

RECREATION POSSIBILITIES OF THE SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST PURCHASE UNITS

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Recreation is one of the most important multiple uses which will be made of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units (See figure). In spite of the natural handicaps cramping development of recreation and tourist industry in southern Illinois, there are many distinct advantages favoring it. Most of the handicaps, moreover, may be mitigated or completely removed.

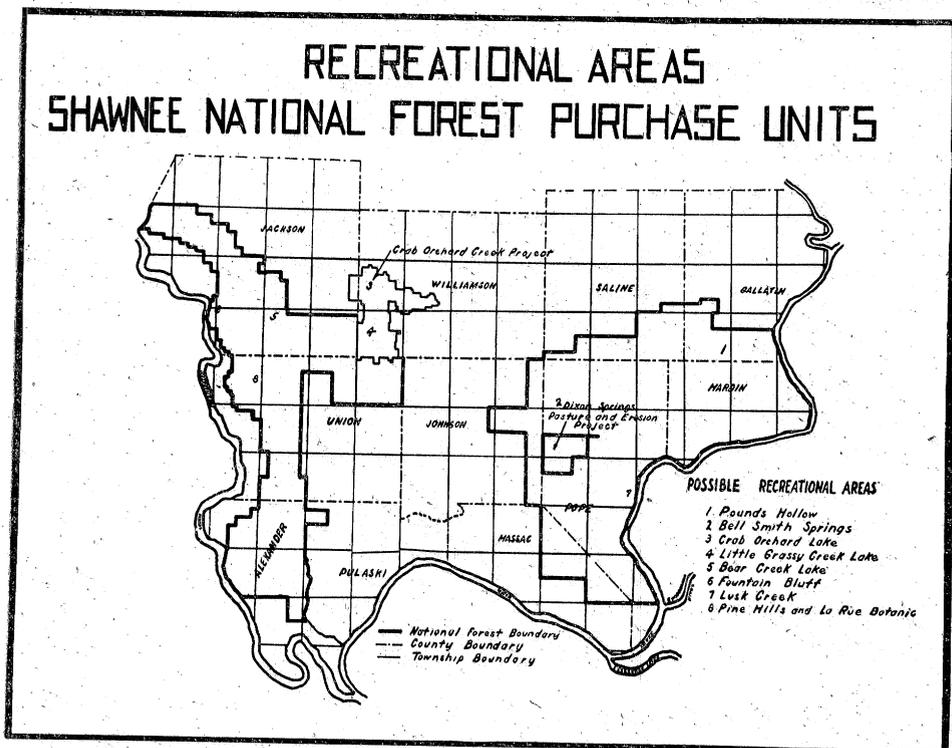
Disadvantages to Recreational Development.—Six of the greatest handicaps to the development of recreation and tourist industry in the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units are: 1, dearth of natural recreational lakes; 2, hot summers; 3, limited extent of the units; 4, mosquitoes and malaria; 5, unhealthful drinking water; and 6, poisonous snakes.

1. Dearth of natural recreational lakes. Because the forest purchase units are located in the mature topography of

the "Little Ozarks" and in the floodplains of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, there is not only a paucity of lakes, but the existing ones offer few if any possibilities for recreational development.

The abandoned channel and ox-bow lakes such as Wolf Lake and Mud Lake are undesirable for certain types of recreation. They are shallow and the water in summer gets very warm. The shorelines and bottoms are muddy and slimy, and along the edges and extending long distances into the water is usually found a heavy growth of vegetation. Most of the lakes are also infested by mosquitoes. Moreover, being small, they are rapidly being destroyed by silting and vegetation. Such lakes are inadequate and undesirable for swimming, boating, and fishing.

One must admit, however, that abandoned channel and ox-bow lakes are better than no lakes, and do contain some



fish and that they are good "feeding stations" for migratory birds, especially waterfowl. These lakes also act as a yearly habitat for some animals and birds.

The karst lakes are mostly small and undependable. Some of them are seasonally intermittent while others may contain water for several years before they are drained by the loosening of the bottom "plugs".

Although mature topography means the extinction of lakes, fine sites for dams and artificial lakes exist. Two dams are now under construction. These will provide lakes for recreational purposes. They are the Crab Orchard dam and the Pounds Hollow dam. A number of other sites have been selected, and plans are being made for more artificial lakes.

