

Missouri Wilderness Coalition

Newsletter #7

November 2007

There has been a great deal of wilderness activity since we last wrote and which we have been anxious to report. Much that has happened has been very positive; there has also been recent media coverage that unfortunately has disappointed us, but, more on that below. Of course this means we all have work to do. Everyone must help make the voice for wilderness even stronger.

FIRST, ALL OF THE GOOD NEWS

MWC Affiliates. Since our last newsletter, six new organizations have endorsed the proposal, bringing our total number now to 25, as per the attached list. Welcome aboard to Greater Ozarks Audubon Society, Ozark Wilderness Waterways Club, Republicans For Environmental Protection (REP), Springfield Plateau Master Naturalists, St. Louis Open Space Council, and Webster Groves Nature Study Society.

We'd also like to thank The Ozark Society, Duane and Judy Woltjen, Ann Eggebrecht, and Caroline Pufalt for their financial contributions made since the last newsletter.

Missouri Conservation Federation publishes Missouri wilderness article. This summer the Missouri Conservation Federation's *Missouri Wildlife* newsletter ran an article by Scott and John on the Missouri wilderness proposal. This story in *Missouri Wildlife* reached thousands across the state. You may recall that the Conservation Federation, Missouri's largest conservation organization, passed a resolution supporting the wilderness proposal this past winter at their annual gathering at Lake of the Ozarks. Their Executive Director, Dave Murphy, is personally committed to the campaign, and their organization can play a key role in spreading the word about this issue, especially in delivering our message to the Missouri Congressional delegation.

Missouri Sierran and Alert articles. The July-September issue of the Sierra Club's *Missouri Sierran* ran a front-page story on the Missouri Wilderness Proposal, with pictures, and authored by long-time conservationist and wilderness booster, Caroline Pufalt.

In the Fall issue of Missouri Coalition for the Environment's *The Alert*, Executive Director, Kat Logan Smith's column featured the wilderness proposal. That same issue carried another story by Coalition staffer Meghan McGuire on Bell Mountain Wilderness.

2007 Missouri Trails Summit. For the past several years lots of folks interested in Missouri trails have gathered to converse about constructing, maintaining, enjoying, and just knowing more about trail opportunities here in Missouri. Sponsored by the Missouri

Park and Recreation Association (one of the growing group of organizations endorsing the wilderness proposal), this year's meeting was in St. Louis, October 24-26.

Wilderness is an important trail resource. The Missouri Wilderness Coalition presented one of the concurrent sessions. It was an hour-long program detailing the history of the current proposal, each area, and what citizens can do to help get the good word out and support for our Missouri areas to each member of our Missouri Congressional delegation. The interest was high, there were many good questions, and it has already resulted in good follow-up on several fronts.

River Hills Traveler. This is an outdoor newspaper, widely distributed across southeastern Missouri. The cover article in the latest issue by writer Bill Cooper reflects a hunter's perspective about wilderness. In 'Successful Deer Hunt in the Irish Wilderness' Cooper highlights the space, the wild character, and the roadless qualities that are so important, and that can be found only in a wilderness setting.

Here are excerpts from that article:

"Deer hunting one of southern Missouri's vast wilderness areas has long been on my list of outdoor adventures to do.....hunting in the Irish Wilderness proved to be an adventure that my wife, Dian, and I will long remember. ...The Irish carries an aura of mysticism that makes it attractive to the adventure seeking outdoorsman."

HOT OFF THE PRESS! Congratulations, and special thanks to Jim Scheff for his many hours of hard work, writing, organizing, and assembling an excellent report all about Missouri Wilderness. This 16-page *Wilderness for Missouri* is in newspaper tabloid format and it provides easy-to-read information on each of the seven endangered areas. With its many photographs, great text, and maps it really helps to tell our story. Several have contributed in various ways to make this possible, but Jim has done the lion's share. We have ten thousand copies in print, and distribution has already begun. Call us if you need some, or just need more!

SOME DISAPPOINTING NEWS....AND HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Recent Newspaper Coverage. The Sunday November 11 Post-Dispatch carried an article about our seven areas. It was front page coverage and certainly served to get the idea of wilderness before the public. Unfortunately that piece seemed to raise more questions than it was able to answer, due in large part to misinformation and perhaps poor editing or poor fact checking. For example:

- The article indicated that these seven areas remain protected by the Forest Service. Even before the management plan was adopted, Lower Rock Creek, one of the most beloved of the seven areas, was threatened by plans to cut, burn, and bulldoze roads (Lower Rock Creek is clearly threatened!). Lack of clear management direction also left small but significant road-building damage at

Smith Creek. The strongest and best protection will come from their designation as Wilderness.

- Forest Service staff indicated in the article that these were not special places and that roads and buildings were too common. Anyone who has visited these areas knows that is not the case; they have been visited, enjoyed, and loved by thousands for decades and had been classified by the Forest Service since 1985 as semi-primitive, non-motorized, and as “Sensitive Areas”.
- A reader might get the impression that 50,000 acres is too much. In the context of the nearly 1.5 million acres of Mark Twain National Forest, this Wilderness proposal, even added to our existing areas, would bring the total Mark Twain Wilderness to less than 7.3% of the Forest. Our proposal is very, very modest and reasonable.
- The Columbia newspaper picked up the story, and included a typing error that left the impression these areas would be closed to hunting if designated as Wilderness. This was simply a huge mistake; the record needs to be corrected.

Other articles have appeared in Springfield, Cape Girardeau, and Poplar Bluff.

Just yesterday we received news that Representatives Jo Ann Emerson and Roy Blunt have issued a joint press release indicating they do not support the wilderness effort. While very disappointing indeed, what this really means is that at this early date they have not yet heard from pro-wilderness residents from their districts. Our elected officials surely will want to hear from their constituents on both sides of this issue.

Yes, the work at hand is substantial. We will need to summon determined, focused, and ongoing effort. We must speak up and out. We already know that almost all reasonable folks who fully understand this proposal support it. Our job is to spread that understanding, to the Missouri people, and also to our Congressional Delegation.

We have good tools at hand, we have exceptional areas to protect, and we have good companions with whom to work. Enjoy your Thanksgiving, and then let's get to work.

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ENDORSEMENTS

- 1) Alpine Shop
- 2) Audubon Missouri
- 3) Cedar Creek Landowners
- 4) Columbia Audubon Society
- 5) Conservation Federation of Missouri
- 6) East Ozarks Audubon Society
- 7) Greater Ozarks Audubon Society
- 8) Heartwood
- 9) L-A-D Foundation
- 10) Missouri Coalition for the Environment
- 11) Missouri Forest Alliance
- 12) Missouri Park and Recreation Association
- 13) Missouri Parks Association
- 14) Missouri Whitewater Association
- 15) Missouri Wilderness Coalition
- 16) Ozark Greenways of Springfield
- 17) Ozark Mountain Paddlers
- 18) Ozark Society
- 19) Ozark Wilderness Waterways Club
- 20) Republicans For Environmental Protection (REP)
- 21) Sierra Club - Missouri Chapter
- 22) Springfield Plateau Master Naturalists
- 23) St. Louis Audubon Society
- 24) St. Louis Open Space Council
- 25) Webster Groves Nature Study Society