

Friends: 2nd Consecutive "Water Conservationist of the Year" Award

...for Operation Drop Off

For the second year in a row, Friends has won the "Water Conservationist of the Year" Award from the Arkansas Wildlife Federation.

This year, Friends was recognized for its active role in Baxter County's Operation Drop Off (see related article page 5). That event brought a variety of partners together in an effort to address two important issues simultaneously: water quality and drug abuse.

Friends board member Carol Short, Baxter County Sheriff John Montgomery and his wife Karen attended the AWF banquet in Little Rock for the presentation. "To say this event was a success is an understatement," said Short. "This could not have been done without a large partnership. I'm sure this will be a model for others."

By providing a safe and proper disposal for unwanted drugs, and by reducing those drugs' availability in households, drugs and hazardous substances are kept out of area lakes, rivers and ground water, and out of the hands of those who might misuse and abuse them.

Baxter County Sheriff John Montgomery, Baxter County Judge Joe Bodenhamer, Friends, various county agencies and departments, and several other partners organized to accomplish the effort.



Friends board member Carol Short and Baxter County Sheriff John Montgomery accept the Arkansas Wildlife Federation's Water Conservationist of the Year Award at the AWF's Little Rock event.

Rivercliff Golf Course Pesticide Spill Kills Fish and Wildlife

By Carol Short

State and local officials continue to investigate a pesticide spill incident on a small creek that runs through Rivercliff Golf Course in Bull Shoals.

The unnamed creek flows into the White River just below the dam.

The spill killed crayfish, snakes and thousands of small fish for a quarter mile downstream from the spill. AGFC counted approximately 6,350 dead fish (mostly minnows and darters), 642 dead crayfish and four dead snakes.

"Pretty much everything for a quarter mile downstream of the spill" was killed, according to Lyndle Crossover, wildlife officer with Arkansas Game & Fish Commission.

However wildlife officials said early

indications are that the contamination did not reach the White River. The area below the dam is a Brown trout spawning area as well as popular fishing area.

How It Happened

The spill happened July 25th near the 18th hole of the golf course, west of Rivercliff Drive.

Groundskeeper Kelly Ott admitted dumping onto the ground, near the small stream, 15 to 20 gallons of the pesticide chlorpyrifos, which he had been spraying on the golf course.

Ott said he thought it was not enough to harm the stream.

A passer-by told authorities about seeing dead fish.

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Suggestions or photos for use in this newsletter would be appreciated. Send to Clay Parton, editor (cparton01@yahoo.com)

The spill was cleaned up by the city of Bull Shoals to protect the environment and the public. Contaminated dirt was removed and tested. Dead wildlife was collected to keep other animals from being harmed by eating it.

AGFC biologists and wildlife technicians identified and counted the dead snakes, invertebrates and fish.

The AGFC may seek damages for wildlife killed according to how many of each species were killed where negligence is involved.

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality is also evaluating how their department will ultimately respond. Criminal charges and civil actions are possible.

RiverReport

Losing a Childhood Paradise: a Stream Re-Visited

by Debbie Vanover

I was born in Guion - a very small town with only three little stores. It was a quiet place to begin life. We all knew one another, and my cousins and a few friends would play together.

Watergate Creek was at the center of our lives. When Daddy came home from work (he worked in the sand mine), he and Mama would gather up the kids and they would take us swimming in the creek. He taught me to swim there when I was five - what a feeling that was, to be able to swim!

Children Playing in Clear Waters

Each spring, we kids would all begin to get excited about being able to go to Watergate Creek -- it was our own little resort right in the town's back yard! Picture this: a group of six year olds getting out of school, and running as fast as we could to the creek. That water was so clear we could see fish swimming, and crawdads scampering around on the bottom. We'd climb and dive off a nearby tent-shaped rock, into that cool, clear water, and swim down to touch the bottom.

