

Threats to Our Water: Where Will the Leadership Emerge?

"Look at a map of Missouri and Arkansas," said Dr. John Moore in his keynote address to the Friends of the River at its annual meeting. "Those parts of the two states which are flourishing are where the lakes and rivers are located."

"What happens if the water goes bad? It would be a terrible thing," he said.

Moore is Executive Director of the Upper White River Basin Foundation, and hails from southwest Missouri.

"Water defines the Ozark region and our economic prosperity."

He said that at one time "point-source" pollution posed the greatest threats to our rivers but that Federal and State regulations have helped - even if those regulations aren't perfect.

"Today, the lakes' and rivers' greatest threats come from non-point sources. In fact, about one-fourth of river pollution is sediment from unpaved rural roads that are poorly constructed and erode when rainfall occurs." Moore said.

Other pollutants are surface nutrients introduced by lawn fertilizers, agricultural operations, and other causes, he noted.

"How do we make people understand that water is one of our greatest issues," he asked.

Moore asserted "behavior follows belief," and cited tobacco use in America.

"Forty years after the U.S. Surgeon General published its smoking study, people now believe that smoking is harmful," he said. That report, followed by other studies and regulatory action, brought a change over time.

"But do we have forty years with our water? Where is the leadership going to come from to prevent the crisis of bad water?" he asked.

"It's going to come from organizations like Friends of the River," said Moore in answer to his own question.



(photo Gene Dunaway)

Public Confused on What Affects Area Watersheds

(excerpted from the Northwest Arkansas News)

More education is needed for the public to understand the region's water source and how to protect it, according to water treatment officials and studies analyzing what residents know about Beaver Lake and area watersheds.

"I think we tend to take our water resources for granted," said Deilia Haak, director for the Illinois River Watershed Partnership. "We tend to think it will be OK without our actions making an impact."

Last October the U of A's Survey Research Center interviewed 405 households within the Beaver Water District and 101 representatives who work

in businesses in its service area.

"As individual consumers we need a more general awareness of where things go and how we're impacting our environment," said Dennis Brewer, associate vice provost of the university, Brewer managed the study.

A Pasadena, Calif.-based consulting firm Tetra Tech, has been aiding a year-long process.

They developed a strategy which includes an education and stewardship program that will teach landowners about maintaining septic systems and vegetation around streams, and how nutrients they

In This Issue:

- Moore Describes "Greatest Threats" to Rivers
- Public Knowledge Weak About Watershed Impacts
- "Discovery Farms": AFB Research and Education
- Voices From the Creek
- U.S. Clean Water Act Progress
- New Financial Opportunities for Landowners
- A View From The Stream
- Why and How: Stream Teams
- Friends Adds Board Members
- Where To Learn What Works
- Membership Matters

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Suggestions or photos for use in this newsletter would be appreciated.

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put on their land affects the environment.

"We literally have tens of thousands of people in the watershed that manage properties. All those properties have runoff into the White River and Beaver Lake," said Tetra-Tech's Barry Tonning. "Everyone engages in something that has impact on water quality."

People are more likely to be protective of the lake and the river if they know what is going to hurt them, he said.

"Everyone engages in something that has impact on water quality"

RiverReport

Discovery Farms

...to show the real impact of farming on the environment

By Gregg Patterson
Arkansas Farm Bureau

A new program called Discovery Farms is preparing to launch in Arkansas. What is it, and how can it help?

Discovery Farms are privately owned farms. The owners volunteer to allow on-farm research regarding the impact of farming on the environment. The goal of Discovery Farms is to promote and document sustainable and viable farming systems that remain cost effective in an environmentally sound manner.

It's not some computer model. Rather, it's real farms, real data, real impacts and real solutions on working farms.

"Models make hypotheses about what might be going on," said Dr. Andrew Sharpley of the University of Arkansas. "Discovery Farms will help determine if it's true or not."

Farm Bureau Enthusiastic

Sharpley is a professor of soil and environmental sciences. He is helping develop the Discovery Farms program here along with the Cooperative Extension Service. Discovery Farms is part of his role to develop research and demonstration programs that can help farmers operate in a cost effective and environmentally sound manner.

Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation jumped at the opportunity to help get Discovery Farms going in the Natural State.

"Farm Bureau got involved in the spring of 2007 with UofA professors who were asked to evaluate the Wisconsin Discovery Farms program," said Evan Teague, Farm Bureau Federation's environmental specialist. "They really liked the program and were excited about the possibility of replicating it here."

Best Management Practices

Farmers typically rely on Best Management Practices, or BMPs, in their day-to-day operations to control and reduce detrimental impacts to the environment.

Sediment runoff, nutrient runoff and water use and conservation are major on-farm environmental issues in Arkansas. Controlling them in a cost-effective manner is what BMPs should do. On-the-farm research through the Discovery Farms program will help make that happen.

Presently, few on-farm Arkansas studies exist that evaluate the



Hay farming operation on a Crooked Creek tributary. (photo Clay Parton)

effectiveness of BMPs to control nutrient and sediment runoff.

"Getting some quantifiable information and numbers on the effectiveness of BMPs will be one of the benefits of Discovery Farms," Sharpley said. "And it will get the word out to other farmers."

Both Research and Education

Each farm will have research and education components. Examples could include a nutrient management plan, documentation, verification, training, and what records and information need to be collected and how often.

Dr. Mike Daniels is a specialist with the Cooperative Extension Service. He, too, is excited about the educational opportunities that Discovery Farms offers.

"Not only will this allow for rapid technology transfer since the research is on-farm, but it will also allow participating farmers to educate other farmers," Daniels said.

Different Types of Farms

Because Arkansas is such a diverse agricultural state, the plan is to have several Discovery Farms that represent that diversity. The initial program hopes to fund up to four farms. These could include: a poultry farm in the northwest; a row crop farm and a rice farm in the east and southeast; or a cattle farm in the southwest.

The program could eventually grow up to 10 research farms providing specific on-farm information on BMP efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Water Conservation, Too

Discovery Farms will also help address water conservation. Declining aquifer levels combined with increasing demand for water create a serious problem in the Delta and south Arkansas.

Developing cost-effective combinations of capturing and storing winter rainfall, increasing groundwater recharge, and finding other sources of irrigation water is essential to agricultural sustainability.

It Takes Time

Research on a Discovery Farm would continue for a minimum of five to seven years to identify realistic water quality responses to management practices. Teague says this information will prove invaluable when addressing issues like TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Loads) and hypoxia (loss of dissolved oxygen in the Gulf of Mexico).

"The data used now is only in-stream data with estimations of where pollution is coming from based on land use types. There's no specific information on what's coming off farms or the best ways how to limit what comes off of farms," he said. "Discovery Farms can provide specific examples."

Teague believes the unique partnerships formed between public and private entities for Discovery farms will help build trust and confidence among all stakeholders. Not only farmers, but resource managers and decision makers will benefit, allowing the implementation of more effective practices and policies on millions of acres. Specific knowledge of the environmental benefits farms provide could also lead to new sources of farm income derived from air and water quality credits.

Respect for Farmers

"I really think farmers will finally get the respect they've deserved for so long for the good land stewardship they've shown for generations," Teague said. "They make their living off of the land. It's a value that's long been a part of their culture."

RiverReport

U.S. Senate Makes First Move To Restore Water and Wetlands Protection Likely Precursor to Parallel Measure in U.S. House

Congress on June 18 took a critical first step toward cleaner water, when the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee voted in support of the amended Clean Water Restoration Act.

A coalition of prominent hunting, angling and conservation organizations stressed the necessity of the legislation on two fronts: first, its importance to clean water, and second, in sustaining essential habitat for fish and wildlife populations.

Restoring Original Protections

Supreme Court decisions have stripped federal protections for geographically isolated wetlands and intermittent ephemeral streams - meaning wetlands and other waters are less protected and

are subject to pollution, draining, filling or paving.

The U.S. Senate committee's passage of the amended measure reaffirms the original intent of the Clean Water Act to broadly conserve the water quality of the streams, lakes and wetlands that are so important to our country and our sporting heritage. The voice of hunters and anglers played a crucial role in the advancement of this legislation, with sportsmen from around the country urging their senators to support this bill.

Broad Hunter-Angler Support

"Hunters and anglers know first-hand the importance of wetlands, lakes and streams," said Geoff Mullins, Theodore

Roosevelt Conservation Partnership's policy initiative manager. "These protections must be restored in order to help conserve our remaining wetlands and enhance our nation's aquatic resources. Restoring these clean water protections will ensure that sportsmen can enjoy these resources for generations."

"Thursday's committee vote represents the biggest step yet towards restoring these much needed protections in the past eight years," he added.

The Senate committee vote builds momentum for the introduction of corresponding legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives, said the TRCP.

Voices From The creeks

by Barbara Carlson

People treasure Mill and Piney Creeks for a variety of reasons. These creeks provide recreation in many forms - fishing, swimming in the old swimming hole, kayaking, canoeing, tubing or just playing in the cool clear water on a hot summer day.

But more importantly they offer a place in this sometimes crowded and busy world for Nature to exist in all her glory.

Trees and flowers, a variety of animals and birds, fish and turtles and snakes, rocky bluffs - and water so clear that you can see to the bottom of the creek. A truly amazing place.

Until last summer it seemed that this special place was sheltered from the intrusion of human interference that threatens so many of our natural havens. Then people along the creeks started to see and hear things that were different - things that were disturbing the balance of our creeks.

Death & Destruction

B & H Resources LLC owned land on Mill Creek and applied for a sand mining permit. Ignoring all laws, rules and common sense, they began a systematic destruction of the land along the creek. In the process they caused major damage to the creek. Huge quantities of sand were released into both Mill and Piney Creeks by the destruction of creek banks.

Regulatory agencies got involved, issued a cease and desist order,

and demanded a reclamation plan. But much damage had already been done.

Fishing holes that had sheltered bass and trout for generations suddenly were filled with sand. The creeks became shallow and the ecological balance was severely affected.

B & H has since withdrawn their application for mining along the creek and disbanded their corporation, but a new sand mining operation under a different corporate structure is apparently being started inland.

A Lesson Learned

We learned many voices are more powerful than a single voice. The single voice of the first person to see a problem or a threat serves as the initial spark to begin a process. Communicating with neighbors and friends brings the problem into the light and allows a group to form -- to protect what is valued.

This is how Friends of Mill and Piney Creeks was formed. Friends and neighbors called other friends and neighbors and formed a group with much greater power and a much larger presence than one individual could have. We reached out to the larger and more organized Friends of the Rivers for advice



Prior to the destruction, Mill Creek was a haven for humans, fish and wildlife. Improper practices brought devastation to a long stretch of the stream, but landowners rallied to halt it. (photo Tammi Trotter)

and help. We called out in our new loud collective voice to our lawmakers and enforcement agencies to alert them and call them into action.

And it worked

There are laws to protect our precious places, and there are agencies empowered to take action. But we quickly learned that these laws and agencies need more power to be effective.

So the next step is to use our collective voice to improve and strengthen the laws and increase the funding for the agencies so that they are able to protect our natural resources.

We have learned to be vigilant, to use our power more effectively and to act with enthusiasm and determination to protect our treasured creeks.

RiverReport

New Tax Credit Offers Financial Opportunity for Landowners

by Joyce Hale, League of Women Voters of Arkansas

We have all seen places we wish could remain the same forever. But as populations increase and climate change continues, nature will be challenged and need all the help we can provide, in order to maintain the natural systems providing our water.

To help muster this help for nature, Arkansas's landowners will soon have a new incentive to protect water resources: an expanded tax credit program for conservation measures.

Riparian Protection

Riparian protection has reached a heightened importance in efforts to improve water quality.

The tax credit program offered by Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC), which provides for repairs and restorations of wetlands and riparian zones, now allows tax credits when permanently protecting riparian corridors -- even if they are not degraded by stream-bank erosion, or cleared of vegetation.

New State Income Tax Credit

The new conservation easement program expands the existing Wetland and Riparian Zones Tax Credit Program (Section 26-51-1501) and establishes a new state income tax credit.

This conservation incentive can be granted under certain conditions to Arkansas landowners who voluntarily set aside eligible land for the protection and enhancement of the water quality of our streams, rivers and lakes.

For a complete reading of the bill, go to <http://www.anrc.arkansas.gov/act351.pdf>.

Thirteen other states have conservation tax credits with protection objectives ranging from agricultural lands, forestry, and wildlife to recreation and historic sites.

The Process...

An Arkansas group of individuals from government, non-profits, water utilities and land trusts came together last summer to work toward the goal of seeing a state conservation tax credit established solely for the protection of Arkansas water.

It became a reality in this last legislative session.

The goal is to encourage the long term protection of water resources. But that goal will only be realized if conservation



(photo Gene Dunaway)

easement projects become a reality.

Important Public Hearing

In the near future, a public hearing will gather input regarding the criteria for conservation eligibility. All groups interested in water issues should participate.

Once the criteria are established, committed landowners must learn of the program.

Tax Benefits Potential

The current program is capped at \$500,000 per year. The maximum tax credit available per project is \$50,000 (over a ten-year period), with a \$5,000 annual limit. However, these same projects will also qualify for Federal tax deductions, the benefit of which will vary according to the individual or corporation's financial position.

