

Summary Newsletter and Comment Form

Ozark National Scenic Riverways • Missouri

General Management Plan / Wilderness Study
Newsletter #3 • Spring / Summer 2009

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Preliminary Alternatives



**Note: This is a short summary and does not cover everything that's in the larger newsletter. Please look at the full newsletter to get more information. You can find it online (as well as the first two newsletters) at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ozar>. A limited supply of printed copies are also available upon request—573-323-4236.*

A NEW PLAN

The National Park Service is working on a new general management plan (GMP) for Ozark National Scenic Riverways. The last plan was done in 1984. Many things have changed at the park since then! The new GMP will help guide decisions at the park for the next 15 to 20 years.

This plan is being done with your help and the help of others. We have heard from many different people and groups. They either wrote to us or attended public open houses. Here are some of the things we heard:

- There are too many tubing, canoeing, rafting, and boating parties on the river.
- There is too much lewd visitor behavior.
- There aren't enough trails.
- There are conflicts between horseback riders and other users.
- The water is being polluted by people, vehicles, horses, and motorboats.
- People often scare wildlife and damage the places they live.
- Plants and animals that don't naturally belong around here are spreading.
- Some land uses and activities outside the park are damaging things inside the park, including water quality.

WILDERNESS

In 1984 the Big Spring tract was found to have “wilderness qualities.” At that time, certain conditions existed that did not fit in a wilderness. The 1984 GMP made a promise to reconsider that area for wilderness if those conditions ever changed. Because those conditions no longer exist, this new GMP will study the 3,400-acre Big Spring tract. To learn what wilderness would mean for that area, please see page 3 in the larger newsletter.

ALTERNATIVES

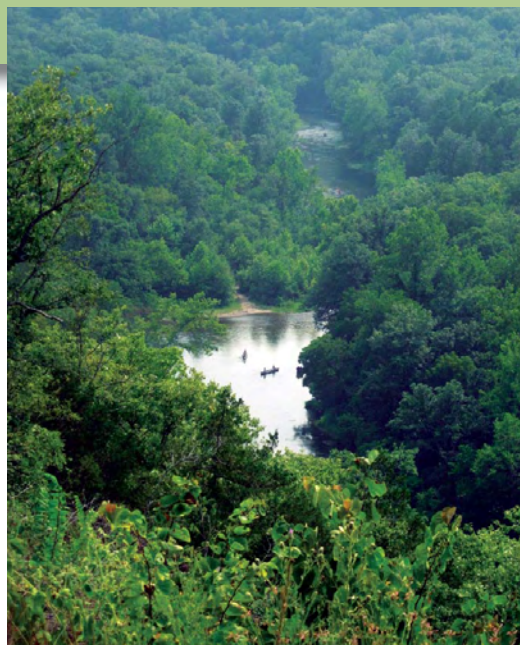
There are different ways to look at the future of this place called Ozark National Scenic Riverways, and different ways to try to solve some of the problems listed above. We refer to these different ways as “alternatives.” Most of this newsletter tells you about some possible alternatives for the park's future. We want to know what you think about them. See the enclosed comment form, and the invitation to public open houses is on the back of this summary newsletter. The GMP team will use your ideas to revise these alternatives and/or perhaps create a new one. The goal is to find an alternative that best balances visitor needs, protection of park resources, and overall cost.

The following is some information about the planning alternatives for the park. There is a no-action alternative (basically, business as usual), and three action alternatives that are labeled A, B, and C.

No-Action Alternative

By law, we need to have a “no-action” alternative. This “business as usual” alternative tells you (1) that what the park does now is something to consider for the future, and (2) helps you understand what might change if another alternative is chosen.

The park offers many things for visitors to do, like canoeing, kayaking, tubing, rafting, johnboating, and fishing. Other activities include hiking, horseback riding, hunting, picnicking, and camping. The park offers events about Ozark heritage and programs about nature. All of these things would continue under this alternative. Those 3,400 acres at Big Spring would not be proposed for wilderness, but the primitive character of that area would be protected.



Alternative A

In this alternative, park managers would create conditions that help recall earlier days along the Current and Jacks Fork rivers. There would be more opportunities for traditional, nonmechanized forms of recreation, and activities that are quieter, less crowded, and slower paced. Protection of Ozark heritage, such as local plants and animals and Ozark structures and settings, would be important parts of creating these conditions. To help restore conditions, many signs of park overuse would be fixed. For example, the park would close roads and trails that have been illegally developed.

There would be sections of the rivers where people could do some slower-paced activities — the kinds of things people did on the rivers in the 1950s or ‘60s. Visitors could float some parts of the rivers without the sights and sounds of motorboats. In other places, they would encounter only lower horsepower motorboats like the traditional johnboats of years past. With these types of activities, some of the commercial services might change. For example, commercial operators could provide guided overnight float trips with gravel bar camping and fishing. Also, the park could do programs about traditional Ozark ways of life along and on the rivers. For example, living history demonstrations of a “float camp” could give people a taste of the past. For the Big Spring area, wilderness designation would be proposed.

Alternative B

Park managers would try to help people discover some of the more hidden but special things about the park. These things might be a remote farm site, a beautiful cave, or a unique water habitat. This would be done in various ways. The park would set up some small learning centers. Some new trails would help guide visitors to an old cabin or cemetery, and some ranger programs would help visitors learn more about their Ozark heritage — both history and nature.

