



Blue Springs Nature Preserve

Steering Committee Newsletter / May 2008

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Steering Committee Member,

In this issue, we are focusing on the economic impact that Blue Springs Nature Preserve can have on our region.

Our primary goal all along has been to provide a venue for outdoor education for the students of Ragland and St. Clair County. However, the natural beauty of the preserve and the popularity of outdoor recreation in the United States makes Blue Springs an ideal attraction for outdoors enthusiasts.

In addition, Blue Springs Nature Preserve is another positive quality of life asset to help sell St. Clair County to prospective businesses looking to make a home in the area. Ed Gardner, Sr., Ed Gardner, Jr. and the St. Clair-Blount Economic Development Council have been avid supporters of the project from the beginning. They have been instrumental in presenting Blue Springs to its stakeholders

In closing, I thank Lyman Lovejoy for including Blue Springs Nature Preserve in Leadership St. Clair County's Quality of Life Day

Sincerely,
Spencer Weitman



Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee

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Steering Committee Chairman

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Blue Springs Nature Preserve
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Blue Springs Nature Preserve as an economic development asset

Quality of Life Day features Blue Springs presentation

Build it and they will come

Blue Springs Nature Preserve important for economic development, experts say

One of the main benefits of opening Blue Springs Nature Preserve is the positive economic impact that it will bring to Ragland and St. Clair County.

In addition to acting as an outdoor classroom, Blue Springs Nature Preserve will provide outdoor recreation opportunities, including bird watching, trail hiking, nature study groups and picnicking while minimizing impact to the environment.

The popularity of outdoor recreation is higher than one might think. According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, more than 87 million Americans -- 38 percent of the U.S. population over the age of 16 and older -- engaged in hunting, fishing and wildlife observation in 2006.

By comparison, an average of 30.7 million viewers tuned in to the season finale of American Idol, one of the most popular TV shows of the past decade.

As a result, outdoor recreation has proven to be a lucrative asset for tourism that can boost local economic returns. According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey,



A network of trails makes hiking one of the many outdoor recreation opportunities that will attract visitors to Blue Springs Nature Preserve.

Alabamians spent \$2.3 billion on ecotourism (including bird and wildlife watching and outdoor recreation) in 2004.

A study by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies revealed that Americans spent \$120 billion in 2006 on hunting, fishing and observing wildlife -- an amount approximate to domestic spending

across the U.S. at all spectator sports, casinos, motion pictures, golf courses, country clubs, amusement parks and arcades combined.

“Tourists seeking nature-based recreational opportunities have a positive effect on rural economies like Ragland by spending dollars with local businesses, which in

turn boosts local tax bases,” said Ed Gardner, Jr., Executive Director of the St. Clair-Blount Economic Development Council.

“Tourist spending also increases demands for local resources, goods and services, in turn creating new jobs and income for area residents.”

Because of its location within driving distance of Atlanta and Birmingham, Blue Springs is positioned to be a regional destination.

Blue Springs Nature Preserve also provides St. Clair County with an additional quality of life asset that can be instrumental in attracting new businesses to the area.

“As industries expand and relocate, quality of life often becomes a determining factor in site selection,” wrote Lee Burlett in Southern Business and Development magazine.

“Corporations find that when all other competing factors are equal, the lifestyle offered by a region becomes an important consideration.”

Many factors contribute to quality of life -- quality education, ease of commute, cost of living and recreational amenities. The popularity of outdoor recreation suggests that it can be a valuable component in evaluating quality of life.

“Many of the companies that we speak with place a premium on quality of life factors, particularly outdoor recreation, when choosing a business location,” said Gardner, who is also a member of the BSNP Steering Committee.

“Executives want their employees to have access to amenities that promote an active lifestyle, because healthy, happy employees are more productive.”

BSNP showcased at Quality of Life Day

Members of Leadership St. Clair County viewed a presentation on the master plan of the Blue Springs Nature Preserve on April 24 as part of Quality of Life Day at Jefferson State Community College in Pell City.

After an introduction from Steering Committee Finance Chair Lyman Lovejoy, Drew Wharton of 4Site, Inc. delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the audience of elected officials and business leaders.

“The mission of the Steering Committee was to create through education and awareness, a destination of hope, peaceful prosperity and the protection of our valuable natural resources,” said Wharton. “We believe we have been true to that vision throughout the development of this master plan.”

Quality of Life Day also included presentations about Moody’s Miracle League Park and the St. Clair County Water Treatment Plant. After the presentations, participants toured the Bamboo Gardens in Springville, ate lunch at Lyman Lovejoy’s farm in Odenville, visited a tomato farm in Steele and walked through downtown Springville.



According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 47.8 million Americans are birdwatching enthusiasts.

About National Cement

National Cement Company is a major producer of cement in the United States. Established in 1908, the company employs over 1,255 employees in Alabama and California.

The company is highly committed to environmental stewardship and supporting the communities in which it operates.

About Blue Springs Nature Preserve

Blue Springs Nature Preserve, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is located in the town of Ragland in St. Clair County, Ala. The 147-acre preserve was made possible thanks to a land donation from National Cement Company of Alabama.

For more information, please contact Tommy Palladino at (205) 328-9334 or send an email to info@bluespringspreserve.com.