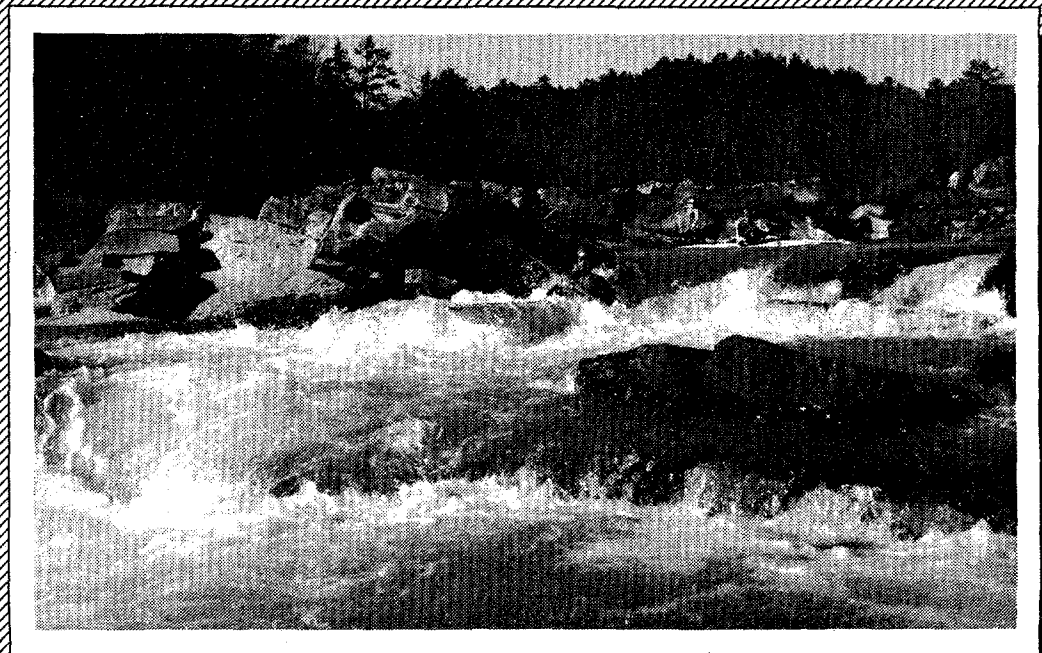
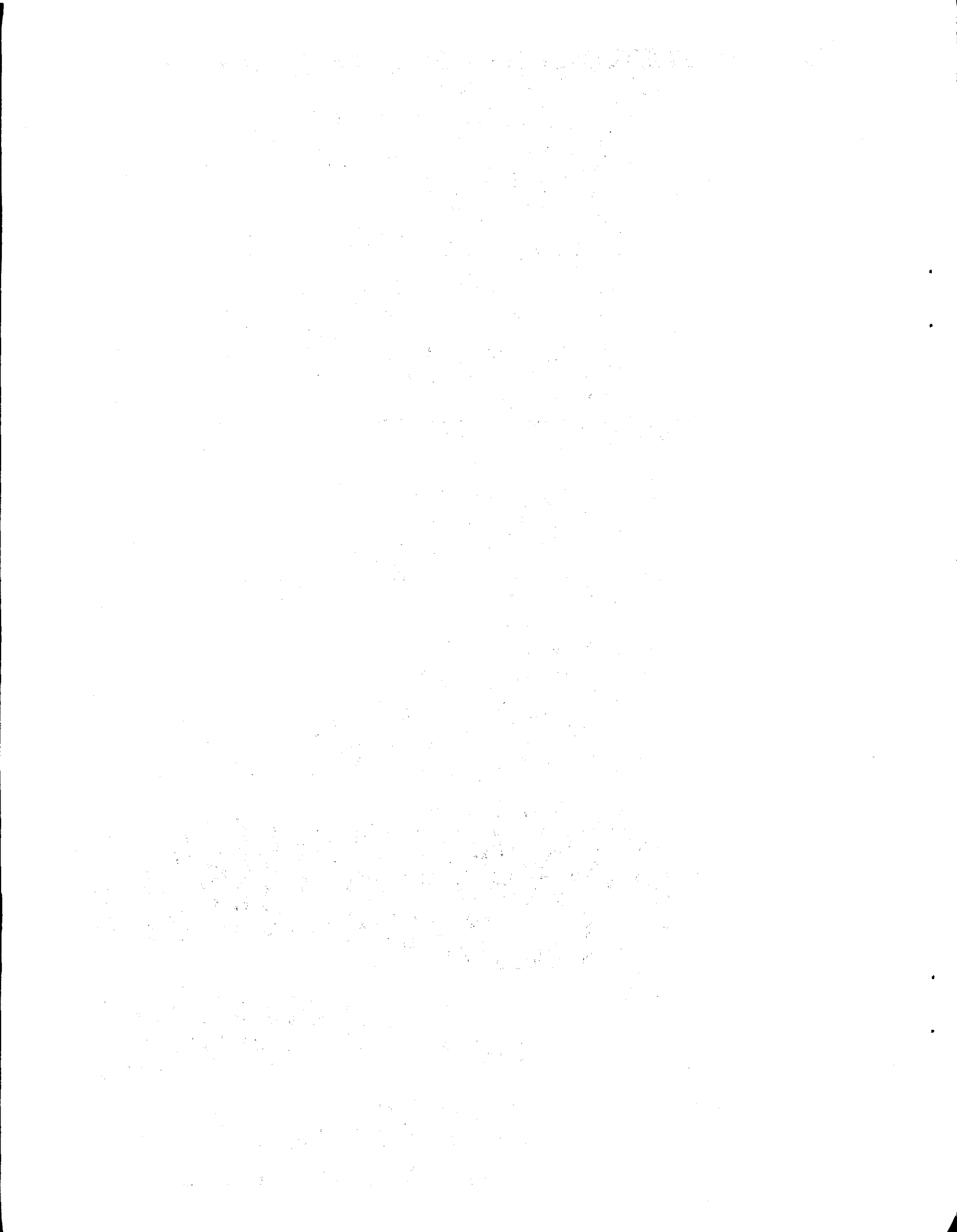