Needed: Increased State Funding

Meaningful benefits from this program will require a greater State funding in the future. Current funding allocations must prove they are wisely applied with true benefits to the people of Arkansas before a greater financial commitment will be politically supported.

More Information?

For more information contact either Joyce Hale or Gene Dunaway. Hale can be reached at 479-527-2777 or joyhale43@sbcglobal.net. Dunaway (Vice President of Ozark Regional Land Trust) is at 870-269-3442 or at gene.dunaway@gmail.com.

Four New Board Members Elected

Friends board added four members at the April annual membership meeting.

"We are excited to add these new members, because they bring a variety and depth of knowledge and experience," said Jerry Weber, President.

The four are Carol Short, Todd Harmon, Tammi Trotter and Ben Levin.

- Short has expertise in planning and regulatory affairs, and has completed the EPA's course on watershed protection.
- Harmon is a river-front landowner on the White in Marion County, and an active Cotter citizen. Harmon was formerly in the insurance field.
- Trotter is an Izard County landowner who spearheaded a protection effort along the Mill/Piney Creeks there, to stop illegal destruction.
- Levin is a stream-front landowner, and a respected fly-fishing guide.

Two Retiring Members Honored

Both Gay Vekovius and Leon Alexander received honors from the organization.

Gay Vekovius got accolades for financial support she generated through grant-writing, and for multiple public education events held in Baxter and Marion Counties.

Alexander was recognized for his key efforts in the Overlook Estates issue, and in the enactment of the Baxter County ordinance.

RiverReport

Pockets of Variety (Or the Lack Thereof)

By Ben Levin

Conservationists and anglers both say that a river is the sum of all its parts.

I would go further by adding that within every watershed there are special places and holes where everything comes together biologically to illustrate some kind of perfect habitat: a little pool or pocket somewhere where there is diversity that reflects the sum of all life forms in a river.

Growing up fishing in the Ozarks has afforded me time to find a few of these places on our local streams.

Stopping to fish a particular spot on Crooked Creek during a long float might remind you what our streams once had going for them.

This little unnamed hole looks like many others. It has a big shade tree hanging over everything including you and the deeper water against the far bank. A tangled, undercut wad of roots at the base of the tree makes an exceptional place for every fish in the hole to hide.

If you fish here you'll wade in under the tree and immediately see lots of bass hanging around the roots and boulders in the deep water. Some longear sunfish will start to nibble at your legs and toes, but the real attention getters will be the big noses, tails, and streamlined shadows that keep swimming around the roots of that far hole.

Cast a crawfish fly at the base of the tree, and there is no telling what will come out and chase it along the bottom. Any combination of smallmouth bass, green sunfish, shadow or Ozark bass, longear sunfish, carp, or largemouth bass could come out and follow the fly, competing for the first bite.

This time it's an eager, naive Ozark



A bass coaxed from a recessed pool in Crooked Creek lives among a variety of species within the same pool. (Photo by Ben Levin)

bass that beats out the rest of the fish.

But all the other smallmouths are following your fish in as it plays on the end of the line. The commotion and vibrations traveling out through the water excite and interest the predatory instincts of the other bass. They are all curious and hungry, wondering what is going on here.

You release the Ozark bass quickly, briefly admiring its speckled body and bright red eyes.

The very next cast gets a bite from one of the smallmouths before the fly even sinks to the bottom. This is a much stronger fish, and it pulls harder at the rod, forcing you to hold on to the cork handle tighter. A few gill flapping jumps make the rest of the bass come closer, and they even intentionally ram into your fish to try and steal whatever is in your fish's mouth that is making it so excited. But

you get the smallmouth to hand and grasp the raspy bottom lip between your thumb and forefinger, lifting the fish up briefly to unhook and admire.

Bronze-yellow sides, dark brown vertical bars on the body, horizontal bars on the gill plate, creamy white belly, full fins, and bright orange-red eyes with iridescent olive-green around their edges...

An hour, seven smallmouths, several Ozark bass, and a few green sunfish later, you might begin to wonder why there aren't more holes like this on Crooked Creek, or other similar rivers and streams in the Ozarks.

Maybe you have a few rare pockets of life like this in your own local stream, but these microcosms are unfortunately now the exception in many of our degraded and declined Ozark fisheries.

Get Involved: Start a Stream Team!

Have you ever floated a stretch of river and thought it just begged for a clean up? Is the high riverbank on your property seriously eroded? Have you quit swimming in the neighborhood creek because there's scum water draining from a pipe upstream?

