

Current River Future to be MPA Annual Meeting Feature

The signs are up at Highway 19, the conceptual development plan is nearing completion, and initial work has begun on the new Current River State Park upstream from Round Spring, but it will be several years before the park is opened to the public. MPA members will be treated to an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the new park during the annual meeting in November, which will also spotlight the future of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR), a national park that holds a scenic easement on part of the new state park.

When ONSR was established by Congress in 1964, part of the deal included the transfer of three state parks—Round Spring, Big Spring, and Alley Spring—to the National Park Service, leaving the state with only one park on the most iconic river in the state, Montauk at the headwaters. MPA members will gather at Montauk, where the organization was founded more than a quarter century ago, to consider the future of the new Current River State Park and the entire ONSR, which has embarked on the development of its second 25-year General Management Plan.

At about 80,000 acres along 134 miles of the Current and Jack's



Temporary interpretive sign at park entrance on Highway 19.

Fork rivers, the ONSR is Missouri's largest park, but it is also the most troubled. MPA President Terry Whaley's message (page 2) probes one of the problems, overcrowding and boorish behavior. While the National Park Service (NPS) has regulations ostensibly to limit the number of canoes rented by concessioners, there are no such regulations on horse liveries. One facility near Eminence regularly holds weekend events attracting more than 3,000 equestrians with their animals. At these times, predictably, the fecal coliform count in the river goes far beyond levels safe for human contact. The NPS has even had DNA studies done to demonstrate that the pollutants come from horses, but has so far been unable to get a handle on the problem.

When the riverways was established, there were relatively few

access points, and the number was intended to remain strictly limited. But over the years trucks, jeeps and ATV riders have degraded riverine areas with a maze of "renegade" roads, hundreds of them, so that it is virtually impossible for canoeists to find a gravel bar campsite that is not subject to invasion from the rear. Prosecutors and courts have proven unresponsive to the problem, so the park service has lost the will to pursue violators.

Worse, at least one county has sent its own crew to bulldoze new roads to the river, such as one gouged out a year ago across federal property at Flying W to connect on the other side to another freshly graded and graveled road within a few feet of the historic Bluff School. NPS was trying to prevent vehicle access in the area but has so far done nothing about

MPA President's Message

Welcome to the Current River

by Terry Whaley

You'll see information about our annual meeting on the Current River in this newsletter. I hope you can take the opportunity to attend with us and gain some insight into the activities our state park division has in store as they plan, develop, and open to the public our new Current River State Park.

I was on the Current River just last week and obtained a river experience I was unprepared for. Just fifteen minutes into the float from Akers Ferry I concluded that something was wrong and *the National Park Service needs our help*.

Just for a bit of background, I'm not new to the rivers. I have been floating our state's rivers for the past thirty-two years. We pretty much raised my daughter on the Current, Jack's Fork and Meramec rivers with weekend and extended overnight trips. So, I have experienced the river when I was the only canoe for miles as well as on busy weekends. However, I have never experienced such a crowded, misused, and under-appreciated river by such an inconsiderate, uninformed, and disrespectful hoard of visitors to a national park in my life.

It was disheartening and embarrassing to see one of our state's great resources being allowed to suffer in such a way. It was an unmanageable situation of loud voices, music, and the various activities one would associate with a college fraternity party. I attempted to hold up on a gravel bar, thinking the masses would eventually all pass by, but there was a consistent flow of large groups of 12-25 canoes all day. Never in the first eleven miles were there not several other canoes within visual and verbal range of me. Much to my relief, just fifty yards downstream of the Pulltite access it was the "good old river" again.

Now, I am thinking....who is at fault here? Maybe I am just middle-aged and cranky, and the situation was not that unusual. Maybe the National Park Service, as it is their charge to manage this resource. Maybe the visitors lack the education and appreciation of the river due to a knock on the head when they were young. Perhaps they were raised by aliens from another planet---there were several out-of-state license plates in the parking lot. Maybe the "last child in the woods" effect we hear about really started 25 years ago and we have to live with another generation of it.

