

**JASON SMITH**

8TH DISTRICT, MISSOURI

**COMMITTEE ON  
THE JUDICIARY**

COURTS, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND  
THE INTERNET SUBCOMMITTEE

REGULATORY REFORM, COMMERCIAL  
AND ANTITRUST LAW SUBCOMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION AND CIVIL JUSTICE  
SUBCOMMITTEE

**COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
REGULATION SUBCOMMITTEE

FISHERIES, WILDLIFE, OCEANS AND  
INSULAR AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2508**

November 12, 2013

2230 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4404-PHONE  
(202) 226-6326-FAX

CAPE GIRARDEAU OFFICE  
2502 TANNER DRIVE, SUITE 205  
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO 63703  
(573) 335-0101-PHONE

FARMINGTON OFFICE  
22 E. COLUMBIA STREET  
FARMINGTON, MO 63640  
(573) 756-9755-PHONE

ROLLA OFFICE  
830A S. BISHOP  
ROLLA, MO 65401  
(573) 364-2455-PHONE

WEST PLAINS OFFICE  
35 COURT SQUARE, SUITE 300  
WEST PLAINS, MO 65775  
(417) 255-1515-PHONE

<http://www.jasonsmith.house.gov>

The Honorable Jonathan Jarvis  
Director  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis,

I am deeply concerned with and disturbed by the "Draft General Management Plan" that was released Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways ("ONSR"). Among other things, it appears that the goal of this plan is to shutdown public access points to the rivers, eliminate motorized boat traffic from certain areas, further restrict boat motor horsepower in other areas, close several gravel bars, and propose additional areas to be designated as federal wilderness. Mr. Director, I feel the need to personally, and formally, inform you that I am adamantly opposed to all of these proposals on behalf of my constituents and their local businesses.

Since its creation in 1964 as a demonstration park for the "Wild and Scenic Riverways" program the Ozark National Scenic Riverways has been a premier destination for tourists from Missouri, the United States, and even foreign countries. An economy has arisen locally from accommodating these visitors with food, lodging, and entertainment; including canoeing, horseback riding, and camping.

Traditionally, local individuals and businesses have been allowed to guide these tourists through the park, and provide them with valuable services. These folks are the backbone of our local economy. Further restricting access to the park, and possibly closing up to 90% of the public access points, is an extreme measure that looks punitive in nature. Preventing the use of motors on boats in certain areas, and limiting their power in others, will damage a local economy that is already the victim of burdensome federal regulations. The Draconian land use policies associated with Wilderness Areas are unwelcome additions to a Park that is well functioning and beloved by those of us who grew up here.

Your Park Service's attempts to restrict the public use of the park and threaten private landowner's property rights are well documented and have been at the forefront of this, my first term in Congress. They started with your Park Service's involvement with the National

“Blueways” System and the (now defunct) designation of the “White River National Blueway,” continued with the sudden requirement for a permit to perform a baptism, solidified with the ONSR’s punitive preclusion policies during the shutdown, and are now popping up again with this draft General Management Plan.

In January of this year fourteen of the thirty counties in my district were included in the Blueways designation without having ever been contacted, and with no public meetings or information provided to them. As reprehensible as doing something like that was without public notice in the affected areas, even worse were some of the proposals in the plan itself that would have infringed on the property rights of area landowners. The Blueways plan called for the creation of 180’ wide “buffer zones” that would have prevented farmers from using their land to graze and water cattle, and also for the acquisition of hundreds of thousands of acres of private property.

When local folks found out what was in the Blueways’ program they were rightfully outraged. Why would the Park Service sign on to a proposal to take away private landowner’s rights without even holding a public meeting?

In relation to the oversight of the Blueways program conducted by the House Natural Resources Committee, of which I am a member, I had the opportunity to discuss the White River National Blueway with Secretary Jewell in an open and public Congressional Hearing. At the end of our discussion, on July 17<sup>th</sup>, I expressed concerns about an upcoming General Management Plan for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Specifically, I informed the Secretary that I would not support any plan that limits access points, closes trails, lowers boat motor horsepower limits, bans motors on parts of the river where they are currently allowed, or proposes new wilderness areas. I realize that this administration has made it a habit of ignoring the wishes of Congress, but I would have hoped that at the very least when changes of this magnitude are proposed in a particular part of the country, in a specific congressional district, that the member’s wishes would have at least warranted a response. I see now that my expectations were too high.

I spoke with you on October 16<sup>th</sup> in an open and public hearing about the sudden requirement in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways that churches wishing to perform baptisms must obtain permits. As I mentioned, the idea that individuals can party on the river, can swim in the river, can float the river, or perform any other lawful activity in the river without a permit – but baptisms would require federal approval – is insane. I am troubled that the same Park Service that would seek to require permits for baptisms is now proposing a new General Management plan while ignoring the public comments that I made to Secretary Jewell.

During the Obama Administration’s government shutdown, your Park Service refused to allow the Missouri Department of Conservation to open the Ozark National Scenic Riverways to the public, free of charge to the Federal Government. That land that now composes the park used to contain two state parks, and the state gave that land to the Federal Government with the hope that it would be preserved and protected for public use. Mr. Director, it was within your purview to allow the State to open the park back up; you chose not to. I wonder what the true intent of

this new general management plan is, when your organization would choose to close a National Park to the public, when there were viable alternative options to keep it open.

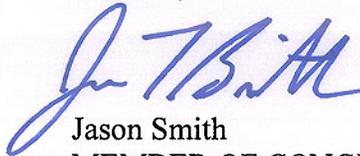
Mr. Director, you may be making these decisions to close public lands to make a political statement, or to appease radical environmentalists who believe that the whole park should be unusable, inaccessible "Wilderness" areas, but the people you are hurting are regular folks.

My district is under assault. We rely on manufacturing, agriculture, mining and tourism. The Obama administration has proposed new regulations that would prevent children from working on family farms, close the only domestic lead smelter left in the United States and raise the cost of electricity. Price raises on electricity in particular would put out of business many small manufacturers, and would be devastating to many of my constituents on a fixed income. The only clear objective that the Obama Administration appears to be meeting is shutting down business in rural America, and in particular my district.

Mr. Director, you have a chance to be a part of the solution for my district, not the problem. The Ozark National Scenic Riverways is priceless, its value to my district and our area is unparalleled, and the jobs and economic activity that the park facilitates are irreplaceable. Don't allow your department to adopt a General Management Plan that is contrary to the wishes of myself, my constituents, and the other folks who want to be able to access the River.

As we move forward with the process of considering this General Management Plan, I hope you will consider my comments, and also the many other public comments from concerned land and business owners in the district.

Sincerely,



Jason Smith  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc: Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior