

MISSOURI OZARK TRAIL COUNCIL MEETING
April 27, 2002
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PARTICIPANTS:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Deb Schnack, Department of Natural Resources | Fred Stenger, Ozark Trails Club |
| Carol Springer, MO Equine Council | Jim McInroe, Hostelling International |
| Nancy Feakes, USDA Forest Service | Rich Bauer, Hostelling International |
| Bruce Linders, Hostelling International | John Donjoian, IMBA Rep for MO |
| Niki Aberle, Department of Natural Resources | Teresa Kight, MO Dept of Conservation |
| Paul Stupperich, Sierra Club | Bob Gestel, Sierra Club |
| John Roth, Volunteer | |

The April 27, 2002 meeting of the Ozark Trail Council convened at approximately 10:00 a.m. at the Meramec State Park Visitor Center. The meeting was called to order by Deb Schnack, Trail Coordinator, Division of State Parks. Following the introductions the minutes of the November 17, 2001 Ozark Trail Council meeting were approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

The topic of the new general slick OT brochure was discussed. At the last meeting it was decided that a brochure committee be established with Terry Laup as chairperson. Terry was unable to attend this meeting so there was no report on the status of the committee. Bruce will check with Terry on the plans for the brochure. Furthermore, Bruce reported that HI-AYH has changed leadership and they are apprehensive about donating the Annual Ozark Trail Hike proceeds to the OTC. No progress has been made with Charlie Davidson and the transfer of the funds to the Conservation Foundation. Bruce will invite the new Director of HI-AYH to the next OTC meeting to discuss this issue further. Bruce thinks that if there is project completed for the OT, such as a new brochure, that HI-AYH could possibly do some reimbursement to the project as long as they are given credit on the brochure.

Peter Jackson, Pebble Publishing, was working on a guide to the OT. No one from the OTC has heard back from Peter for editing purposes. His deadline was December 2001.

STATUS REPORTS:

MISSOURI EQUINE COUNCIL (Carol Springer)

Once again, Carol reiterated the point that trails have to be designed for multi-use. She questioned the rules on the Council Bluff Trail. Paul informed her that horses are not allowed in that area and it is not part of the OT, although there is a spur off the OT to reach Council Bluffs. Carol requested to be put on the brochure committee when one is set up so that the equestrian community can be represented. Deb announced that the whole OTC will have a say in the brochure before it is printed, someone just needs to take the lead. The general brochure will be difficult to update because all of the agencies must get together and agree on the draft. Furthermore, Bruce recommended that the MEC have a trail maintenance workshop so that they can lend a hand in maintenance on the horse areas. Carol explained the demographics of the organization and stated that they would be more likely to donate money than do trail work. Carol was also worried about the horse restrictions on the Huzzah MDC area. It was decided that in order for the MEC to get their voices heard that they would have to give a presentation to the Conservation Commission. This is the only way regulation can be changed on MDC areas.

IMBA (INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BIKE ASSOCIATION), MO CHAPTER (John Donjoian)

John reported that a statewide event would occur on the Berryman Trail on May 18 and 19. Saturday will be a trail maintenance workday and Sunday will be ride day. Last year the Berryman Trail was designated as an IMBA Epic Trail. Epic trails apply to those trails worldwide that are unique and offer "long" opportunities (usually 20 miles or more). The Berryman Trail is a great example of Missouri backcountry. He announced that there would be another small celebration on the Berryman Trail this fall. John is also involved with maintenance on the Karkaghne Section. The weather this spring has not allowed him to get out much to do maintenance.

US FOREST SERVICE (Paul Nazarenko, Nancy Feakes and John Roth-volunteer)

Paul reported that they are still in the process of laying out the section of trail from Trace Creek to the Karkaghne. This section is fashioned after the Berryman trail. To date they have 16 of the 25 miles flagged. It will tie into the existing Karkaghne section just below Council Bluffs. John Roth reported that all trail reports (including topographic maps with the route laid out) are on the web. Email him at jroth@hyperdata.com and he will send you the link. Furthermore, Paul reported they are delayed at a very steep section of the trail, which will take more time to lay out. It should be completed in a week or so, then it will go through the NEPA process. John also reported that there is an endangered butterfly population at Barton Fen. They did get permission to cross above the fen. This is going to be difficult because they will be working on a 30% slope. With the help of the new trail dozer, it should be less difficult to build. Paul is one of two trail dozer operators in the Forest Service. Deb reaffirmed that a side hill trail is the most desirable if done correctly. Jim and Rich are working on the trail from Harmon Springs going west towards Huzzah. They are stalled at the Bass property. John Roth is speaking to the Bass's about different route options. (It will be an equestrian trail as they own and rent horses out of their concessionaire.) Deb said that DNR could work on negotiating an easement with the Bass's. John will send information from the Bass's to Deb and then DNR can begin negotiations. Paul offered to have the USFS secure the easement if it would be a quicker process. John will speak with the Bass's to see which agency they would rather work with. Furthermore, Paul suggested using some of the HI-AYH donation to hire a maintenance crew. Deb said a proposal would have to be made to the OTC with a vote. John Donjoian suggested getting together a 501©(3) Ozark Trail organization. Finally, Nancy reported that there is some major damage on the OT in the Poplar Bluff District due to a tornado.

