



Ozark Waters

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HEARINGS RAISE WATER CONCERNS, SUGGEST NEED FOR PROACTIVE APPROACHES

By John E. Moore, Jr.

In the last several weeks I've attended three or four hearings where water quality concerns have been uppermost in people's minds. Disposal of wastes and burgeoning development have potentially negative impacts on both ground and surface water, and it seems that an increasing number of citizens in the Ozarks recognize this threat. When proposals or issues with implications for water resources come into focus, people are quick to react.

About three weeks ago I attended a hearing in Green Forest, Arkansas conducted by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), essentially the same state agency as Missouri's Department of Natural Resources. The subject of the hearing was a draft permit by ADEQ for a biowaste disposal company headquartered in Russellville, AR to land-apply near liquid "post-processing" wastes from poultry plants in Berryville and Green Forest. The company planned to inject this waste material six to eight inches under the surface of the soil on several area farms.

This issue had been a topic of concern for several weeks before the hearing and a study by hydrogeologist, commissioned by landowners adjacent to the proposed land application site, had been circulated and had sharpened public opinion. Citing earlier studies done in the area, Aley focused on the potentially negative ground water implications of the plan.

About 100 people packed the small community room where the meeting was



A farm similar to the proposed bio-waste injection site.

held early in the evening. The common denominator of the questions asked, concerns voiced, and statements made was the impact of these applications on ground and surface water considering the karst topography of the area. "Karst" refers to the fractured and fragmented limestone underlying the soil through which water can migrate, often quickly, into the ground water and then into springs which bring the water back to the surface.

These concerns were pointedly expressed, and questions directed to ADEQ staff about the experience of such waste applications in other karst areas and the ways the agency intended to monitor ground water effects, did not bring satisfactory answers. It was not a good night for the hearing staff or for the representatives of

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HEARINGS RAISE WATER CONCERNS

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the company. Most of those attending the hearing left frustrated by the lack of responsiveness to their questions and concerns, and quite obviously the hearing had been poorly handled.

The resolution of this issue, surprisingly, came more quickly than I had anticipated. A week and a half after the hearing, the applicant withdrew its application for the permit, thus ending the process for the moment. Citizen concerns for water resources clearly had a direct bearing on the conclusion of this sensitive matter.

Another set of town hall meetings in Greene County (Springfield) in recent weeks to discuss a draft comprehensive plan raised a variety of citizen concerns, including water quality. The center piece of the plan, a revised land use concept, drew most of the attention, but a continuing and underlying issue about ground water was evident throughout the meetings. The level of the ground water (the subject of a current study), the proliferation of on-site waste water treatment systems (septic tanks), and the potential of some proposal for an ethanol type plant in the county, were issues raised in the meetings.

While consideration of the new county plan is ongoing, the widespread concern for water quality and quantity indicates a growing level of awareness about this important resource. This concern, a reactionary one, comes to the surface when the status quo is disrupted by proposals which could affect the water resource.

Our challenge, much wider than these immediate issues, involves ways to extend the awareness of water resource concerns, and promote and develop more proactive approaches to keeping Ozark waters clean and abundant. It's not enough to react to ad hoc threats to water quality if long range approaches and solutions are to be assured. That's a challenge for local, county and state agencies and also for the watershed organizations in business to promote such awareness, understanding and action. The Upper White River Basin Foundation is working in this direction and we invite you to join us and other regional watershed groups in this important effort.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 13

SIERRA CLUB PROGRAM: THREATENED HABITATS OF THE OZARKS THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF BOB BALL

Springfield Conservation Nature Center, Springfield MO
7 p.m.

For more information, visit: www.news-leader.com/calendar

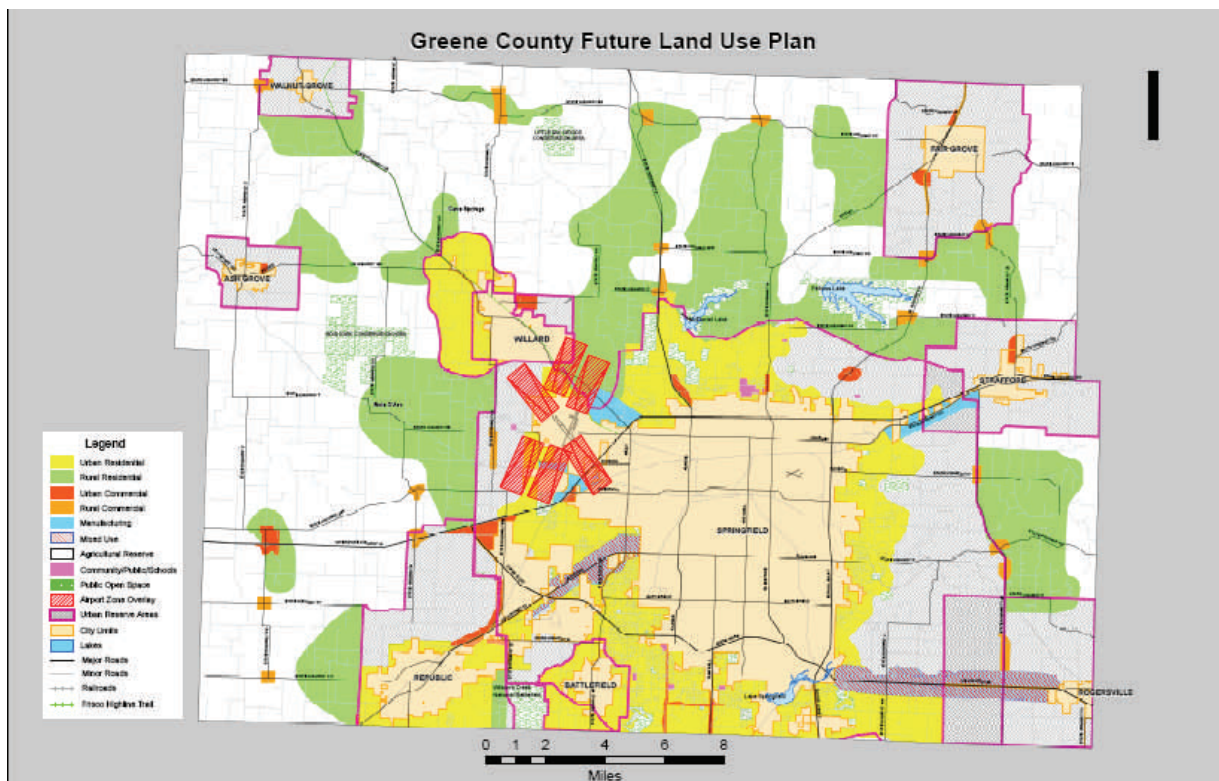
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TABLE ROCK LAKE NATIONAL ONSITE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FINAL CONVENTION