We'd laugh and play. Someone would throw in a rock and we'd all dive to the bottom to see who could find it first. We'd spread out our towels on a sandy beach on the other bank (the creek was about 20 feet wide then), and just enjoy the afternoon sun. We'd talk and laugh and just be kids. We hadn't a care in the world.

I remember we could actually smell the cool, cleanness of the creek.

Now: Stinky, Smelly Water

Although we left Guion when I was seven, I still have family and friends there. Not long ago, our family drove back for a visit. I wanted to show my Grandson where we used to swim, and take him swimming, too. I wanted him to see the clear, gravel-covered stream and to smell that cool clean water, and to be able to play in it like we did.

At Guion, we got into my car and drove up to the big rock where we children had gone so many years before. I'm sure he could sense my excitement at taking him to this place of joy. But my heart fell when I looked down upon the creek as it was that day.

The creek that had once been flowing clean and clear was now not flowing at



Watergate Creek, near Guion, was once the site of playful children enjoying a swim after school, with blankets on a sandy beach. Now, the stream's flow is blocked and it has become stagnant and unfit. The author laments its loss. (photo Debbie Vanover)

all, and was dark, filthy, and was covered with floating scum that was actually moving backwards to the natural flow of the creek. Mosquitoes were thick. The smell of the place was not at all like clean water, but was instead like a stagnant swamp.

Holding out hope, I thought that we might go upstream, to another place which my Uncle had thought might also be beautiful. My grandson, too, was hoping - for clean water to play in! We had journeyed upstream for a mile or two, when we both walked out to the creek - hoping for swimming - but there was the same scum floating on the water. The scum was so bad it was even killing the vegetation on the bank.

What's Changed?

When I was a child there, the sand mining company built a dam across the creek, downstream from our swimming hole, but that dam was not so high that it would completely stop the flow of the creek. Then, when a big rain came, the rushing water would completely clean the creek.

Now, the height of the dam is so high that it completely stops the flow of the creek - except for a tiny trickle at the base of the dam. It now has no flow at all, and so cannot clean itself.

Instead it is a stagnant mess.

Have We Lost It?

I am afraid we've lost Watergate Creek - but maybe I'm wrong. Losing this stream would be almost like losing a family member. If we do lose this creek, then our grandchildren will not experience the joy we once did by Watergate Creek.

State Watershed Conference Coming to Mountain View

The Arkansas Watershed Advisory Group's (AWAG) biennial Conference is being held in Mountain View November 18-20 (Thursday-Saturday) at the Ozark Folk Center.

"This is practically in recognition of the work FNFWR, our members and partners have done to focus attention on the White River," said Gene Dunaway, Friends' Board Member.

Early registration is only \$50, and this includes some meals. There are scholarships available.

Friends encourages members to attend. "Don't miss this opportunity to deepen your understanding of our water and rivers," said Jane Darr, President. "You'll have a chance to meet people from all over the state, including state and federal agencies, and learn how we can work together.

You can now register online at <https://www.ark.org/watershed>.

Thursday will feature a field trip including a restoration site, local water treatment plants and an educator-accredited training day on watershed education subjects.

Friday and Saturday will be filled with presentations on a wide variety of water related subjects at the Folk Center.

The Folk Center is a fun place to stay. A poster session, mixer and music will take place Friday evening. Rumor has it that Dunaway is joining up with local band, Harmony, for a "river music" reunion.

Trout Nature Center Lands \$822,000 Grant

...to be located at ASU's Mountain Home Campus

The Trout Nature Center, to be located at Arkansas State University-Mountain Home (ASUMH), just took a giant step forward.

ASUMH was awarded a \$822,558 grant by the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC), to help fund the Center in the 65,000 square foot Vada Sheid Community Development Center of ASUMH.

"We are thrilled to learn of the award," said Ed Coulter, Chancellor of ASUMH. "This center will provide so many opportunities - both for our students and for the area's residents. Plus, we believe the center's economic impact will be felt throughout north central Arkansas."

