

Missouri Wilderness Coalition

Newsletter #8

Winter 2008

Citizens Show Their Support

There have been some well-written opinion pieces and letters to the editor in Missouri's newspapers over the last couple of months. We'd like to share a few of these with you.

Roy Gerdel, Missouri state coordinator of Republicans For Environmental Protection (REP) had his excellent letter published in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *Springfield News-Leader*, and the *Southeast Missourian*. It's a beauty. You can read it at the [REP website](#).



Tom Kruzen of Mountain View submitted a great Op-Ed piece to the *Springfield News-Leader*: "Wilderness status is crucial for national forest's protection". Tom's article is available on the [Springfield News-Leader website](#).

Finally, Terry Whaley, executive director for Ozarks Greenways and a resident of Springfield, did an Op-Ed, "Wilderness is worth protecting" for the *Springfield News-Leader*, in response to some misinformed earlier reports. This outstanding Op-Ed generated much favorable comment, and was picked up by the national organization *Campaign For America's Wilderness*. One commenter declared: "This is probably the best written piece on this I've seen." Read the entire article at the [Springfield News-Leader website](#).

This is just a sampling of the many good articles and letters that have been circulating around the state and country. Thanks to all who have made such contributions, and cheers to Roy, Tom, and Terry for these outstanding pieces.



Missouri Wilderness In The News

On December 15, 8th District Representative Jo Ann Emerson's weekly radio address was regarding Missouri's forests, entitled: "*The Forests and the Trees*". This first caught our attention in the *Shannon County Current Wave* where it appeared as a guest Opinion piece. It has been printed in several south Missouri papers. While there are some issues that can be inferred from the article which MWC may not support, Ms. Emerson does make a clear endorsement of the value of Wilderness Areas and wildlands in the overall spectrum of Missouri's forest assets, both from an environmental and economic perspective. With this in mind, MWC sent a letter to Jo Ann, expressing our support for that aspect of her article. The column can be found at [Jo Ann's official website](#). Our letter to Rep. Emerson can be downloaded from [MWC's website](#).

Sue Gustafson had two great articles about the Wilderness Proposal in recent editions of [Audubon Society of Missouri's](#) newsletter, *The Bluebird*, and [St. Louis Audubon Society's](#) newsletter, *Talefeathers*. Both of these Audubon organizations have endorsed the Wilderness proposal. Sue's articles make the critical point that all seven of the proposed areas "...lie within designated Important Bird Areas and provide habitat for species of concern such as Cerulean Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Bachman's Sparrow." Thanks Sue, for your work on these fine articles!

Finally, the December issue of [River Hills Traveler](#) had a short opinion piece about the Wilderness Proposal - specifically about the lands within RHT's readership area

(southeast Missouri Ozarks). The piece was written by the newspaper's retiring editor, Bob Todd. RHT has also contacted MWC about a possible Wilderness article for an upcoming issue.



MWC Affiliates and Other Business

Since our last newsletter, one new business has endorsed the proposal, bringing our total number now to 26, as per [this linked list](#). Welcome aboard to Mike McCarthy and [Photozarks!](#) We'd also like to thank Harry O'Toole, Bob Roth, Gary Grigsby, George Alderson, and Al Honican for financial contributions made since the last newsletter.

A reminder that we have plenty of printed copies of Jim Scheff's *Wilderness for Missouri*, and distribution has been in full force. Response to this newspaper has been enthusiastic, and it has already proven to be an invaluable resource for getting the wilderness message out in an inexpensive and convenient format. Contact us if you need some.

Another useful media item is the *Wilderness for Missouri* PowerPoint that is beginning to get use around the state. We have edited an original version that Jim Scheff put together and used it at the recent Missouri Trails Summit. If you would like to use the slideshow for presentations, please contact us.

Van East Trip

Scott Campbell and John Roth took a day hike into the Van East Mountain Proposed Wilderness a few weeks ago - took some great pictures, and provided some excellent comments about the trip. Many thanks to Scott and John for letting MWC reprint a portion of their comments.

Scott: "The place feels just as wild as Trackler Mtn. There are a few jeep paths up there and that's all the trails we saw. Great place to bushwhack. The glades offer great views and on sunny spring and fall days I imagine it would be like heaven up there. Lots of perfect spots to sit for a spell in the glades and have lunch or just relax. The pines on the distant hills were wondrous to behold. Due to the wet weather the mosses and lichens were really glowing green and though the forest was at rest and the silence of winter was upon us we did get to enjoy the sound of water as it flowed down the mountain through rock strewn notches seemingly talking and laughing all the way to the creek in the valley below."

