

MISSOURI OZARK TRAIL COUNCIL MEETING

March 20, 2004

MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

PARTICIPANTS

Jessica Terrell, Dept. of Natural Resources
Teresa Kight, Dept. of Conservation
John Roth, Ozark Trail Association (OTA)
Nancy Feakes, U.S. Forest Service
L. Gail Gartside, Conservation Federation of Missouri
Marsha Copeland, Show-Me MO Back Country Horsemen
Bruce Linders, American Youth Hostels/OTA
Jim McInroe, American Youth Hostels
Bob Gestel, Sierra Club/OTA
Paul Stupperich, Sierra Club

Mike Bollinger, Sierra Club
Wayne Miller, Sierra Club
Dennis Hogan, St. Louis County Parks
and the Meramec Greenway
Wilmer Scott, U.S. Forest Service
Greg Echele, OTA/Sierra Club
Jeff Goetter, OTA
Steve Coates, OTA
Lisa Hollenbeck, OTA/Sierra Club
Pat O'Driscoll, Sierra Club

OCTOBER 25, 2003 MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the draft meeting minutes were distributed. Meeting minutes distribution will change starting with this meeting. Draft minutes will be compiled shortly after the meeting and distributed via email to attendees. Attendees will have until the next meeting to submit changes. At the next meeting, the council will approve the minutes, after which Doug Eiken will sign them for the official file. The revised, approved minutes will then be distributed to the council.

Changes made to the 10-25-03 minutes include the addition of the Mingo Saddle Club's OT-related activities and deletion of the words "and biking" from two sections. A suggestion was made to save "special interests" discussions until the end of the meeting, after all agenda items have been adequately covered. A motion was made (Roth) and seconded (Gartside) to approve the minute as amended. All were in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

Ozark Trail Brochure - The new Ozark Trail brochure has not yet been printed. However, it will definitely be out later this spring, and a mock-up version will be sent to the council before it goes to final print. Contact Jessica to obtain copies of the brochure once it is printed. This first printing will be distributed at no cost to the agencies, due to grant funding. If demand is high, we may have to ration the first batch to ensure wide distribution until a second batch can be printed. Agencies will be notified of the cost per copy if they would like to order more copies than grant funding will provide. This could help to lower the cost per copy. A photo submitted by Bruce (of a gray tree frog perched on an OT blaze) will be scanned for possible inclusion in the new brochure.

Sierra Club Recommendations – At the close of the last meeting, council members were asked to provide written responses to the recommendations (to Jessica) for compilation and distribution to the council, as well as for possible group discussion at a later date. To this date, only DNR and MDC have provided comments. The DNR comments will be distributed to the council at some point after the meeting. Concerns were expressed (Gartside) that the council cannot determine policy and should therefore not respond to the recommendations. A response was given (Terrell) that we are not determining policy, but using the council as a forum to discuss and understand differing agency policies. Mike Bollinger stated that he was expecting feedback from individual agencies and groups and that the council has a role in presentation of issues relating to the Ozark Trail. He further stated that, for instance, if the OT council can't agree to complete the whole trail (their first recommendation), then who will? There is value in finding common ground and building on it, especially considering the history of the council. Mike asked that we consider talking about the recommendations on one level, then separately making a decision as to what we as a council would like to do with them. It was decided that reminders would be provided to the council (by Jessica) to prompt feedback to the Sierra Club. These minutes serve as the first reminder. John Roth will distribute copies of the recommendations at his quarterly board meeting for the OTA, at which time they will comment on the document. The minutes were approved as amended.