**COSSATOT
RIVER
STATE PARK
-NATURAL
AREA**

**FINAL PUBLIC COMMENTS
ON THE DRAFT RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT PLAN**





PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE
DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK-NATURAL AREA

Compiled
October through November, 1989

by
Arkansas State Parks
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission

June 18, 1990

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PREFACE

The Cossatot River State Park and Natural Area (CRSPNA) is the result of the cooperative efforts of Weyerhaeuser and the Arkansas Nature Conservancy with the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission in the Department of Arkansas Heritage and Arkansas State Parks within the Department of Parks and Tourism. As a designated state park and natural area, greater protection will be afforded to one of Arkansas' most popular natural resources. The Cossatot River, a major tributary of the Little River, is one of Arkansas' wildest and most spectacular rivers. The 11 miles that constitute the CRSPNA are bounded on the south by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land (Howard County) and on the north by the Ouachita National Forest and private lands, near Highway 246 (Polk County).

The Cossatot River State Park and Natural Area had its beginning almost 14 years ago. In 1974, the staff of the Arkansas Environmental Preservation Commission (AEPC) began to research the possibility of preserving Cossatot Falls, a unique geological area. In October of 1975, the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (formerly the AEPC) initiated communications with the Weyerhaeuser Company with the goal of acquiring portions of the upper Cossatot River, including Cossatot Falls. These communications continued over the following 13 years, and the issues involved in negotiations were complicated.

The Natural Heritage Commission first presented a written proposal to the Weyerhaeuser Company in January, 1976. The Company's response to that proposal showed its genuine interest in protecting the river, but local timberland managers had reservations about the Natural Heritage Commission's ability to manage such a popular recreation area.

It wasn't until the spring of 1984 that productive negotiations began. With the encouragement and support of Governor Bill Clinton, the Natural Heritage Commission and Arkansas State Parks offered a joint proposal to Weyerhaeuser that was centered around the concept of a combined natural area and state park. This resolved Weyerhaeuser's concern about the State's management capability, and from that point attention turned to such issues as boundaries, total acreage, mineral rights, access, and price. The Natural Heritage Commission requested assistance from the Arkansas Nature Conservancy in March, 1987, and in August of 1987 an appraisal was completed and the final phase of negotiations began. These negotiations culminated with Governor Clinton's November 19, 1987, announcement at a joint meeting of the

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Natural Heritage Commission that the State of Arkansas, in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy, would acquire this 11-mile segment of the Cossatot River. On December 23, 1987, the Nature Conservancy purchased these lands to hold in trust for the State until funding was made available for its purchase. Per Acts 512 of 1975, final approval was granted for its acquisition from the Arkansas Legislative Council on February 19, 1988.

In April, 1988, a one-time funding grant of \$83,094 for interim management functions was approved by the Natural and Cultural Resources Council to cover management costs for the remainder of the biennium (July 1, 1988 through June 30, 1989). Continued funding will be sought from the Arkansas Legislature for future bienniums.

The Nature Conservancy transferred management responsibilities for the area to the State in July, 1988. These interim management functions include: law enforcement, information/education, emergency services, on-site surveys, research, etc. They will be performed by a park ranger/interpreter employed by Arkansas State Parks.

Arkansas State Parks and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission have entered into a cooperative agreement, which will result in the development of a resource management plan for joint State Parks/Natural Heritage management of the property. Technical assistance is being sought from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Scenic Rivers Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Corps of Engineers, Arkansas Forestry Commission, and the U.S. Forest Service during the preparation of the plan.

Statistics are readily available through several federal and state agencies concerning the southwestern region of Arkansas. These statistics identify many limiting factors such as soil suitability, water quality, access, slope, etc., and population trends, travel patterns, and pertinent socio-economic factors which directly--or indirectly--affect the management options available for the CRSPNA. Information on the public preferences of those who will utilize the area for recreational purposes is, however, difficult to obtain.

In order to identify and serve the interest of the people of Arkansas in the future management of the CRSPNA, State Parks and Natural Heritage sponsored two public listening sessions in late Fall, 1988--one each in Wickes and Little Rock--to receive comments from the public concerning their preferences for CRSPNA management and public use. Over 120 people participated in these meetings, with over 17 people making public comments. In addition, written comments were solicited throughout the state during the month of

November, 1988. Those comments received through the mail, along with the comments from the public listening sessions, were compiled in an earlier document entitled "Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area: Public Preferences for Management and Use."

These particular public comments provided guidance for the managing agencies in the preparation of a draft management plan in 1989. In the fall of 1989, this plan was sent out for public review and comment. The purpose of this document is to provide a record of these comments made during two public meetings held in November, 1989, concerning the draft plan. The two managing agencies would like to thank those individuals and organizations for their input throughout the planning process. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the organizations and individuals that organized and assisted in those listening sessions, especially Wickes High School and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

Questions regarding this document may be addressed to: Bill Paxton, Resource Management Specialist, Arkansas State Parks, One Capitol Mall, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201.

FINAL LISTENING SESSION
FOR GATHERING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE
DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK - NATURAL AREA

November 1, 1989
Wickes High School Auditorium
Wickes, Arkansas

This public listening session is sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.

For those persons wishing to make comments on the draft plan, please sign the register at the entrance of the auditorium.

