



IN REPLY REFER TO:

## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Ozark National Scenic Riverways  
404 Watercress Drive  
P.O. Box 490  
Van Buren, Missouri 63965

D18 (xL76) (xN16)

September 6, 2007

Greetings:

The National Park Service (NPS) seeks your input on a proposal to construct a stabilized boat ramp and parking area upstream from Van Buren above the "gap" in the vicinity of Chilton Creek on the lower Current River. Attached you will find the Public Scoping Notice containing background information and a statement of purpose and need.

If inclined, please respond with any information you believe may be useful during this planning process by September 21, 2007, via the methods listed in the attached scoping notice. Ozark National Scenic Riverways is interested in hearing from you regarding your concerns or suggestions. Thank you for your time and consideration and we look forward to collaborating with you on this project.

Sincerely,

*For* Noel R. Poe  
Superintendent

Enclosure

# Public Scoping Notice

## **Environmental Assessment Ozark National Scenic Riverways**

**Proposed Project:** Construction of a stabilized Boat Ramp & Parking Area (Current River – Weymeyer/Chilton Creek Area) *Reference attached Location Map.*

### ***Overview:***

The National Park Service (NPS) - Ozark National Scenic Riverways (OZAR) is seeking initial comment from the general public and relevant agencies as the park begins preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA). The intent is to analyze and evaluate several proposed alternative actions which could be taken on the Lower Current River upstream from the Van Buren “gap” in the general vicinity of the Chilton Creek area. The objective will be to mitigate conditions that give rise to concerns about visitor safety, to reduce the potential for visitor-use conflicts, and to enhance the potential for a variety of visitors to enjoy their time on the river. At this stage of the planning process, scoping is an essential tool for gathering input on issues and possible alternatives that should be considered during analysis. Scoping provides an opportunity for park staff to gather additional information and also provides a forum for the public to voice relevant concerns during progressive stages of the planning process.

### ***Background/Existing Conditions:***

With the authorization of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways in 1964, Congress tasked the National Park Service with management of 134 miles of land and water resources along the Jacks Fork and Current Rivers to provide for both the protection and enjoyment of these resources. Connected to, but exclusive of the 134 miles of protected riverways, two “gaps” were to remain outside NPS jurisdiction. A four mile stretch of the Jacks Fork River at Eminence, Missouri and a four mile stretch of the Current River at Van Buren, Missouri lie outside the ONSR boundary. This has resulted in challenges for both the park and the local communities, as over time these “gaps” have flourished as centers of concentrated commercial tourist related activities.

On busy summer weekends the Current River above Van Buren is congested with hundreds of tubes and canoes, the majority floating between Weymeyer Landing and Van Buren. Boat operators electing to launch their outboard motor boats from one of the two public boat ramps at Van Buren must negotiate around “floaters” before reaching sections of the river to the north where minimal “float” traffic is encountered. There is an existing boat launch ramp within the park at Weymeyer Landing upstream from the Van Buren “gap”, but the gravel ramp is steep and unstable and there is little or no parking space to accommodate vehicles pulling boat trailers. The Weymeyer Landing site also serves as a primary “put-in” for park-contracted concession operations. Concession buses transporting floaters and hauling canoe trailers/tubes arrive to launch floaters and the site becomes exceedingly congested on summer weekends.

### ***Purpose and Need for Action:***

The increased traffic on summer weekends along this stretch of river between Weymeyer Landing and Van Buren has resulted in increasing conflicts of use during the height of the summer season as thousands of tubes and canoes share this short stretch of the Current River with outboard motor boats on busy weekends. Issues of safety and overcrowding jeopardize the quality of each of these varying types of visitor experience and have become an increasing cause for concern for the visiting public, the local community, and the park.

The desired goal and driving purpose of this EA is to examine such actions which could be taken to mitigate the conditions giving rise to concerns about visitor safety, to reduce the potential for visitor use conflicts, and to enhance the potential for a variety of visitors to enjoy their time on the river. To this end the park is

evaluating a proposal to provide enhanced facilities at, or near, Weymeyer in the vicinity of Chilton Creek which is situated above the Van Buren “gap”. This would allow motor boat operators an opportunity to avoid the “float” traffic downstream.

***Request for Public Comment:***

The National Park Service is taking initial public comments from interested parties at the advent of this “planning process”. There will be additional opportunity to comment once the ‘draft’ Environmental Assessment is posted for public review in late 2007. It is critical that you, as a citizen and visitor, inform the park of relevant issues that concern you. Your comments will help to insure that we have addressed all aspects of concern, and explored a wide spectrum of alternatives. Several leading questions that might help you focus your comments are:

- Has the park identified and defined the issues/problems satisfactorily (refer to *Background* and *Purpose & Need* above)? Can you add to this? Do you agree that the issues, as stated, are a problem?
- In addition to the proposed action (alternative) to provide an upgraded boat launch facility at (or near) Weymeyer Landing---are there any other alternative actions which the park could take that would assist in alleviating the issues of crowding, lessen safety hazards, diminish the potential for conflicts between various user groups, and enhance the overall visitor experience?

***Submitting Your Comments:***

If you have any comments regarding this proposal, please send them in writing by September 21, 2007 to the Superintendent, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, P.O. Box 490, Van Buren, MO 63965. Or, you may elect to visit the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) site (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>) to submit your comments.

