Exhibit No	<del></del>	
Issues: Applicant	. Qualifications.	Overview of

Utility Systems, Capital Structure, Tariffs and

Rates, Public Interest Witness: Josiah Cox

Type of Exhibit: Direct Testimony

Sponsoring Party: Confluence Rivers Utility

Operating Company, Inc

File Nos.: WA-2019-0299

Date: July 25, 2019

### **Missouri Public Service Commission**

**Direct Testimony** 

of

**Josiah Cox** 

On Behalf of

**Confluence Rivers Utility Operating Company, Inc** 

July 25, 2019

### **Table of Contents**

WITNESS INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE	3
QUALIFICATIONS	4
Confluence Rivers Utility Operating Company, Inc. ("Confluence Rivers")	4
SYSTEMS TO BE ACQUIRED	10
TARIFFS AND RATES	13
STAFF'S PROPOSED CONDITIONS	15
PUBLIC INTEREST	16

### DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JOSIAH COX CONFLUENCE RIVERS UTILITY OPERATING COMPANY, INC.

### 1 WITNESS INTRODUCTION

- 2 Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.
- 3 A. My name is Josiah Cox. My business address is 500 Northwest Plaza Drive,
- 4 Suite 500, St. Ann, Missouri, 63074.
- 5 Q. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION WITH CONFLUENCE RIVERS UTILITY
- 6 OPERATING COMPANY, INC. (CONFLUENCE RIVERS OR COMPANY)?
- 7 A. I hold the office of President of Confluence Rivers.
- 8 Q. PLEASE PROVIDE SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT
- 9 **CONFLUENCE RIVERS.**
- 10 A. Confluence Rivers is a Missouri corporation, active and in good standing with the
- 11 Missouri Secretary of State. Confluence Rivers' principal office and place of
- business is located at 500 Northwest Plaza Drive, Suite 500, St. Ann, Missouri,
- 13 63074.
- 14 Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
- 15 **EXPERIENCE.**
- 16 A. I received a Bachelor of Science with a major in Environmental Science from the
- 17 University of Kansas. Professionally, I have worked at the Kansas State
- Biological Survey, where I performed a wildlife habitat study. I then worked at a
- 19 civil engineering firm where I was involved in various facets of the land
- development process, including permitting, entitlement, civil design, project

management, and construction management. I focused mainly on the water and wastewater side of the civil engineering business and participated in every part of the civil business from waste-load allocation studies (now known as the anti-degradation processes), design, permitting, project management, and construction management. I also ran the firm's environmental consulting division and was the second private consultant to submit a water quality impact study in the state of Missouri in 2003. I joined the engineering firm's executive leadership team and helped run all the firm's operations.

Beginning in 2005, I raised money from a group of investors and formed a full-service civil engineering, environmental consulting, general contracting, and construction management firm. I served as the Chief Operating Officer, and finally, Chief Executive Officer. I obtained extensive experience with rural communities in every facet of the water and wastewater compliance process, including environmental assessment, permitting, design, construction, operation and community administration of the actual water and wastewater (sewerage) systems. The firm performed stream sampling and built waste-load allocation models to determine receiving water-body protective permittable effluent pollutant loads. It also performed full engineering design of multiple whole community wastewater and water infrastructure systems including wells, water distribution, water treatment, water storage, wastewater conveyance, and wastewater treatment plants and taken these designs through federal and state permitting processes in Missouri. The engineering firm also administered the

construction of these water and wastewater systems from green field site selection all the way through system startup and final engineering sign off.

During this time, I began the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at Washington University in St. Louis, from which I graduated in 2007.

In addition, starting in 2008, I took over the operations of an existing rural sewer district and I still operate a system managing the functioning, testing, and maintenance of the system. I also act as the administrator for this non-profit system performing all the billing, emergency response, accounts payable/accounts receivable, collections, budgeting, customer service, and public meetings required to service the community.

