



The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association Fall 2008

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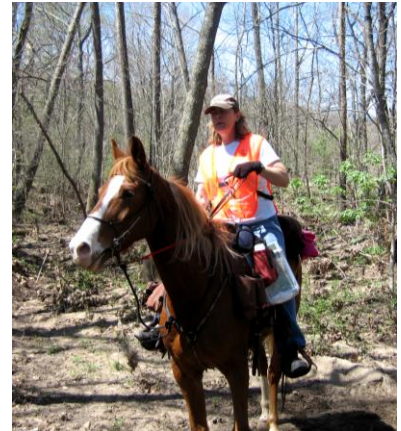
**NEW! Expanded Fall
Events Schedule**

The Ozark Trail Association is a non-profit group with the mission to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the rugged natural beauty of the Ozark Trail

Horse-packing the Ozark Trail

By Melissa Rheinecker

I have always loved the Missouri Ozarks for its rugged natural beauty, and as an avid horseman, I find the rolling Ozark hills ideal for trail riding. So I was thrilled when I discovered the Ozark Trail system about 5 years ago. Unknown to me, I had been riding on trails for decades that are now part of the Ozark Trail. Once I discovered the OT, it wasn't long before I became intrigued with the idea of horseback riding as much of the trail as possible.



Melissa on Romeo, a Missouri Fox Trotter, during their 100-mile Ozark Trail horse-packing trip, April 2008

Planning an adventure on horseback

Thus the idea for a horse-packing trip was born. In the fall of 2007, five like-minded friends: Linda Forbes, Sharon Graser, Amy Pashea, Selinda Jensen and I, decided that we would embark on a one-hundred-mile Ozark Trail trip. We planned the trip for the spring of 2008. In preparation, I took a horse-packing class offered by the St. Claire Saddle Club and instructor Bob Wagner of

The Ozark Trail's varied terrain of ridge tops, hollows, river bluffs, and valleys, running through dense hardwood and pine forests, makes for spectacular horseback riding.

—Melissa Rheinecker

Wagner Outdoor Enterprises, a certified Leave-No-Trace Master Educator. His class offered excellent hands-on instruction on the practical aspects of packing horses or mules into the wilderness while preserving the environment.

The planning began in earnest in late winter. Our small group had years of collective trail riding experience, but none of us had packed horses before. As planned, our trip would begin west of Centerville on the Karkaghne section and

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Early hint of fall color: browning out on Goggins Mountain in August



This newsletter is printed on paper containing 30% recycled fiber content

President's Report

Greetings fellow trail enthusiasts and I hope you've had another fine summer. I spent part of my summer up in Wisconsin (like I did last year). I told my wife that when I retire, I could easily see myself living up there during the summer. I got lots of hiking in too, which I always look forward to when I'm up there.

I'm happy to report that Anna has settled nicely into her role as the first full-time Executive Director. She's plugging away writing grants, learning the ins and outs of running a non-profit and representing the OTA in meetings with the various agencies with which we partner. I hope you all have had, or will have, a chance to meet her.

Shortly before Labor Day, my wife and I were fortunate to secure some tickets to the Bruce Springsteen concert in St. Louis. If you are not familiar with Springsteen's music or his concerts, what I want you to know is that the guy is known for long live performances – sometimes 3 ½ hours long! He has a music library that dates back almost 35 years and he draws from that massive library and mixes up his concerts each night. Each show is different. And he always gives it his all. He just keeps going and going, and seems to get more energized as his show goes on. And so at this concert a few weeks ago, as the show drew to a close, the crowd didn't want him to stop. But after 3 ½ hours, even Springsteen needed some rest. Even someone with that much energy needs his rest. And each show that I've seen (four in total) has been progressively more energetic than the previous one.

Like a good Springsteen concert, the OTA has a lot of energy too. And we've got a big library to draw from – called volunteers. Each one of our "shows" – or events – is different and we always give it our all. Like a Springsteen concert, I often come away amazed at what the OTA can do "on stage". We are performing for Missouri's trail enthusiasts. They are taking notice. They like the show... and it's just starting. More and more people are taking notice of what we are doing and our accomplishments. And the energy level is growing as the show goes on. I hope you enjoy the show too.

We've taken some time off from the show this summer, but now it's back on stage. This fall's work schedule is highlighted by two more Mega-events. The one in September, the weekend of the 27th, is partnered with REI. It's hard to believe that it has been five years since our first outing with them in 2003. We'll have another Mega-event in October. I consider these events, along with the other single-day events on the schedule, to be the songs that make up the show that is the construction season.

And the early reviews are looking good.

Happy trails,

Steve



Ozark Trail now a National Recreation Trail

In May 2008, the Ozark Trail was announced as a National Recreation Trail by Secretary of the Interior Dick Kempthorne.

The OT is one of 25 trails in 16 states to be named as an NRT in 2008. The NRT program highlights the diversity of the American landscape and “provides an excellent link to the outdoors, particularly for children...a path to fitness and stewardship for Americans of all ages,” said Kempthorne. The National Trails System now contains over 12,000 miles of trails; at 262 miles the Ozark Trail is the seventh longest NRT and the second longest managed by the Forest Service.

Nancy Feakes Forest Recreation Manager for Mark Twain National Forest, spearheaded the process which culminated in the Ozark Trail’s designation. Inclusion as a National Recreation Trail offers increased national visibility for the Ozark Trail as a special and outstanding trail. In addition information about sections of the OT including the Berryman Trail is available in the online NRT database. For more information about the National Recreation Trails program and the OT designation, see <http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/>



This photo, included in the proposal supporting the OT’s nomination for NRT designation, shows a rock retaining wall built on Neals Creek which allows the Middle Fork section to pass along a bluff

My first 100 days

By Anna Kopp

Starting in June as the first full-time Executive Director of the Ozark Trail Association marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life. When September 7 rolled around, I had to take a deep breath to reflect on my first 100 days. However, this time hasn’t only marked a new beginning for me. Hiring a full time employee was a big event in the story of the OTA, and it was a step in the right direction.

June brought a new level of OTA productivity. Our volunteers work tirelessly to complete many “behind the scenes” tasks after a long day’s work. With a full time employee in the picture, the past 100 days have witnessed a whirlwind of accomplishments. When I began this job I put together a 90-Day Plan that described various important tasks to be completed. Looking at that list now, I am gratified that each item has been addressed, and I am amazed at the possibilities that are now open to us. During my first 100 days, the OTA has:

- submitted five grant applications requesting a total of nearly \$200,000
- begun developing a college outreach program
- developed and initiated a staff committee structure
- taken the chair of the Ozark Trail Council and developed a new Memorandum of Understanding to guide the Council’s activities
- hosted an Open House
- promoted the September Mega Event to full capacity (registration was closed as of Sept. 8)
- entered into a Cost Share Agreement with the US Forest Service worth \$14,000 allowing us to:
 - fund GPS data collection of the trail corridor,
 - establish a summer mowing program making the trail more accessible and appealing during the summer months,
 - develop software for managing the AAT program
 - purchase nearly \$3,000 in new tools

I have also been meeting with land managing agency representatives and building professional relationships to help promote the OTA as a peer organization among our partners.

I’ve been privileged to witness, learn and contribute to the building of the OTA legacy. But we need to realize that the OTA still has much to do in fulfilling our duty to the Ozark Trail even after construction is completed. I look forward to the next 100 days and every day after that, as an opportunity to help shape a successful future for the OTA. Our story couldn’t be off to a better start.



Anna

Horse packing on the Ozark Trail

Continued from page 1

continue north through the Middle Fork and Trace Creek sections. Our ending point would be my property, River Oaks Ranch. We believed that we could average approximately 15 miles a day and complete the 100-mile trip in 7 days.

We decided on early springtime to guarantee adequate water for ourselves and our horses from the many running streams along the trail. We conditioned our mounts and pack horses for the trip by riding several days a week, and consulted books and websites on tips for food and packing. When horse packing, much of the equipment is the same as a hiker needs, with the addition of supplies for the horses such as feedbags, repair kits for saddles and tack, plus high lines for tying. Particularly, we had to figure out a way to meet our horses' nutritional needs along the OT in the absence of good grazing. This dilemma was solved by a plan to drop off hay in advance at Sutton Bluff campground, DD Highway and Hazel Creek campground, our camping locations. The trip planner on the OT website proved invaluable with its topographic maps which we laminated to carry along. And of course, the amazing John Roth, who knows every nook and cranny of the trail, was a wealth of information and as always, very generous with his time.