Regardless of who might be at fault we all need to get involved and make it right. I am in hopes that our new Current River State Park and the daily presence of professionally trained resource managers and interpreters can help jump start a process whereby future visitors to our National Scenic Riverways are able to respect, enjoy and save the river for a future generation to grow up with.

I encourage you to find a way to become involved in positive activities — especially the upcoming NPS planning process — and work with the National Park Service, our Missouri Park Division, outfitters, conservation organizations and MPA to take back and protect the river experience that belongs to the Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

*Cave Spring
on the Current
River, a canoe-
ists paradise
(if you are
lucky).*



("Current" from Page 1)

this egregious activity. At the new Current River State Park a county crew bulldozed another new road down a steep hill through a potential natural area and fen to the river, causing major damage; the state has since removed access.

On lands within the ONSR boundary that it does not own outright, such as at Bluff School, the National Park Service used taxpayers' money to purchase scenic easements in order to prevent new development, but it has failed to adequately protect the public interest in



Road bulldozed by a county crew in 2007 across federal property at Flying W where no road existed before.

these easement lands. In addition to all the renegade roads, some cabin owners have built expensive new homes without

challenge, and even the Missouri Department of Conservation tore down an old barn and built a discordant new one at its Jerry J. Presley Conservation Education Center in violation of the easement.

When MDC sought to tear down most of the remaining structures at the Presley Center in order to build wholly new facilities, it was historic preservationists and river lovers, not the NPS, who came to the rescue. In addition to pointing to impending easement violations, they made the case for the historic significance of the old Alton Box Board Club buildings as rare survivals of a type of rustic private retreat once common along the rivers and succeeded in nominating the site to the National Register of Historic Places. With neither the mission, the interest, nor the will to protect the site, MDC agreed in 2007 to transfer it, along with about 780 acres fronting on the river and extending back toward (but not to) Highway 19, to DNR for the new Current River State Park.

The state park division estimated it would require \$7 million to restore the historic Alton Club buildings and develop other infrastructure and facilities for the new park, and originally intended to raise the funds through the state park foundation. But after approval in January 2008 of the \$180 million settlement with Ameren for damages suffered to Johnson's Shut-ins by the failure of Ameren's Taum Sauk Reservoir, state officials allocated settlement funds to the project.

The rugged topography of the Current River hills and easement restrictions on more level land on the southern third of the property near the river mean that new facilities will be quite limited; most will be on or near the bed of a former lake outside the easement area. They will likely include a new Jerry J. Presley Education Center (the name of a former MDC director required by terms of the transfer agreement with MDC), an amphitheater, a small campground for pop-up trailers, fifteen cabins of various types, and of course parking. There will also be a special event and group camp area elsewhere on the property and several locations for walk-in tent camping, plus a trail center located in the new barn built by MDC. There will be a canoe landing at the river, but no canoe launching facilities. To avoid polluting the river, the park will utilize innovative reciprocating wetland wastewater facilities with subsurface disposal.

Natural history staff are excited about the potential for restoration and interpretation of the remarkably diverse scenic and natural features of the park (though the park will be open for hunting 60 days a year by terms of the agreement with MDC), and cultural history staff are preparing for restoration and interpretation of the historic Alton Club in full cooperation with the terms of the NPS scenic easement.

Meanwhile, the Ozark National Scenic Riverways has welcomed a new superintendent, Reed Detring, who will oversee the protracted and potentially contentious process of developing a new general management plan. Detring was born and educated in Missouri (history B.A. from UMC) and began his career with Missouri state parks, serving as site administrator at Mark Twain Birthplace. He will join the MPA group for a panel on the future of the riverways at Montauk and the field trip to the new state park.

As the recent history of the new Current River State Park demonstrates, there is no substitute for effective citizen action if the Ozark National Scenic Riverways is to reverse decades of decline and realize the future envisioned in its original enabling legislation.

Arrow Rock CAFO Permit Set to Expire

Dennis Gessling, who was granted a permit by DNR last August for construction of a 4,800-hog concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) less than two miles from Arrow Rock, failed to apply for renewal of his permit, which expires at the end of August. Whether deterred by the several lawsuits filed by MPA and others (see *Heritage*, December 2007) or other considerations, Gessling never began construction.