# 11 Q. DO YOU ALSO HAVE A POSITION AT CENTRAL STATES WATER 12 RESOURCES, INC.?

13 A. Yes. I have been the President of Central States Water Resources, Inc.
14 (CSWR), for approximately four and a half years.

#### 15 Q. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFLUENCE RIVERS TO CSWR?

A. Confluence Rivers is an affiliate of CSWR. A corporate organization chart illustrating the relationship is attached hereto as <u>Schedule JC-1</u>. Confluence Rivers is one of the "Missouri UOCs" identified on the chart. Later in my testimony I will discuss the role CSWR would play in Confluence Rivers' future utility operations if the Commission approves the Application in this case.

#### **PURPOSE**

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

21

22

#### Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?

1 A. The purpose of my testimony is: (1) to discuss Confluence Rivers' qualifications 2 to own and operate the water and sewer systems it seeks to acquire; (2) provide 3 an overview of the water and sewer systems Confluence Rivers seeks to acquire; (3) explain what rates and regulations Confluence Rivers seeks to initially use in 4 providing service; (4) explain Confluence Rivers' position as to the conditions and 5 6 actions proposed by the Commission Staff in its Staff Recommendation and 7 Memorandum; and, (5) explain why Confluence Rivers' acquisition of substantially all the water and sewer system assets of Port Perry Service 8 9 Company (Port Perry), including its Certificates of Convenience and Necessity 10 ("CCN"), is not detrimental to the public interest.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

11

12

19

### Confluence Rivers Utility Operating Company, Inc. ("Confluence Rivers")

#### 13 Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE CONFLUENCE RIVERS.

A. On February 14, 2019, in Commission File Nos. WM-2018-0116 and SM-2018-0117, the Commission granted Confluence Rivers CCNs to operate water and sewer utilities. Confluence Rivers is a "water corporation," a "sewer corporation," and a "public utility" as those terms are defined in Section 386.020, RSMo, and is subject to the jurisdiction and supervision of the Commission as provided by law.

#### Q. IS CONFLUENCE RIVERS A PART OF A LARGER ORGANIZATION?

A. Yes. CSWR, LLC (formerly known as First Round CSWR, LLC), is Confluence
Rivers' ultimate parent company. Central States Water Resources, Inc., is the
manager for CSWR, LLC. I commonly refer to the entire business organization
as a whole by using the name "Central States" or "CSWR."

#### Q. WHAT IS CSWR'S EXPERIENCE WITH WASTEWATER/SEWER SYSTEMS?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

A.

On the wastewater side of the business, CSWR has purchased 22 wastewater treatment plants with associated sewer pumping stations, gravity force mains, and gravity conveyance lines. CSWR-affiliated companies currently provide safe and reliable service to approximately 2,800 customers. In Missouri and Arkansas, CSWR-affiliated companies have designed, permitted, and completed construction, with MDNR approval, of approximately \$5.1 million of sanitary sewer investments since March of 2015. In Arkansas, affiliated companies have designed, permitted, and completed construction, with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality approval, of approximately \$2.2 million of sanitary sewer systems investments since October of 2017. All of these improvements include wastewater line repairs to remove infiltration and inflow, building sewer main extensions, the repair of multiple lift stations, the construction of lift stations, the closure of an existing environmentally distressed wastewater treatment plant, building two fully activated sludge plants, constructing moving bed bio-reactor plants, converting two failing wastewater treatment plants into sludge storage/flow equalization and treatment basins, converting failed mechanical systems to I-Fast systems, and constructing various other wastewater supporting improvements. In addition, CSWR has active acquisition cases, with the associated engineering/permitting, pending before the Tennessee Public Utility Commission for three systems, the Kentucky Public Service Commission for eight systems, and the Louisiana Public Service Commission for approximately 170 systems.

#### Q. WHAT IS CSWR'S EXPERIENCE WITH WATER SYSTEMS?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

A.

