The challenge goes on. There are other lands and rivers, other wilderness areas, to save and to share with all. I challenge you to step forward to protect and care for the wild places you love best.” – Dr. Neil Compton

Buffalo River Reflections
by Laura Timby

This has been a really interesting spring here on the Buffalo, one day cold and blustery and the next sunny and warm. As a result, the springtime display, long delayed, is just now happening. Most of the trees have started to bud, so the hillsides are cloaked in the softest shades of green imaginable. In fact the newly completed section of the BNR trail, that had been visible across the river from Gilbert, is quickly fading from view. The bracts on the dogwood trees are still pale green and about the size of a quarter, while Redbuds and Serviceberry are blooming in full force, and each morning some new flower has opened up. The rain we had yesterday did an amazing job clearing the air of pollen, but did little to raise up the level of the river. Even so, there is still really good flow here on the middle river and the water is cold and clear! While out walking along the river just the other day I had the good fortune to encounter two box turtles, which appeared to be mating, and a baby armadillo-about the cutest little thing imaginable. Unfortunately, I didn’t have my camera with me so it was impossible to document these rare viewings, but it really was cool! Mushroom season has been delayed by the cool weather as well. Just now we are beginning to see a few scattered morels here and there. A neighbor found a colony of false morels, gyromitra caroliniana, or more commonly referred to as “the Big Red”, while mowing in town this past week. Although beautiful to behold they are not fit for human consumption. Lots of birds are making their way back to the river. The Buffalo is an ideal place for bird watching and now is the time if one is interested in viewing migrating neo-tropicals. Turkey season starts soon and it looks like it will be a good year while early fishing reports that the fish are hungry and biting. So don’t delay, make plans to visit the Buffalo soon, it really doesn’t get any better than this!

A Communication Problem
by Farrel Couch

I recently read an article about the hog farm being constructed at Mt Judea. The article was about the way the state informs the public about upcoming permits to be issued for projects and how it should be changed. Give me a break. It appears to me that this project (the CAFO) was purposely kept on the down low in order to get it started before any objections could be put forward by conservation groups or the park service. I believe that certain entities have labeled all conservation related organizations as bad for business and need to be kept out of the loop as much as possible. Blame for this can go both ways as I see it. On the one hand many landowners believe that they have the right to do with their land as they please, no matter what, because it’s their land. On the other hand many conservationists feel like it’s their duty to stop any project that might in any way have a chance of hurting the environment. I think there has to be middle ground or we will be no better off than our government which has become deadlocked in it’s decision making abilities. And both sides will continue to grow further apart with double-dealing and underhandedness. Is the hog farm a good idea? Probably not, but one thing is for sure, with the current way of doing business, nothing but hard feelings from both sides will definitely be one of the lasting effects of this fight.
Big Stink on the Buffalo!
by Wendel & Wes Norton

I live and work near Mt. Judea on Cave Creek, on the farm that was homesteaded by my family in the 19th Century. My family has preserved and restored the house, barn and springhouse built by our great grandparents. This land is in our blood. We love it and the people here; many are from the first families that settled here, and many are our relatives.

This is the land of the Buffalo River, one of the few places where people from all over our nation and world can still experience clean air and free flowing water in peace and harmony with nature. We are committed to preserving this land for ourselves and our families, and the public that so enjoys this “First National River”. But the Buffalo River, and the amazing springs and creeks that feed it, are in jeopardy.

Dr. Compton and those brave souls of the Ozark Society loved the Buffalo River so intensely that they spent over ten years in a long campaign that led to the protection of our national treasure. By its designation as The Buffalo National River in 1972, it would appear that we could rest assured that these lands would be protected in perpetuity. Yet written in The Battle For The Buffalo we are warned that the vigil to save our river is an ongoing responsibility.

It may be a little known fact that Dr. Compton, led friends from the Buffalo River Chapter of the Ozark Society on his last outing, to this neck of the woods. The rainstorms had swollen Big Creek in Mount Judea to flood stage that day as we drove by what is today the planned site of the first factory hog farm or CAFO of its type in this region. Ironically, the flooding of Big Creek will wash hog effluent from the projected CAFO down the creek and into the Buffalo River.

We need to remember the ill-fated attempt several years ago to permit large-scale storage and disposal of agricultural animal refuse in the Buffalo River watershed in Searcy County. Even though the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission had already granted a permit, the concerned citizens of Pindall Arkansas led a grassroots effort to halt this irresponsible operation. They were able to garner the support of others far and wide who loved the Buffalo River, and joining with the National Park Service, were successful in the revocation of the permit. History now shows that this was an overall good policy outcome for Arkansas.