AGENDA

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Welcome & Opening Remarks ----- | Harold Grimmett, Director Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission |
| Public Comments ----- | Stan Speight, Superintendent Cossatot River State Park & Natural Area |
| Intermission | |
| Agencies Responses to Questions -- | Greg Butts, Manager Planning & Development, Ark. State Parks Harold Grimmett, Director Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission Bill Pell, Chief of Stewardship Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission Stan Speight, Superintendent Cossatot River State Park & Natural Area Bill Paxton, Resource Management Specialist Planning & Development, Ark. State Parks |
| Closing Remarks ----- | Greg Butts |
| Adjournment | |

FINAL LISTENING SESSION
FOR GATHERING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE
DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK & NATURAL AREA

Wickes High School Gymnasium
Wickes, Arkansas
November 1, 1989

Attending:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Greg Butts | Arkansas State Parks, Manager, Planning and Development |
| Harold Grimmett | Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Director |
| Bill Pell | Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Chief of Stewardship |
| Stan Speight | Arkansas State Parks, Superintendent, Cossatot River State Park & Natural Area |
| Bill Paxton | Arkansas State Parks, Resource Management Specialist, Planning and Development |
| Dorothy Clement | Arkansas State Parks, Administrative Assistant, Planning and Development |
| Tony Perrin | Arkansas State Parks, Superintendent, Queen Wilhelmina State Park |
| David Flugrad | Arkansas State Parks, Assistant Superintendent, Queen Wilhelmina State Park |
| Ed Falwell | State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, Chairman |

Harold Grimmett: Good evening. My name is Harold Grimmett and I'm the Director of Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. The Director of Arkansas State Parks, Richard Davies, couldn't be here with us tonight, but I know he would join me in expressing appreciation for you for taking the time to be here tonight, as well as having been here nearly a year ago - many of you - at our earlier hearing. And to kind of get things started tonight, first, I would like to make a few introductions, the staff members that are here from the State Parks and from Natural Heritage. We have Dorothy Clement, standing back here out of everyone's way. Tony Perrin, superintendent at Queen Wilhelmina State Park, and the assistant superintendent of the park, David Flugrad. David, good to see you here. We have Mr. Ed Falwell, who is presently chairman of the Arkansas Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission. Mr. Greg Butts, Manager, Planning and Development, Arkansas State Parks. Bill Pell, who is Chief of Stewardship for the Natural Heritage Commission. Stan Speight, Superintendent, Cossatot River State Park. And Bill Paxton, who is Resource Management

Specialist, in Planning and Development, Arkansas State Parks. As I said, we were here almost a year ago for our first public hearing to kick off our planning program for the Cossatot River State Park and Natural Area. We received a large number of very helpful suggestions and recommendations here in Wickes and at a hearing in Little Rock, as well as through the mail. All of those suggestions were very helpful to us in developing the draft plan which now has been available for almost thirty (30) days. We are inviting your comments on that draft plan here tonight. The comment period extends and remains open through November 17, so if you should wish to make a later comment by telephone or through the mail, please do so. We made a very special effort in this draft plan to avoid the expected bureaucratese. We hope we have made it much more easily read and understandable while at the same time addressing the issues that have come to our attention on this new piece of property. We are anxious to hear your comments and suggestions and your questions relative to this draft plan. The plan that we had tonight was to ask individuals to come down and offer us their comments and to submit any questions that they might have. We would record the questions as well as the comments, then take a brief intermission, and then come back and the particular individual best qualified to answer the questions would then answer these questions for you. It seems we have a small number of people who to this point indicated that they wanted to make a statement. I hope that means you're relatively well pleased with the draft plan. Either that, or you've just given up on us. Which I guess that remains to be seen. At this point, I want to ask Stan to come up and emcee this portion of the program where we will be receiving your comments and questions. Thank you.

Stan Speight: Let me welcome everybody here tonight and we really appreciate your coming out for this first session on the draft plan. We're going to get started. We have three speakers we're going to start out with and as Mr. Grimmett said, we will have an intermission, and then kind of go from there. The first speaker we have is Bruce Ewing from the Mena Nature Club. Mr. Ewing, would you like to come down and make your comments?

Bruce Ewing: Well, I'm Bruce Ewing, President of the Mena Nature Club, Route 2, Box 256BB, Mena, and in studying this plan over I believe it's probably one of the better things that I've seen of this type in all or any of things that I've looked at. We feel like that the plan has addressed all of the natural features, taken the natural features, and still utilized the resource. I will add that the conversations that I've had with the biologists of the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service in Vicksburg had the same compliments to say about this plan as the Nature Club has. We'd like to endorse this plan wholeheartedly in concept the way it is now. Thank you.

Stan Speight: Thank you, Mr. Ewing. Our next speaker will be Bob Hedge, from Wickes, Arkansas. Bob.

Bob Hedge: Good evening. My position has not changed since we were here last year. I have reviewed the plans thoroughly and wish to thank the board here for the opportunity to express my opinions on the plans. I have talked to many people who oppose this development, but they feel it futile to attend the meetings or to express their opinions. I do not want the Cossatot River to be developed for tourism, although the current plans outline an excellent facility, I do not want these facilities. I do not want parking lots, asphalt, cement. I do not want flushing toilets on the river, nor do I want laundry facilities on the river. I do not want tourists to be here. I'm sorry if I sound selfish, but I am. My great-grandparents moved here over a hundred years ago. They enjoyed the river. My grandparents enjoyed the river in its present state without flushing toilets and without all the facilities that have been outlined. My parents enjoyed the river. I have enjoyed the river and my nieces and nephews have enjoyed it. If I had children, they would enjoy it as it is. Although I would not wish to see the restrictions which would be involved if the Cossatot were to be declared a wilderness area, I would find that preferable to having to see the area developed for tourism. I do wish to see the park area patrolled by a ranger. I wish to see the controls which a ranger would bring to the area. The only development I favor as outlined last year would be for there to be some chemical toilets provided and some trash receptacles provided. Please do not ruin our river by developing it for tourism. Please just leave it alone.

Stan Speight: Thank you, Mr. Hedge. Our next speaker will be Miss Lana Ewing from Mena, Arkansas. Miss Ewing.

Lana Ewing: My name is Lana Ewing of Route 2, Mena. I think the Natural Heritage Commission and the State Park people have done an excellent job on the draft plan. It seems to address the needs for environmental safeguards for plants and animals in the area itself. I like the placement of camping areas and other developments away from the river. I agree with Bob in a way that I hate to see the developments, but if we must have the people coming in, I

prefer to see the developments so that it can take care of the people that do come in.

Stan Speight: Thank you, Miss Ewing. We are scheduled to take a small intermission at this time, but considering that, we can open things up, if there is anyone else that would like to make any comments or come forward in reference to the plan. Yes, sir, Mr. Compagna from Wickes, Arkansas.