On the drinking water side of the business, CSWR-affiliated companies have purchased 13 drinking water systems in Missouri and Arkansas. CSWR-affiliated companies currently provide safe and reliable water service to approximately 2,900 customers. In Missouri and Arkansas, CSWR has designed, permitted, and completed construction, with MDNR approval, of approximately \$4.1 million of investments in drinking water systems since March 2015. These improvements include construction of three new groundwater storage tanks, construction of three sets of drinking water pressurization pump assemblies, drilling a deep water well, erecting two new well houses, closing two failed well houses, closing an exposed failed deep water drinking well, blasting/coating existing tankage, rehabilitating an existing impaired well house, closing a failing booster pump station house, replacement of over 750 meter pits with new meters, replacement of numerous existing water service lines, installing numerous isolation valve systems, installing multiple flush hydrants, repairing almost hundreds of leaks and repairing or building various other supporting drinking water system improvements.

In addition, CSWR has active acquisition cases, with associated design engineering/permitting, pending before the Louisiana Public Service Commission representing approximately 30 systems.

Q. WOULD CONFLUENCE RIVERS AND CSWR HAVE PERSONNEL

QUALIFIED TO PROVIDE SAFE AND ADEQUATE SERVICE IN THE

### SERVICE AREAS YOU PROPOSE TO ACQUIRE AND OPERATE IN THIS CASE?

Α.

A.

Yes, they would. CSWR is already providing those and other similar services for water and wastewater systems in Missouri and Arkansas. The level of experience and expertise CSWR currently provides affiliated systems in Missouri and Arkansas, and that it would bring to Confluence Rivers if the Application is approved, is not usually available to small systems like those at issue in this case. But CSWR's business model provides these assets to its affiliates and does so through the economies of scale that CSWR's centralized management structure can achieve, at a lower cost than would be the case if Confluence Rivers or a similarly-sized company had to acquire or provide such expertise and support on its own.

### Q. HAS THE ORGANIZATION TAKEN STEPS TO IMPROVE SERVICES AT THE SYSTEMS IT NOW OPERATES?

Yes. In addition to the capital improvements made on all the systems, the organization has built from scratch customer service systems at each Missouri utility it currently operates. Those systems provide benefits to customers and comply with the Commission's Chapter 13 rules. The systems include 24-hour emergency service phone lines for potential service issues, on-call emergency service contractor personnel, implementation of a computerized maintenance management system for wastewater and drinking water utility assets, real time remote monitoring to ensure service stability, customer dissemination of MDNR drinking water testing information, on-line bill-pay options, up-to-date website

bulletins about current service status, and service initiation or discontinuance
 procedures.

### 3 Q. DOES CONFLUENCE RIVERS HAVE THE TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO 4 OPERATE THE ASSETS IT PROPOSES TO PURCHASE?

Α.

Yes. We have experience in the design and operation of water and sewer systems. Confluence Rivers intends to utilize a contract operator for plant operations, utilizing the services of appropriately qualified and licensed utility system operators (for water and for sewer) ultimately supervised by me. The contract operator would undertake routine day-to-day inspections, checks, sampling, reporting, and meter reading for the water and sewer systems, as well as accomplish most system repairs and extraordinary operations tasks as needs arise, to address proper facility operations and customer service matters. All these activities would be tracked inside CSWR's computerized maintenance management system. Computerized maintenance monitoring also feeds in remote monitoring data from individual plants, which together with the maintenance data, integrate with a water information management system for all CSWR facilities.

# Q. DOES CONFLUENCE RIVERS HAVE THE FINANCIAL CAPACITY TO OPERATE THE ASSETS IT PROPOSES TO PURCHASE?

A. Yes. CSWR has been able to attract investment capital to construct and maintain facilities necessary to provide safe and reliable water and wastewater service. Additionally, attached as **Schedule JC-2C** is an adjusted balance sheet and income statement showing the results of the acquisition of properties

acquired by CSWR and its affiliates, which shows CSWR is a substantial company with the financial wherewithal to own and operate the systems at issue in this case. **Schedule JC-2C** has been identified as Confidential in accordance with Commission Rule 4 CSR 240-2.135(2)(A)(3) and (6), as it contains market specific information and information representing strategies employed in contract negotiations.