Setting out

Despite less than perfect weather including sleet and even some flooding, we began our trip as planned on April 13: five women and 8 horses. Almost immediately we started having trouble keeping our horse-packs balanced. Each pack pannier should be kept within 5 pounds of the other, or they will shift with the movement of the pack horse. If the shifting continues, the whole pack saddle can slide to one side. Our pack issues were mostly brought on by inexperience; one class does not an expert make. Additionally, we found that the Karkaghne and Middle Fork sections up to Brushy Creek Lodge are narrow for horse-packing. A pack horse with panniers is almost four feet wide, which is about the width of the trail between trees. Consequently, our panniers were often knocked off balance by the trees and brush along the trail and it seemed we were constantly adjusting one of our packs, slowing us down to a crawl. Largely due to that frustration, two of our group called it quits at the Brushy Creek Lodge on day three. By that time we were a day and a half behind schedule.

After a full day of rest at the lodge, the three remaining riders set off again. We downsized our packs to move a little faster under lighter weight. The trail north of Brushy Creek Lodge was wider and we were finally able to enjoy the



The "Ozark Rough Riders" head out on the trail, captured by Linda from Caddy's back: Selinda on Buddy; Sharon on Rosie; Amy on Princess; Melissa on Romeo with pack horses Buck Wheat, Eagle and Rebel

beautiful scenery without constant adjustments. As a result of the endless rains of early spring, the babbling brooks and waterfalls were spectacular! Unfortunately, on day six, the weather turned and we awoke to a driving rain and temperatures in the 40s. The rain was unrelenting throughout the day and by the time we made it to Hazel Creek campground that evening, we were cold and wet and our spirits were dampened as well. My last two comrades called it quits; lured by thoughts of a hot shower and a dry bed, they called home to be rescued.

Now I was on my own. Faced with three more days of riding alone, I decided to downsize again to move faster yet, by leaving my pack horse at Amy's nearby farm along with some supplies. My idea worked, and on Sunday, April 20th at about 7:00 p.m., only a day behind schedule, Romeo and I arrived at River Oaks Ranch, having finished our 100-mile journey.

Next time

It didn't take long after the ride, and I was planning to explore the Trace Creek section and Bell Mountain Wilderness loop on horseback. I have decided that my next adventure will be "ultra-light," taking only what I can carry on my riding horse, with fewer clothes and less food for myself. I'll use more drop-off points and plan to share more supplies among riders including stoves and cookware. For others planning a trip, I'd also suggest matching the gaits of the horses as closely as possible and making sure that the horses can safely high-line tie to avoid tying (and damage from nibbling) to trees.

The OT's Middle Fork section north of Brushy Creek, and the Trace Creek and Courtois sections are suitable for horse-packing and have an abundance of water, which allows for enjoyable creek crossings. The terrain while rugged at times is generally quite accessible and offers wonderful trail riding opportunities for all levels of equestrians. What a treasure we have in the Ozarks! 🌿

Notes from the field

Construction and Maintenance Committee Column

By John Roth

[There were five of us in the back room of the Sunset Hills Bread Company, coffee-stained maps and notes competing with trays of half-eaten sandwiches that sprawled across the three tables we had pushed together for the first meeting of the Construction and Maintenance Committee. Four sets of eyes looked at me, their owners in silent pause as I asked who wanted to be the committee chair. Is there such a thing as confirmation by ocular vote?

It may seem like I was the one soldier in line who didn't step backwards when the sergeant asked for volunteers, but the truth is that I really wanted this job, because building trail is that much fun. Designing trail is the best, and maintaining trail fills your heart with glowing satisfaction that every good gardener knows and loves. I'm honored and delighted to chair this great group.

*With that preamble out of the way, let's get on to the **Notes from the Field!***

The new fall schedule is out, and we've added a second MegaEvent to this mix. We'll have one in September and a follow-up in October, both based out of Bass' River Resort and both working on the Courtois section. The schedule features four additional Courtois construction days, and we've also added much-needed maintenance outings. Trees keep on falling and brush keeps on growing; try to make one of the maintenance trips so we can keep the Ozark Trail a great place to visit.

