

Friends of Ozark Riverways Alert

Draft Riverways Plan Open for Public Comment

1-9-14 [dates revised]

The National Park Service (NPS) released its Draft General Management Plan (GMP) for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR) for public comment on November 8. The steering committee of Friends of Ozark Riverways (FOR) has reviewed the 512-page document, and we applaud the National Park Service for addressing many of the issues that have been festering at ONSR for years.

Friends of Ozark Riverways understands that communities along the Riverways rely heavily on tourism to support their local economies. We believe a well managed park will help foster the type of visitors who have respect for the natural and cultural heritage of the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers.

While all plan alternatives are a step in the right direction, we believe the **NPS-preferred Alternative B** provides the most balance among the three alternatives and deals well with FOR's long-standing concerns, though some of our member organizations may favor the environmentally preferable Alternative A or a mix of elements from alternatives A and B.

Highlights of Alternative B:

- Enhances opportunities for visitors to experience the park's natural and cultural resources through resumption of an oral history program, establishment of a new visitor learning center at Powder Mill, and restoration of natural and cultural landscapes and historic structures.
- Provides a balance of diverse recreational opportunities.
- Develops two additional campgrounds at existing day-use areas at Akers and Blue Springs.
- Closes undesigned roads and access points and restores 45 miles of roads to natural condition.
- Converts 10 miles of roads in primitive zones to hiking trails.
- Reduces the number of gravel bars open to motorized vehicles and limits drive-in camping to designated sites; access from the river to gravel bars will not change.
- Provides for a horse use and trail management plan (possibly with a permit system), closes 65 miles of undesigned horse trails and river crossings, adds 35 miles of designated horse trails, and redesigns 23 miles of existing designated trails to limit impacts to natural and cultural resources.
- Establishes non-motorized zones on the upper rivers to reduce user conflict while providing continued opportunities for motorboat use in the majority of the park on the lower stretches.
- Fulfills a commitment in the 1984 GMP to identify areas in ONSR with wilderness qualities and recommends 3430 acres in the Big Spring area for such management.

We encourage everyone to comment on this important plan, as it will guide managers of the Riverways for the next twenty years. **Comments must be submitted no later than February 7, 2014**, either on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?documentID=56208> or by mail to ONSR, 404 Watercross Drive, P.O. Box 490, Van Buren MO.

We also encourage you to attend one of the four NPS public meetings, recently rescheduled:

- Thurs. Jan 16, Eminence High School New Gym, 6-8pm open house
- Fri. Jan 17, Salem City Hall Auditorium, 6-8pm open house
- Tues. Jan 21, Van Buren Youth & Community Center, 6-8pm open house, 8-9pm wilderness hearing
- Wed. Jan 22, Powder Valley Conservation Center (Kirkwood), 6-8pm open house, 8-9pm wilderness hearing

Friends of Ozark Riverways was founded in 2003 to promote a respectful management approach to Ozark National Scenic Riverways. For more information and to download our Citizen Guide for commenting on the plan, visit the websites of FOR: www.friendsofzarkriverways.org or the Missouri Parks Association:

<http://parks.missouri.org/IssuesAction/CurrentRiver.aspx>. For an on-line illustrated version of the guide, visit: <http://www.moenviron.org/index.php/program-areas/clean-water-program/ozark-national-scenic-riverways>.

To stay up-to-date, visit FOR's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CurrentRiverFriends>.

Questions? Email: CurrentRiverFriends@yahoo.com