Joe Compagna: My name is Joe Compagna. I live close to the high water bridge which is going to put me right close to the state park. At the last meeting I was pretty well going to go along with everything that they had at that time, but what I see now looks like there's not going to be much wild left around the river. But, if that's the way it's going to be, I guess it'll be fine, at least it will be taken care of, it'll be clean. There's one thing here that I would like to get a little information on -- on the natural area. The acreage, they've got initially 2,300 acres of the 4,454 within the park will be dedicated into the Arkansas system of natural areas. As forest restoration efforts are completed, additional acreage will be added to this system. What additional acreage are we talking about? I've got some of this acreage close to the park system, and I plan on keeping it natural and wild with no developments. Is some of this acreage considered in this? Thank you.

Stan Speight: Thank you, Mr. Compagna. Is there anyone else that might have some comments they would like to come forward with? Well, we're going to address the comments that have been made at this time. Let's take a little short break here. Everybody relax a minute.

Stan Speight: Mr. Compagna, since you had a specific question, we're going to address your question first of all. Bill Pell from Natural Heritage is going to discuss that with you at this time.

Bill Pell: The question had to do with natural areas and how many acres we were going to be adding to our system eventually. The summary says we start out with 2,300 and as areas are restored to forest, we might be adding acreage to the natural area system. That acreage we're referring to comes entirely from the property that we own or will own as outlined on these maps over here. So we weren't mentioning or talking about private lands outside these boundaries. I think that was part of your question.

Mr. Compagna: Can I see one of your pamphlets there, please? These tracts right here, nine and ten.

Greg Butts: I think it's important that I back up a little bit and give some background on how we reached some decisions on this whole planning process. When we were first introduced to this proposal, we had to make several decisions concerning what was in the best interest in the long term for everybody regarding the acquisition boundary. There were several factors that played key roles there. One certainly was the amount of money that would be available from whatever source to acquire property. Secondly, we also were very concerned about what would be a manageable piece of property that in the long run would preserve the inherent qualities of the Cossatot, a piece of property that could be managed and certainly protected. Well, fortunately, for the most part, the land that is being acquired today and that was acquired by the Nature Conservancy represents the vast majority that in our mind would be needed to protect and preserve the resources. In any long term planning process, we've got to look at the whole picture and I think as you can see from the handout tonight and as shown here in the draft plan, there are some holes in it. There is property that comes down to the river's edge in several places. What we are proposing is not to go in there like big brother and kick everybody off the land. That's not the idea whatsoever. I know, Mr. Compagna, you feel that you've done a very excellent job of preserving and protecting that property, and you do. We know that. What we are concerned about is what's going to happen fifty years from now. A hundred years from now. A hundred and fifty years from now. Far into the future. And as I stand before you tonight and here I am dressed up in a suit and this guy who I look to you I may not look like I like parks and get out and hike and all, but I've got two daughters and I'm concerned about what they're going to have in the future. And all of us up here have got children. And we like parks and we are concerned about what our children are going to have and what your children are going to have. What we're proposing here is what is a modest approach to a variety of acquisition possibilities through cooperative agreements, through scenic easements, where the landowner retains ownership of the property, through other mechanisms that will preserve the Cossatot. And, again, it's no reflection upon you or your ownership. I just think that it's very important that we work towards what can be done on these properties, whether retained by the owner through cooperative agreements or whatever, that's going to keep the Cossatot for future generations. I hope that gives you a feeling of where we're coming from.

Stan Speight: We've had a little bit of a break. Now has anybody thought of any questions? Bob.

Bob Hedge: The common philosophy is that the user pays. This development is going to cost a tremendous amount of money. My question is, will the local people end up having to pay parking fees and all kinds of access fees, a put in fee, a take out fee?

Stan Speight: Well, Greg, do you want to address this? I don't believe so, Bob.

Greg Butts: If we did, tomorrow Stan would probably be burned by the nearest tree and we don't want to do that. He's our great employee on site. Today in the state parks system, just due to the realities of life and having to meet expenses, we generate about 65% of our operating revenues from fees and charges. Nowhere do we charge for launching a boat or getting onto a river, or picnicking, those kinds of things. As far as I'm concerned, and I know Commissioner Ed Falwell feels the same, there are certain items that the state parks have provided, and we've been in business since 1927, that we don't charge for. I cannot say though that fifty years from now or a hundred years from now that that wouldn't be the case. Where we do charge are for those kinds of facilities that are typically provided also in the private sector. Motel rooms, cabins, camping, anything of that kind. We have no plans whatsoever to charge for day use activities, launching, etc.

Stan Speight: I will say one other thing in reference to charges, that one of the primary themes of the Cossatot will be environmental education for our youth, and that will be one great positive aspect of the park that there would be no charge for those educational experiences that the children have here in the park area.

Harold Grimmett: The next item is the location of septic systems on the Cossatot. How many flushing toilets are planned?

Stan Speight: The flushing toilets that you mentioned, right now, the only things planned for the Cossatot are Clivus Multrum type toilets which are composting, organic, very environmentally sound toilet systems. Now eventually, in a Visitor's Center situation you might have the flushing toilets. There are very stringent water quality standards and things that govern what we can do in reference to the Cossatot so I don't think you'll see any problems in that area.

Greg Butts: This phase of development would not include flushing toilets; those are planned for the VIC and later, the campground and, if demand warrants, cabins.

Stan Speight: Does anyone else have any questions in reference to the point? I would like to reiterate when you leave here tonight, if a question pops into your mind or something like that, we will be taking written comments or telephone calls until November 17, so you still have the opportunity to comment on the plan before the draft comes out, the final thing comes out in January.

Greg Butts: As Stan mentioned, you should have been able to pick up a time schedule when you came in this evening. Both the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Natural Heritage Commission will be taking all of your comments plus the comments that we received a year ago, revise the draft plan, and make a decision on it in January, 1990. We have, I think, a couple of extra copies of the plan, if you want a full set. We will be more than glad to mail you out one this week. Additionally, we're going to hang around here for as long as you want us to. Come on down and talk informally, formally, whatever, to go over any questions you might have. So we're here to listen. Mr. Falwell, would you like to close please.

Ed Falwell: My name is Ed Falwell with Parks and Tourism. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you who came to this meeting. It shows that you are interested in your Cossatot, and I'd like for you to know very much that we're interested in what you have to say. I think if you'll bear with us through this deal, and when we have it completed, I think that you will be as satisfied as the people are with the Buffalo River. Again, we appreciate each of you coming out, and if we can answer any further questions or additional ones, we'll be happy to do so. If not, we'll be dismissed at this time. Thank you very much.

WICKES, ARKANSAS FINAL LISTENING SESSION

November 1, 1989

Public Speakers

Bruce Ewing

Mena, Arkansas

Bob Hedge

Wickes, Arkansas

Lana Ewing

Mena, Arkansas

Joe Compagna

Wickes, Arkansas

that theirs is #1. So, the next biennium, which means the legislature will convene in January, 1991, we'll be submitting budgets in October, 1990. At that time, we will again address Phase 1 elements which I have just discussed. The plan is so designed that additional developments would come, based on whether or not the demand is there. I'm not saying let's go in there and build cabins, and Class "A" campsites first shot out of the barrel, that's not our intent. If there is heavy demand and use grows, we've got to look at how we can accommodate them.

Question from Audience: What is a Class "A" campsite?

Greg Butts: In our terminology, it means a developed campsite that has electricity and water, a picnic table, a lantern hanger, campfire ring.

Question from Audience (Randy Frazier): I know that this is more in-house than anything, but is Stan Speight still to be considered as a ranger.

Bill Paxton: I believe his position has been reclassified to that of "superintendent".

Harold Grimmett: Greg, will you close for us?

Greg Butts: Thank you for coming. Is there anything else? Please let us know, November 17 is the cut-off. Feel free to call anybody, especially Harold. Both State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Natural Heritage Commission will review all of your comments and we will have the plan actually presented to them in January. It is that month that hopefully the plan will be approved and we will be able to proceed with implementing various policies and programs.

Harold Grimmett: Thanks again for joining us.

Bill Paxton: We'll be here for awhile if you want to ask us any questions.

state actually bought it, the Nature Conservancy went through an exchange and traded some of the land they had acquired from Weyerhaeuser back from the river for land that fronted on the river. So we've already plugged in one little inholding on the river up here near the north end. There are ongoing discussions with a land owner here, and we are attempting to establish communications with a couple of others. So it will be a long process. One of our objectives is to fill in.

Question from Audience: How do these landowners feel about the possible wild and scenic designation?

Bill Paxton: They are positive. Most of these people are local people that have a close relationship with the river, and they want to see it protected as well. So I think we have a good working relationship with them already. I think it will go a long way toward solving any problems we might have 100 years from now. That is what we are trying to plan for, this is something we are looking at down the road after all of us are gone.

Greg Butts: The whole key to it, I think, is everyone feels that they are good stewards of the land. And boy, they certainly don't need government to help them take care of it. But that's true in many cases. The problem is that, in the long run, there are no guarantees. I think those are decisions that we will have to make.

Question from Audience: Simply, what is to be done in the first phase?

Greg Butts: The first phase is really addressing public information and improving the access areas. The public information part is to provide a small visitor information center where a visitor can come and get information about the river and various interpretive programs, environment, etc. Also to get support services such as maintenance facility, and get employee housing on site. We've got a lot to do concerning sanitary conditions at various access areas, putting in Clivus Multrum composting type toilets, designating parking areas, and preventing people from staying in parking areas that are there right now, those kinds of activities. The first shot we'll have for development funding will be the next biennium. We did, in fact, request funding for the current biennium, but we did not receive the appropriation. With 48 state parks and museums in the department, there is a great deal of competition for funding. Of course, we feel this is a high priority project. But for every legislator out there who has a park or museum in their particular district, they feel

their gas pipeline, but provide an equal area size for future needs. So if, and most likely there will be requests in later years to cross the river for some sort of transmission facility, a box to accommodate that. So we won't be faced with overhead power lines and other lines trying to go through the river. Simply, we can bring everything together and manage it from that nature.

Bill Paxton: There are plans for a regional, I think it's 25 years hence, plans for a regional 12" water line across the river at some point. So that is all accommodated in there, plus fiber optics in telephone lines, and that's basically everything.

Question from Audience: What is the status of the private land holdings along the river, that you all are trying to get, that you say that you need, what is the status of the landowners, do they sell or do they get to keep their land?

Greg Butts: Well, we are just in the beginning stages of having identified those properties and starting to work with these landowners. Currently the funding that has been allocated from the Natural and Cultural Resources Council-- which is, the new Real Estate Transfer Tax program--is taking care of the acquisition of the property which the Nature Conservancy bought from Weyerhaeuser Corporation. Natural Heritage is scheduled to complete that by . . . , (Harold Grimmett: It will be two years, about 24 months.) So, financially, we have to look at alternatives as to how we can spread that out over time. Obviously, there are very important pieces of property there, that given a change in their status, it could certainly be detrimental to the overall goals of the project. The plan proposes certainly that we explore any and all alternative measures that would, in fact, protect or maintain those properties in their present condition. Cooperative agreements, scenic easements, of course, fee simple acquisition, these are some of the alternatives that are possible.

Harold Grimmett: Greg had a conversation with the owner of one of these inholdings just last night who naturally expressed some concern. Is the government going to come in and try to take my land? In Greg's conversation with him, it turns out that this gentleman, who is a very good steward of his land, would like to retain it, but wants to cooperate with us and manage it in a manner that is consistent with surrounding park lands. Just before the state acquired from the Natural Conservancy, the parcel right in here (pointing to map) there was some private land that came right down to the river, we got to talking to that land owner and he was interested in a possible exchange of land. So, before the

Question from Audience: My opinion is "Would it have to be? Should it go through the park? In other words, why here?"

Bill Paxton: They only travel a short distance through our land. The land it crosses really belongs to somebody else. They cross our land for a short distance and then they cross private land, then they cross our land, and they are back on Weyerhaeuser, so I can't remember how many feet it is, is it 1,000 feet? Something like that.