SIERRA CLUB (Bob Gestel and Paul Stupperich)

Bob reported that they have had a good year so far with trail maintenance. They have been out 6 weekends with 10-12 volunteers at each outing. Therefore, the Pioneer Forest section should be pretty well maintained. (They also had fewer windfalls this year). Paul reported that he is working with Boy Scout troops on the Roger Pryor Back Country Area and they will tie this new trail in with the OT. Also, Bob led a beginners' backpack trip on the OT to introduce them to the trail. He has also been to several events promoting the OT. Furthermore, they are progressing on the new Brushy Creek Trail (in Pioneer Forest). They have a couple miles complete and just have to finish up the tread work. Scott Merritt, a Sierra Club member and OT volunteer, wrote a very positive article about his experiences on the OT. It was published in the *Ozark Sierrian*.

OZARK TRAILS CLUB (Fred Stenger)

Fred reported that this spring there has been a considerable amount of four-wheeler damage. Vandals are stealing markers and even intermediate hikers are getting lost. Furthermore, Fred reported on the tornado damage in the Poplar Bluff area. He believes it may have wiped out both trailheads on the Victory Section. The town of Ellsinore also had considerable damage. Since the tornado had just hit, Fred

hadn't been able to assess all of the damage. He could only get close to the Wrangler Trail Head. As soon as Fred gets an assessment he will report to the USFS and the US COE. Nancy reported that FEMA was assessing the area. She said that based on a USFS flight, there are at least twelve miles of trail in that district that need clearing.

Fred is still continuing to send out lots of OT information to interested individuals and groups. A group from Virginia is coming to hike the OT. Fred's group met them when they were hiking the AT. Fred's group will help with shuttling and hospitality. Fred also continues to promote the trail wherever he can. He is regularly on the radio show and he is making the school circuit with OT promotion. He is telling them about trail ethics. Fred further reported that the gray diamond markers are lasting longer than the OT markers. Deb reiterated the point that agencies can purchase the OT on thicker material if desired. It is more costly, but the markers will last longer.

AMERICAN YOUTH HOSTELS (Bruce Linders, Jim McInroe)

Bruce reported that they are still working with Paul Nazarenko on trail maintenance on the Trace Creek Section. They had to reroute approx. 100 yards of trail that four-wheelers had destroyed. They are scheduled to go out on May 18 to work on their 6-mile section of Trace Creek. The next HI- AYH hike will be October 12 – October 19, 2002 on the Wappapello and Victory Sections. The OTC agreed to help promote the hike.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (Teresa Kight)

Teresa distributed a map and brochure on the Huzzah Wildlife Viewing Trail (not part of the OT). It connects with the road at Onondaga Cave State Park and goes north. Teresa reported that recently MDC was audited and was cited for having hiking trails on Federally designated Wildlife Viewing Areas, therefore; these wildlife viewing trails cannot be connected with the OT. Furthermore, Teresa reported that no work has been completed south of the Courtois down to the Narrows, but they have identified a better creek crossing. MDC area managers have decided to cross the creek at a low water crossing where their maintenance vehicles cross. Rich agreed that this would be a great spot and he was told it is crossable 90% of the time.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS (Dick Chenoweth):

Dick was unable to attend. Deb read his report.

"Presently, most of the trail is clear and open, however some parts have not yet been inspected or maintained. The remainder of trail will be inspected and maintained, no later than June 4, 2002.

For future reference, the crossing at US Highway 67 may "go under" the highway and probably will accommodate horses with riders. For further information or discussion, please contact Natural Resource Specialist James Gracey at (573) 222-8562.

