

MISSOURI OZARK TRAIL COUNCIL MEETING
October 26, 2002
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PARTICIPANTS:

Niki Aberle, Dept. of Natural Resources
Jim McInroe, Hostelling International
John Donjoian, IMBA Rep for MO, GORC
Paul Stupperich, Sierra Club
John Roth, Volunteer
Greg Echele, Volunteer
Thomas Haines, USDA Forest Service
Danny McMurphy, Volunteer
J.N. Lapeyre, Volunteer
Wayne Miller, Sierra Club

Melanie Robinson, Dept. of Natural Resources
Bruce Linders, Hostelling International
Robert Gestel, Sierra Club
Bill Fordyce, Volunteer
Suzanne Smith, Sierra Club
Dian Albert, Hike Club of St. Louis
Robert Smith, Volunteer
Margo Carroll, Pebble Publishing
Duane & Judy Woltjen, OHTA
Paul Nazarenko, USDA Forest Service

The October 26, 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 Niki Aberle, Volunteer Coordinator, Division of State Parks. Deb Schnack was unable to attend. Following the introductions the minutes of the April 27, 2002 Ozark Trail Council meeting were approved.

STATUS REPORTS:

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

John updated the group on the Potosi Ranger District. In the Karkaghne section, Sutton Bluff to Hwy. 72 is complete. The rest is unfinished. They have flagged 25 miles on the North Karkaghne section. NEPA has been completed by the USFS. It is now in a review stage with other organizations. November 15, 2002 is the target completion date for the paperwork then they will start building the trail. John reported that they are putting together a construction plan for the next year. They are planning a reroute in the Courtois Section from Hazel Creek to Onondaga. Americorps did some tread maintenance south of Council Bluff Lake this year. GORC (Gateway Off Road Cycling) also helped out with maintenance. John is looking for volunteers.

Regarding the Bass property, DNR sent a sample trail easement to Bass but have had no response. John suggested another plan so that the Bass' wouldn't have to sign over their property. John asked Bob Gestel what Pioneer Forest had done. Bob said that they have had an easement with DNR in place since 1980. Bob read the easement agreement aloud.

Paul reported that he, John Roth, John Donjoian and Jim McInroe have put in over 700 hours of trail layout time. This new trail will be constructed with the SWECO dozer and it will definitely be a multi-use trail (as required by the USFS). Paul mentioned that there would be timber cuts along the OT due to the oak decline. In summary, the Potosi Ranger District now has approximately 83 miles of continuous trail (except N. Karkaghne) in one USFS District. Due to budget cuts for all agencies, volunteers are now crucial for getting the trail completed.

SIERRA CLUB (Bob Gestel and Paul Stupperich)

Bob reiterated the point that they have an agreement with DNR to maintain the Ozark Trail in the Pioneer Forest from the north box to the south box, approx. 14 miles. Since the last meeting, the entire section has been completed. Last month, they started again at the north box and found an abundant amount of windfalls (minor enough to drag out or cut with a bow saw). They cleared Laxton Hollow Trail and ran out of time at the junction of the OT and the Laxton Hollow Trail. They will continue working south to the end of the south box. Bob announced their next planned workday and Halloween party.

Paul reported that most of their outings take place November through March. The access to the trail is not good, unless a 4-wheel drive vehicle is available. They sometimes have to hike 3 or 4 miles one way, just to get to the trail. Even so, they have 10-12 volunteers that help with maintenance; it just takes time because of the access problem. The Boy Scouts are helping them with the Brushy Creek Trail. Paul would like anyone out on the trail to do inspections and report back to him.

OZARK TRAILS CLUB (Fred Stenger)

No report. Fred was unable to attend.

HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL (Bruce Linders, Jim McInroe)

Bruce reported that they had their 14th Annual Ozark Trail Hike. He showed the OTC this year's promotional T-shirt, which had a confederate soldier on it since they were hiking close to Civil War battlefields. They are for sale for \$15/shirt. They had great participation this year. They had 24 people stay over in the town of Piedmont, which was very beneficial to the community. He reported that the entire Blair Creek Section was in bad shape. Also, Bruce reported that they had a negative experience with the NPS campground at Owl's Bend; the cost was \$12/night/site and there were no toilets, just Johnny on the Spots (which were extremely full). He pointed out that this situation is not good for promotion of the OT. The NPS and MDC portions of the trail they traversed were in pretty bad condition. Bruce suggested having a major working group attend to that area of trail. The next hike is scheduled for October 11-19, 2003 and they will be hiking the Taum Sauk Section for sure.