Greg Butts: I think the proposal probably came at a timely point within the preparation of the plan. Several theories or schools of thought were developing with the plan and how that subject should be approached. But I think realistically we've got to study it in great detail, we've got to make plans, not for just now, but for our kids' kids, and where we're going to be in 200 years, or whatever, 100 years. The concept that is noted in the plan is that certainly local communities, developing water associations as they may grow and develop, electric companies, the telephone company, other utilities, it makes sense that we need to plan for that. If there are no other alternatives, the negative side of problems in the national forest, the endangered species, we can designate an area and say this is it, don't mess up a natural area, don't cut up the middle of it, then I think it's a positive aspect. In this particular case, I believe, we looked at numerous alternatives. One of them included going below Gillham Dam, and another segment of the review process gets involved, and not just an environmental aspect, but also the cost benefit portion, including the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. When they get involved in determining routes as they apply to the ratepayer, is it environmentally safe, and is it cost effective for corporations on a new line, and how much is he going to charge the consumer? South of the dam, they ran into, instead of viable options, they ran into all kinds of archeological problems, and they ran into wetlands. So, I think that those are the alternatives that they addressed. And, when we look at the proposal, we've got to be practical. And looking at where we are going to be long, long down the road, and the proposal must be environmentally safe and provide a place that's not going to hurt the park/natural area.

Harold Grimmett: Not only the location was a factor, this particular entrance in crossing the river with a transmission facility, but any future ones at the bridge sites, ARKLA has offered to construct this, probably a steel encased, but coated to look like concrete like the current highway bridge, a steel box that will accommodate not only

wandering off. I think the situation at Pinnacle Mountain State Park where there is over 2,000 acres of land, less than 200 acres developed, there are trails out there that are, for the most part, and Randy, correct me if I'm wrong, but people stay on those trails. The very sensitive plant and animal communities which Randy and his staff are trying to protect, lead people directly away from those areas by having designated trails. When you have people come, you have to have some method of organizing how to use it, and protecting the resource. And, I think just letting everyone wander freely is a very nice concept, but in reality, it would be very detrimental to the resource.

Question from Audience: When someone drowns, are you going to start policing the river like the Buffalo. It might help to have some safety recommendations.

Greg Butts: Well, we've had a drowning this summer, and the river's not closed. I think the whole concept is that it be an educational process, and through literature and working with the Canoe Club, the Ozark Society, and several other folks who have been addressing this plan, is that people realize that they can't get on the river when it's running at 10,000 CFS, or whatever, in a Walmart innertube or something. It just can't happen. So we would hope there would be less accidents simply by our presence and through public information programs.

Question from Audience: What can you share with us about the proposal to put a utility or transmission line, or put something across there. It is a concern of mine.

Bill Pell: You know, we have been approached by ARKLA, actually many months ago with a proposal to put a gas pipeline across the property that we are picking up. The original proposal would have put it right through the middle of the property. Our response to that was "if all your analysis points to our 10.4 miles of river, at least consider moving it to the 246 bridge site," which was, in our opinion, was the most disturbed area on the river, at least within the part that we picked up. So, we have been working with ARKLA ever since, attempting to make sure that they had really analyzed all the alternatives and that they were coming up with a scheme that would not negatively impact the river. At this point, we are still in the proposal stage. There has been no final decision about what will happen. But what they are looking at right now is a pipeline bridge which would be located near the 246 bridge, about 70 feet south. And of course on either side of the pipeline, it would be buried underground. It would have some surface disturbance on either side.

of the plan very greatly reflects upon the public input that we have received. We have been able to try to incorporate it into it. Without your participation, it wouldn't have been any kind of plan that I think met the needs of the people and the resource.

Question from Audience: How do the locals feel?

Harold Grimmett: There was one individual whose attitude was simply that the property should be protected, but nothing should be done to attract additional public use there. In other words, I'm glad you bought it, put a ranger on it, and don't let anybody do anything . . .

Bill Paxton: And don't put any flush toilets on it . . . don't do a thing.

Question from Audience: I think that is part of the charm of the Cossatot area, going down there, getting lost on the Weyerhaeuser roads, going down there three or four times and finally learning about it, from a first hand experience, I'm sure, as we know about it, and following maps, and being able to go anywhere you want to go.

Bill Pell: We hope there will still be plenty of wildness down there, if you look at the map. . . , I'm sure you can't see that map from here, but it shows the development spots along the river, there will be miles and miles of territory that has no development at all, possibly a foot trail. But you won't see anything else, you won't see asphalt, you won't see buildings, you won't see anything that will intrude on your experience of a wild and scenic area.

Greg Butts: Just to add to Bill's point, out of some 4,200 odd acres, what we are talking about here is 100 acres at the most, and I think the things we've learned. . . , and we have Randy Frazier here tonight with us, Superintendent of Pinnacle Mountain State Park. . . , is that it is very important to have designated areas, it is very important to have the ability to collect trash, to take care of human waste, and everything else. There are a lot of problems right now at the Cossatot because there aren't facilities to take care of that situation. We had a clean-up in June. We found broken glass everywhere, in fact, we have a new policy that has gone through the Administrative Procedures Act that prevents the use of glass containers on the River and within 50 feet of it, with the exception of the camping and picnicking areas, whatever. That is the kind of thing we have to address, and in order to address it, we found that by having designated trails, by having designated parking areas, we are able to keep the public in those areas and not

Question from Audience: What is the process for national river designation?

Bill Paxton: We would apply for it, we would ask the Governor to recommend that it go to the Department of Interior and the National Park Service would handle that, and then it would be by an Act of Congress really.

Question from Audience: What is the status now?

Bill Paxton: We're moving along with it, part of this effort right tonight is part of the process. As we move along with approval of the plan, it'll take a year to a year and a half to get it done. I just got some stuff faxed in from the American Rivers Association which is following us very closely, and the American White Water Association.

Question from Audience: How much development is going to be at the access points? I see the drawings up here, specifically are these parking areas going to be paved or gravel?

Bill Paxton: Gravel, probably gravel. We're not planning on doing any major development, this is phased in over time, and each thing has to be done in phases. We're trying to keep it back from the river, pick the most logical location, most of these are already existing use areas, all we're going to do is improve them somewhat, solve the problems that are already there, and accommodate some users. Did you get a copy of the plan, by the way? (Yes, I did.)

Question from Audience: Just out of curiosity, how many of those plans were mailed out.

Bill Paxton: About 160. We handed out a lot, too, so we have approximately 12 plans left out of 200 printed.

Greg Butts: All the individuals who presented comments at the listening sessions a year ago, or sent in written comments, were sent a plan. Then, of course, we had others who picked up about the plan in the paper and also called in.

Harold Grimmett: We really appreciate the interest you have shown in this project by your attendance tonight, and your comments. I encourage you to think more about it. Come to think about it, the comment period remains open . . . , Greg, until the 17th of November? We welcome your comments, we feel that some have complimented us, people not here have apparently complimented us by at least not finding enough fault with the plan to be here to criticize it. The quality

Question from Audience: We're worried about the politics of economics on the Cossatot.

Bill Paxton: One of the things that would probably solve that, one of the things that we're going for is the designation as a National Wild and Scenic River. Once it is afforded that status, if you read real closely, you saw that we were talking about a scenic designation of the classification rather, of the corridor initially because we're going to be doing timber management. It will be reclassified wild in 28 years. In a wild and scenic river, I don't think anybody in this country would let anybody do something like that to a wild and scenic river, to corrupt something like that.

Question from Audience: What if someone comes in 20 to 30 years from now and discovers, say, oil or natural gas, or some substance that they don't even use now, but in 20 or 30 years might use it -- and they want to build a mine or well there, right in the river part or somewhere very close, then what happens?

Bill Paxton: Harold answered that question. If you read the plan real carefully, you'll find that we don't allow that.

Harold Grimmett: A simple answer is, the state does not own any gas, oil, or mineral rights underneath the property. Those were retained by the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, but we have restrictions written into the deeds that will prevent them from having any surface occupancy. They cannot come on the property to extract anything, nor can they have any operation sub-surface within a certain level of the surface.

Question from Audience: What would be their objective in reserving the mineral rights?

Harold Grimmett: Their simple answer is, company policy is, they never sell land without retaining those rights, because somewhere down the line, George Weyerhaeuser's father, that is what I was told in their negotiations, told him not to sell land without retaining those oil and mineral rights.

Question from Audience: I still wonder what they would do?

Bill Pell: The rest of the answer to your question is that there are methods you can use to extract minerals and resources without being on the surface. Slant drilling, other methods, and that is what we would expect them to use, without destroying the park natural area.

Question from Audience: If there is some economic interest that develops on the river, is it gonna be abandoned like the Crater of Diamonds?

Bill Paxton: The question was, if there is an interest in economic development, are we going to abandon the Cossatot? Is that what your question was? We don't have any plans to abandon it. We just bought it.

Question from Audience: Well, I mean, you know, maybe that's a strange question, but it's

Greg Butts: To answer the question about the Crater of Diamonds, the Department nor the Commission have abandoned that particular park. Nor has the Commission made any decision on mining the Crater. I think the decision that has been made is to do testing to see exactly what is there.

Question from Audience: Well, I'll tell you why I asked that. I saw a quote in the paper where some state representative said he wanted to see the Cossatot be the Buffalo River of Southwest Arkansas. In politics, things change, so I guess I just want to hear what is planned.

Greg Butts: I think in the context in which that was put, it was that it should not be aluminum, or in this case a plastic conveyer belt, with 500,000 people visiting a year. I can't speak for Chairman Falwell, but I know his feelings on the matter. There's one that there would be a facility that would meet some of the needs certainly of the visitors, that the goals of preserving and protecting a natural area - state park would be identical to the mandates of our two commissions.

Harold Grimmett: If I might, Mr. Falwell's remark was aimed not at the level of a huge development, but at thinking that with our close plans people would be as happy with our management of the Cossatot River as the people of the Ozarks are with the National Park Service's management of the Buffalo River. That was his thrust in saying that.

Greg Butts: To add to Harold's remarks, the Buffalo Point area was one of the first state parks in Arkansas. I'm not for sure if everyone remembers that or is aware of it, but over 3500 acres of Buffalo Point, and also up at Lost Valley is part of that, and was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corp, and was then transferred in '73 to the National Park Service.

for a long time trying to find a place like that. You said something about stream flows, also? You mean in terms of us measuring it, whatever? Oh, yeah, we've got twenty-two years of data on flow on the river, daily flow, as well as mean, monthly mean yearly, all those things. And you could almost get into statistics and predict what days it will be up, if you got down to it. We will have a stream gauging station at the Highway 246 bridge, I think we just about consummated the agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey?

Greg Butts: There's two parts to it. They -- some of you may be aware of it -- they had an old gauging station there and when the new bridge went in they had to relocate it or take it out. Both commissions approved them putting in a new station, additionally a proposed cooperative agreement where a phone modem (telemetry line) could be put in and where the public could call and get by the minute information from, I think, Fort Smith. Right now we've been trying to iron out the details of the agreement that the U.S. Geological Survey and their attorneys at the federal level have certain requirements about format; it's really a matter of resolving those things. But that will go back in.

Question from Audience: What's the number of the road to the overlook?

Bill Paxton: The number of the Weyerhauser road? Probably 52247 would be the number, I think. When you're coming from Route 4 towards the falls and when you came to that T intersection to turn right toward the falls, you turn left and take the first right. Then take another right and that puts you back downstream less than a quarter of a mile from the falls parking area.

Question from Audience: Can you address what the policy is going to be toward concessionaires and new businesses that are of this type?