In June 2012 C&H Hog Farms, Inc announced their intent to build and operate a new CAFO under coverage of a statewide general permit issued by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) in November 2011. The chosen site is located in a pristine area near Mt Judea and more critically in the Buffalo River watershed. ADEQ Director Teresa Marks has stated that she agrees that the Buffalo National River must be protected, but that her agency does not have authority to restrict activities within a specific watershed. That authority and responsibility is entrusted to the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission (PCE). Failure to block this CAFO installation and establish a moratorium on such permits in the Buffalo River watershed not only jeopardizes the health of the river and its tributaries, but also the health of local citizens and the thousands of visitors to the Buffalo each year.

CAFO’s contribute significant pollution despite legal compliance. The risks of adverse ecological health effects from CAFO hog farms are well documented. The US Geological Survey and other organizations have identified impacts from CAFO’s to nearby waters including harmful algal blooms, eutrophication/hypoxia, and diseases from pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Fecal indicator bacteria counts in surface waters downstream of hog operations have been found to exceed Federal concentration standards for contact recreation, and pose a threat to waterfowl health due to pathogen exposure to organisms such as Salmonella, Bacillus, Listeria, Staphylococcus, Enterococcus and Clostridium. Additionally, water contamination with pharmaceuticals has lead to endocrine disruptions that influence changes in fish health and their reproductive capability.

The other major pollution concern is the negative impact of air emissions generated by the hogs themselves and by their manure as it decomposes in lagoons, barns and as it is spread onto land. Gaseous emissions including ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, methane, carbon dioxide and volatile organic compounds contribute to foul odor and in high concentrations are dangerous to humans. Some of these gases (odors) persist in the atmosphere for hours or days and may be transported many miles.

Arkansas should be proactive and avoid what North Carolina learned the hard way- that ignoring environmental concerns over industrial-sized hog operations is a formula for disaster. Degraded rivers and fish kills resulted in damage to North Carolina’s lucrative tourism industry, as the state’s environmental problems become nationally known.

We must protect the Buffalo River National - an Extraordinary Resource Water (ERW) and a state, national, and world treasure. Let’s support the National Park Service and the Ozark Society in their appeal to block this and all CAFO developments in the Buffalo River watershed.
The Ozark Society, Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and others, are actively enlisting help to support Governor Beebe and Chairman Stan Jorgensen of APCE commission, in their responsibilities to protect the natural treasures of Arkansas and our Buffalo National River. Public outrage is warranted in this stinky situation! Our action can end this foul factory farm operation.

What can we do?
The Buffalo River Watershed Alliance website offers a wealth of relevant information on upcoming public meetings and media coverage. buffaloriveralliance.org

~Please email, mail or phone contact the governor’s office.
Governor Mike Beebe
State Capitol Room 250
Little Rock, AR 72201
501-682-2345
http://governor.arkansas.gov/contact/index.php

~Let’s all contact Stan Jorgensen – Chair Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission. He seems to be a voice of reason and is the chair of the commission responsible for this stink. sjorgensen@ecci.com

~Contact Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality to register a complaint with the ones that issued this permit. Teresa Marks ADEQ Director marks@adeq.state.ar.us

~Senator Pryor’s office is investigating this issue and has good public communications –Contact Russell Hall at Sen. Pryor’s office 501-324-6336
Russell_Hall@pryor senate.gov

~The USDA Inspector General’s office can be reached at (202) 690-1622.

~Share your thoughts and information on Facebook. We are spreading this national issue far and wide with the touch of your fingers! Be creative- do something helpful. Who do you know in the media that could help spread the word? Please do your part.

The Intentional Mistake
by Shawn Porter

Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) being constructed near Mount Judea along Big Creek has incited a spirited debate, with some residents rushing to defend the operation. A guest writer to the Newton County Times claims the project is solely the result of the CAFO owners "hard work and money". It should be noted however, that the operation also needed a large loan, and that loan is backed by public tax dollars via the Farm Credit Service Agency and Farm Services Administration (FSA). The acting representative of the FSA completed an "Environmental Assessment (EA)" which contained at least 45 known "errors". The loan was approved in spite of those errors, and our tax dollars are now backing the construction of this Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO). Neither the public, nor the Park Service were informed of the permit application in time to comment or object before construction began.

How did such a large project using loaned tax dollars get to this stage of completion without anyone having an opportunity to comment? Was that a mistake? Or is it simply how our regulatory system now operates? One thing for certain is that the EA would have been contested if anyone had been given the opportunity. Forget the argument that all the proper steps were taken. It simply isn't true.

