



The Flashlight



Spring Planning Season

With March already upon us and spring around the corner, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the progress of two large park projects: the *Comprehensive Trail Management Plan* and the *Green River Crossing Environmental Assessment*. I would also like to introduce a new planning project to improve visitor services in the park – we are preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for *proposed improvements to the Mammoth Cave Hotel*.

The Comprehensive Trail Management Plan was completed in December 2008, and we are now putting it into practice.

Work on the Green River Crossing Plan continues. Park managers are carefully studying and considering all the suggestions and comments received during the public comment period, as well as the reports from river studies and consultation with other agencies.

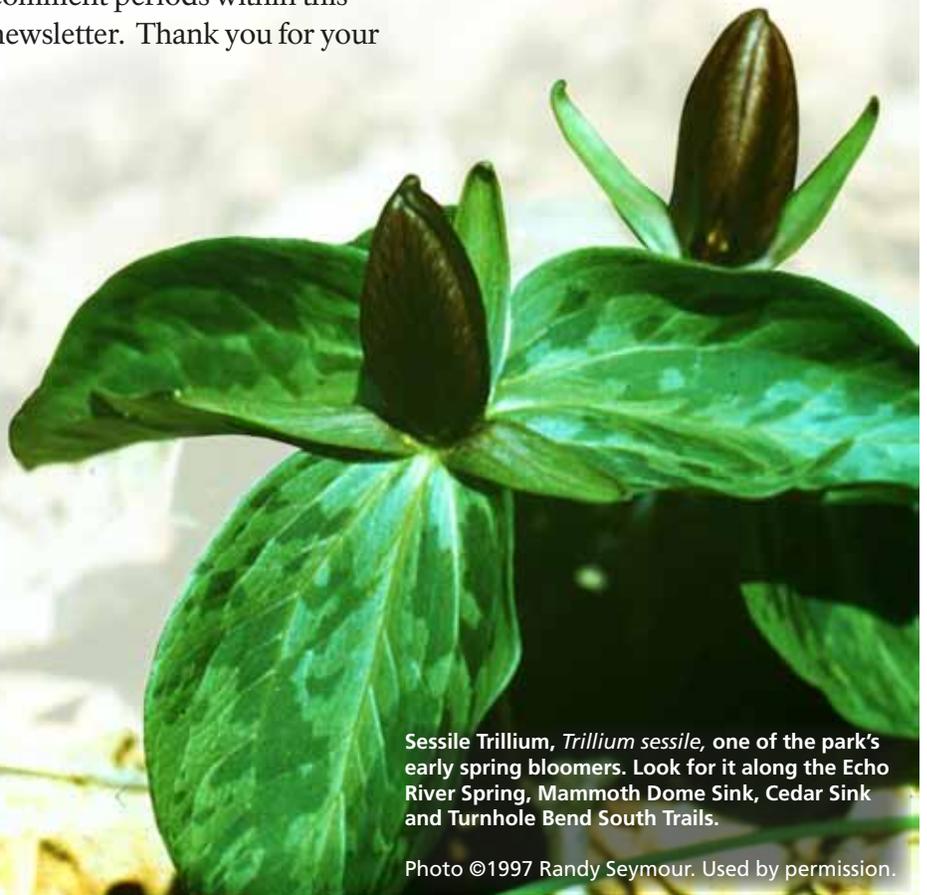
We are developing an EA for the Mammoth Cave Hotel project in preparation for the advertisement of a new competitive concessioner contract in 2011. The contract with Forever Resorts is currently on a temporary extension, pending the award of a new contract in 2011-2012.

Each of these topics has a great public following. Please note the dates for public meetings and comment periods within this newsletter. Thank you for your

interest in the park in the past and we look forward to hearing from you again in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Patrick H. Reed
Superintendent



Sessile Trillium, *Trillium sessile*, one of the park's early spring bloomers. Look for it along the Echo River Spring, Mammoth Dome Sink, Cedar Sink and Turnhole Bend South Trails.

Photo ©1997 Randy Seymour. Used by permission.

Details on Trails

Comprehensive Trail Management Plan



The Plan put in place several implementation procedures:

A trail monitoring program was initiated summer 2009 to establish baseline data of trail conditions and the extent of erosion on backcountry trails. A narrative description of each trail was written and a comparative assessment of all backcountry trails was completed to determine the condition of trails segments. A four-mile segment on the west end of Sal Hollow Trail was found to be in the best condition of all backcountry trails; a 1.5-mile segment on the east of Good Spring Trail was in the worst condition of all backcountry trails. For example, one element of the assessment was trail width – the Sal Hollow segment averaged 24 inches wide; the Good Spring segment measured 113 inches wide. This summer (2010) a water quality

monitoring component will be added to the assessment.