There's a solution to your problem, but it will require team effort to get the job done.

Stream Teams in Arkansas help control litter, work on stream-bank stabilization projects, improve fish habitat, and monitor water quality.

Stream Team members can adopt a stream, determine its current situation and plan a project based on their initial survey. This is done with the landowner's approval and with AGFC technical assistance. Projects can include litter pickups, water-quality monitoring, streambank erosion control, watershed improvement and more.

How to Get Involved?

There are three easy ways to get started:

- Go to the AGFC website (www.agfc.com), and type "stream team" in the homepage search-box to find a form that gets you started.

- Write to the State Stream Team Coordinator, 2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas 72205, and request a sign up form.
- Call Steve Filipek at (501) 223-6369. He will get it going for you

Join the Arkansas Stream Team.

Return the completed form to AGFC, and you will receive directions for surveying your chosen stream.

The website above also contains a link to the program's excellent newsletter.

Get your feet wet, and help conserve Arkansas' streams for future generations.

(courtesy AGFC)

RiverReport

Membership Is Important

Friends paid membership grew by 25 during the first few months of the year, and now is above 125. Another 300 volunteer advocates have given time and effort, but have not yet become dues-paying members.

Why Join?

If you ever wondered whether your membership in Friends matters, then think about this:

- Membership dues are currently Friends' sole financial resource for undertaking the variety of educational and policy initiatives;
- More members means more impact with policymakers;
- More members means we can accomplish more;

If you are already a Friends member, would you take it upon yourself to recruit one new member this month?

Two easy ways to join:

- By mailing the membership form in our brochure (for brochures contact Jane Darr: 870-430-5777 or email jedarr@centurytel.net, or
- Join online on our website (www.friendsoftherivers.org)

Your membership includes a printed copy of the newsletter, alerts regarding conservation issues in the state or region, and relationships with others like you who care about these streams.

Learn What Makes a Difference

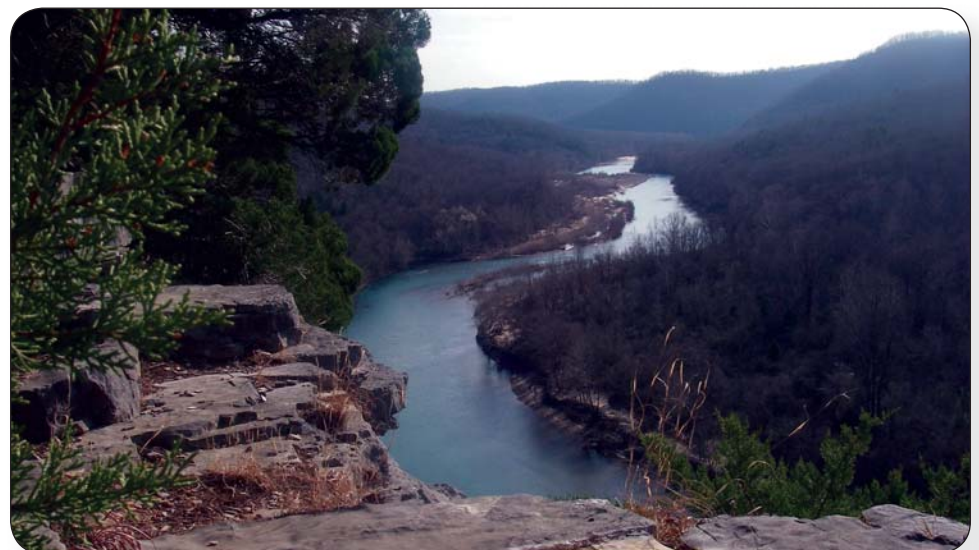
Once you learn what works, you can become more effective at Conserving, Restoring and Enhancing these beautiful and important streams.

We wanted to highlight a few resources that can help you quickly learn what you need to know:

- University of Minnesota site (<http://www.sustland.umn.edu/related/water1.html>) contains good basic resources as well as extensive links to more in-depth materials.
- Center for Watershed Protection (<http://www.cwp.org>) offers an

on-line watershed quiz, a library of articles on topics such as site planning and impervious surfaces, and an Introduction to the Eight Tools of Watershed Protection.

- The Alliance for Watershed Protection (<http://www.allianceforwaterstewardship.org/>)
- The EPA Watershed Academy offers a great online training, in multiple sessions (<http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/>)



The rivers of the Ozarks wind through areas that are at times remote, and at times populated. (photo 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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