We're looking ahead to the winter/spring schedule, and I think we've finally made headway on the Taum Sauk rebuild. Jeff Ayers, the new superintendent of Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, has asked us to submit plans for constructing the two miles of trail that will reopen the middle portion of the Taum Sauk trail that was closed in December 2002 due to a reservoir breach. I accompanied Robert Smith on a check-out trip of the new route in August, and the committee will be submitting a full plan for a series of winter/spring construction outings. We'll know more in the coming weeks.

On the maintenance front, a wetter-than-normal summer has encouraged tremendous growth along the trail corridor. Trail Adopters should get out soon and trim limbs and saplings in preparation for what promises to be a beautiful fall season. If you're not a trail adopter and want to help out in September or October, please contact us! We need more folks on the trail, both from current adopters and new volunteers. We've scheduled a special event on October 11 for "orphaned" sections of the trail: see page 6 for event details. Sign up and get that warm feeling you only get from a newly manicured trail!

We received some help with maintenance this summer through a "cost-share grant" from the U.S. Forest Service that allowed us to hire a seasonal worker. You may have seen references to this on our online forums; "Nate the Mower" took our DR-Mowers up and down 80 miles of trail on the Middle Fork and Trace Creek sections of the trail, as well as portions of the Courtois, Between the Rivers and Eleven Point sections. We hope to expand this program next year.

That's it for this issue. If you'd like to join the Construction and Maintenance Committee, drop me an email at john.roth@gmail.com or call the office at (573) 436-0540. ☺



Surveying the Taum Sauk trail site; after emerging from the woods, the new trail will wind through limestone shelves and cross the valley floor scoured by water from the breached reservoir

OTA Staff Committees: what are YOU interested in?

A new committee structure has been developed to make the best of the time and talents of our OTA staff and volunteers. For more details and information see: <http://www.ozarktrail.com/documents/committees.pdf>

Trail Management and Planning: planning construction and working with land stewards to develop the OT and GIS mapping

Trail Construction and Maintenance: trail design, outings, trail corridor maintenance, tools and equipment, training and trail monitoring

Communications: event calendar, newsletter, press releases and promotional materials, public meetings and seminars, and recognition programs

Funding: membership dues, grants, donor program, and merchandise fulfillment

Program Development: recreation, education and community outreach, and trail tourism

OTA Fall Schedule

September							October						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3
						OTA Open House (in Potosi)					Missouri Trail Summit	Missouri Trail Summit	Taum Sauk Clean-up
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Monthly staff meeting				Courtois "Clean Up"							Adopt-A-Trail work party
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
								Monthly staff meeting					"Fall Fun" Outings
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
					Free camping at Bass'	REI MegaEvent at Bass'						Free camping at Bass'	October MegaEvent at Bass'
28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30	31	
Trail outings after Mega							Trail outings after Mega						

COURTOIS CLEAN-UP

Saturday, September 13
Registration 8:30 - 8:45 AM

Where: Meet at Highway 8 & Butts Road, 8 miles east of Steelville in Crawford County.

What: We'll be putting the 'finishing touches' on a newly built 4-mile section of trail from The Narrows to Butts Road. 12-20 people are needed for tread work, corridor clearing and putting up signs. Plus, you'll get to hike the new trail!

Also: Trail-side BBQ after the event.

REI MEGA-EVENT

Saturday, September 27
NOTE: THIS EVENT HAS FILLED UP

Where: Bass' River Resort is our base camp.

What: We call this a 'mega-event' for a reason - it's our largest event of the year! Make new friends and lasting memories as you join 150 volunteers building new trail through the hardwood/pine forests in the Courtois valley. We almost always fill up, so be sure to reserve a spot today.

Also: Free camping Friday & Saturday night, complimentary lunch and evening BBQ, live bluegrass music, raffles and more! 20% discount on all cabins and Sunday canoe rentals.

TAUM SAUK CLEAN-UP

Saturday, October 4
Registration 8:15 - 8:30 AM

Where: Taum Sauk trailhead at Highway A.

What: Trail maintenance on one of the most beautiful trails in Missouri. Optional work on Sunday.

Also: This is a strenuous trip, so be prepared!

ADOPT-A-TRAIL WORK PARTY

Saturday, October 11
Registration 8:15 - 8:30 AM

Where: Multiple locations along the trail.

