

Ozark National Scenic Riverways

The Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR) is part of the U.S. National Park System located in southern Missouri--it contains two beautiful spring-fed rivers, the Current and Jacks Fork. ONSR is the first national park area in the U.S. designed to protect a river system. Proper management of the Park is essential to its continued existence, and there was an open public comment period that ended on September 11, 2009 asking for the public's input on the park's General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP will guide the park's management for the next 10-15 years. There were four alternatives presented for the GMP, in addition to a "no-action alternative", which is the option that would have not changed anything about the park's management for the future. The public comments are still in the review phase and the Park Service will come out with a final plan sometime in the near future.

Listed below are some of the main topics at issue for the new General Management Plan:

- The Illegal Use of ATVs and Other Motorized Off-road Vehicles and How to Eliminate That Use
- What Effective Measures Can be Taken to Monitor and Minimize Human Waste Pollution
- How to Establish Conditions on Horseback Outfitting Permits to Eliminate Manure, etc
- How to Eliminate Excess River Access Points and River Openings and Alleviate the Problems They Create
- How the National Park Service Can and Should Provide a Detailed Plan Outlining the Elimination of Existing Illegal Roads and Trails
- What can be done about Campers Illegally Located On or Near the River Banks and the Openings They Have Created
- New Measures that can be taken to Control Increasing Park Congestion and Excessive Noise
- Measures that Must be Taken to Control Floater Traffic so as to Preserve the Scenic and Natural Experience of Park Users
- Strict Regulations that Must be Applied and Enforced to Eliminate Large Horseback Packs and Relocate Horseback Trails
- Excess Noise Abatement by Eliminating Mixed-Use River Zones Wherever Possible, and the Potential Banning of All Electronic Audio Devices Without Headphones

Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE) filed public comments on the GMP in July 2009, calling for elimination of the use of ATVs and other off-road vehicles, measures to minimize human waste pollution, measures to minimize manure from horses used for trailriding in ONSR, measures to eliminate illegal river access points and campers illegally located at openings they have created along the river, and decibel limits, a possible ban on all electronic audio devices without headphones, and traffic control measures to keep noise and traffic in ONSR to a minimum. MCE has also been working with Friends of Ozark Riverways regarding some of these issues in the GMP and with the management of ONSR in general. Many of the issues with the GMP highlight the ongoing conflict between use of ONSR and resource conservation and stewardship.

For more information contact Missouri Coalition for the Environment www.moenviron.org