Table Rock Lake Water Quality, Inc.

Keeter Center, 1 Opportunity Lane, Point Lookout MO
9:30 a.m.

For more information call Table Rock Lake Water Quality, Inc. at (417) 739-4100.



The Green County Future Land Use Plan and the proposed Comprehensive Plan can be found online at the Green County Missouri website [here](http://www.greencountymo.org) or at www.greencountymo.org

BASIN NEWS

Blunt plays politics with DNR trust

The Columbia Tribune

<http://www.columbiatribune.com/2007/Nov/20071102Comm002.asp>

Go back through the years. Lafser, Brunner, Mehan, Shorr and Mahfood all have been directors of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Some were Republicans, some were Democrats, and all were dedicated to protecting the natural resources of this state. Some were better than others.

Organization forms four-state watershed group

The Morning News

<http://www.nwaonline.net/articles/2007/11/09/news/111007azwater.txt>

The push to explore forming the Multi-Basin Regional Water Council came from the Benton County Water, Wastewater and Watershed Committee, which is teaming with a Missouri group to develop a plan for economic and community development across three counties in the two states.

Community Foundation keeping programs afloat

Springfield News-Leader

<http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007711070375>

Andrew Sweet knows how to tell if a stream is healthy. The 7-year-old looks for stone fly larvae.

Coody embraces role as traveling environmentalist

Northwest Arkansas Times

<http://www.nwanews.com/nwat/News/59016>

Dan Coody is using his role as mayor of Fayetteville to spread the message of environmental sustainability around the globe.

Voices: Concerns about county plan valid, will guide commissioners

Springfield News-Leader

<http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071112/OPINIONS02/711120312/1068>

In recent weeks, the Greene County planning staff has held four "town hall" type meetings for county residents to discuss the first draft of a new comprehensive plan for the county.

Money still available for septic pump-out

Branson Daily News

<http://www.bransondailynews.com/story.php?storyID=5362>

Funds are still available for Tri-Lakes area home owners with septic tanks. Table Rock Lake Water Quality Inc.'s septic tank pump-out program has been deemed successful, but there are still nearly 170 rebates for homeowners in the Table Rock Lake or James River area.

WATER NEWS

NEWS FROM AROUND THE NATION

House majority votes to void veto

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

<http://www.nwanews.com/adg/National/206908>

Cities generate more than energy from wind farm

Springfield News-Leader

<http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007711050355>

Weed it and reap

The New York Times

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/04/opinion/04pollan.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Lawmakers create a stink over farm pollution

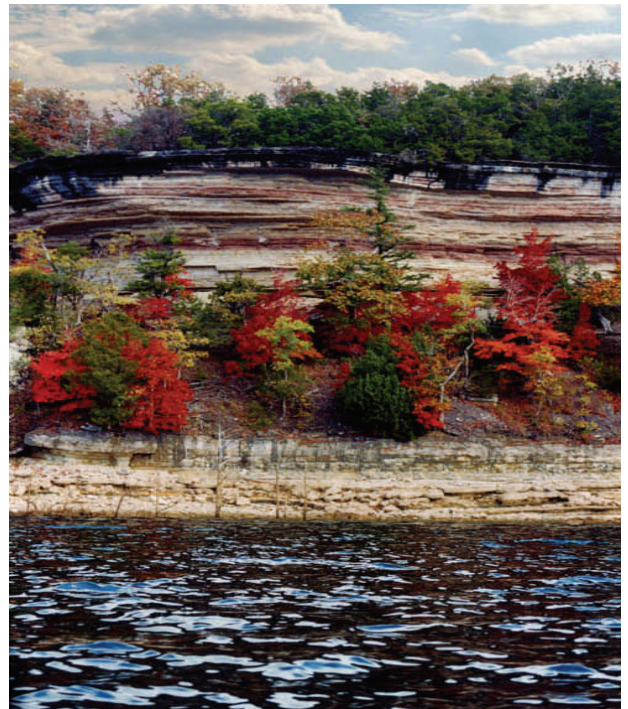
NPR.org

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16126292>

We have 10,000 lakes, but do we have enough of these?

Minneapolis Star Tribune

<http://www.startribune.com/462/story/1543870.html>



Beaver Lake in autumn.

Photo by Barb Kerbox