Presently we are seeking groups to adopt portions of the Ozark Trail. Currently the major focus has been both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. However, the Mingo Saddle Club, Puxico, MO, has made a verbal commitment to adopt 11 miles of the Ozark Trail from Carlton Place to 34 Bridge. Also, just recently BSA Troop #72 in Bloomfield was contacted with the proposal for their two Eagle Scout candidates to locate, construct and maintain an overlook or vista and an adjoining campsite along the Ozark Trail at the Lake. We hope to hear from him soon.

The Clark's Creek Crossing remains the same with no plans or funding available to construct a low water crossing safe for equestrians and other trail users. We still advise

using extra caution when crossing this creek, and further advise phoning the toll-free hotline at 1-877-LAKE-INFO, or project office at (573) 222-8562 to obtain lake and/or trail conditions before leaving on your trip."

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION (Duane Woltjen)

Duane was unable to attend the meeting. Deb read is report aloud.

"As you know, we are authorized to build about 29 miles of Ozark Highlands Trail in the Sylamore District of the Ozark National Forest near Norfolk, AR. Since we began last October 15, we have built 16.8 miles using 75 volunteers who have collectively worked 3,500 labor hours on the line.

Forest Service cooperation has been simply fantastic.

We have the first nine-mile section known as the Spring Creek Section open for hikers.

We have not heard anything for the National Park Service regarding the 45-mile section Environmental Assessment they undertook more than a year ago. They claim they are still working on it, and they expect to hold a final round of public hearings sometime after July 2002. They claim they plan to do something, not opting for the "do nothing" alternative.

As you may have gathered from the very flawed article in *Backpacker* magazine, May 2002, Marion and Searcy Counties Quorum Courts have passed resolutions opposing the establishment of the Ozark Highland Trail in their counties. This came about because of a petition.

The OHTA did nothing to counter the effort except Tim Ernst vowed in the *Harrison Times* that we would not build trail on private land without the consent of the owner.

When Baxter County (where we have over 15 miles built) considered going the same way, I stepped in with documented facts and able assistance from local folks: John Hiser, Lead Ranger of the Norfolk lake Project, where they have been building OHT around the Lake for years; a local Historian, Bill Woodiel, working to locate the Trail of Tears on the ground; a retired attorney who is leading some of our work crews; and best of all, the County Judge Joe Bodenhamer.

The issue is still on the table in Baxter County Court, but at least we won't have gone down again without a fight.

The Park Service has not indicated whether they will succumb to the political pressure from Marion and Searcy Counties, but if they do we really have a huge problem. We need to keep them propped up in the saddle no matter how many bullet holes they get.

The T-shirts we now have depict the maps of Missouri with the OT and Arkansas with the OHT, and identify the wearer as TOT Trail Crew. We are giving them to volunteers who spend 40+ hours building the OHT. They would be just as applicable in Missouri. They cost our sponsor about \$5.00. They are a heavy cotton sage green color."

OZARK TRAIL TEAM STATUS REPORT (Deb Schnack and Niki Aberle):

Deb reported that Niki no longer works at the Conservation Federation of Missouri. She is now working for DNR-State Parks as the volunteer coordinator for the division. She will still be working with Ozark Trail Teams and is working on transferring the RTP Grant over to DNR. Niki's new contact information is the following: Niki Aberle, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks, PO Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0175, (573) 522-3259, nravern@mail.dnr.state.mo.us
Please continue to send her all OTT Reports.

Paul reiterated the point that he needs to know when and where the volunteers will be working. He does not like to see an OTT report that he did not previously know about. He doesn't want the volunteers if they don't report to him first. Niki pointed out the fact that it is stated in the **OTT Handbook**, that all volunteers should contact the land manager of the trail section before they go on an outing. Niki said she will continue to remind the volunteers to contact the manager and when she redoes the **OTT Program information** she will make that

point in bold lettering. The OTC agreed that there definitely needs to be more volunteer recognition.

DNR TRAIL COORDINATOR POSITION (Deb Schnack):

Deb reported that the paperwork was initiated for the Planner position in the Planning and Development Program at DNR. This will be a full time trail position whose duties will involve OT coordination.

NEW BUSINESS:

John Roth and John Donjoian are willing to get the new OT 501(c)(3) organization started. The OTC agreed that this needs to happen. (It will be patterned after the Appalachian Mountain Club). John Roth proposed that John Donjoian do some research on the new organization. John Donjoian agreed and he will try to put a plan together for the next meeting. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

NEXT MEETING:

The next Ozark Trail Council meeting will be held on Saturday, October 26, 2002 at Meramec State Park at 10:00 a.m. in the Visitor Center

Prepared by: _____ Niki Aberle

Approved by: _____
Douglas K. Eiken, Director, Division of State Parks
Chairman, Ozark Trail Council