Meanwhile, many people agree that the water quality in the Buffalo River is going downhill, regardless of the cause. We can point fingers all around… canoeists, elk, hogs, chickens, failing septic systems, herbicides, horse trails, roads, fertilizers… you name it… its ALL affecting the river. And the problems are growing as waste increases.

The key lies in understanding the limitations of the river to absorb waste and runoff, and then limiting further development in order to protect the river, our economies, our communities, and our health. We're all in the same canoe. We sink or swim together. We need small farms and farmers as well as tourists and tourism dependent businesses. We need each other for this county to thrive.

The guest writer continues in her letter by quoting Paul Harvey's commentary of how "God made a farmer". Well, Cargill made a fortune from that farmer. Cargill is the largest private corporation in the world, and like every other mega-corporation, they have been soaking up the profits at the expense of smaller farms and independent farmers for many years. I am a Newton County small farmer, and I support other independent farmers in our area, but if you ask me, Cargill can go back to Iowa (and please take your 6000+ hogs when you go). The best way to support small farms and farmers would be to ban CAFO's from our county. Nothing would better protect our water, our economy, our health, and our family farms. Regulations, subsidies, and farm bills are being written by and for large agri-business at the expense of independent farmers. There is a big difference between a traditional independent small farm, and a corporate CAFO. It would be to our advantage to understand those differences.
Adkins Creek (A Wonderful Day in the Wilderness) by Farrel Couch

You only have so many good days in February and the 17th was one of those days. Setting up hikes three months ahead of time one never knows about the weather. But luck was with us as we met at the Fallsville store on a beautiful winter’s morning. Our group was a large one, eleven eager hikers itching to get started. After a short shuttle to our starting point at the Dahl Memorial just off of Dixon Ridge road every one gathered their packs, hiking sticks, and cameras and off we went. Our route at first was along an old road that ran along the top of a ridge that separates the Buffalo River and Adkins Creek. This road is used by hunters and hikers to access the Upper Buffalo Wilderness. As we grew closer to the wilderness boundary the road became fainter and more overgrown. Finally at the wilderness boundary the road became a trail leading further out the ridge where it finally ran out at what appeared to be the foundation of an old home place near the point of the ridge. What a far-flung place for a home, shurely these folks liked their privacy. From this point the hike became a true bushwhack as we made our way the last few hundred feet out the ridge to where the only route ahead was down.

Making our way downhill trying to stay upright on the steep slopes and fighting briers, we were treated with areas that had some very large oak trees that somehow escaped the logging along this section of the river. Soon it was time to make our final decent to the creek down a very steep chute that was for some better to tackle on their bottoms. We met the creek at it’s confluence with the Buffalo at a shoal called the Mixmaster. At this point we gathered for photos and to recoup after our decent. Soon it was time to explore the wilds of Adkins Creek. We made our way up the creek, crossing whenever necessary in order to try to stay dry. We were treated with many unusual rocks including fossils of Pitkin Limestone which have a varied selection of interesting ancient life, and in many places, littered the creek bed. Also there were many Boyd formation tree imprints to dazzle us as we made our way further up the creek.

Although the weather had been quite dry Adkins creek seemed to have plenty of water. Having large bluffs on one side and then on the other made our trip even more memorable. Just by chance it happened to be right at noon when we reached a beautiful two tier waterfall a few yards up a side canyon that provided the perfect spot for lunch. The name of this waterfall is Adkins Creek Falls and was decorated with small icicles, which were slowly melting and everyone had to watch where they sat as not to be below them. After lunch and some exploring in the falls area we made our way back to the creek and continued up the main creek. As we moved further up the creek a large sandstone bluff on the hillside on the right had many large overhangs, luring many of our group to explore them for interesting features. After getting used to the sound of the water rushing over the rocks it was quite a change when we reached an area where the water came gushing out of two large holes at the left side of the creek—another Ozark disappearing stream that is so common in this area.

Moving forward the creek bed was dry and we wondered if the rest of our trip would be dry. Soon the sound of water began to fill our ears and ahead of us the creek came pouring over a falls and disappeared in the gravel at it’s base. After cautioning everyone about watching their step on the rocks I took a plunge into a very cold pool head first after losing my footing and falling. No real harm was done except my pride was badly damaged and my confidence shaken. Oh, and I was wet.

Waterfall after waterfall greeted us as we moved on up the creek. In one place a large tree had fallen across a pool in front of a falls; a good spot for a group photo sitting on the log. The day was coming to a close and it had begun to cool off as we made our way uphill and to the right, once again on the old road we had followed at the beginning of our trip. Returning to our cars everyone was tired but invigorated by our hike.