# 7 Q. DOES CONFLUENCE RIVERS HAVE THE MANAGERIAL CAPACITY TO 8 OPERATE THE ASSETS IT PROPOSES TO PURCHASE?

A.

Yes. Like routine facility operations, Confluence Rivers intends to utilize a contract billing agent and utilize an emergency answering service. The billing agent would be responsible for computing, printing, and sending monthly bills to customers, and then collecting payment. The billing agent would also have customer service staff that would be able to take and process customer inquiries pertaining to billing, make bill adjustments, and enter into payment plans within company guidelines, interact with the Commission's Staff in working with customer complaints, and manage new customer accounts and the closing of customer accounts. The contract billing agent would also be available to route service complaints and inquiries. In addition, I would also be personally available by telephone when severe emergencies arise. Confluence Rivers would comply with the Commission's rules and standards regarding the provision of water and sewer services.

Q. IF THE COMMISSION APPROVES THE APPLICATION, IS CONFLUENCE
RIVERS WILLING AND ABLE TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS NECESSARY TO

1		BRING THE PORT PERRY WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS UP TO
2		APPLICABLE COMMISSION STANDARDS, MAINTAIN COMPLIANCE, AND
3		RECTIFY ANY EXISTING ISSUES WITH MDNR REGULATIONS?
4	A.	Yes. If the Commission grants Confluence Rivers the authority it seeks in the
5		Application, Confluence Rivers and CSWR have access to adequate capital and
6		are willing and able to invest the capital necessary to bring the water and
7		wastewater systems at issue in this case up to standard and maintain
8		compliance with applicable MDNR regulations.
9	Q.	HOW DOES CONFLUENCE RIVERS PLAN TO FINANCE THE PURCHASE
10		OF THE SYSTEMS TO BE ACQUIRED AND THE MAKING OF THE
11		NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS?
12	A.	Confluence Rivers plans to fund the purchase using equity provided by
13		Confluence Rivers' parent company, CSWR, LLC. Confluence Rivers has not
14		yet determined whether improvements at each system would be funded by
15		equity, debt, or a combination of both. The terms of any debt financing that
16		Confluence Rivers would enter into would be subject to the approval of the
17		Commission.
18		SYSTEMS TO BE ACQUIRED
19	Q.	WHAT DOES CONFLUENCE RIVERS PROPOSE IN THIS MATTER?
20 /	A.	Confluence Rivers proposes to acquire substantially all the water and sewer
21		system assets of Port Perry, including its CCNs.
22	Q.	WHAT IS THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE SYSTEMS TO BE

23

**ACQUIRED?** 

A. All the systems lack the financial, technical, and/or managerial capacity needed to provide safe and reliable water or sewer service. In addition to financial problems, the systems have distinct operational problems. I provide a general overview of the systems and their state of operation. The direct testimony of Todd Thomas will address the conditions of the systems and Confluence Rivers' proposed improvements to those systems in greater detail.

### 7 Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE PORT PERRY SERVICE COMPANY, LLC

**AGREEMENT?** 

A.

On May 18, 1973, Port Perry was granted a CCN to provide water service in Case No. 17681. Then on June 7, 1973, Port Perry was granted a CCN to provide wastewater service in Case No. 17642. Port Perry is located near Perryville, Perry County, Missouri, and according to its most recent annual report currently serves approximately 370 water customers and 248 wastewater customers. The service area is shown on the map in **Schedule JC-3**, and the legal description of the service area is provided in **Schedule JC-4**. Due to their lack of utility experience and inability to make the investments necessary to upgrade its systems, Port Perry has concluded it is in the best interest of the Company and its customers to sell the systems to a qualified operator.

