



Ozark Waters

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THE WORST, BEST SYSTEM IN THE WORLD

By John E. Moore, Jr.

Last week I attended a meeting of watershed organization representatives to review the status and progress on a grant we share. We all have a part in completing the projects funded through the grant, and it's common for various groups to work together to gain leverage in efforts to keep our waterways clean. We not only reviewed plans and progress on our grant projects, we also visited about other things we were doing along with news and issues in the watershed community. It's always gratifying to visit with others involved in essentially the same kind of enterprise.

Before we concluded our meeting over lunch, discussion turned to a number of frustrations in dealing with other organizations which have a part in making and administering grants, regulation and public policy. Some couldn't get things approved; others couldn't get an answer; and still others were simply frustrated with bureaucratic processes which seemed to grind down initiative and enthusiasm. I listened to most of this discussion before observing that my experience in the field of education had led me to conclude that these kinds of frustrations were part of the challenge of doing business today.

We do our business in a political culture that is complex and colored by arrangements and traditions distinctive if not unique in the world. Winston Churchill once observed that democracy is the worst



In response to the Foundation's documentary *White River Heritage: Guarding the Treasure*, photographer Barb Kerbox, of Busch, Arkansas, submitted this photo "Boat in Rain" taken on Beaver Lake.

form of government except for all others that have been tried. Our system of representative democracy operates within a federal system where responsibility and authority are divided among several levels or layers of government. Although sovereignty lies with the United States (a constitutional issue finally settled by the Civil War), the constitution reserves many prerogatives to the states. From my years in the educational trenches, the neat formula in that field is that education is a federal interest, a state responsibility and a local operation.

Public policy is made at the federal, state, county and municipal levels, with special districts thrown into the mix to keep us on our toes. Most of us who work in watershed organizations represent the not-for-profit community under section 501(c) 3 of the Internal



THE WORST, BEST SYSTEM

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Revenue Code. In more recent years, these kinds of non-profit groups have been collectively referred to as "NGO's," or non-governmental organizations. Many of these organizations, like watershed groups, depend on grants from one or more levels of government to help fund their operation. As a result, there are many ties, sometimes symbiotic, occasionally frustrating and yet mutually beneficial, between efforts at the grassroots level to keep water clean and public policy made and administered at the federal, state and local levels.

I have observed that public policy made at all levels—whether it be The Clean Water Act, state regulation on nutrients, county rules on the installation of septic tanks or municipal design criteria for storm water—this public policy creates the larger framework for what we do in watershed work. Because we live in a representative democracy, we usually have input into how this policy is shaped and made. Nonetheless it is the ethic, understanding, interest and commitment of individuals at the local level that give traction to public policy made at our many levels of authority. Helping to promote an ethic, interest and commitment to clean water is an important part of the work watershed organizations do in places where they operate.

As those of us in the watershed business relate to those who make and administer policy at all levels, frustrations are inevitable in getting things done. The benefit of our federal system is that many issues are kept as close to the people as possible, at least much closer than if everything was run from a central bureau. Could you imagine traveling to Washington in order to get a permit for your septic system? The challenge for us all is to recognize and acknowledge the nature of our system, to speak and advocate candidly and to persist patiently in dealing with the various layers of our federal structure.

And if the frustrations with the administration of public policy seem on occasion to overwhelm, individuals and organizations still have the privilege of taking initiative, being entrepreneurial, interpreting the needs, telling the story and gathering people together in the worthy cause of keeping our waterways clean. The beauty of our system is that the power of an individual or a dozen individuals with a sound idea and plan can never be underestimated. At our best, we'll combine that commitment with the power of public policy to make a difference for water quality....and other environmental and social needs.

NATURE'S CURIOSITIES ...



A rare photo of a mother black bear with her white cub in Minnesota. Apparently the cub is not albino. Do you think Native Americans would consider this bear much the same as they do the white buffalo?

—Submitted Photo

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 28

FENCE DEMONSTRATION AND DEMONSTRATION/STREM CORRIDOR TOUR

Electric fence building demonstration and tour of the Grazing System & Riparian Corridor at the Fellows Lake Demonstration site. **Dinner provided** by the Fellows/McDaniel-Fulbright 319 Project.

RSVP by 9/26 to Will Rhodes (417) 831-5246 x.3

SEPTEMBER 29

BEAVER LAKE CLEAN-UP

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers

For more information, contact: Alan Bland
(479) 636-1210 ext. 313

Alan.P.Bland@usace.army.mil

BASIN NEWS

Lowell: Sewer to subdivision too costly

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

<http://www.nwanews.com/adg/News/202351/>

Flushing a toilet on a rainy day in the Saber Heights subdivision isn't a good idea. Water drains so slowly there that, during a storm, effluent might float to the top of a saturated yard or creep up a drainage pipe into a home.

Watershed improvement district tries to redefine role

Springfield News-Leader

<http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007709180381>

Finding itself without any guarantee of state funding and few suitors looking for help with sewage problems, a multi-county watershed improvement board is trying to redefine itself.

Locals upset by Plaster petition

Springfield News-Leader

<http://www.news-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007709230371>

Residents and resort owners around DD Highway at Table Rock lake are alarmed over a Lebanon businessman's petition to make his property an incorporated village, removing it from Stone County jurisdiction as well as planning and zoning.

CAFO opponents cite presentation setbacks in appeal of permit

The Joplin Globe

http://www.joplinglobe.com/siteSearch/apstorysection/local_story_263214457.html

At least 45 days will pass before opponents of the Ozbun Farms poultry CAFO near Roaring River State Park will know whether they have been successful in obtaining a stay of the business's operating permit.

Guest Writer: Your tap water (Editorial)

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

<http://www.nwanews.com/adg/Editorial/202138>

Much has been written and said during the past several months concerning the safety and reliability of the tap water provided by your local water utilities.

WATER NEWS

NEWS FROM AROUND THE NATION

DNR commits \$50,000 to area for water study

The Joplin Globe

http://www.joplinglobe.com/siteSearch/apstorysection/local_story_263214457.html

Kansas: Planned ethanol plant generates public resistance

The Joplin Globe

http://www.joplinglobe.com/siteSearch/apstorysection/local_story_265234337.html

Kansas City council OK's plan to reduce raw sewage flowing into area streams

Kansas City Star

<http://www.kansascity.com/115/story/284591.html>

Landscape architects' green roof kept runoff out of DC sewers

Environment News Service

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/sep2007/2007-09-21-097.asp>

Ethanol production threatens plains states with water scarcity

Environment News Service

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/sep2007/2007-09-21-091.asp>

Editorial: Water is getting cleaner, but greener

Post-Bulletin (Minnesota)

http://www.postbulletin.com/newsmanager/templates/localnews_story.asp?a=308871&z=12

"Throughout the history of literature, the guy who poisons the well has been the worst of all villains ..."

—Author Unknown

CONTACT US

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www.uwr.org