2. Hot summers. It is true that summers are hot and the relative humidity in southern Illinois is high. For example, the average summer temperature for Carbondale is 76.9, for Harrisburg 77.4, and for Cairo 77.4 degrees F. Maximum daily temperatures of over 100° F. are common.

Now, since millions of people live within a hundred-mile radius of the Shawnee National Purchase Units, and since on a hot day it is naturally more comfortable swimming, or driving through a wooded area than sitting in an urban house not "weather-conditioned" for local use, most of these people will rely upon whatever recreation the local area has to offer. Trips to the purchase units can easily be made after working hours, evenings, or week-ends.

Accessibility and cost of transportation to recreational points are often a more determining factor than weather. Most of the people within a hundred-mile radius of the national forest do not have the time to go for long extended trips, but they can afford to drive one hundred miles for attractive out-door life.

For example, the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri is not as cool or desirable as the "Lakes Area" in northern Wisconsin, but the former is frequented by a lot of people living within a radius of one to two hundred miles because they lack the time or means for longer trips.

Although in southern Illinois the summers are hot, spring comes earlier and fall lasts longer than in northern Wisconsin. Therefore, the possible ideal

recreational weather is longer in southern Illinois than in Wisconsin—even excluding July and August. It is expected that even during those two months the recreational use of the purchase units will be high.

3. Limited extent of the units. It is true that one can drive from one end of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Unit to the other in a day. But, if one were to appreciate the scenic beauty, visit the unique physical phenomena of the area, or delve into the storehouse of knowledge the regions offer in archaeology, botany, geography, geology, history, or zoology, it would take one days and weeks to cover the region.

4. Mosquitoes and malaria. In the past, southern Illinois was greatly menaced by malaria-carrying mosquitoes. During the last ten years, however, the drainage of swamp land and the better methods of control have greatly reduced the number of these insects.

A factor considered in selecting sites for artificial lakes is mosquito control. A lake with a high location and with prevailing winds together with a partly rock shoreline will permit water to dash malaria-carrying mosquito larvae against the rock walls thus destroying them. In sheltered and protected areas or embayments, larvae-eating fish, with which the lake will be stocked, will help control the mosquito.

A few mosquitoes, however, will not hamper the recreational use of an area. Anyone who has visited Atlantic City or Lake Champlain in New York, know that these insects are large and numerous, yet both these areas are recreationally famous.

5. Unhealthful drinking water. Many of the shallow wells and springs in southern Illinois contain unsanitary drinking water. Consequently, the federal government does not encourage its use. The government will not provide facilities whereby spring water may be tapped. Deep wells are being drilled and the only drinking water to be had must meet the state health tests and standards.

6. Poisonous snakes. Although formerly numerous, through ruthless and thoughtless extermination poisonous snakes are fast disappearing. They are now found only in the more inaccessible places.

Advantages Favoring Recreational Development.—Six important assets to recreational development and tourist industry in southern Illinois are: 1, existing recreational needs; 2, a great variety of hunting; 3, educational phenomena and projects; 4, scenic beauty; 5, inaccessible areas; and 6, location on Highway 51.

1. Existing recreational needs. Within a 100 to 150 mile radius of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units live 15 million people with a few if any recreational opportunities. These people live within a three to four hour ride of this national forest offering present and future recreational opportunities. For example, St. Louis and the Belleville-East St. Louis-Alton Industrial Areas lie within a few hours drive of these purchase units. The metropolitan area of St. Louis is nearer the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units than it is to the Lake of the Ozark region. People from here now come to southern Illinois to hunt, or to enjoy the natural beauty of the scenery, particularly during the peach-blossom time or when the fruit is ripe. Evansville, Indiana is within a few hours drive to the northeast, and Paducah, Kentucky is just across the Ohio river south of the units.

In Illinois, there are no large recreational centers south of Pana. That people in southern Illinois would take advantage of proposed recreational facilities is indicated by the use they now make of the abandoned channel and ox-bow lakes. On week-ends and holidays these second-class lakes are overcrowded.

2. Great variety of hunting. Hunters, here, will find a great variety of game. There is more quail, rabbit, and squirrel here than in any other part of the state. Opossum and raccoon are still numerous. And not only is it possible to follow the dogs as they chase the "possum and the coon" on moonlight nights, but here one may still hold fox hunts. Restoration of deer in the forest units is expected to furnish deer hunting. One of the principal north-south migratory waterfowl fly-ways covers the area. Although waterfowl-hunting may not be permitted in some parts of the purchase units, camera shooting and sight-seeing are welcome.