National Park Service Clarification Statement

Martha Ruhe presented a letter to the council from Noel Poe (Supt., OSNR) that identifies uses permitted on the Ozark Trail that travels through the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. This letter was in response to a previous conversation between Superintendent Noel Poe and Marcia Copeland of the Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen, whereby Marcia was informed that the Current River Section of the OT was open to equestrian use. The following is a portion of the letter (entire text to be included with all hard copies of the minutes). *"Equestrian use is prohibited on the Current River Section of the Ozark Trail within the park boundary. While the park supports equestrian use on designated trails within the park boundary, a decision was made in the 1991 Roads and Trails Study that the Ozark Trail was open for hiking use only. It appears from the information in the files and the memory of long-term staff that this decision was made because once the trail leaves the park boundary it crosses land ownership where horse are prohibited. It does not make sense to have a trail start as being open for horses and once the rider reaches a certain ownership boundary to have the trail closed to horses, unless there is a return loop or access to another trail open to horse use. I apologize if I made the wrong statements or there were some miscommunications on this issue. The park is in the process of determining what trails and traces within the park are*

appropriate for horseback use. This designation will be one issue addressed in the upcoming General Management Plan revision that is scheduled to begin in 2005."

STATUS REPORTS

Department of Natural Resources

- The Missouri Trail Summit will be held October 7-9, 2004 at the ARC in Columbia. The MPRA will be providing written flyers soon. Additional information will be given to any interested individuals after the meeting.
- Trail maintenance has been completed on the entire Taum Sauk Section in the last month. There is an extensive effort to work on the burned area on Proffit Mountain that continues to give the park trouble from downed trees. Arrival of two new ATV's soon will help park staff to better reach some of these areas for maintenance purposes.
- Missing Masterpieces Survey – an extensive survey that asks what additional representation is needed in the state park system. Certain groups are being targeted to complete this survey, hence the request to the council. The survey indicates the current criteria used to decide what should be added to the park system, and asks if it should be changed and if so, how. Copies were made available at the meeting, and an online version is available at <http://www.mostateparks.com/survey/index.html>.

Ozark Highlands Trail (Duane Woltjen)

Jessica gave the OHT report and mentioned briefly some items. The report in its entirety is listed below:

- The Ozark National Forest is expected to begin distribution of a color Recreation Opportunity Guide for the Ozark Highlands Trail, Sylamore Section later this month. This brochure will have a contour map showing the trail, mile markers, trailheads, and 5, 000 meter UTM/UPS grid lines (not 1,000 meters because of the small scale of the map).
- Tim Ernst, President of the Ozark Highlands Trail Association, has updated the website trail description and general map to now include the entire length of the Sylamore Section. Go to www.hikerarkansas.com, then click on Ozark Highlands Trail Association, then on the trail update.
- The National Park Service has closed the comment period on their EA for extending the Ozark Highlands Trail from the present terminus at Buffalo River at Hwy 65 to near the Spring Creek Trailhead of the OHT Sylamore Section. The subject was very popular, over 500 comments were received.
- The Ozark Society board of directors endorsed the decision of the general membership to support the extension of the OHT within the Lower Buffalo Wilderness area. The vote of the General Membership was 42 to 8, and the board voted 13 to 8.
- The Park Service has yet to announce any decision, but their stated preference in their EA was to terminate the OHT at Hwy 14 so no trail would be built in the Lower Buffalo Wilderness. They prefer to send hikers off on multiple miles of state highway and county roads to the vicinity of Big Creek, then let them bushwhack or establish social trails through the remainder of the LBW, to find their way to the Ozark National Forest Sylamore District territory and the Sylamore Section of the OHT.
- As some of you realize, the National Park Service position is that the Park Superintendent makes the decision. It is interesting to note that the Buffalo National River is not a National Park. It is a special entity created by Congress in the legislation authorizing the establishment of the BNR. Establishment proposal and early management plans state it shall be managed as a National Recreation Area.

National Park Service

- There are plans to extend a segment of the OT (1/8 mile) to the Powder Mill Visitor Center off Hwy 106, where there will be access to restrooms, phones, and water and formal TH parking. John Roth, Robert Smith (OTA) and Martha recently walked the proposed segment. Paperwork will have to be initiated for both natural and cultural clearances, and work could begin this fall.

Department of Conservation

- Nate Forbes is the new manager of the Huzzah Conservation Area. He comes to Huzzah from MDC's Piedmont office, and will now be in the Sullivan office.

Ozark Trail Association

- OTA volunteers have now completed 4 2/3 miles of the new Middle Fork Section. Signage has been placed at its intersection with the Trace Creek Section through County Rd. 72 (approx. 4 miles). Trail construction continues to be the #1 goal of the OTA.
- Membership is at 150, and the OTA hopes to double that number this year.
- Volunteers are working with Paul Nazarenko (USFS) and an Eagle Scout to construct a TH parking lot at Hwy DD (near intersection with Hwy 32).
- There are digital maps of the entire OT available on the OTA web site (www.ozarktrail.com/maps).
- Robert Smith has been named as the OTA Field Liaison and has been contacting the land managers to obtain current trail conditions to put on the OTA web site and coordinate volunteer outings.
- The OTA web site has thousands of hits every month and is reaching people nationwide.

- The OTA will soon have 501(c)(3) status.
- Steve Coates will speak about the Victory Section progress over the Black River.
- The OTA worked with Martha from NPS on the Powder Mill Visitor Center spur (Current River Section).
- The OTA worked with Americorps to build a footbridge and culvert on the Middle Fork Section. Americorps will be doing more work with the OTA in the near future.
- OT media coverage included Rural Missouri magazine, Ozark Watch television program, and hundreds of requests for information via email.
- For those who use ArcView, the OTA has a shapefile available for the entire trail. Ask John or Steve Coates about it.
- Selection of a new board resulted in a large group, including people from St. Louis, Steelville, Sullivan, Poplar Bluff and Van Buren. Also represented are hiking, bicycling and equestrian groups (Mingo Saddle Club).
- The OTA is working on an Adopt-A-Trail program for OT maintenance. This program is their #2 priority for 2004.
- The American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation will be held in conjunction with the USFS May 2-8 to build 1 mile of trail north of Barton Fen (Middle Fork Section), which is a sensitive area that will be open to foot travel only.
- May 15-16, in coordination with the Alpine Shop and Patagonia, a big trail construction and "play" weekend will be held.
- The OTA is applying for a second RTP grant, and is teaming with the USFS on another RTP grant.
- A National Trails Day event (June 5) will be held at Council Bluff Lake. Information to follow on the web site.

U.S. Forest Service

- A 40-acre fire near the North Fork River Section in late February necessitated the replacement of signs and general clean-up of the trail.
- A volunteer from the MO State Water Patrol to help re-mark the North Fork River Section from Pomona to Blue Hole.
- Mingo Job Corps has worked on the OT section from Hwy 14 north to the fire location on the North Fork River Section, and also on the section that goes into the Devils Backbone Wilderness.
- Worked with the OTA on clearing 14 miles of the Victory Section. Completion is desired by the end of this summer.
- Downed trees were cleared on the Eleven Point River Section.

John Roth gave Paul's report for the Forest Service as follows:

- Courtois Creek Section is in fairly good shape.
- Trace Creek Section from Hazel Creek to Hwy 32 is on good shape, with the exception of a small washout near Hwy DD (to be fixed by GORC).
- The Marble Creek Section has areas that need work and some signage.
- Three miles of SWECO work has been done on the Middle Fork Section, and more use of the trail dozer is scheduled this season.
- Completion of the Middle Fork Section is contingent upon volunteers and RTP grant funds.
- Logging operations on the Middle Fork Section need to address slash removal in future contracts, where the trail has been flagged but not yet built and where there is oak decline harvesting going on.

Conservation Federation of Missouri

- This weekend is the annual convention for the CFM.

Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen

- The group is in the process of becoming a state organization. They have representation from satellite groups all over the state and also participate in Ozark Trail work days put on by the Mingo Saddle Club.

American Youth Hostels

- The section of trail maintained by AYH (Hwy 32 south to A) has been recently checked and will continue to be maintained. Clearcutting was noticed in the area. John Roth mentioned that the OT is on old haul roads for about 1½ miles, and now that timber harvesting is taking place, large trucks are essentially driving on the OT. The Forest Service plans to repair the area and block the roads off once the harvesting is complete.
- Efforts continue to obtain boulders to be able to more easily cross Ottery Creek.