The Big Hollow Trail route has been chosen, and an archeological assessment was completed early this month. Park staff are pursuing an agreement with the International Mountain Bicycling Association toward the construction of the Big Hollow Trail.

▲ Superintendent Reed visits with park workers constructing a new bridge for horses and hikers on the First Creek Lake Trail.

The completed ► bridge.



The route of the 1.5-mile connector trail in the Maple Springs area has been flagged – with great effort, as pine trees are piled like matchsticks in some places as a result of the January 2009 ice storm. An addition to the Maple Springs trailhead parking lot has been flagged. Archeological assessments are underway.

The park is awaiting clearance from the NPS Washington office regarding approval of a special regulation on bike use in the park.

Three bridges were constructed, one on First Creek Trail and two on the west end of Good Spring Trail. White Oak Trail is now open to hikers, horses and bikes.

Volunteers contributed a total of 4,770 hours on backcountry trail maintenance and construction. Most of those hours came from groups, like scouts and trail users, but 1,300 hours were donated by individuals.

Progress at Green River

Green River Crossing Environmental Assessment

“The purpose of this project is to provide a safe and reliable connection for travelers across the Green River in Mammoth Cave National Park in an environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible manner.” – Green River Crossing Concepts, April 2009

With the purpose statement in mind, park managers are working toward a summer 2010 release of the park’s preferred alternative and draft environmental assessment. At that time, the park will schedule a public meeting and open a public comment period.

More detailed concepts and cost estimates for construction and maintenance of each alternative are being developed.

A mussel survey was conducted in the vicinity of the Green River Ferry – no endangered species were found within that area, but the report noted the possibility of drift. Another study examined the river bottom.

In October-November 2009, the park requested public comment regarding the hours of ferry operation. In summary:

- ▶ Most people use the ferries in the park 1-3 days per week, both in the morning and the evening.
- ▶ 62 percent of the people who

commented said it is very important to have the Green River Ferry operating 24 hours/day.

- ▶ If the park could extend ferry hours at Green River Ferry, but lacked the funding to operate 24 hours/day, most respondents preferred extending evening hours of operation to 12:00 a.m. A small number of respondents recommended 5:00 a.m. as the time for beginning daily operations.
- ▶ At Houchin Ferry, most people preferred extended hours of operation in both the morning and evening, from 6:00 a.m. to either 10:00 p.m. or 12:00 a.m.
- ▶ For both ferries, most people noted extended operation was important all days of the week.

View from the Green River Bluffs
Trail overlook.

Changes Coming at the Hotel

Concessions Planning

The Mammoth Cave Hotel was constructed in the 1960s in a style that corresponded to the visitor center. The visitor center is now under renovation, and the Mammoth Cave Hotel is in need of a similar upgrade to the facility and its appearance.

In the EA for the Mammoth Cave Hotel, the park is considering several basic facility needs that must be addressed via rehabilitation, new construction, or both:

- ▶ Utilities – updated electrical system, heating and cooling systems, and installation of a sprinkler system.
- ▶ Food service areas – improving visitor access and consolidating the three existing dining areas.

- ▶ Lobby and visitor flow – renovation of the lobby area to improve guest registration, access to the visitor center, and a comfortable common space.
- ▶ Gift shops – consolidation of the two retail areas within the primary lobby area.
- ▶ Heritage Trail rooms – renovation or replacement of guest rooms adjoining the main Hotel building.
- ▶ Exterior – enhancement of the exterior façade along with sidewalk and parking area improvements.

A public scoping meeting will be scheduled on March 16, 2010, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Rotunda Room in the Mammoth Cave Hotel, to solicit public comment on which areas are of greatest importance to the public. Another public meeting will be scheduled later this year, following the development of an EA.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Flashlight is the official newsletter of Mammoth Cave National Park, and is produced by the Office of the Superintendent. For more information about this edition, or about the park:

Superintendent Patrick Reed
Public information Officer Vickie Carson

Mammoth Cave National Park
1 Mammoth Cave Parkway
P.O. Box 7
Mammoth Cave, KY 42259

Phone
270 758-2180

E-mail
Vickie_Carson@nps.gov

Online
www.nps.gov/macac

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