Greg Butts: That's a good question. And we had some conversations after the meeting last night from an interested individual who in fact wished to establish a concession within the park - natural area. I think no decision has been reached at this time. I think it's a matter of taking a look at what kind of demand there is, it's something that the commission will have to sanction and so authorize if we get into it. I think Richard Davies' feeling at this stage is it's a little early in the game to know how much interest there is, what kind of restrictions we ought to place on it, if any, and we're going to address that as we get into the daily workings of operating the area.

if we put developments in the corridor, where we put them, and how that may affect the long range goals of maintaining the river in a wild state. I support measuring the water turbidity in the main stream and on the tributaries to monitor the effects of non-point source pollution and land management activities. I think john boats and innertubes can be used for certain recreational activities at appropriate water levels, and we should be sensitive to these types of uses that mainly occur in the latter parts of the summer. We probably should strongly encourage the use of helmets and life jackets under certain water levels particularly, and I also think that there is appropriate use of aluminum canoes, and canoes without floatation, during certain water levels and on certain parts of the river. I think that we need to be careful not to be too restrictive with our boating recommendations and suggestions. I also support the concept of a greenway from the Caney Creek Wilderness Area to Gillham Lake. Those conclude my remarks. Thank you very much.

Greg Butts: Thank you, Stewart. That was one. Any others? Questions? Is there any particular point about anything? Yes.

Question from Audience: I was wondering about average flow.

Bill Paxton: You're wondering about average flow? I want to make sure I've got the question down because we have to transcribe all this. What's your name, by the way? Jim Reinmiller. You wanted to know about flow levels?

Jim Reinmiller: Right and I agree with this man. I question the overlook at the falls.

Bill Paxton: Well, the overlook that we're talking about is up on top of a ridge, back from the river and the way it would be located, you would not be able to see it from the river. It will be set back. The idea is to give those people that can't get down to the river a look at it, maybe they're handicapped or whatever. There's a pine plantation up there, there's a road that almost goes to the end of this spur. And to make a small trail out to this walkway, it goes out a little bit to the side of this spur and you'll be able to look down the corridor. You cannot see it coming down, if you were floating down the river, you would not be able to see it, and also down near the falls, it would not really be visually intrusive. You've got to look real hard to see it. (Where will that be?) It will be on the stream left going downstream. Same side where the falls parking area is now. Same side the way the ridge is pointing as generally southwest. We walked it out after looking around

of Arkansas, and others that have led to the creation of the Cossatot River State Park - Natural Area. In summary, I think the management plan is very responsive to the many issues that are at hand on the Cossatot River and I think both agencies are to be commended for that. And I say that in all sincerity, I think it borders on being excellent. The only reason I hesitate to say that is I've only read it once. I'm sure I missed something. I think the challenge, however, is to manage the Cossatot to keep it special. And that's the part that I have a little bit of quandary with in that I can't think of anything that's gone unsaid, but there perhaps need to be some things that go undone, and I just don't know what those are yet. And I think that's the real issue here as far as managing and maintaining the Cossatot as a special place. I think a lot of that's yet to be determined so I'll just defer any comment about that until a later date. I do have some more specific type comments and I would like to offer those as a matter for the public record. I support the National Wild and Scenic River designation for the river. I support protecting and enhancing the character of the area and including acreage in the Arkansas system natural areas, including a portion of the acreage in the Arkansas system of natural areas. I support managing the land in favor of a naturally occurring mixture of hardwood and pine, including those areas which have been heavily cut over in the last several years. I also support restricting any transmission line crossing regardless of what type they are to the Highway 4 and Highway 246 corridors. I generally support the plans of development if they are carried out in a manner described in the plan and if they maintain the primitive nature of the area. However, I do question the visual impact on the corridor and the need for an overlook in the Cossatot Falls area. I think boating guides, or recommendations, should be posted with recommendations for equipment etc. at each access point. However, I do question the authority, the legal ramifications, and the ability to police --and I say this in quotations-- "boating requirements". I think there should be a differentiation between recommendations and requirements and I think we need to avoid the requirements any time that we can. I do support posting of safety recommendations concerning equipment and water levels at each of the areas. I think I've already said that. Under the goals section, under goal 1 under the objectives, I think we should more specifically say that we should include actually going for or seeking the National Wild and Scenic River designation for the river. Although it's stated in other areas, I think it should be more clearly stated in the goals section. I also support managing the river corridor as if it were wild as opposed to as if it were scenic, and I think therein lies the question of how much development, and

FINAL LISTENING SESSION
FOR GATHERING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE
DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK & NATURAL AREA

Arkansas Game & Fish Commission Auditorium
Little Rock, Arkansas
November 2, 1989

Attending:

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| Greg Butts | Arkansas State Parks, Manager, Planning and Development |
| Harold Grimmett | Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Director |
| Bill Pell | Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Chief of Stewardship |
| Bill Paxton | Arkansas State Parks, Resource Management Specialist, Planning and Development |
| John Beneke | Arkansas State Parks, Landscape Architect, Planning and Development |
| Dorothy Clement | Arkansas State Parks, Administrative Assistant, Planning and Development |
| Becky Cahoon | Arkansas State Parks, Secretary, Planning and Development |

Harold Grimmett: My agency and, on behalf of Richard Davies, Director of State Parks, I want to welcome all of you here. We've organized this to invite comments of the public on our draft management plan for the Cossatot River State Park - Natural Area.

Greg Butts: We're here to answer any of your questions. We do want to record this so that we can add the additional comments, plus the written comments, into the text of the final plan. It would be very helpful for those of you who want to make it a part of the record to come on down and speak here in this area in front of the microphone. After that, whatever... we'll cover the questions.
Stewart?

Stewart Noland: Greg, I appreciate the opportunity to speak this evening just like I did the last time you held a public hearing out here, and I think I'm going to go to my last item first to address both agencies. As I mentioned the last time, I think the Cossatot River is a special place and I'm very thankful for the cooperation and the efforts of Weyerhaeuser Company, the Nature Conservancy, the Department of Parks and Tourism, Natural Heritage Commission, the State

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This public listening session is sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.

For those persons wishing to make comments on the draft plan, please sign the register at the entrance of the auditorium.

AGENDA

Welcome & Opening Remarks ----- Harold Grimmett, Director
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission

Public Comments ----- Greg Butts, Manager
Planning & Development, Ark. State Parks

Intermission

Agencies Responses to Questions -- Greg Butts, Manager
Planning & Development, Ark. State Parks
Harold Grimmett, Director
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Bill Pell, Chief of Stewardship
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
Bill Paxton, Resource Management Specialist
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John Beneke, Landscape Architect
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Closing Remarks ----- Greg Butts

Adjournment