MPA, Friends of Arrow Rock, and the Village of Arrow Rock filed a lawsuit in October 2009 against the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and its director to establish the responsibility of DNR and its director to preserve and protect state parks and historic sites and not to grant permits for the construction and operation of CAFOs that would threaten them. The attorney general having declined to defend DNR, the case has been handled by a private firm, which filed an initial motion to dismiss; the court denied that motion. Most recently, the firm filed another motion to dismiss on the basis that the case is now moot since Gessling's permit will expire August 30. MPA and its co-petitioners had filed a motion for summary judgment in this case, and the court by order of July 31 announced it will rule on that motion. Stay tuned.

In related news, the report of a major study by the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production and the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in April found that the current CAFO system poses unacceptable risks to public health, the environment, rural communities, and animal welfare, and that industrial farm interests exert significant influence over agricultural research, policy, and regulation. The report, of course, was challenged by the industry for not allowing enough industry input.

Meanwhile, CAFOs near Battle of Athens in northeast Missouri and

Roaring River in the southwest continue to operate, despite increasing opposition by park supporters and local residents. In late June, in view of heavy rains and flooding, CAFO operators in twenty north Missouri counties were allowed by DNR to spread animal waste on saturated fields, despite virtually certain runoff in order to prevent catastrophic failure of waste lagoons; in late July the waiver was extended. At press time, the Roaring River Parks Alliance continued to wait for the Administrative Hearing Commission's date for its hearing to be announced.

Ameren Files for Relicensing of Taum Sauk Reservoir

As anticipated, Ameren filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on June 24 for relicensing of its Taum Sauk pumped storage hydroelectric plant, even as reconstruction of its failed upper reservoir continues around the clock. Citizens in the area report massive scars, constant traffic and noise, and bright lights obliterating the night sky for miles around, as far away as Bell Mountain Wilderness.

The current license, which expires June 30, 2010, was issued in 1965 (after the plant was already in operation) retroactive to July 1, 1960, owing to a U.S. Supreme Court decision that the plant indeed required a license; as a result, there was little opportunity for public input on potential impacts of the project (see *Heritage*, December 2007). When Ameren announced its intention to rebuild the upper reservoir before the relicensing process, MPA asked FERC for a formal Environmental Impact Statement so that a full range of impacts could be considered before the rebuild, lest the relicensing process again become a *fait accompli*. But FERC held that the rebuild was simply "repair" of an existing facility, and authorized Ameren to proceed. At that point, MPA and the Great Rivers Environmental Law Center sued FERC, contending

the agency erred in its decision and violated the National Environmental Policy Act.

MPA's suit was subsequently consolidated with one filed by the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, also represented by Great Rivers, in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit. There have been a number of briefs and responses from both sides concerning MPA's standing to sue, which Ameren questions, and whether construction and operation of the plant are "connected actions," as MPA and the Coalition contend.

Among other arguments, Ameren recently contended that the arguments of MPA and the Coalition are now moot, since Ameren's June 24 application for relicensing has begun the process by which FERC will fully consider environmental impacts of future project operations. (Yet, FERC's own schedule for the relicensing procedure suggests that it will not even *begin* its environmental analysis until 2011, **a year after Ameren's license expires**. MPA will point this out in its comments on the relicensing process due August 25.) The case has been set for argument in St. Louis on September 24.

In a related matter, in January 2008 the circuit judge in Reynolds County approved the \$180 million settlement for damages from Ameren to the State of Missouri that MPA had questioned (see *Heritage*, December 2007), and work continues on the rebuilding of Johnson's Shut-ins State Park and the Rock Island extension of the Katy Trail from Windsor to Pleasant Hill. By June the costs of Ameren's contractor at the Shut-ins, Mactek, had mushroomed so far out of control that DNR announced it would exercise its right to act as contractor. After subsequent negotiations, Mactek agreed to complete the work satisfactorily for the originally budgeted price. DNR has also allocated funds from the settlement for the development of the new Current River State Park.