### Q. HAS CSWR AND PORT PERRY EXECUTED AN ASSET PURCHASE

A. Yes. The Agreement For Sale of Utility System ("Asset Purchase Agreement") is attached as Schedule JC-5C and has been identified as Confidential in accordance with Commission Rule 4 CSR 240-2.135(2)(A)(3) and (6), as it contains market specific information and information representing strategies

employed in contract negotiations. Pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement, CSWR proposes to purchase substantially all the water and sewer assets of Port Perry as specifically described in the agreement and under the terms and provisions further described in the agreement. Such assets include the Port Perry CCNs.

A.

Section 17 of the Asset Purchase Agreement authorizes CSWR to assign its rights under the agreement to an affiliate. CWSR and Confluence Rivers have executed an Assignment of Rights, attached as **Schedule JC-6**, that at closing would transfer to Confluence Rivers all CSWR's rights, title, and interests in Port Perry's assets.

## Q. PLEASE DISCUSS THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE PORT PERRY SYSTEMS TO BE ACQUIRED.

The water system has two wells. Well #1 is connected to the chlorine disinfection system that directly enters the water supply system, which does not allow for minimum disinfection contact time before the drinking water goes into the distribution system to consumers. Well #2 is operated as an emergency well and is not connected to the disinfection system. The well house, internal electrical systems, and internal piping are aged and in need of immediate repairs. The water system has one 223,000-gallon ground storage tank and three 800-gallon hydropneumatics tanks to normalize water pressure in the distribution system. Confluence Rivers proposes to invest in upgrades to maintain compliance with Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) drinking water regulations, maintain safe and adequate service and preserve the normal

life of the utility assets. The direct testimony of Todd Thomas discusses the state of the water system in more detail and the projected cost of the proposed improvements.

Port Perry's wastewater treatment facility is a no-discharge system utilizing land irrigation for the effluent. The collection system consists of both pressure sewers and gravity sewers. There are issues with the land application system that preclude it from correctly applying waste. The system also lacks adequate security fencing. Confluence Rivers proposes to invest in upgrades to maintain compliance with MDNR clean water regulations, maintain safe and adequate service and preserve the normal life of the utility assets. The direct testimony of Todd Thomas discusses the state of the wastewater system in more detail and the projected cost of the proposed improvements.

Additionally, most of the existing utility easements have major clouding or impairments due to numerous changes of ownership control without the proper recording of transfers.

### TARIFFS AND RATES

- 17 Q. IF THE APPLICATION IS APPROVED, WHAT RATES DOES CONFLUENCE
  18 RIVERS REQUEST TO UTILIZE FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICE?
- A. Confluence Rivers proposes to use the existing rates for Port Perry customers approved by the Commission in 2002.
- The current water rates for Port Perry are as follows:
- Monthly Minimum: (Includes 2,000 gallons of water)
  For Service through a 5/8" meter \$ 13.23

For Service through a 3/4" meter \$ 16.26

1 2 3 4 5		For Service through a 1" meter For Service through a 1 1/2" meter For Service through a 2" meter For Service through a 3" meter For Service through a 4" meter	\$ 22.3 \$ 37.4 \$ 55.6 \$ 98.1 \$158.8	9 9 6	
6 7		All usage over 2,000 gallons (per 1,000 gallons)	\$ 3.5	8	
8		Any applicable federal, state, or local taxes co	mputed	on a billing ba	sis would be
9		added as a separate item in each bill.			
10		The current sewer rates for Port Perry are as for	ollows:		
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18		Monthly Bill Full-time Residential Sites Part-time Residential Sites Part-time Residential Trailer or Camper Site with sewer service Bathhouse and swimming pool complex Camper dumping station (each)  Any applicable federal, state, or local taxes con	e	\$18.94 per mo \$14.21 per mo \$14.21 per mo \$37.37 per mo \$37.37 per mo	onth onth onth onth
20		added as a separate item in each bill.			
21	Q.	WOULD THOSE RATES EVENTUALLY REQ	UIRE A	DJUSTMENT	?
22	A.	Yes. The Commission approved these rates i	n 2002.	The current i	rates for Port
23		Perry do not reflect the current cost of p	roviding	service. Add	ditionally, as
24		indicated above, these systems require inves	tment th	hat would like	ly result in a
25		rate increase request of some amount a	fter tho	se additions	have been
26		completed. However, any such increase wou	ıld requ	ire a separate	e, future rate
27		case for the purpose of considering such factor	rs.		