What: There are a few 'orphan' sections of the trail that aren't adopted and need corridor maintenance. Join this outing to help clear the trail!

Also: Registrants will be contacted prior to event with final details on meeting spots and work areas.

MEGA-EVENT REDUX

Saturday, October 25
Registration 7:30 - 8:45 AM

Where: Bass' River Resort is our base camp.

What: See September 27th-- we're doing it all over again! Same place, same great time.

Also: Free camping, lunch, dinner, music... if you missed the first Mega, don't miss the second!

Registration

You'll need to register online or by calling our office at (573) 436-0540.

We want to bring enough tools and food for everyone, so you'll need to register in advance-- and registration is easy! Online is the easiest: go to www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php, find the event you're interested in, then click the 'Sign Up' button. Fill in your name, contact information and comments, then click 'submit.'

It's that easy! (You can also call our office and speak with Anna)

OTA Fall Schedule

November							December						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 Sawyer Day on the OT	31	1	2	3	4	5	6 Courtois Gap Trail Building
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Courtois Trail Building & "Cook-Off"	7	8	9 Monthly Staff Meeting	10	11	12	13 Courtois Gap Trail Building
9	10	11 Monthly Staff Meeting	12	13	14	15 Firearm Deer Season Opens	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25 Christmas	26	27
23	24	25 Firearm Deer Ssn. Ends	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31			
				Thanks-giving day									

SAWYER DAY ON THE OT

Saturday, November 1

Registration 8:45 - 9:00 AM

Where: Meet at OTA office in Potosi. Crews will then depart for their work locations along the northern-third of the trail.

What: It's a big forest out there, and trees keep falling. Big trees, little trees and everything in-between--- on November 1st we're going to cut 'em out and clear the trail.

Also: You'll need to have a Forest Service sawyer card to operate the chainsaws. We still need plenty of helpers to drag off the logs and clear the corridor, so anyone can join.

COURTOIS COOK-OFF

Saturday, November 8

Registration 8:30 - 8:45 AM

Where: Meet at Highway 8 & Butts Road, about 8 miles east of Steelville in Crawford County.

What: Continue building new trail along the wonderful Courtois Valley.

Also: After the event we'll be firing up our 5-foot grill as we cook, talk, eat and enjoy the outdoors. Bring a side-dish or a meat/fish/veggie-- show us your best recipe for our first 'cook-off!'

COURTOIS GAP TRAIL BUILDING

Saturday, December 6

Registration 8:30 - 8:45 AM

Where: Meet at Highway 8 & Butts Road, about 8 miles east of Steelville in Crawford County.

What: Early December can be the best time to build trail. It's cool, bug-free and you can see for miles. 12-20 volunteers will continue work on the 'Courtois Gap' section of the trail.

Also: Complimentary BBQ after the work event. Free lodging/camping nearby.

COURTOIS GAP TRAIL BUILDING

Saturday, December 13

Registration 8:30 - 8:45 AM

Where: Meet at Highway 8 & Butts Road, about 8 miles east of Steelville in Crawford County.

What: Get your shopping completed early and come join us for the last work party of 2008. We'll build a trail-side fire to keep warm during breaks as we finish up the fall construction season. Remember: new volunteers are always welcome. Our certified crew leaders make sure you have a fun, rewarding and safe time on the trail!

Also: Complimentary BBQ after the work event.

Most of our fall 2008 outings are on the Courtois section

If you're registering for non-Courtois events you'll find complete driving directions on the sign-up pages at our website: www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php. All of our Courtois events will meet at either Bass' River Resort or the road leading to Bass' Resort on Highway 8 & Butts Road. Give us a call at (573) 436-0540 or email anna.kopp@ozarktrail.com if you would like personalized directions.

Volunteer with the OTA!

For general volunteer information or to become a certified Trail Leader, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jeff Goetter at OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com

Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets at **7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month**. Check out the web site at www.ozarktrail.com for exact times and locations. If you can make it, stop in.

The meetings are open to the public and input is welcome. Meetings are professionally run so you can count on finishing at 9:00 p.m. But the group usually goes out for a late snack and some great camaraderie afterwards. So join in the fun; we'd love to see you!



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED