



The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association Winter 2008

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The Ozark Trail Association is a non-profit group with the mission to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the rugged natural beauty of the Ozark Trail

Volunteers in Action on the North Fork Section

By John Roth

A few years ago, Illinois native Rick Henry moved to southern Missouri. It was a move of choice; a move made after a careful search of the "best of the Midwest." A major search criterion was great outdoor recreational opportunities, and in 2005 he found his new home.



OTA Super-Volunteer Rick Henry at the Winona Outing, January 14-16, 2006

Rick was a recent convert to backpacking and hiking. He sampled the trails in northern Missouri and wanted more. A few trips into Ozark country got him hooked on the region's trails, and he decided to settle just outside of West Plains, a dozen miles from the Arkansas border in the middle of the rolling Ozark Hills.

Rick found a new passion in trails. He started chewing up trails throughout the Ozarks: Berryman, Trace Creek, Taum Sauk and Hercules Glades. Then one fateful day he ventured to the nearby Ridge Runner Trail.

**It's a great feeling knowing you opened a trail
and people in the future will enjoy it. —Rick Henry**

"It wasn't good," recalls Rick. "I'll never say I got lost, but sometimes I wasn't sure just exactly where I was. I couldn't find markers. It was overgrown. There were fields full of briars. Actually, it was horrible."

Rick decided he could complain, or he could help. If he was going to enjoy the region's trails, he thought he should give something back. He contacted Robert

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President's Report

The Ozark Trail Association Newsletter is published four times each year and is mailed to all members. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact kathy.atnip@gmail.com.

Contributions are welcome and may be emailed to the editor at the above address or mailed to:

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A light dusting of snow outlines trail on the Middle Fork



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The OTA turned FIVE in December! That's right; in December 2002 the OTA was incorporated and we're now a half-decade old. Hard to believe isn't it?

I'm not going to summarize five years worth of accomplishments, but I would like to highlight what the OTA accomplished in 2007:

- Obtained a \$75,000 grant from Ameren as part of the Johnson's Shut-Ins settlement;
- With the Ameren funds, we created Phase 1 of an online trip planner for 100-plus miles of trail and we purchased a shuttle van and a bike trailer;
- Operated a shuttle service last fall;
- Set up a new office in the US Forest Service bunk house in Potosi;
- Obtained a \$30,000 grant from the Forrest and Francis Lattner Foundation, which will fund Phase 2 of the online trip planner;
- Membership grew modestly, but not as much as we had targeted;
- Flagged 8 miles of new trail on the Courtois Section;
- Built 3 miles of new trail on the Courtois Section;
- Performed A LOT of trail maintenance after winter ice storms;
- Assisted in obtaining a "handshake" agreement with Bass Resort;
- Continued a very strong AAT program – the trail is in good shape;
- Completed the restoration of the North Fork Section;
- Worked at Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park (JSI);
- Began the visioning process of assuming leadership of the Ozark Trail Council.

We also have some challenging target goals for 2008. Aside from building and maintaining trail, I think it will be important to have a continued emphasis on membership, fundraising and donations. We also hope to play a significant role in the rebuilding efforts of the Taum Sauk Section at Johnson's Shut-Ins. We'll also be expanding the online trip planner by developing Phase 2.

We'll be presenting an outline to the Ozark Trail Council of an initiative to oversee the Council's vision of expanding the trail and to assume the leadership of the Council.

We hope to hire an Executive Director by the second quarter of 2008. An Executive Director is necessary for many reasons, but simply put, we need someone to run the day-to-day business of the organization and raise funds. I hope to have more details on this soon.

Here's to a successful 2008. We're off to a great start and we're well on our way to completing the Courtois Section this year. Hope to see you on the trail.

Steve



Volunteers in Action

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Smith, the Ozark Trail Association's Adopt-A-Trail coordinator, who quickly signed him up to a portion of the Eleven Point section of the Ozark Trail.

For most volunteers, that would have been enough. But Rick still had the Ridge Runner Trail in the back of his mind, especially the portion that runs concurrent with the North Fork section of the OT, so he asked Robert about North Fork adoptions.

Robert told him the brutal truth: "The North Fork is a mess. The eastern 12 miles is almost non-existent, and the piece along the Ridge Runner was hit by wildfires. It's going to take years to get that trail open."

Not if Rick had anything to say about it. He called a friend and they started lopping the corridor. He called another friend and they put up signs. Soon he had people calling him, asking if they could help. One volunteer grew to two, then three, then a dozen.

While they don't have a name, the group definitely has a feeling of membership and belonging. A typical group outing is four to six people, although sometimes it's just two people who happen to have some open time. While many are from the West Plains area and surrounding Howell County, they are represented by nearby Oregon, Ozark and Douglas Counties as well.

The group has been working hard, and they're proud to announce that the entire **North Fork section is now is now open for travel**; 25 miles from the Pomona trailhead through the Devils Backbone Wilderness is cleared, signed and ready.

"It's hard work," said Rick. "You're sweaty and tired, but then you look back on what you accomplished, and WOW!"

Well done, folks. The OTA and trail users thank you for your efforts!

MANY THANKS TO: Rick Henry, Tom Caldwell, Tracy Harper, Sara Weaver, Tara Weaver, Martin Trehal, Tom Wilson, Chris Chronister, Bill Driscoll, Laurel Driscoll, Ryan York, Ty Swirin and son, Ted Berger. 🍷

Filling the Gaps in Crawford County

By John Roth

The Ozark Trail started 30 years ago with an inventory of a few existing Missouri trails and a vision to fill the gaps with new trail construction. The most recently completed gap was the Middle Fork section, which created a 200-mile trail from southern Missouri near Thomasville up to the Berryman Trail in Washington County.

The northern terminus ends unceremoniously on a lonely gravel road with a simple green and white marker nailed to a post. There is more trail ahead—seven miles of trail in the Huzzah Conservation Area—but it's an eight-mile walk on gravel roads to get there.



Digging a trench for rocks to keep soil on the trail (l-r): Joel Luedders, Frank Wentz, John Brett and Todd Horn (Crew Leader) on the Oct. 13, 2007 North Courtois Outing

We call it the "Courtois Gap," and it's the current focus of OTA volunteer construction. We completed layout of nine miles of new trail last summer and started work in September. By the end of 2007 we built three miles of new trail and are scheduled to complete the remaining six miles by next fall.

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Red Jacket: a Symbol of Commitment to the Ozark Trail

By Linda Meade

If you've been to an Ozark Trail Association outing, you've probably seen them: red jackets. The exact color and style of the jacket varies, but they have a few things in common: They bear the US Forest Service logo embroidered on the left and the wearer's name on the right, and they are usually worn with at least some measure of pride.

The Red Jacket reminds me of all the good times, making new friends, seeing new trails and a feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day... —*Suzanne Smith*

John Roth, the first recipient of the Red Jacket Award, estimates that the tradition started around 2000, when he received the American Trails Volunteer of the Year Award. The US Forest Service nominated him for the award and made the presentation, and in addition "graciously" presented him with a fleece jacket with the Forest Service logo and his name. John recalls: "I wore that jacket on all of my cold-weather volunteer outings, which initially was either with USFS staff, Americorps teams or with various volunteer groups such as Hostelling International. Once the OTA events started up in Winter 2002-2003, the jacket was frequently the source of questions: was I a Forest Service employee? If not, then how did I get the cool jacket? If it was for volunteering, then how could other people get the cool jacket?"

The Red Jacket was never exactly a "goal" for me...just a nice remembrance and a milestone of some wonderful experiences on the Ozark Trail. —*Bruce Hadley*

Around 2003-04, the OTA began offering volunteer incentives, including a personalized red jacket to be awarded after twenty outings. John Roth adds: "Since we were working almost exclusively on USFS property, the Forest Service agreed to continue to embroider the jackets with their logo for qualifying volunteers." Since then, twelve additional OTA volunteers have been awarded a red jacket: Jeff Goetter, Robert Smith,



Red Jacket awardees at the April 2006 Ozark Trail Grand Opening (l-r): Ron Moll, Linda Meade, Roger Allison, Suzanne Smith, Matt Atnip, Brian Atnip, and Bruce Hadley, with John Roth, who started it all (sans jacket) in front

Gwen Fuehring, Dave Fuehring, Frank Pointer, Ron Moll, Roger Allison, Bruce Hadley, Matt Atnip, Brian Atnip, Suzanne Smith and Linda Meade.

Red jackets were also awarded to the students from the Student Conservation Association, who worked with the OTA for several months: Naomy Perez, Scott "Squirrel" Hanson, Meg McAlonis, Creedence Otto, and Joe Silins.

The last set of Red Jackets was awarded at the Ozark Trail Grand Opening in April 2006. Look for new award winners at the 2008 Trails Day celebration!

We had two plus years of weekends in the woods and we grew from a Father/Son pair into friends with a common interest. My Red Jacket reminds me of that growth with my son and friend. —*Matt Atnip*

In the meantime, perhaps the true meaning of earning an OTA Red Jacket is best expressed by Roger Allison, who received his at the April 2006 Grand Opening: "It meant I had a fleece that no one else in my family would misappropriate." 🍄

Thanks to John Roth, Jeff Goetter and Ron Moll for their assistance with this article.

Red Jacket Photo Gallery



Wilmer Scott (a.k.a. "Scottie") from the U.S. Forest Service presents Dave Fuehring with his Red Jacket on National Trails Day, June 5, 2004



Scottie, Gwen Fuehring and her Red Jacket, June 5, 2004



Jeff Goetter receives his Red Jacket on National Trails Day, June 5, 2004



Robert Smith wearing his Red Jacket at the April 23, 2005 Outing

Upcoming Events

Below are upcoming work outings and other events on the current OTA calendar. To receive event updates via Email, visit the calendar online at the OTA web site: www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php

WINONA WEEKEND

3/01/08, 8:30 A.M.

Maintenance: one of the best outings of the year!
More information available soon

WINONA BACKUP DATE

3/08/08, 8:00 A.M.

Backup date for the Winona Weekend (just in case the weather is foul the week prior)

CREW LEADER TRAINING

3/08/08, 9:00 A.M.

Details to be announced. Contact John Roth for more information: john.roth@gmail.com

OZARK TRAIL COUNCIL MEETING

3/15/08, 10:00 A.M.

MERAMEC STATE PARK

Bi-annual meeting of the Ozark Trail Council

MEGA EVENT ON THE COURTOIS GAP!

4/19/08

Details to be announced

WINONA SPRING CLEANUP

5/03/08, 8:30 A.M.

Details to be announced: maintenance on the southern portions of the OT planned

SPRING MEGA EVENT!

5/17/08, 8:45 A.M.

This should be huge—reserve the date now.
Complete details in March

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

6/07/08, 9:00 A.M.

Award ceremony, some trail work and optional hikes. Location to be announced

Plan Your Next OT Trip with the New Online Planner

By John Roth

With 350 miles of trail to choose from, it can be a challenge to pick the best place for your next Ozark Trail adventure. We get questions every week from around the country: Where's the best one-day biking trip? What's a good three-day backpacking destination? Where can I park my horse trailer? Where can I find water?

OTA volunteers have been providing answers to these and other questions for five years. Last year we decided we should find a way to store this information and make it available online. We sought out a grant, wrote some software and started filling a database with all sorts of great trail information.

We're happy to announce the newest feature of the Ozark Trail Association website: the Ozark Trail Trip Planner. Visit www.ozarktrail.com/planner for a peek at the first phase of our work, which covers the Middle Fork, Taum Sauk, Karkaghne and southern Trace Creek sections of the Ozark Trail, plus the connecting trails at Council Bluff and Bell Mountain Wilderness.



You can get there from here; using the online trip planner, hike to this overlook of the Ottery Creek Valley and Southwest Bell Mountain

Using the "trip calculator", you can select the type and length of your trip and retrieve a list of custom-designed trail itineraries. Each itinerary features an overview, detailed turn-by-turn directions, water sources, campgrounds, maps, pictures and trailhead driving directions.

We're in the process of adding more trips for the remainder of the Ozark Trail. This spring and summer we'll be out marking GPS waypoints on new trail, creating new maps and building

Filling the Gaps in Crawford County

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The new trail will feature a stop at Bass Resort on the banks of the Courtois Creek. This will give trail users a convenient place to resupply and offer some great hike, ride and float trips. There will still be a mile of gravel road past the Bass Resort campgrounds and over the low-water bridge, but it's a vast improvement over the eight miles of gravel that exists today.

The new trail features exceptional views of the Courtois and Huzzah valleys, bluffs, waterfalls, pines and hardwood forests. It's probably the most scenic portion along the northern third of the Ozark Trail.

Construction outings continue 2-4 times a month through next fall, with the exception of the hot and humid summer months. Sign up online at <http://ozarktrail.com/workparties.php>.

Maps and additional information can be obtained by emailing john.roth@gmail.com 

more trips. In future versions of the Planner we'll be adding additional links to nearby amenities such as bed & breakfasts, campgrounds and local attractions. It's a work in progress, but we think you'll like what you see.

The planner can be viewed online at www.ozarktrail.com/planner, and our regional shuttle service can be found at www.ozarktrail.com/shuttle. Drop by and tell us what you think! 



Look for these symbols in the Ozark Trail Trip Planner to choose Hiking, Biking or Equestrian activities

It's time to renew your Ozark Trail Membership

Support the OTA's mission to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the Ozark Trail. New members receive an OTA patch, a membership card and an Ozark Trail Guide, plus the satisfaction of helping out a great cause. There are three membership types: Individual (\$20/year), Family (\$35/year) and Lifetime (\$250). If you are registering your family, please include all family member names in the "Other Information" box if they also want membership cards).

All funds go towards trail construction and maintenance, maps & brochures, website maintenance and slight administrative costs. There are no salaries—the OTA is a volunteer-run organization! Please take a moment to clip and mail your renewal or, *new this year*, pay via PayPal

- Family membership \$35
 Individual Membership \$20
 Lifetime Membership \$250

Name _____

Address _____

City _____, State _____ Zip _____

(optional) Phone _____ Email _____

Other information: -please list any special skills, experience, or resources (trail maintenance, equipment etc) that you have and that you would be able to share with the OTA (family memberships should also include all family names here):

mail to: Ozark Trail Association
483 South Kirkwood Road #40
Kirkwood, MO 63122

or PayPal (<https://www.paypal.com>) to **OTAmembership@ozarktrail.com** (this account can accept credit card payments and checks.) Use the "send money" feature and enter the name, address, etc. information in the "note" section.

Check here to have your newsletter sent via email!

Volunteer with the OTA!

For general volunteer information or to become a certified Trail Leader, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jeff Goetter at OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com

Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets at **7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month**. Check out the web site at www.ozarktrail.com for exact times and locations. If you can make it, stop in.

The meetings are open to the public and input is welcome. Meetings are professionally run so you can count on finishing at 9:00 p.m. But the group usually goes out for a late snack and some great camaraderie afterwards. So join in the fun; we'd love to see you!



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