Sierra Club

- Maintenance work continues on the OT. Many downed trees were on the trail.
- There is an increase in ATV activity on the Blair Creek Section. At one point 14 ATVs were seen on this section, and they are starting to use the Laxton Hollow Trail as well (Jessica will pass this information on, since DNR has an agreement with Pioneer Forest to manage the trails and enforce rules in that area).
- An outing next weekend will focus on the Brushy Creek Trail (a great cook will be serving food at the outing!). An outing in April will be on the southern part of the OT section.
- Jack Palmer, who performed work on the Ozark Trail from its inception, passed away in February.
- Bob asked why aluminum nails are generally used to put up blazes, in light of the fact that he has an offer from a carpenter to supply him with galvanized nails. Scotty mentioned that if that tree is cut at some point in the future, non-aluminum nails could damage equipment.
- Paul asked what to do to prevent animals from eating metal signs (located on non-OT trails in Pioneer Forest). Scotty suggested using Carsonite post pieces and mounting signage onto that before nailing it to a tree.

St. Louis County – Meramec Greenway

Dennis Hogan thanked the Sierra Club for including urban segments in their recommendations, and proceeded to distribute some informational brochures about the Meramec Greenway and the newly opened Al Foster Trail.

- The Al Foster Trail (2.5-miles) and much of the Meramec Greenway will become a part of the Ozark Trail at some point. The Al Foster Trail is located on an abandoned railway and is built much like Katy Trail State Park. It currently connects Packwood Park, Sherman Beach County Park and Castlewood State Park. Eventually the trail will extend east to Route 66 State Park.
- There is a concern about accommodating the trail south of I-44 near the new Legends development.
- There is a considerable amount of funding provided through the Great Rivers Greenway, which is itself funded through a county sales tax. However, the price of greenway land is high no matter if it's floodplain land or properties with great bluff-top views.
- Lisa asked about equestrian use on the Al Foster Trail. Plans have been made to accommodate equestrians on a parallel path (recently flagged by Jessica at Castlewood State Park), but at this time equestrians are not permitted on the trail.

VICTORY SECTION UPDATE (Steve Coates)

Steve presented the results of a recent trip to Williamsville Stone, the quarry operation that has access to a bridge that crosses the Black River. Steve, John Roth, Wilmer Scott, and Jessica Terrell attended. Steve had made an initial visit to the bridge in the fall and submitted a detailed report to the Forest Service and DNR. Both agencies have expressed preferences in the proposed routes which subsequently led to this site visit.

West of Black River - A map was displayed that depicted the route walked by Jessica and Steve both on the west side of the river from a current terminus of the Victory Section (partial existing trail, good trail potential in the area) and from Hwy J going west (from the Cane Ridge Walk-In Spring Turkey Hunting Area, USFS). A route to connect the trail from the west side of the river to the quarry looks possible, with the only major concern being a property "corner hop" which DNR is looking into.

Quarry Site – There is a 20-acre piece of property for sale adjacent to the quarry which could prove useful in avoiding the swampy areas on quarry land. Another option would be to build a bridge just south of the old lake on the quarry property. Significant erosion has taken place here where a stream feeds into the lake. DNR will look into this as well. After traversing the swampy area, the trail becomes an abandoned dirt road that goes under Hwy 67 (a local party spot?) and leads to the bridge. The bridge has lead paint (which will not be an issue, per Jessica's findings) and a significant amount of kudzu which could take years to successfully eradicate. It also will need to be safety inspected, and access controlled to prevent ATV use (and bridge-jumping). The quarry has expressed that they will require fencing along portions of the trail. DNR may be able to work with them on that.

East of Black River - The trail would then enter USFS property (Hendrickson Recreation Area), cross the active railroad on the USFS entrance road, then travel across at least two private property and Hwy O to reach USFS land and the current eastern terminus of the Victory Section.

MOTC "BYLAWS" REVISION COMMITTEE UPDATE (Jessica Terrell)

The committee met in February and will meet once more before making a formal recommendation to the council. Some fundamentals that have been agreed upon were to get rid of the term "bylaws", not to complicate the way the council operates, to ensure that all interested parties are treated fairly, and to allow for the ability to resolve issues but eliminate the flexibility needed by each entity. The major struggles seem to be defining membership and the role of voting in the council. Both Lisa (who is an attorney) and DNR legal counsel will be taking a closer look at the document.

OZARK TRAIL EXPANSION AND AGENCY BOUNDARIES (John Roth)

The OTA has been asked numerous questions about the incomplete sections of the OT, such as when they will be completed and who is responsible for completing them. Steve Coates of the OTA has been assigned to work with agencies on expansion issues, but there is a need to clarify what the limits are within each agency. Each agency was asked two questions: a) What are your plans for completing parts of the OT that are not yet in existence? b) Do you have limits to your boundaries (where you can purchase, obtain easements, or otherwise construct the OT)? Each agency present responded as follows:

- DNR has a lot of flexibility when it comes to acquiring land and easements, and determines acquisitions on a case-by-case basis. DNR has attempted to prioritize certain connections in the northeast part of the trail (including Marble Creek and north of Huzzah), although little progress has been made on those to date. Jessica will be the first point of contact within DNR to start the acquisition process for any proposed segment of the OT. The focus right now is on the Victory Section, since it seems to be progressing the most at this time.
- The OTA is not interested in purchasing any land.
- The NPS requires an act of Congress to expand beyond their current boundaries. Much of the land in the ONSR is not fee-owned, but consists of scenic easements. NPS can participate land swaps, but purchases are rare occurrences at ONSR. The only expansion project right now is the extension to Powder Mill Visitor Center.
- MDC is not aware of any plans to expand the OT. Teresa is not entirely sure of where the connections need to be made. MDC has a somewhat flexible land acquisition budget in terms of where the land is purchased, but it is unlikely that OT expansion would be funded.

- The USFS can expand within the line of their district boundaries. Anything outside of this would require an act of Congress. Does not formally approach landowners, only will wait to be informed of willing sellers and at that time consider purchasing land. This helps to prevent landowners from not selling their land just so that the government won't get it. Current plans include the completion of the Middle Fork Section. Other OT connections are not being extended because there would be a chance that after private easements are acquired, a trail that goes beyond the last logical trailhead within the boundary may be located in the wrong spot for making a connection. Attempts will be made to include the Victory Section in planning efforts within the next five years (but no sooner than two years). The Bass property on the Courtois Creek Section still remains the only obstacle to the completion of that section, and neither the USFS or DNR has had any luck in negotiating an easement. Minor trail relocations are also planned.
- The management of Norfolk Lake was questioned, and although there was no Corps representative present, it was agreed upon that it was indeed under Corps management (most likely the Little Rock District).
- Dennis spoke for both the Meramec Greenway Association and St. Louis County. The Meramec Greenway Association is an affiliation of communities and entities along the river with the goal of preserving, protect and restore the corridor (by proclamation from Gov. Bond in 1970's) from Meramec State Park all the way to Arnold, a total of 108 miles. St. Louis County's plan is to locate the OT along the greenway corridor within the county. Plans for the trail in Franklin County are not known. Although they have purchased land outside the county in the past, changes in the leadership have the possibility to impact that process. Landowners and property parcels have been identified along the corridor.
- No one knew of any private establishments that are actively pursuing trail easements.

OZARK TRAIL DAY (Jessica Terrell)

It was suggested that individuals and agencies interested in planning an Ozark Trail Day form a committee and meet outside of the council to discuss options. Activities included in past Ozark Trail Day events include guided hikes, vendor and user group displays. DNR may have had most of the organizational responsibility for previous OT Day events, the last one being held approximately eight years ago. Possible tie-in events include Earth Day (April), National Trails Day (June) and National Public Lands Day (September). It was suggested that Jessica contact Dan Wedemeyer (Meramec State Park Superintendent) for help with the OT Day event. It would be desirable to coordinate with similarly targeted events in Missouri, and bring in national support.

NEXT MEETING DATE

It was suggested that we meet on a weekday instead of a weekend. Points raised included that fact that it would not allow some members to attend. A suggestion was made to alternate weekday and weekend meetings. After a considerable amount of discussion, it was agreed that we would have the next meeting on Saturday, November 6, 2004. The meeting time will be extended (10 A.M. - 2 P.M.) to allow for more in-depth coverage of agenda items and to allow for items not on the agenda to possibly be discussed. A lunch will be brought in at a cost to each person, or attendees may bring their own lunch.