3. Educational phenomena and projects. The educational value of the physical phenomena, points of historic interest, and conservation projects for educational-recreational groups (such as boy scouts, girl scouts, religious groups, etc.) is unusually large for such a small area.

Many important historical events connected with our State's history took place here. Evidence reveals that early man probably lived in rock shelters long before he learned to make mounds. Biological southern and northern species are found here, as well as combinations due to interbreeding. From the standpoint of physical geography and geology there are more features in juxtaposition than in any other part of the state. In connection with conservation, one may see examples of how forests, soil, and wildlife are being restored and conserved.

4. Scenic beauty. Those who have viewed the forest-clad escarpments of the cuesta topography in Johnson County, the rugged hill topography along Skyline Drive above Pine Hills, the enchanting beauty of the Mississippi floodplain, the scenery around Pounds Hollow, or the karst topography of Bell Smith Springs, will not deny the scenic beauty of the "Little Ozarks". Space will not permit mentioning other places of equal beauty.

5. Inaccessible area. Natural, small inaccessible areas will not be opened and cluttered with cultural features. They will remain as natural areas to be viewed only by those willing "to take the climb".

6. Location on National Highway 51. The Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units rest astride the main north and south route of tourist travel—from Chicago to New Orleans. It is only natural then, to expect some tourists to stop over in southern Illinois.

Recreational Objectives.—To provide varied healthful recreational facilities blending with the physical environment, and within the means of the \$1,000- to \$3,000-a-year class of people, is the general goal of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units.¹ Expensive resort hotels such as we have in Yellowstone Park will not be found. Present plans do not even cover tourist camps—a number exist outside the area. A few trailer

¹ Interview with J. B. Gray, Recreation Specialist of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units, Jan. 22, 1939.

camps may be constructed, but not elaborate ones.

To fit in with the physical environment there will be rock shelter camps for small outing groups. The facilities of these camps will chiefly meet the needs of the hiker wanting to "rough it". Here one can unroll his pack and sleep under the rock shelter protected from weather elements.

Seven types of recreation will predominate, namely: scenic drives, improved picnic grounds, hiking trails, fishing and hunting, specialized wildlife habitat areas, artificial lakes with associated recreational facilities and specialized recreational areas. In some places a number of these types will be associated together.

Many superior scenic drives will cover the area. Short ones will be linked, making possible long continuous routes. The Pine Hills Skyline Drive has been recently constructed. The Skyline Drive to Bald Knob (the highest elevation in southwestern Illinois) is now being paved with macadam, and Karber's Ridge Skyline Drive at the southern edge of the Eagle Creek syncline of gravel.

Improved picnic grounds will be provided. In 1938, a small map of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units was issued showing seven of these places. There will be hiking trails and "hosteling", and these should become a very important part of the recreational use of the area.

After fish and game have been restored, fishing and hunting in some parts of the forest will be regulated. Artificial lakes

will be stocked. Breeding stocks of birds and animals are also being released,² and wise use of wildlife and tree protection will be stressed. If part of the annual increase of some wildlife were not removed by hunting and fishing, the wildlife would be harmed by natural "overproduction".

In specialized wildlife habitat areas, no hunting will be permitted. Such an area is being considered on the upper end of the Crab Orchard Lake. Hunting on small recreational lake areas would be dangerous to man and would also frighten the animals. One of the greatest pleasures of man is to watch the activities of wildlife in its natural environment.

Several artificial lakes with associated recreational facilities such as swimming, boating, fishing, etc., will be made available. The Crab Orchard Lake³ and the Pounds Hollow lake should be completed in 1939. The dam for the Little Grassy Creek Lake will be started in 1939.

Although picnic grounds are widely dispersed over the purchase units and scenic drives and hiking trails will interlace the forest areas, there will be some specialized recreation areas. Some of these are partly finished and now in use, while others are under construction or still in the "planning stage".

Some of these specialized recreational areas are: Pounds Hollow, Bell Smith Springs, Crab Orchard Lake, Little Grassy Creek Lake, Big Grassy Creek Lake, Bear Creek, Pine Hills and La Rue Botanic, Fountain Bluff, and Lusk Creek.

² For additional information, see Barton, Thomas F., Reforestation in Southern Illinois: The Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units, *Transactions of the Illinois Academy of Science*, Vol. 30, pp. 201-205.

³ The Crab Orchard Creek Project is to become a part of the Shawnee National Forest Purchase Units when completed.