And John: "A relatively small area, but with a viewshed that pulls in so much---Blue and Smith Mountains are prominent to the south but even Trackler and Kelley can be seen from the magnificent glades on the south-face of Van East. Unlike the view from Goggins or Bell, the surrounding "billion year old" mountains seem so close, so intimate. (If you've seen Marlow from Black, you'll know what I mean.) Van East was a visual feast, especially after a few days of rain. The cascading waterfalls to the north, especially by the "slot" running uphill from the spring we found, were breathtaking. I could probably write a short novel about Van East.....Absolutely stunning."

Upcoming Wilderness Events

**Unless otherwise noted, these events are not sponsored by Missouri Wilderness Coalition. We list them here for general Wilderness information.*

February 9

Sierra Club Outing: *"Smith Creek Proposed Wilderness Area, Boone County, MO. Day trip hike to a stream that has carved a beautiful bluff-lined valley through the otherwise rolling uplands of central Missouri. \$5 donation requested. Eileen McManus, (816) 523-7823 eileen4250@sbcglobal.net."*

February 22 - 24

2008 [Conservation Federation of Missouri's](#) Annual Convention. Last year's meeting saw the Federation's endorsement of the Coalition's Wilderness Proposal. This endorsement is a key piece to our Wilderness efforts, and we are all grateful for the support the Federation has shown, including hosting a statewide Wilderness meeting last September. The convention will be held at The Lodge of Four Seasons in Lake Ozark, Missouri. Call (573) 634-2322 or (800) 575-2322 for more info.

February 23

Nixa, Missouri will have an Outdoor Gear Swap Meet in February. MWC will have a table at this show, and we look forward to this opportunity to reach more outdoor-minded folks in the southwest Missouri area. **Your help is needed!** We currently have one volunteer who will be working the table, but that person could use some assistance. This is a good opportunity for our SW supporters to get out and help spread the word. If you think you can help out in any way, please send a note to scottm@mowild.org. For more information about the swap meet, call 725-5486.

February 24

Sierra Club Outing: *"Day Hike, Bell Mt. We will start at the upper parking lot and descend to the lot at Hyw A where will have shuttled some of our cars. Some experience traveling over rugged terrain required. Bring lunch, water, rain gear and extra warm clothing. Bob Gestel (636) 296-8975, or rgestel@sbcglobal.net Paul Stupperich, (314) 429-4352, or lonebuffalo@earthlink.net"*

March 14-16

Sierra Club Outing: *"Backpacking in the Irish Wilderness, Wilderness, MO Spend the weekend before St. Paddy's day backpacking in this scenic wilderness area near the Eleven Point River. A great trip for beginners. \$10 donation requested. Dave Patton, (816) 461-6091 davedahiker@yahoo.com"*

March 21

Sierra Club Outing: *"Our annual March hike to Bell Mountain with its fantastic overlooks. About 9 miles total and maybe we will see "Billie" up there. Suzanne Smith, (618) 281-4762, thisissuzanne@yahoo.com"*.

Until next time....

2008 will be a decisive year for Missouri Wilderness. We continue to seek audiences with Missouri's Congressional delegation, and hope for the introduction of a Missouri Wilderness bill. Election year politics could distract attention, but also could stimulate some action. We'll see. In the meantime, more letters and opinion pieces are needed in the state's media, articles and interviews with magazines and newspapers are still occurring, and people all over this state are out exploring and learning more about the wildlands of Missouri. Let's all keep looking for ways to help. Please contact your Senators and Representatives, continue to write Letters to the Editor and Opinion pieces, and spread the word anyway you can.

We are all volunteers, and can only do the best we can to ensure the gift of Missouri Wilderness for this and future generations. But consider what an incredible opportunity we have - we're blessed to still have these wildlands intact. Our efforts can pay off, literally, for hundreds of years. Or more. The concept of wilderness needs explanation for some, but we need not get sidetracked by the confusions of others. At its heart, we know the idea is simple, noble, honest, and humble, and these areas are truly memorials to our American heritage.

"As for the last unspoiled areas in our forests, we don't even have to fix them up to show off their good points. They comeready for use" - REP President Martha Marks, from an Op-Ed published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

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Photos: Bell Mountain Wilderness, Big Spring Proposed Wilderness, and Smith Creek Proposed Wilderness.