



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Oklahoma Field Office
7906 East 33rd St., Ste. 101
Tulsa, OK 74145



March 17, 2014

Honorable Representative Mac Thornberry
2329 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4313

Dear Representative Thornberry:

Thank you for your letter dated January 30, 2014 providing your comments on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) upcoming Environmental Impact Statement. This multi-year effort, which is now soliciting public input or “scoping,” will eventually result in broad-scale recommendations for management of Federal and Indian lands and minerals in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. The BLM appreciates your feedback and the opportunity to work with you and your staff during our planning process.

Your letter raised some issues regarding public domain lands in the vicinity of the Red River boundary between Texas and Oklahoma that I would like to address prior to the release of our formal “scoping report.” This report will soon be available to the public pursuant to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

At a number of public meetings in TX, OK, and KS, individuals and user groups have expressed interest in obtaining access for recreational purposes to the Federal land, or portions of it, along the 116 mile stretch of the river from its north fork to the 98th Meridian. Among the user groups are an equestrian trail riders association based in Amarillo, TX. Any discussion about active management of the area would eventually turn to the need for cadastral surveys of large segments of the river, to ascertain the boundary between Federal land and private land along the river’s southern bank in Texas.

The potential for any new surveys, as you are aware, has raised concerns among residents along the river’s edge in Texas, partly for fear that any new surveys would create cloud to their private property title. Let me assure you, first of all, that no new surveys are currently planned. In addition, there are no claims to Federal land south of the gradient bank of the river, and no claims to Federal land in the State of Texas as defined by multiple rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Our goals in the short term involve: 1) installing signs in the previously surveyed area of Federal land near the SH 79 bridge between Waurika, OK and Wichita Falls, TX, 2) planning and executing a day-long cleanup of the Federal land in that area to include volunteers, 3) assigning Federal law enforcement to periodically visit the area to see whether signs posting the boundary

between established Federal and private land are being respected, 4) working with the States of Oklahoma and Texas on the proposed bridge replacement that will require issuance of a Federal right-of-way, and 5) working with the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board to plan cleanup of relic oil field equipment dating back to the 1910s and 1920s, on Federal land in the State of Oklahoma that is north of Burkburnett, TX.

Prior to any decision to execute new cadastral surveys we would be in contact with your offices. It is likely that any such decision would be based on a review of geographic information systems and the potential overlay of public and private access points with sections of the river frontage that might be managed for public recreation.

We have met with one of your staff members previously and are currently attempting to arrange a larger meeting with your staff in Texas to better address these issues moving forward. If you would like to be included in those meetings, or to meet with me or my staff separately, feel free to contact me at (918) 621-4102 or by email at stryon@blm.gov.

I look forward to working with you and anyone from your staff to help resolve the long-standing issues relating to public land management along the Red River.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen G. Tryon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stephen G. Tryon
Field Manager

CC: New Mexico State Office, NM 090000