
MISSOURI OZARK TRAIL COUNCIL

May 15, 1999

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Status Reports
- Ozark Trail Team Status
& Workshop Report (Niki)
- Next Ozark Trail Team Leader Workshop
- Overview of the Trans Ozark Trail as
Seen From Arkansas (Dwayne Woltjen)
- Next Meeting Date

MISSOURI OZARK TRAIL COUNCIL MEETING
May 15, 1999
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PARTICIPANTS:

Deb Schnack, Department of Natural Resources	Fred Stenger, Ozark Trails Club
Niki Aberle, Conservation Federation of Missouri	Carol Springer, MO Equine Council
Paul Nazarenko, US Forest Service	Karen Mobley, US Forest Service
Teresa Kight, MO Department of Conservation	Dick Chenoweth, USACOE
Dennis Hogan, St. Louis Co. Parks / MRRA	Greg Iffrig, Pioneer Forest
Dan Wedemeyer, DNR-Meramec S.P.	Duane Woltjen, OHTA / Ozark Soc.
Bruce Linders, Am. Youth Hostels	Jim McInroe, Am. Youth Hostels
Terry Laup, Am. Youth Hostels	

The May 15, 1999 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 October 3, 1998 Ozark Trail Council meeting were approved with one minor change; Karen Mobley-USFS reported that the trail loop to Grasshopper Hollow Natural Area is planned, not completed.

STATUS REPORT:

AMERICAN YOUTH HOSTELS (Bruce Linders, Jim McInroe & Terry Laup)

Bruce reported that the 11th annual Ozark Trail Hike is scheduled for October 9 – October 16. They will be covering the Eleven Point River Section and approximately ¾ of the Between the Rivers Section. The cost of the trip is \$150.00 for the whole week or \$90.00 for a half week. Half of the money generated from the trip (@ \$1,000) is donated to the OTC. Currently, the money from past trips (@\$2,000) is in an account held by AYH. Bruce would like to transfer the money the Conservation Foundation of Missouri Charitable Trust to be earmarked for the Ozark Trail. Niki and Deb will talk to Charlie Davidson and have him contact Bruce. Karen will talk to Ben Wyatt (US Forest Service) to make sure maintenance is performed on the two OT sections prior to the trip. If needed, Niki will work with Terry and Bruce on getting out a press release.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (Teresa Kight)

Teresa reported that she and Niki met with Denice King (OTT Leader) at Huzzah CA. Along, with the MDC land managers, they walked the OT section from the northern terminus south to Courtois Creek. The 4.5 miles of trail in this area are in excellent shape, but it does need some publicity (i.e. trailhead and OT markers). The trail had actually been built to a higher standard than typical OT, with the majority being about 5 feet wide. Denice's TEAM will have an easy time maintaining this section. Teresa will work with MDC's Design and Development Division to do a feasibility study and a cost estimate on constructing a bridge across Courtois Creek. Deb suggested that they look at the bridge at Johnson Shut-In's State Park. Teresa is also working with Paul to possibly find a new route to connect the Huzzah CA with US Forest Service land. (There is a potential link through the Bass property.) Teresa will research the old OT maps and send them to Paul and Deb.

US FOREST SERVICE (Paul Nazarenko and Karen Mobley)

Paul reported that Americorps has finished their GPS work on the Trace Creek Section. The new segment from Hazel Creek to Berryman is marked and easements are in place. They are currently waiting on manpower and time. Dan Wedemeyer suggested using Eagle Scouts to help construct the new trail. Niki suggested using the Rough Country Trail Riders, a new equestrian TRAIL TEAM that adopted the Trace Creek Section. Karen reported that Americorps has finished the GPS work, light maintenance, and marking on the Potosi, Salem, Karkaghne, Blair Creek, and part of the Eleven Point River Sections. Due to lack of maintenance, they lost the Blair Creek Section on the north end of the trail. Karen went on to report that Sutton's Bluff is too dangerous and they are in the process of rerouting that segment. With the help of TEA-21 funds, they are also working on a loop to Grasshopper Natural Area. As soon as NEPA approval is acquired, they will begin rerouting the segments around Bee Branch, north Blair Creek and the Blair Creek Fen. The question was raised as to whether or not the USFS could use OT markers instead of the gray diamonds. It would make the trail more visible for both users and volunteers. Karen will check on this.