1	Q.	IF THE APPLICATION IS APPROVED, WHAT RULES AND REGULATIONS
2		DOES CONFLUENCE RIVERS PLAN TO UTILIZE FOR THE PROVISION OF
3		SERVICE?
4	A.	Confluence Rivers proposes to adopt the rules and regulations currently
5		approved for Port Perry.
6		STAFF'S PROPOSED CONDITIONS
7	Q.	STAFF FILED A RECOMMENDATION IN REGARD TO THE APPLICATION.
8		HAVE YOU REVIEWED THE STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION?
9	A.	Yes. The Staff recommends approval of the transfer of assets of Port Perry and
10		transfers of the relevant CCNs to Confluence Rivers with the 11 conditions or
11		actions contained on pages 8 and 9 of Staff's Memorandum.
12	Q.	ARE STAFF'S RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OR ACTIONS ACCEPTABLE
13		TO CONFLUENCE RIVERS?
14	A.	Confluence Rivers disagrees only with the Staff's determination of the net book
15		value of assets proposed to be purchased from Port Perry in this case. In Staff's
16		Memorandum, Staff determined the net book value of assets is approximately
17		\$58,133.00 as of March 31, 2019, and proposes this net book value be used as
18		the starting point for determination of the rate base value in the first rate case for
19		the Port Perry systems. However, footnote 5 on page 7 of Staff's Memorandum
20		states:
21 22 23 24 25		the rate base value as determined by Staff for this case is for informational purposes only, and reflects only Staff's determination based on its review of this case. In subsequent proceedings, the rate base determination value identified by Staff is subject to change based on positions of other parties, or by receipt of

additional information not available during Staff's review of this case.

Α.

Staff's statement appears to reserve the right of parties to argue a different rate base value in subsequent proceedings. With Confluence Rivers' disagreement with Staff's determination of the net book value noted, along with the parties' reservation of rights to argue a different rate base value in subsequent proceedings, Staff's Recommendation is acceptable to Confluence Rivers.

### PUBLIC INTEREST

### 10 Q. HOW DO YOU BELIEVE THE PROPOSED TRANSACTIONS RELATE TO THE

### **PUBLIC INTEREST?**

As my testimony explains, the proposed acquisition of the specified assets of Port Perry and the related transactions are not detrimental to the public interest of the State of Missouri. The assets would be acquired by Confluence Rivers and remain subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission. Confluence Rivers is fully qualified, in all respects, to own and operate the systems to be acquired and to otherwise provide safe and adequate service – something that is not present at the current time.

#### 19 Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?

20 A. Yes, it does.

### **AFFIDAVIT**

28 - 200a - 100a - 100a

STATE OF MISSOURI ) ss COUNTY OF St. Loui )	
COUNTY OF <u>Je. Wall</u> )	
I, Josiah Cox, state that I am the Presider Company, Inc.; that the Direct Testimony and some or under my direction and supervision; and, are true to the best of my knowledge, information	that the answers to the questions posed therein
Subscribed and sworn to before me this	22 day of July 2019
	Senda Caves  otary Public
My Commission Expires: $O( 3 )$ Zo $2/$ (SEAL)	BRENDA EAVES Notary Public, Notary Seal State of Missouri St Charles County Commission # 13443468 My Commission Expires 01-31-2021