Healthy Fish: Healthy Streams

The Center will feature exhibits on trout reproduction and developmental stages, food sources and food chains, habitat requirements and stream health. Additionally, interactive science exhibits and other elements will teach visitors about minimum-flow, aquatic biology, water and its chemistry, common diseases and characteristics of the local trout species, changing water flow and its effect on geographic terrain, and more.

"It will help teach residents and visitors ways to help maintain healthy trout and healthy streams," said Steve Wilson, *Friends'* board member and the Chair of the Center's Trout Task Force. "This is important, since these rivers, and their fish, are at the center of the local economy."

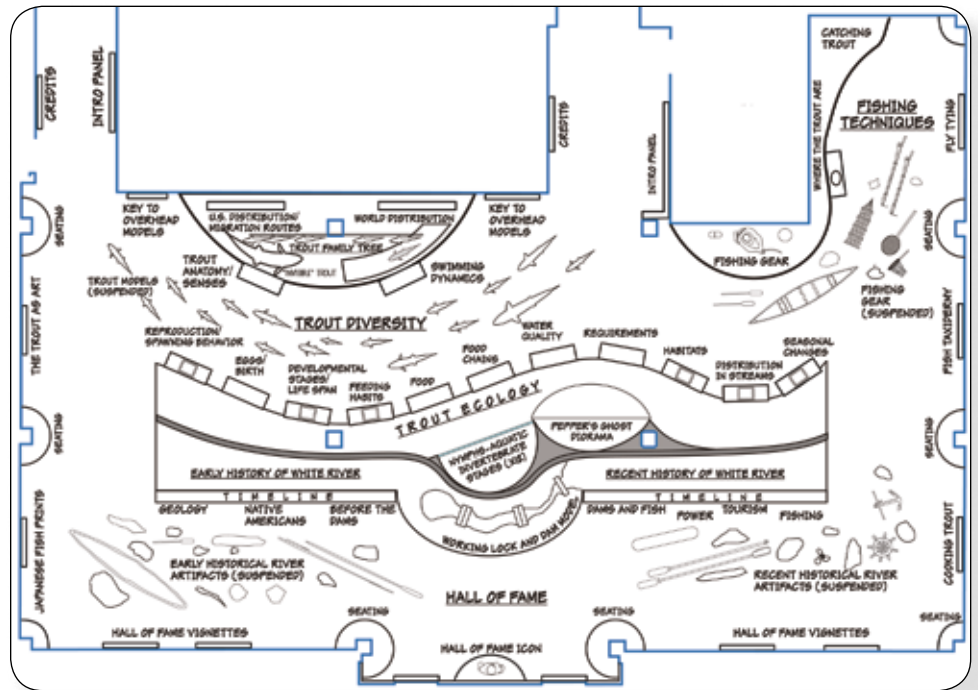
Coulter said a side-benefit to the community will be the local economic development spurred by the Center.

Year-long Effort

Carol Gresham, Vice Chancellor for Development at ASUMH credits Steve Wilson and other members of the Trout Task Force for the vision to develop such a center on the ASUMH campus.

"The Trout Task Force has held monthly meetings for over a year now," she said. "They have identified community needs and issues that will be addressed in the Trout Nature Center, and are excited about how students and professionals will be involved and served through the center."

For more information, contact Gresham at (870) 508-6116.



The proposed floorplan for the Trout Nature Center at ASUMH: at about 4,500 square feet, the Center will offer interactive science and educational exhibits aimed at teaching visitors about trout, stream health, water chemistry and biology. Steve Wilson, *Friends'* board member, chairs the Task Force. (diagram courtesy ASUMH)

PCEC Bans Surface Sewage Discharges In Lake Maumelle Watershed

Aimed to Protect Drinking Water

(excerpted from Arkansas News Service)

The Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission at its May meeting unanimously amended the state's pollutant-discharge regulation to ban the surface-release of wastewater anywhere in the Lake Maumelle watershed.

Commissioners voted 11-0 with two members absent to grant the request of Central Arkansas Water to change Regulation 6.

The amended regulation will prohibit any surface discharges from homes, cities or industries.