Furthermore, Bruce reported that he did not think the Wappapello Lake Section was designed for hikers. He said it lacks switchbacks and going up and down hills was strenuous. Bruce talked with Dick Chenoweth about this and the US Army Corp of Engineers will work on adding some switchbacks, which will add a couple more miles to the trail.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (Teresa Kight)

No report. No longer sure if MDC will be attending OTC meetings.

John Roth did contact Bob Aubuchon, MDC, and he reported that they are looking for grant money for the Courtois Creek crossing.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS (Dick Chenoweth):

Dick was unable to attend. Niki read his report.

"Currently the trail is clear and open. The areas of the trail that need to be cleared, according to members of the co-sponsored Ozark Trail Backpack Trip, are on U.S. Forest Service portions of trail. This was discussed at a meeting with the U.S. Forest Service and Corps of Engineers on October 23, 2002. Also, the U.S. Forest Service at the Poplar Bluff District Ranger office plan on using their GPS equipment to map the entire length of the Wappapello Lake Section in the near future. No date had been scheduled as yet, however the Corps of Engineers staff at Wappapello Lake will assist and provide support.

Bruce Linders, with Hostelling International, the trip leader and coordinator, advised the trail was in 'Great Shape'. However, the group noted the lack of sufficient switchbacks and requested the installation of some, if and when possible.

In the distant future, the crossing of the Ozark Trail at U.S. Highway 67 may go under the highway and probably will accommodate horses with riders. For further information, or discussion, please contact Natural Resources Specialist James Gracey at (573) 222-8562.

Presently, an Eagle Scout candidate with Troop #371 from Dexter, Missouri has contacted the Corps of Engineers at Wappapello Lake and expressed an interest in doing a project on the Ozark Trail for his eagle project. One of the suggestions was to locate, construct, and maintain and overlook, vista, or watchable wildlife area along the Ozark Trail at the lake. We hope to hear from him soon but no later than November 2002.

Also, the Mingo Saddle Club of Puxico, Missouri has officially signed the Volunteer Agreement, September 6, 2002, to maintain and eventually adopt 10 miles of the Ozark Trail from Parking Area #58 north to Highway 34 bridge site. The Mountain Park Baptist Academy of Patterson, Missouri is maintaining a section of trail adjacent to their property line and the Corps of Engineers boundary line of 1.5 to 2.0 miles and plans to adopt this section of trail, with is concurrent with the Mingo Saddle Club section.

The Clarks Creek Crossing has been relocated (see enclosed map). Also the signing for the old crossing and approach have been removed. Presently this relocation is providing a safer crossing, although wet, for hikers, mountain bikes, and equestrians. For planning your trip, we advise phoning the toll free hotline at 1-877-LAKE INFO (1-877-525-4363) or the Wappapello Lake Management Office at (573) 222-8562 to obtain lake and/or trail information and conditions."

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION (Duane Woltjen)

Duane reported that there was a resolution in Baxter County, Arkansas opposing the OHT. Getting the subject referred to a committee dedicated to the Sylamore District defeated the resolution. The OHTA completed seventeen miles of trail last year. This winter they have completed 1.3 miles with twelve miles left to go. (They have a very successful base camp for their volunteers.) The National Park Service (NPS) has produced a document after nearly two years. They have sent it to NPS headquarters in Omaha, NE for comment. It is now on its second round of comments. Then, the NPS will schedule public hearings for the new trail between Hwy. 65 and the Sylamore Ranger District, where they are already building 25 miles of trail.

The OHTA tried to launch a new chapter in Mountain Home, AR and held a public meeting. Attendance was fair. They later found out that simultaneously (one day prior to their meeting) that another trail club met in Mountain Home. This shows great momentum for trail building. Another OHTA chapter meeting will be held in Mountain Home sometime this November.