The park would continue to have popular activities like floating, motorboating, and horseback riding. But those activities would be managed in balance with these other discovery and learning opportunities. This might mean some changes in commercial services. For example, new guide services might help small groups of visitors explore a cave. It might also mean some differences in where motorboats could be used. As in alternative A, the Big Spring area would be proposed for wilderness designation.

Alternative C

Increasing the public's access to outdoor recreation, like what visitors do now for fun, would be the main focus of this alternative. During the summer especially, there would be many visitors to interact with and the need for a lot of traditional commercial services. Providing for community and family gatherings would be a major goal. Many ranger-led programs would focus on helping visitors connect with the resources and improve their outdoor skills. For example, there could be demonstrations of traditional Ozark life-ways and boater and hunter safety lessons.

The park would develop methods to make sure that greater levels and types of visitor use do not damage resources or threaten public safety. More facilities, like campsites, picnic areas, boat ramps, and trails, would be provided. More staff would be needed. The Big Spring tract would not be proposed for wilderness designation, but its primitive qualities would be protected.

Management Zones

Management zones for this plan describe how different areas of the park would be managed in the future. Zones form the basis of the GMP. Each alternative has slightly different zoning to reflect the overall goal of each alternative. The management zones are *not* applied to private lands or easements.

The following is a summary of the seven zones proposed for the park. See the color chart of management zones and the maps in the larger newsletter for more information.

Developed Zone: These areas would have mostly buildings and visitor facilities (like campgrounds) and related services. In alternatives A, B, and C, the total number of acres covered by this zone would be small. Alternative C would have the largest amount of this zone because of that alternative's focus on enhancing recreation. The larger areas would be at Round Spring, Alley Spring, Powder Mill, and Big Spring.

Resource-based Recreation Zone: This zone would be managed for a wide range of recreational and educational activities. Natural and cultural resources would remain largely intact. A lot of this zone is used in alternative C because of its focus on enhancing recreation.

Natural Zone: The management priority would be to protect the plants and animals and the beauty of the scenery. Visitors could easily enjoy solitude

and natural sights and sounds. Recreational activities would be allowed as long as they don't cause much damage to the environment. There is a lot of this zone in both alternatives A and B. These alternatives emphasize protecting natural features and providing chances for visitors to enjoy quiet places and learn about the specialness of the area.

Primitive Zone: These areas would keep their wild, natural character. Natural resources and processes would be protected. Visitors could find backcountry challenges and solitude. Alternative A has the most of this zone. In alternatives A, B, and C, much of the Big Spring area would be zoned primitive. Note: If the Big Spring tract is designated as wilderness (alternatives A and B), some additional restrictions might also apply to that area.

The following zones include the rivers up to the ordinary high water mark.

Mixed-Use Zone (motorized and nonmotorized boats): These river areas would include a mix of motorized and nonmotorized boating opportunities. Many visitors would be around, especially during the busy season. The natural setting would dominate, but the sights and sounds of human activity would be evident. Alternative C would have the most river miles of this zone.

Seasonal Mixed-Use Zone: These river areas would include a mix of nonmotorized and lower horsepower motorized boating during the low-use season. The rest of the year, only nonmotorized boating would be allowed. The natural setting would dominate. The number of visitors would vary seasonally. Alternatives B and C would have the most river miles of this zone.

Nonmotorized Zone: Only nonmotorized boating would be allowed in these areas. Visitors would find that natural sights and sounds dominate, except during the busy season. This zone is found mostly in alternatives A and B, where the goal is to provide more nonmechanized recreational activities and more quiet stretches of the river. This zone would be applied to parts of the Upper Current and Jacks Fork.

Invitation to Comment and Attend Open Houses

Please join us the week of June 22, 2009, for public open houses on these alternatives. We have scheduled open houses in Van Buren, Eminence, Salem, Columbia, and St. Louis. See the schedule below for specific dates, times, and locations.

If you cannot attend, you can still ask questions or offer comments to the planning team. Use the enclosed postage-paid comment form or the general management plan website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ozar> (or via the link on the park's website www.nps.gov/ozar). You can also write a letter to: Superintendent, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, P.O. Box 490, Van Buren, Missouri 63965.

Public Open House Schedule

City	Date	Time	Location
Van Buren	Monday, June 22	5:00 –8:00 p.m.	Van Buren Community Center, Intersection of Business 60 and D Hwy. Van Buren, Missouri 63965
Eminence	Tuesday, June 23	5:00 –8:00 p.m.	Eminence High School, new gym, College Avenue, off Hwy. 19 Eminence, Missouri 65466
Salem	Wednesday, June 24	5:00 –8:00 p.m.	Ozark Natural and Cultural Center, 202 South Main Street (Hwy. 19) Salem, Missouri 65560
Columbia	Thursday, June 25	3:30 –7:00 p.m.	Courtyard by Marriott-Columbia, MO, 3301 Lemone Industrial Blvd. Columbia, Missouri 65201
St. Louis	Friday, June 26	3:30 –7:00 p.m.	Crowne Plaza Hotel St. Louis-Clayton, 7750 Carondelet Ave. St. Louis, Missouri 63105