PIONEER FOREST (Greg Iffrig)

Greg reported on their thirteen miles of the Blair Creek Section. The Sierra Club has a maintenance agreement on this segment. They maintain once a month September through April. Approximately twenty volunteers are in attendance at each outing. They finished the two-mile connector trail from the OT to Himont Tower. Currently they are looking at adding a loop trail from Himont Tower for weekend use. The volunteers were rewarded with a "thank you" picnic at Babler State Park.

MISSOURI EQUINE COUNCIL (Carol Springer)

Carol reported that the OT signs around the Berryman area are missing. She went on the report that she talked to the master wrangler at Trout Lodge and he would be interested in helping to maintain the trail. Carol has a group of riders that are planning to ride the Ozark Trail down to the Arkansas border. They will take alternative routes where horses are not allowed on the trail.

OZARK TRAILS CLUB (Fred Stenger)

Fred reported on the Victory Section. So far this spring, they have only been scouting the area. Because of the thin soil and heavy winds, they are having a problem with fallen trees. The tread is in good shapes and signage is in place. Brushy Creek Trailhead was shut down by the Forest Service because kids were using it to park and sell drugs. Fred's group knows of an alternative parking area, which is where they go when they are maintaining. He has been on the radio promoting the OT once this year and plans to go back soon to promote National Trails Day. Last year on National Trails Day, his group built a footbridge. This year they will kick off the start of their maintenance season. Since spring began, he has been getting two to five letters or emails per week concerning the trail.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS (Dick Chenoweth):

Dick reported that they are also having problems with fallen trees. They are hiring summer help to do maintenance. Portions of the trail are currently underwater. He suggested that visitors or volunteers should call the Hotline at 1-877-LAKEINFO to check lake levels. If the level is 362 or greater then the trail will be flooded. He reported that the crossing at Clark's Creek is somewhat "horse friendly", but they are still having problems in the streambed. When funds

become available, they will try to build a crossing suitable to all users. By the number of horse trailers in the parking lot, he has noticed that most users are equestrians. Dick will continue to solicit volunteers and coordinate them through Niki.

MERAMEC RIVER RECREATION ASSOC / ST LOUIS CO PARKS (Dennis Hogan)

Dennis reported that the town of Arnold (at the mouth of the Meramec River) recently went through a master planning process looking at developing the first 8 miles of the Meramec Greenway into parkland and eventually anchoring it to the OT. Because of easements, the trail corridor will cross the river numerous times on existing bridges. Because of flood by outs, they have acquired hundreds of acres on the St. Louis side of the Greenway. The parks that will be connected by the Greenway are the following: George Winter St. Louis County Park, Fenton City Park, Unger County Park, Booter Park, Lone Elk County Park, West Tyson County Park, Times Beach, Castlewood State Park, Wildwood area, Packwood property, Simpson County Park, Sherman Beach, Valley Park, Kirkwood's Green Tree, Eminager Park and Sunset Hills. This represents a golden opportunity to connect these areas to the OT. The MRRA is holding public meetings in the St. Louis area. Dennis also explained St. Louis 2004, which is a citizen based initiative to promote clean water, safe parks and community trails. (They do not focus directly on the Meramec River.)

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (Deb Schnack)

Since Deb did not receive an OT report from Johnson Shut-In's, there was no update given at that location. She went on to explain the White House's Millennium Trails Initiative that is designed to promote trails across the nation. The Katy Trail was nominated as a National Millennium Trail, but was not accepted. (Only twelve trails are designated as National Millennium Trails) Deb is resubmitting the Katy nomination and nominating the OT as Legacy Millennium Trails, the results on whether one is accepted have not yet been given. (Fifty-two trails will be accepted as Legacy trails – one from each state including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.) Deb went on the report that a large parking lot was completed at Wappapello Lake State Park to accommodate equestrians. This trail section now connects to the USACOE's portion of the Wappapello Lake Section and to MDC's University Forest. This allows for a nice trail complex of at least 100 miles open for hikers, bikers and horseback riders. DNR is currently working with St. Louis County on getting a trail at Castlewood State Park. The ultimate goal is to connect Castlewood to Times Beach on an old railroad corridor with the use of TEA-21 Funds. Deb let the OTC know that the Missouri Equine Guide is now available. It lists all equestrian trails located on public land (MDC, DNR, USFS, USACOE, and NPS). There was a discussion about the misuse of horses and mountain bikes on the trail. Deb informed the Council of the Trail Hotline at Rock Bridge State Park that tells the potential user if it is too wet to ride.