Trail construction has exceeded over 3,000 man-hours with 85 volunteers participating last year. Their main way of promoting the OHTA is by word of mouth and through the Internet.

DNR TRAIL COORDINATOR STATUS (Niki Aberle):

Niki reported that there would be a Trail Coordinator hired by the next meeting, unless a hiring freeze occurs.

RECREATION TRAIL PROGRAM GRANTS

Niki reported that she (the Market Development Program at DSP) applied for a RTP Grant that would allow her to update the general OT brochure into a full color fold out brochure (similar to the Katy Trail State Park brochure). On a side note, Niki also introduced Melanie Robinson, Special Events Coordinator for the Market Development Program at DSP, and also Niki's immediate supervisor.

No other applications were reported.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT TRAIL ORGANIZATION STATUS – JOHN DONJOIAN

John made a presentation to the OTC about forming a nonprofit group to support the OT. He explained that a nonprofit organization status would directly benefit the OT by giving them a better avenue for grants and private funding. Currently, there are 334 completed miles of trail on the OT. It is the top 20 trails in length for the United States, but unlike the others the OT does not have a nonprofit status. A nonprofit organization, currently named the Ozark Trail Association (OTA), would help with administration of the trail system as a whole and be better suited to solicit and organize volunteers. The OTA concept is inspired by the Ohio Trails Partnership where they provide training of crew leaders throughout the year and promote the trail system on a grassroots level. This could increase usage, which will in turn help keep the trail clear. Also, the OTA could solicit for donations, charge membership fees, organize numerous outings, incorporate hikes and rides with workdays. All they need is cooperation from the land managers/stewards.

Furthermore, John stated the seven keys to success given to him by the Ohio Trails Partnership. They are the following

- Everyone must be focused on the bigger picture
- Everyone must be heard and listened to
- Check your egos at the door
- Vow to support each others' causes
- Build slowly with projects that you can make a success (start small)
- Must be a handshakes and hugs partnership

John also told the OTC the proposed plan to kick off the OTA. First, they need a by in from the OTC. Then, they must get their drafted mission statement finalized, hold an organizational meeting as soon as possible, and create and staff the initial organization. John Roth has stepped forward to spearhead this project. The initial focus of the OTA will be to finish the Karkaghne Section (a 26-mile addition). John Roth also revealed the sample OTA logo.

John Roth made a motion that the OTC officially sanction the creation of the OTA, a volunteer based group to support, develop and maintain the OT. Bob Gestel seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion carried.

John Roth is working with the Armstrong-Teasedale Firm in St. Louis. They have agreed to do the corporation work free of charge less the filing fee. He announced the first meeting of the OTA would be in mid-November. John D. reported that GORC has already developed a full day trail training school. This training can be adapted for the OT. They will focus on training crew leaders, but anyone will be invited. Also, Paul Nazarenko and John Roth will work on getting a 3-day USFS chainsaw certification class together to train crew leaders. John and John will work with Duane Woltjen and his experience with the OHTA.

With the inception of the OTA, John Roth is now calling for trail statuses from agencies once a month. He will call/email the land managers and put the updated information on the website, www.ozarktrail.com. The website will be up and running by 2003. He is soliciting for volunteers and members with the help of Danny McMurphy's hiking trail website and with the help Scott Merrit's website. Margo Carroll is working on an Ozark Trail book and is doing GPS in certain sections of the trail. John Roth and Margo will share their GPS data.

Furthermore, John reported that he contacted Kris Swanson (USFS) about a blanket volunteer agreement. He explained that this is a move in the right direction as most of the OT is on USFS land.

HIKE CLUB OF ST. LOUIS – DIAN ALBERT

Dian introduced the OTC to a new organization in St. Louis. The Hike Club of St. Louis formed with the idea of getting a group of people who enjoy hiking together for outings. There are no fees for membership. It is an Internet based group with 275 members.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

NEXT MEETING:

The next Ozark Trail Council meeting will be held on Saturday, March 22, 2003, at Meramec State Park at 10:00 a.m. in the Visitor Center

Prepared by: _____ Niki Aberle

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