7B** in annual economic activity, with commercial use returning roughly **\$1.2B** in income to households in Louisiana and Arkansas. In addition, all commercial use of the river is linked to nearly **21,000** full-time jobs for Louisiana and Arkansas residents. The economic value associated with tourism and recreation alone at Ouachita, DeGray, and Greeson Lakes is tremendous with more than one million visitors annually.

### **Louisiana Needs and Support**

- ✓ Fund the \$10.7M annual need to operate and maintain the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.
  - \$3.3M for dredging.
  - \$1.6M for routine maintenance of the waterway.
  - \$4M for lock operations.
  - \$1.8M for recreation.

- ✓ Allocate resources to complete ~\$10M in backlog maintenance.
- ✓ Support the funding and completion of a study to modify the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include bank stabilization as a project feature.
- ✓ The authorization to add the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee to the MR&T Project.
- ✓ The authorization of the water supply as a feature of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.
- ✓ Support the State of Louisiana with funding and the completion of a study of the Stack Island Chute as a potential solution to the Lake Providence Harbor sediment problem. (Construction funding from the State of Louisiana's Port Priority Program is expected in July 2020.) In addition, Congressman Ralph Abraham (representing Louisiana's Fifth Congressional District) announced recently that resources for dredging of the Lake Providence Harbor were identified in the Presidents' FY 21 budget.)

### **Arkansas Needs and Support**

- ✓ Fund the \$10.7M annual need to operate and maintain the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project as outlined above.
- ✓ Support the FY 20 additional resources necessary for backlog maintenance of the three Corps' Ouachita Basin lakes: Ouachita, DeGray, and Greeson. Fiscal Year 21 capability estimated at \$46M.
- ✓ The authorization of the water supply as a feature of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.
- ✓ Support \$2.3M additional capability funds to construct a new DeGray Lake field office.

### **Good News Updates**

On April 3, 2019, the Vicksburg District, US Army Corps of Engineers hosted a signing ceremony for two water storage agreements at DeGray Lake near Arkadelphia, Arkansas. The agreement with Central Arkansas Water is for supplying an estimated 100 million gallons a day of water to their customers. The second agreement, with the City of Hot Springs, Arkansas, is for supplying approximately 20 million gallons a day of water to the city.

The City of Hot Springs, Arkansas' \$110M Lake Ouachita water supply project is moving forward. The Corps' Vicksburg District has been engaged and responsive to the City's needs for the project. The timeline for completion of the intake structure, water transmission mains and water plant is 2023.