



TRAIL TALK

NEWSLETTER OF THE OZARK TRAIL ASSOCIATION



A little help from our friends REI and Alpine Shop support the Ozark Trail

The Ozark Trail Association is lucky to have some very good friends. In addition to the great support of state and federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Department of Conservation, and many others, the OTA has benefited from ongoing partnerships with two outdoor retailers who have become family: REI (Recreational Equipment Inc.) and Alpine Shop.

The Ozark Trail has enjoyed the support of REI since the first Mega Event on September 27, 2003. REI sponsored the event and helped to spread the word through its local communications channels. Staff from the St. Louis store delivered sandwiches to 45 trail volunteers that day. In total, REI has sponsored 8 Mega Events which have drawn a total of 942 volunteers to help with trail construction.

More recently, REI has provided two grants to the OTA, totaling \$20,000 to cover expenses for our events. (See photo below.) In addition to support for food, the grants allow us to purchase safety equipment for volunteers—like hard hats and goggles—and have provided for purchase of a portable generator and canopies for registration, along with rental of toilet facilities. Money from the grants will also contribute to maintenance and replacement of trail-building tools. The grants support promotion of the Ozark Trail through printed brochures and subscription to our email bulletin service, along with OTA-logo merchandise to sell for fundraising. In addition to the grants, REI continues to donate items for raffles and silent auctions at both our Mega Events and Trivia Nights and includes OT presentations in its program of community events.

Alpine Shop has been our partner since the first OTA organizing meeting in 2002 and sponsored their first Mega on May 15, 2004. Sixty-nine volunteers attended that day and Alpine Shop covered purchase of food and raffle items. Alpine Shop has supported seven Mega events so far, bringing out more than 1000 volunteers in all. To help our volunteers feel recognized and welcome our Alpine friends arrange OTA “Red Jacket” awards with personalization and donate SmartWool® socks at no cost for every volunteer who attends Alpine Megs. Alpine Shop supported the Boots, Bikes, Bridles and Bluegrass Family Festival in 2010 by providing online registration and helping to coordinate the delicious barbecue dinner. At the April 2011 Mega, Alpine representatives presented the OTA with a check for \$10,000, representing a small portion of contributions provided overall.

Our continuing relationship with Alpine Shop provides outdoors items for raffles and auctions and opportunities to promote the Ozark Trail along with a critical connection to a national funding agency that has granted nearly \$135,000 to the OTA. Lisa Hollenbeck, co-owner of Alpine Shop, was an original member of the OTA Board of Directors and still serves in that role as well as on the Communications committee; her guidance has been invaluable to our organization.

Sometimes you hear that old friends are the best kind. And REI and Alpine Shop, have been there from the beginning for the OTA. Their support has helped to create over 45 miles of new trail and has been a catalyst to bring hundreds of volunteers into the woods for a fun and rewarding experience. Thank you, friends.

NEWS & UPDATES

Re-routed trail opened

Nearly 2.5 miles of trail on the Courtois section, Berryman Loop, has been re-routed due to poor location and erosion.

125 miles of OT mowed

The summer of 2011 saw 125 miles of the trail on U.S. Forest Service land mowed by paid crews. The areas were identified by Adopt-A-Trail volunteers.

More crew leaders for trail building events

The number of certified crew leaders available to direct volunteers at trail building events has grown to more than 30 as of August 2011 when ten new crew leaders were certified.

U.S.F.S donates equipment for chain sawing work

The Forest Services has contributed six sets of new protective chaps and six new sawyer helmets to the Ozark Trail Association.



Mari Erb and Matt Poppleton of REI presented the OTA with a \$10,000 check (displayed by Kathie Brennan) in September 2010

OUR MISSION

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.



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WE'RE POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS.

JOIN US: To learn about volunteer opportunities, or become an OTA member, see our website at ozarktrail.com, or send an email message to OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com.

MEMBER MEETINGS: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Check website for details. All are welcome!

Trail Talk is published four times each year for OTA members. If you would prefer to receive your copy electronically, please contact Kathy Atnip, editor, at kathy.atnip@ozarktrail.com.

Photos: Adam Rothermich, Jon Crockrell



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Nimblewill Nomad completes OT through-hike

M.J. Eberhard, long distance hiker and author, better known by his trail name "Nimblewill Nomad" has completed a through-hike on the Ozark Trail started on May 4, 2011.

Beginning at Onondaga State Park, the Nomad contended with challenging spring weather and flooding along with a time-out to rest sore knees. He finished his OT odyssey on June 17 with the North Fork section and then started out on the Ozark Highlands Trail the very next day. Eberhard, a retired optometrist who was raised in the Missouri Ozarks, began hiking on the Florida and Appalachian Trails in the 1980s. He has completed numerous distance hikes, including an epic 4000-mile trek from Florida to Quebec in 1998. For more about his adventures, see nimblewillnomad.com.



Adopt-A-Trail volunteer Sara Crockrell hangs an Ozark Trail blaze as part of maintaining her adopted segment

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Into the woods

By Steve Coates

Happy trails, fellow OT enthusiasts! As I say goodbye to a rather hot summer (I spent a week in Wisconsin and it was hot even up there!), I turn my sights to the fall and another fun season of trail building and maintenance on the Ozark Trail. There are several events scheduled this fall and I hope that there is something here to your liking. Of course, you're always welcome to get involved with the OTA in other ways such as with membership, communications, grant writing, equipment maintenance, etc. Feel free to shoot me an email anytime at steve.coates@ozarktrail.com if you're interested in getting involved in some way.

I do enjoy Missouri summers, but after weeks of heat and scorching sun, I'm always ready for fall. For me, fall is a season of renewal, which I know is an ironic thing to say given that spring is the season known for renewal and rebirth. But for me, fall represents a time to return to the woods—to reconnect. As trees and wildflowers begin the process of going dormant for winter, I renew my connection to the woods. And as a member of the OTA, part of that renewal is the new construction and maintenance season on the Ozark Trail. With that comes renewed connections with friends. I'm looking forward to it and I hope you are too. This fall, we've started our construction season working on another reroute of the Berryman Trail. I hope to see you at an event this fall. Let the renewal begin!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The OTA's Adopt-A-Trail volunteers are key to our success. By lopping branches, smoothing the tread and clearing weeds, adopters collectively maintain over 270 miles of the Ozark Trail. And some of our AAT "trail parents" go above and beyond to keep the segment under their care in great shape, including Jon and Sara Crockrell.

Both Jon and Sara are veteran volunteers for the Ozark Trail Association. Jon started coming to work events in 2003, followed by Sara in 2005. In January of 2006, they adopted a portion of the Trace Creek section, from the Council Bluff cutoff to Highway 32, a lush area that includes the upper source of the Big River, Telleck Branch and the occasional beaver dam. Jon and Sara have done an "outstanding job taking care" of their adopted segment, according to AAT coordinator Renee Wrest. They consistently average four to five maintenance visits each year, with 14 outings so far in 2011.

What's the best part of being an AAT volunteer, according to the Crockrells? For Sara, it's "seeing the results of our hard work, getting very familiar with a section of the trail and finding things that many people may not notice." Jon takes a more down-to-earth viewpoint: "communing with the ticks and chiggers" is the highlight, he says. If you're considering adopting a section of the OT, Sara has some advice to share: "Give it a try. You don't need any special skills and only minimal tools, so almost anyone can do something to help." Jon adds, "Bring lots of bug spray."