

Missouri Wilderness Coalition

Newsletter #5

July 2007

New endorsements continue to mount up for the MWC Wilderness Proposal. Since our June Newsletter, support has come from Alpine Shop, Audubon Missouri, Heartwood, L-A-D Foundation, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Missouri Forest Alliance, Missouri Park and Recreation Association, Missouri Whitewater Association, and Ozark Greenways of Springfield, for a total of 17 organizations (see attached list). In addition, we are very pleased and grateful to report that Dr. Peter Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden and Missouri's most prestigious biologist, has also supported the proposal with the attached letter.

During the middle of the week of June 25, John Karel was in Washington D.C. on business, and had the opportunity to visit the offices of Senators Kit Bond and Claire McCaskill, and also representative Russ Carnahan. John was guided in these visits by longtime Coalition supporter Rindy O'Brien, who as legislative aide to Senator Tom Eagleton played a key role in securing passage of the first generation of Missouri Wilderness bills in the 1970's and 80's. Rindy lives in Washington and has retained a very strong interest in public land issues, especially for her native state of Missouri, and worked for a number of years at The Wilderness Society. Rindy provided hospitality and wise counsel on these visits to our delegation – thanks again Rindy!

Senator Bond: We met with the Senator's aide, John Stody, and enjoyed a brief but very cordial personal hello from the Senator. John S. indicated that the Senator supported our proposal and would like to work with us. He nevertheless needs additional factual data, which we promised to provide and which will be very helpful in any event as the campaign progresses. We emphasized our hope that the Missouri proposal could move through Congress as a consensus of the whole delegation.

Senator McCaskill: We met with the Senator's aide, Nichole Distefano, who indicated that she felt confident that Senator McCaskill could and would support our proposal. She expressed some concern that the administration might oppose it, and we responded that this was why it was so important that our bill have bipartisan support. Nichole agreed, pointing out how the whole delegation had united to oppose the sale of National Forest lands in Missouri. That unity is the very model we hope to develop for our Wilderness bill.

Representative Russ Carnahan: This is John's own Congressman, and Russ graciously spent personal time with us, along with several of his staff. Russ enthusiastically supports our efforts, and will try to help however he can. He recognizes that we need to first develop support in the districts where the areas are located. He reports that the personal relationships among the Missouri delegation are generally strong, and that he will help to build the consensus we seek.

We were enormously encouraged by these visits. Our reception was very cordial, and we were urged to develop further information – always a good sign.

Note: We obviously need to visit the other delegation offices as well, and will do so, but on this brief first trip we wanted to focus on the Senators, and John's own Congressman. When we visit Representatives Emerson, Blunt, and Hulshoff, the teams should be led by constituents from those districts.

The strategy for developing those teams will be a key part of our agenda on July 21, when we gather in Jefferson City for our strategy meeting. Responses have been coming into the Conservation Federation offices, and we anticipate a good turnout. Call 1-800-575-2322 right away if you wish to attend. Thanks again to Dave Murphy and his staff for their key role in setting up this meeting.

In addition to all the people who have been so generous with their contributions of time and expertise, we would like to extend our gratitude to Karen Haller, Joe Krutzsch, John Roth, and Steve Coates for making financial contributions to MWC, direct and indirect, in the past month.

Hope you all are enjoying the summer, and that we have the opportunity to work with you personally as this campaign moves forward.

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P.S. John's D.C. trip reminded all of us of a key factor in the long term success of our efforts. As the late Ernie Dickerman once said, we cannot force Congress to do anything, but if we make it clear, with courtesy and persistence, that this issue will not be concluded until the legislation is passed, Congress will eventually move in our direction, especially when the goal is such a good one for everybody.

The Missouri Wilderness Coalition's 2007 Proposal For Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas has been endorsed by the following organizations:

Alpine Shop
Audubon Missouri
Cedar Creek Landowners
Columbia Audubon Society
Conservation Federation of Missouri
East Ozarks Audubon Society
Heartwood
L-A-D Foundation
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Missouri Forest Alliance
Missouri Park and Recreation Association
Missouri Parks Association
Missouri Whitewater Association
Missouri Wilderness Coalition
Ozark Greenways of Springfield
Sierra Club - Missouri Chapter
St. Louis Audubon Society