~contributed by Patti Van Camp

Trail Work Still in Progress: Volunteers needed! There isn’t much time left but it is still possible to help with trail construction on the Buffalo National River Trail. Ken Smith and friends are base camped at Tyler Bend until April 20th. You may be able to contact him on his cell phone (479) 466-7995, but service is limited. Another option might be to call the Tyler Bend Visitor Center at (870) 439-2502 and they will be able to relay your message to Ken down at the campsite. Or just show up at Group Camp #1 before 8:30am. If you plan on volunteering you will need to bring your own food and gear, but free camping, a camp kitchen and tools will be made available to you. The river is undergoing its magical transformation from winter into spring right now so it is an absolutely beautiful time to get out on the trail!
Welcome New Members!

- Cale Nicholson
- Ron & Lisa Almond
- Melinda Rutledge
- Larry Boyd Nutt
- Lin Wellford
- Annie Lincoln
- Lea Charlton & Julie Hofheimer
- Mary McCutchan & Dennis Meyers
- Michael Reed
- Jeffrey & Diana Hartnett
- Louis Jacks

Meetings...

For information and directions contact Laura at ldtimby@ritternet.com or 870-439-296

The Buffalo River Chapter will meet Thursday May 16th, at the Gilbert Café in The Coolest Town in Arkansas! Come at 6pm if you want to eat dinner at the café. The meeting will start at 7pm. Our guest speaker will be Faron Usery of the NPS and he will be giving a presentation about bacterial levels in the Buffalo for the past 5 years. Hope you can make it.

Hikes...

Editor's note: Please contact the Farrel at f.t.couch@att.net or 479-200-2621 prior to the event to sign up or to check on any changes. Thank you.

Indian Creek Top to Bottom Sunday April 21, 2013, Meet at Kyles Landing at 9:30 am. This hike is rated strenuous and will be approximately 7 miles in length. There is a 15 person limit 15 person limit.

Cold Springs Schoolhouse, The Funnel, Loonbeam Overlook, Sunday May 5th, 2013, Meet at Big Flat School parking lot at 10 AM. The hike is approximately 5 miles in length and is rated moderate. There is a 15 person limit.

Outings...

May 17th-19th It’s time to get ready for another Katy Trail ride. This year I thought it might be fun to camp out if the weather permits. I have booked two rooms for Friday night May 17th at the Super 8 in Marshall Missouri on Hwy 65. We will try to get an early start for the shuttle to Clifton City and New Franklin. Lunch at Boonville. We will camp out Saturday night May 18th at the Katy Roundhouse in New Franklin. They have showers and no reservations necessary. Breakfast at Casey’s General Store We can stop at Catfish Katy’s for lunch. Sunday May 19th camping or B&B at Hartsdale if you do three days. Day 3 Breakfast at Doty’s café. Lunch at Holts Summit or Jeff City. Finish at Steedman. Winery at Rocheport, microbreweries at Columbia. Contact Rick Hughes at 870-496-2129 or 870-504-0605, email to hughesrw@gmail.com with any questions or suggestions. This promises to be an exceptional outing—hope you can join us!

Other rides of interest include:

Tour de Rock Sat. June 1ST 6 am to 4 pm.
Altus Wine Country Tour Sat. May 4th 8am to 3pm.
Big Dam Bridge Ride Sat. Sept 28th 7am to 4pm
All of these events offer short and long rides. Contact Rick Hughes if you are interested in going.

April-June Calendar

- April 12-14th OS Spring Meeting
- Sun. April 21st Indian Creek Hike
- Sat. May 4th Gilbert Centennial Celebration
- Sun. May 5th Cold Springs Schoolhouse Hike
- Thurs. May 16th BRC meets @ Gilbert Café
- May 17-19th Biking Katy Trail

There’s still time to pay your dues.

The Ozark Society and Buffalo River Chapter dues are now due for 2013. Dues for the Ozark Society are $15.00 for an individual or family, $25.00 for contributing, or $200 for life ($100 for seniors 65 and older) a one-time fee. BRC dues are $10.00 annual, $5.00 email only, or $100 life (also a one-time fee). To become a member of the BRC you must first be a member of the Ozark Society. One check made payable to the Ozark Society/BRC and sent to BRC, PO Box 105, Gilbert AR 72636 or Ozark Society, PO Box 2914, Little Rock AR 72203 will take care of your general Ozark Society membership plus your chapter dues. If you are a new member and paid dues after October 1, 2012 your dues will be good through 2013. Thank you for your continued support.

See you on the River. LT