



TRAIL TALK

NEWSLETTER OF THE OZARK TRAIL ASSOCIATION



What can an Executive Director do for you?

By Matt Atnip

As we celebrate our 10th Anniversary year, it is amazing to see how far we have come, how much has been accomplished and overcome: 50 miles of new trail constructed, 280-plus miles of trail adopted, 91,000 volunteer hours, a reservoir breach that took out 2 miles of trail, a 2009 derecho storm that damaged over 100 miles of trail and the loss of our founder and leader John Roth the same year. John's energy was contagious and his work ethic unmatched. We caught enough of John's trail fever to commit to keeping the OTA moving forward, as we know John would have wanted. It took many volunteers to attempt to match his work output and we continued to grow. The truth is we began to fall short of meeting some obligations while our hearts continued to dream about a trail from St Louis to Arkansas.

The OTA needed someone to take on many of the necessary, but less glamorous, management functions that had been spread to several volunteers, allowing those key people to have a better balance between their "payin' jobs", their home lives and their passion for the OTA. We needed full time coordination of efforts, in-depth review of business practices and someone to communicate with the land stewards during regular business hours. In 2012, we were fortunate to receive a grant to fund an Executive Director position for a two-year period. A search process began in September and I am honored to have been chosen for the position in December. The first order of business was to evaluate our open grants, then firm up construction plans for this year and beyond, and strengthen our accounting processes to aid in creating a broader based fundraising program.

During my first couple of weeks, our Office Coordinator Abi Jackson and I gathered information on open grants and researched expenses that could be billed to these grants. Many grants are reimbursement-based; we spend the money and then submit an invoice to get the funds back. Our research uncovered \$22,000 of eligible expenses from prior years. Adding this unanticipated revenue to the 2013 budget allowed us to buy a much-needed and long desired pick-up truck. Purchased in a government auction, this classic Forest Service green extended cab 4x4 will handle the forest roads and deliver work crews with their gear to remote work sites. We also discovered grants that were significantly behind schedule and made contact with the grantors for extensions complete the work. These include projects to create a Missouri Trail Standards manual and one to produce large, full color folding Ozark Trail section maps. We will start with the Middle Fork-John Roth Memorial section. This will be the first such map for this signature OTA-built section. For you fellow map geeks, these will be must-haves for your collection. Look for the first map this fall, along with the Trail Standards Manual.

Sitting high behind the wheel of our green beast with map in hand, where do we build now? This spring, we will hold our Alpine Shop Mega Event at Council Bluff Lake. We will camp on the wooded ridgeline, complete a walk-in of a mile or more and build trail on a beautiful but steep hillside. We are taking the trail up the hillside where it will not only be more sustainable but it will offer nice views of the drainage below and leave a busy beaver family in peace to create their lodge and pond. This project will keep us busy throughout 2013. Construction continues on the Round Spring trail that will eventually connect the Blair Creek section to Round Spring and on to the new Current River State Park. An environmental assessment is being conducted in the National Park Service section and we anticipate being able to build there in 2014. A reroute on the eastern leg of the Berryman Trail is also under consideration and another reroute way down south on the Eleven Point is being designed. Some very preliminary talks have taken place with the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Doe Run Company to expand the trail south from the Taum

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NEWS & UPDATES

OTA birthday party, June 1, 2013

The Ozark Trail Association is preparing a 10th anniversary celebration and we've invited Governor Jay Nixon to keynote the festivities. We're also planning other presentations and activities; we hope you'll join us for the fun! Save the date and stay tuned for more information!

OTA sawyers re-certified by USFS

Twenty-three volunteer sawyers have been recently re-certified by the U.S. Forest Service. Thanks to Brian Merkel, USFS and to April Scott, our Sawyer Coordinator. A big thank-you to our volunteers for taking the time to prepare for the critical job of keeping the trail clear.

New mini-trailer for OTA gear

The OTA has purchased a small trailer to haul tools and cooking equipment. The 5 by 8-foot size is easier to haul and just right for maintenance outings and smaller construction groups.



Atnip, along with Steve Coates, OTA President (left), and Greg Echele, OTA Mega Coordinator (right), at the September 2009 Mega Event morning talk

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.

Executive Director (Cont.)

Sauk section through the Ketcherside Conservation Area. It would cross Doe Run property near Glover in an attempt to get to Crane Lake on the Marble Creek section. There is a lot to build and even more to maintain.

Meanwhile, back in Potosi, I will be working on firming up our accounting to allow for a more efficient budget process and enhanced grant administration while ensuring IRS compliance. Our Treasurer, Roger Allison, has reviewed our books and we have a game plan in place to make our books a tool to obtain future funding through solid business controls. From this firm foundation we can build strong cases for future funding based on past performance. This will be key in building additional funding to support our dedicated volunteers.

It has been an inspiring ten years with great accomplishments powered by volunteers. My goal is to help the OTA reach that dream of connecting St Louis to Arkansas. So, let me know what this Executive Director can do for you.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRAIL

Cotham Pond

By Bob Henningsen

*Without wind no ripple ran the water.
The tree's reflection was as still as the tree.
But a piping song rang in the air
As though the pond echoed
A shimmering of afternoon.
When we arrived at camp
We found that peepers were out.
From marshy shores
A chorus of invisible frogs
Plied peeps to the dying day.
As the sky darkened and the stars brightened
The ruckus heightened until
the stars found voice in the frogs
and pulsed with them through the night.*

*The shyness of day's first light
Did little to daunt the din.
But as dawn slowly erased the constellations
And reestablished the trees,
The song softened until the last
Plaintive peep sputtered out.
We rose to a silence ghostly
As the fog above the water.
It seemed a cooling of night's yearning:
The exhalation of all those voices
Condensed to a sigh.
We packed and moved on,
Charged by the commerce of stars
With the high pitch of spring.*

Bob Henningsen is a trail poet, dedicated Ozark trail biker and retired teacher from John Burroughs School, St. Louis, Mo.

Executive Director's Report will debut in this space for the summer 2013 issue of *Trail Talk*.



Ozark Trail Association
406 W. High Street
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POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS.

JOIN US: Learn about volunteer opportunities, become an OTA member at ozarktrail.com or email OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com.

MEMBER MEETINGS: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., second Tuesday of each month. All are welcome!

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Photos: Calvin Brennan, McRaven family



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The McRaven family during a hike, near the Taum Sauk section of the OT

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Giving some of the love back

Susan and John McRaven have been mountain biking and hiking the Ozark Trail for more than 15 years. When they decided last year to adopt a segment of the trail with their son "Little John", age 9, they picked the Berryman, one of their favorite sections for trail fun. Along with nearly 375 hours in construction and maintenance outings with the OTA since 2009, they can now "give some of the love back" through Adopt-A-Trail, said Susan. In the first 9 months after becoming adopters, the McRavens visited their segment for maintenance work three times and for each trip submitted a "detailed, articulate and very enthusiastic work report" with suggested solutions for issues they noticed, according to Renee Wrest, Adopt-A-Trail coordinator.

John said his favorite part of AAT work comes from riding the trail for fun. At those times, he notices that the "the brush really moves in on both sides unless someone's keeping an eye on it." Little John, who has been out on the Ozark Trail since he was small, likes trail work too. But he added, "my parents are too slow! Lop faster!" With AAT projects, Susan said, the family can make their trips into a weekend adventure of both work and fun. If you're considering adopting, Susan's message is simple: "DO IT! Using a trail you made better is a great feeling. It sure gives one a sense of gratitude to all those who have done the same."