MPA 26th Annual Meeting at Montauk State Park November 7-9, 2008

To reserve park lodging call the lodge at 573-548-2434 and note the Missouri Parks Association Annual Meeting. The campground is open year-round although showerhouse facilities will be closed. You may reserve a campsite by calling toll-free 877-422-6766 or online at www.mostateparks.com. Meals will not be available except by advance registration (use form below), since the lodge will be on winter hours.

Friday, November 7

5:30pm Reception in Searcy Building

6:00pm Dinner buffet at the lodge (preregistration required, as park is on winter hours)

7:00pm Overview of Montauk State Park, Searcy Building, by Steve Bost, Park Naturalist.

Saturday, November 8

7:30am Breakfast buffet at the lodge (preregistration required)

8:00am Registration: Searcy Building (across road from park lodge)

8:45am Welcome and introduction to the park, MPA Pres. Terry Whaley; John Bufkin, Park Superintendent

9:00am State of the Parks Address and discussion: Doug Eiken, Director of State Parks

10:15 Break

10:30 Panel: Status and Threats to the Ozark National Scenic Riverways: ONSR Superintendent Reed Detring, DSP regional director Denny Bopp, Ozark Regional Land Trust Director Ted Heisel, and writer Kathy Love.

12noon Depart for Current River State Park in vans (box lunch along the way). MPA members will be offered an insider's view of the planning, restoration, and development of this new park on the Current River, which is not yet open to the public.

5:30pm Reception in Searcy Building

6:00pm Annual dinner; emcee: MPA President Terry Whaley

Speaker: John Karel, "Why We Must Save the Current River, Again"

Sunday, November 9

7:30am Breakfast buffet at the lodge

8:30am Annual meeting of members: Searcy Building

9:30am Meeting of MPA board of directors (all are welcome to stay)

12Noon Adjourn

Registration Form

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Registration Fee	_____ persons	@ \$15	\$ _____
Dinner Friday	_____ persons	@ \$13	\$ _____
Breakfast Saturday	_____ persons	@ \$8.50	\$ _____
Box Lunch Saturday	_____ persons	@ \$7	\$ _____
Dinner Saturday	_____ persons	@ \$14	\$ _____
Breakfast Sunday	_____ persons	@ \$8.50	\$ _____
Total		\$66.00	\$ _____

Make check payable to **Missouri Parks Association** and mail with form by October 24 to Eleanor Hoefle, MPA treasurer, 1234 Hoyt Dr., St. Louis, MO 63137. **Because the lodge will be on winter hours, advance registration is required for meals.** For questions or late registration call Eleanor Hoefle, 314-869-6534.

MPA Announces Statewide Awards

At the Joseph Jaeger Academy in Columbia in April, MPA recognized State Park Employees of the Year in five categories—including, for the first time, a new interpretive category won by **Larry Webb**, interpretive resource specialist at Ha Ha Tonka. Webb, who also supervises natural resource stewardship at the park, including prescribed burns and monitoring and research projects, uses his interpretive skills to "put a voice" to the natural and cultural resources the park protects.

Danny Jaco, ranger at Lake Wappapello, was recognized in the field category. In addition to his dedicated service at Wappapello, he has been called on for help at Johnson's Shut-Ins and after the Carthersville tornado and he is often asked to train new rangers.

Laura Hendrickson, natural resource manager at Pomme de Terre, was chosen employee of the year in the facility head category because of her role in saving a man from drowning while she was swimming with her children on her day off. It took four dives before she was able to locate the victim and bring him to shore, where he was resuscitated.

Russell Burge, park maintenance worker at Big Lake, won in the maintenance and construction category for his initiative during flooding in May 2007. Even though off duty, he drew on his 22 years of experience at the park to initiate emergency measures, ensure the safety of park visitors and minimize damage, then led the maintenance staff in a huge cleanup effort.

Don Stier, planning section chief for the Planning and Development Program, was honored in the central office category because of his creative solutions to projects, his calm, steadfast manner and his team approach to problem solving.

MPA's Susan Flader (right) and park director Doug Eiken (left) presented Employee of the Year awards to (l to r) Russell Burge, Don Stier, Laura Hendrickson, Larry Webb and Danny Jaco.



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*Current River is MPA Meeting Feature
Updates On Arrow Rock and Taum Sauk*

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