Lake Maumelle is the principal source of drinking water for about 400,000 central Arkansas residents. Its watershed includes about 88,000 acres of land as well as stream tributaries that drain into the lake.

"Basically, this means that if anyone applies in the future to be a discharger, they will be denied," said Ryan Benefield, Deputy Director of ADEQ.

Martin Maner, Central Arkansas Water's watershed manager, said after the

meeting that he was "tickled pink" with the decision. "We want to ensure that our water supply is free of pharmaceuticals and personal-care products. They get there because they pass through wastewater treatment systems. It just doesn't make sense to have human sewage go into your drinking water supply."

Pulaski County Judge Buddy Villines was happy to learn of the commissioners' decision to amend the regulation.

Villines said by phone, "This gives additional protection to drinking water in central Arkansas, and I don't know of anyone who opposed it. You're talking about raw sewage in the water. Who's going to oppose that?"

Commissioners and a number of residents were concerned that new subdivisions would cause water pollution when runoff containing high amounts of soil or chemicals drained into the lake. The utility also wanted to avoid spending millions of dollars on building water treatment plants to counter any contaminants.

Bull Shoals lake is also a major water supply source.

RiverReport

Friends Supports, Opposes Proposed Regulation Change Provisions

...in collaboration with Beaver Water District

Friends of the Rivers submitted on August 4 its official comments regarding the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission's (PCEC) proposed new Regulation #2.

The proposed Regulation would be one of the Commission's (and ADEQ's) primary tools in maintaining water quality across Arkansas.

"*Friends* supported Beaver Water Districts' position on key aspects of the proposed regulation," said Jane Darr, President of *Friends*. "Basically, we felt that the proposed regulation had some good aspects, but also contained provisions which seemed wrong."

Chlorophyll and Transparency

Friends supported two proposed water quality criteria aimed specifically for Beaver Lake, but asked that PCEC apply these criteria to all of Arkansas' lakes.

Chlorophyll and secchi transparency both serve as indicators of nutrient enrichment and algal growth, and the new regulation would set important criteria for both of these indicators, but only for Beaver Lake.

The proposed numeric criteria were selected to limit nutrients and algae to levels that do not impair Beaver Lake's

designated drinking water use.

"Having scientifically-based numeric, as opposed to narrative, criteria for indicators of nutrient pollution will provide a straightforward method of assessing whether the water quality standards are being met," said *Friends*.

Phosphorus

Friends objected to the proposed removal of the numeric phosphorus requirements for point source discharges into specific waterbodies. The waterbodies include some in the legislatively-designated "nutrient surplus watersheds," and on Arkansas's list of impaired waterbodies (the so-called 303(d) list).

"The phosphorus requirements have been an important tool in reducing nutrient loadings to these waterbodies," said *Friends'* comment. "The deletion of the Reg. 2.509 phosphorus requirements is contrary to and prohibited by the antidegradation provisions of Section 303(d)(4)(B) of the Clean Water Act and Reg. 2.201 through 2.203.

Friends asserted the PCEC could delete the phosphorus requirements only if they are first replaced with equivalent or more stringent instream, numeric phosphorus criteria or, possibly, through equivalent or

more stringent phosphorus limitations in another APEC regulation.

Bacteria Testing

Although *Friends* did support proposed changes making bacteria testing standards more readable, we objected to changes relating to the *E. Coli* criteria itself.

Friends asked PCEC to apply its *E. Coli* criteria to all waterbodies in Arkansas, and to clarify the number of tests and the calculation of test results. *Friends* also asserted the PCEC-proposed changes would not be allowed under the U.S. Clean Water Act and other federal laws.

Stakeholder Workshops

Friends did ask that in the future, ADEQ conduct stakeholder workshops prior to filing proposed changes with the PCEC.

"ADEQ had several informal meetings with the Arkansas Environmental Federation regarding the current proposed revisions to Reg. 2," said *Friends*. "These types of meetings should be expanded to a broader range of stakeholders, with an opportunity for the exchange of drafts of the proposed changes prior to anything being filed with the APCEC."