CONSERVATION FEDERATION OF MO – OZARK TRAIL TEAMS (Niki Aberle)

Niki reported on the first Ozark TRAIL TEAM Leader Workshop that took place on Saturday, April 17, 1999 at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park near Chesterfield, MO. The agenda consisted of Deb covering the history of the OT, the OTT Program and fundamentals of trail maintenance. Niki covered workday preparation; Dick covered trail and tool safety; Bruce covered trail sharing and

ethics; and Ron Moon (USFS) did a tool sharpening demonstration. Ron, Deb and Karen Mobley broke the group into three subgroups and took them on an on-site demonstration. Thirty-eight volunteers attended despite the dismal weather. So far the Trace Creek Section is the most popular section to adopt. As of May 1, 1999 there were twelve official TRAIL TEAMS, some with as many as forty members. Of course, the number of TRAIL TEAMS will increase after the next two workshops. The fall workshops are scheduled on September 18 at Wappapello Lake and October 2 at Babler State Park. Because of various articles and promotion at conferences, there are approximately 350 people in the OTT Database. These are individuals interested in becoming a TRAIL TEAM Leader or joining an existing TEAM. Niki emphasized the importance of promoting the OTT Program in any publication, i.e. newsletters, websites, etc. She reported that she has been talking to Martha Ruhe (NPS). Martha is the individual that is now in Mark Weaver's position. Martha was unable to attend this meeting, but she is researching the OT and reading through Mark's old files. Local contact is necessary for OTT Leaders. The Council agreed that it is best if the Leaders contact the land manager prior to an outing. Niki will reinforce this when talking to TEAMS. CFM has a new website – www.confedmo.com

NEW BUSINESS:

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION / OZARK SOCIETY (Duane Woltjen)

Along with other pioneers, Duane has long had a vision of a trail that connects the St. Louis Arch to Fort Smith, Arkansas by way of the Ozarks. Currently there are approximately 180 miles of trail in Arkansas from Fort Smith to Tyler Bend (on the Buffalo River). There is also about twelve miles of trail going from the dam at Norfork Lake north to Tracey Creek. Duane asked the OTC who is working on the Missouri side of the OT going south to Arkansas. Because of various reasons, NPS and USFS have stalled trail building northbound at Buffalo National Park for the last five years (although the extension of the trail is in the management plan). Because of this resistance, there will remain a gap between the MO trail and the AR trail until there is enough public comment to change the views of these agencies. There is a need for a market survey; the land managers do not think the trail would receive enough use. Duane thinks that the NPS could possibly be persuaded to develop trail on the north side of the Buffalo River (from Hwy 67 to the mouth of the river), but not the south side. There is an old existing road along with many historical sites from the rush-mining district. After the mouth of the Buffalo is reached there is really no where to go except to wade across the Buffalo or the White River. The OHTA would like Missouri to help persuade the federal agencies in Arkansas to take action on the Trans-Ozark Trail. So far, budget problems are their main concern, but other things can be done without spending money. Karen (who is originally from Arkansas) acknowledged that in the past there has been much public resentment to federal agencies because of prior actions. Private citizens action groups are extremely active in that area, even though the whole trail will be on public land. Duane gave Deb a packet of information with the marked trail along with mileage and GPS coordinates. Duane would like to expedite the process. He suggested that the OTC send a letter to Arkansas updating them on MO's progress and the OTC's interest in what Arkansas is doing. The letter

will be drafted by Deb and the OTC (on their official letterhead) and sent to the OHTA, ATC, USFS, NPS, and the Arkansas State Trails Coordinator. (Duane provided Deb with names and addresses.) The Council agreed to hold a meeting with Arkansas representatives (OHTA, ATC, USFS, and NPS) this winter. Duane borrowed the OT slide show so that he could show Arkansas what Missouri has accomplished and how we are counting on the successful connection of the two trails.

NEXT MEETING:

The next Ozark Trail Council meeting will be held on October 23, 1999 at Meramec State Park at 10:00 a.m. at the Visitor Center

Prepared by: _____ Niki Aberle _____

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