

From: Scott Merritt [merritt@htc.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2006 9:05 AM
To: 'comments-eastern-mark-twain-potosi@fs.fed.us'
Subject: Project #50616 2006 Tornado Salvage Project Potosi/Fredericktown Ranger District

Dear Tom McGuire,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2006 Tornado Salvage Project. The Lower Rock Creek area (LRC) is one of the most important primitive, wild landscapes in the St. Francois Mountains, and indeed all of the Ozark area. It is a treasure to the Forest, the citizens of Missouri, and to the Nation.

Missouri Wilderness Coalition supports active management of our wildlands and Wilderness Areas when property and/or human life is seriously jeopardized by the forces of nature. However, we strongly feel that any such management in these areas needs to be minimal, and carried out only for safety concerns and property protection.

Missouri Wilderness Coalition does not support the 2006 Tornado Salvage Project in its current form for the following reasons:

- 1.. The Forest Service should employ only the minimal management necessary to protect the private property affected by the tornado damage, which is limited to clearing a 250 foot buffer around the property owner's cabin. 177 acres of salvage logging is not required to protect this single piece of property, and the owner's own salvage logging may be sufficient enough to preclude any further involvement by MTNF.

- 2.. A tornado, devastating though it may be, is a natural and important part of the greater ecological process that shapes the Ozarks. In Mark Twain National Forest, we should have areas set aside where we can observe and monitor these natural processes and disturbances as they play out over time. Lower Rock Creek, being one of the Ozarks' most significant wildlands, is exactly the kind of place where we should allow this biological drama to unfold.

Due to Lower Rock Creek's decades-old history as a Mark Twain National Forest Special Area; the outpouring of public comment calling for preservation of LRC during the 2005 Planning process; and the National significance of this rare, wild landscape, Missouri Wilderness Coalition feels that this project should be dropped in its entirety, or re-scoped to only include a very small amount of tornado debris cleanup to protect the private property in question.

Sincerely,