Added *Friends*, "The public hearing setting does not really allow for the type of collaborative efforts that are needed to ensure water quality standards that protect the quality of the waters of the State of Arkansas."

ADEQ Holds Public Hearing on Frac-Sand Mining Plant's Air Permit

by Barbara Carlson

As frac-sand mining becomes a reality, citizens are speaking up - insisting that concerns be addressed.

Forty-seven local citizens turned out for an ADEQ-called public meeting related to frac-sand mining in Iazard and surrounding counties.

ADEQ held its August 19 public hearing in Calico Rock, to air issues surrounding a proposed "air permit" for the Evergreen Processing / Twin Mountain Project.

ADEQ staff shared information about its process to evaluate a permit application, and determine whether all state and federal regulations governing air quality will be met. Previously-submitted public comments had been considered by ADEQ, and responses were included in the presentation.

Comments and questions from the audience focused on several areas:

- Potential danger of silicosis, caused by inhalation of microscopic particulate matter;

- the smoke caused by burning 1,300 acres of trees and brush removed to clear the quarry site;
- the lack of confidence in self-monitored control systems. Citizens felt monthly self-monitoring by the company, and only annual inspections by ADEQ, seem inadequate to ensure safe air;
- whether state and federal standards themselves are adequate, given the rapid expansion of this industry in our area;
- whether perimeter testing at the well site be required;
- whether independent monitoring of equipment and processes will be required.

The process at these hearings is geared to ensure that the public has an opportunity to comment, and that ADEQ staff will review and respond to all comments when the final permit decision

is reached.

Future meetings will be convened to discuss other permits required. Then other issues will be aired, among them concerns regarding aquifer depletion and the impact of sediment-discharges into our streams.

For now, we take a deep breath.... and hope that our air and water will remain safe.

It is deeply satisfying to live in an area full to the brim with fresh air and clean rivers. We're surrounded by healthy forests and fields filled with an abundance of wildlife. But the pleasure of living in an area of natural beauty comes with a responsibility to protect and preserve.

...Barbara Carlson

RiverReport

Drug Takeback Event Successful

by Carol Short

When *Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers* suggested a drug takeback event to Baxter County Sheriff John Montgomery, he ran with the idea.

Operation Drop Off was a program designed to get unused prescription and non-prescription medications (legal or illegal) out of the home and out of the hands of our youth AND to keep our waterways clean and chemical free by properly disposing of them.

"*Friends* thanks all who made the event a big success, including all those who cleaned out their medicine cabinets and gave them to Operation Drop Off," said Jane Darr, *Friends'* President.

The project mushroomed as 14 partners enthusiastically joined the effort.

Drugs are a problem for people as well as water quality. Prescription drug abuse is a growing problem. Arkansas rates #1 for abuse of prescription pain drugs by teens. Arkansas has also consistently ranked among the ten states with the highest rate of non-prescription use of pain relievers by 12 to 20 year olds.

"Operation Drop Off" was planned so any person could get rid of old, unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medications for people or animals, and also illegal drugs - no questions asked. Anyone could drop off drugs in a convenient drive-through event.

Disposal of unwanted drugs is a big issue. For years people have been told to flush unwanted drugs down the toilet or put them in the trash. However growing evidence shows that these practices contaminate the water supply. Sewage treatment does not remove drugs from waste water.

At the suggestion of *Friends*, and using funds donated by Roller Funeral Home to purchase an expensive piece of equipment, the sheriff's department instead incinerated collected drugs in its new "Drug Terminator."

On collection day, almost 500 vehicles drove through the drop off site and 119,000 doses of medications were collected in a six hour period -- far in excess of the 47,000 doses collected in Boone County's event earlier this summer.

Plans are in the works to do future drop-off events, as well as a permanent secure drop-off box located at the sheriff's department.



Prescription drugs and silt can end up in streams, threatening the streams' ability to support healthy fish and wildlife. This stream runs clear and supports healthy communities of fish AND people.

Workshop Details Effective Ways to Reduce Road Erosion While Reducing Maintenance Costs

by Carol Short

Poorly-maintained unpaved roads are a major contributor to poor water quality when sediment is washed into streams from the roadbeds.

And costs -- public and private -- rise due to erosion and poor drainage on poorly-maintained roads.

But those at a two day workshop learned simple and inexpensive practices to reduce road drainage problems, reduce road-maintenance costs and improve water quality.

All this happens through minimizing road erosion using effective maintenance practices for unpaved roads.

The Nature Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Stone County Road Department partnered to hold the workshop. *Friends* also co-sponsored the August 24-25 event.

Work with nature

It's a win-win: Strategies intended to reduce sediment getting into streams also helps unpaved roads last longer - and reduce maintenance costs. Key principles:

- Avoid concentrating runoff flowing onto the road and in the roadside ditches,
- Minimize the flows in the ditches by diverting water back into the forest and fields where it will disperse more widely,

- Improve the ditches themselves so they do not erode,
- Reduce the effects of concentrated drainage, and
- Prevent surface erosion by planting vegetation and improving the road surface.

Keep Water Off the Road

Erosion control begins with strategies to keep water off the unpaved road in the first place. By doing work away from the road, stormwater can be kept from getting onto the road. An example is a roadside bench on the uphill side to slow water down and divert the water away from the road. The idea is to avoid concentrating water and slowing it down so it has less energy to carry silt.

Secondly, ditches themselves can be improved by:

- "Armoring" them where they are likely to erode,
- Providing turnouts so ditch water flows out of the ditch and back into the woods or fields,
- Having adequate culverts, cross pipes and underdrains.

Additional information can be found at the Pennsylvania Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads:

www.dirtandgravelroads.com.

RiverReport

Sponsor a New Friend of the Rivers !

Your paid membership in *Friends* is so important. The larger and more diverse our member base, the more impact we can have on policy-making.

Currently membership dues are our sole financial source for undertaking educational and policy initiatives.

Each membership includes a printed copy of our quarterly newsletter, alerts regarding conservation issues in the state or region and means to partner with other citizens like you who love these streams.

Join either online at our website (friendsoftherivers.org), or use the form below.

We need you!

Join Friends of the North Fork & White Rivers

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home or Cell Phone numbers _____

E-Mail address (for electronic news) _____

Membership Levels - (Membership dues and any donations are tax-deductible)

- Individual Annual Membership - \$25.00
- Family Annual Membership - \$35.00
- Partnership Annual Membership - \$100.00
- Life Membership - \$500.00
- Business/Organizational Membership - \$50.00
- Donation (\$ _____) - *Donations are appreciated!*

Mail to Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers PO Box 61, Mountain Home, AR 72654

Signature/Date: _____

River DO Levels Fall Below 6.0

After the dissolved oxygen (DO) level in water releases from Bull Shoals Dam recently dropped below 6 mg/l, the Corps of Engineers implemented dam-operation practices aimed at improving the situation as much as possible.

According to Jeff Williams, Trout Program Coordinator with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Corps' operational plan for this situation provided for their blocking open the vacuum breaker vents on all turbines at Bull Shoals.

"This should allow for greater aspiration and increased dissolved oxygen levels in the releases," said Williams. "We will continue to closely monitor the dissolved oxygen levels at Bull Shoals and Norfork tailwaters."

The minimum ADEQ-established level for DO in trout streams in Arkansas is 6.0 mg/l. Trout require at least this level in order to reproduce and grow. (During spawning seasons, 8 mg/l is preferred.)

Williams can be reached at (870) 424-5924.



Clean, crystal-clear water supports healthy trout. (photo courtesy Bob Waldeck)

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers, Inc. is an Arkansas non-profit organization -- 501(c)(3) -- devoted to creating an ongoing dialogue where individuals, groups, and government agencies can work together to conserve, restore and enhance these beautiful rivers.

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