



# Blue Springs Nature Preserve

Steering Committee Newsletter / November 2007

## Letter from the Chairman

Dear Steering Committee Member,

The community meeting to unveil the Blue Springs Nature Preserve was a great success. The event was well attended by local and state leaders, who were unanimously excited about the plans, and there was very positive media coverage of the event as well.



Thank you to all steering committee members who were able to attend. Many of you had the opportunity to share your vision, passion and outlook for Blue Springs Nature Preserve to the audience and the attending media. Your enthusiasm is inspiring, and will certainly influence others to lend their support to this worthwhile project.

We are working to form our fund-raising plans over the coming months. We have some very talented people that have volunteered their assistance to help us in efforts with both the public and private sector, as well as pursuing grants. We expect to convene the fund-raising subcommittee in January.

Sincerely,  
*Spencer Weitman*

## Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee

Spencer Weitman  
National Cement Company of Ala.  
Steering Committee Chairman

Lyman Lovejoy  
Lovejoy Realty  
Finance Chairman

Bill Phillips  
Envision Ecology  
Land Use Chairman

Darlene Rotch  
Panorama Public Relations  
Communications Chair

Ed Gardner, Sr.  
St. Clair County EDC  
Facilities and Infrastructure

Marsha Boswell  
Ragland High School  
Education Chair

Rep. Blaine Galliher  
State Representative  
Finance Committee

Hon. Charles Robinson  
St. Clair County Circuit Court  
Finance Committee

Hon. Gary Daffron  
Mayor, City of Ragland  
Finance Committee

### Committee At-Large:

Jean Claude Brocheton, National Cement; Joan Ford; Jeff Hardy, Ragland High School; Charlie Brannon; Jerry Sue Brannon; Chairman Stan Batemon, St. Clair County Commission; Commissioner Paul Manning, St. Clair County Commission; Ed Gardner, Jr., St. Clair County EDC; Don Smith, St. Clair County EDC; Bob Champion, National Cement; Con. Larry Means, State Congressman; Randy Gray, National Cement; Dr. Jenny Seales, St. Clair County Board of Education



Blue Springs Nature Preserve  
2000 SouthBridge Parkway  
Suite 600  
Birmingham, AL 35209



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## Blue Springs Plans Unveiled

On November 13, the Steering Committee revealed plans for Blue Springs Nature Preserve to an audience of more than 70 state and local leaders and area residents at the Ragland Town Hall.

Finance chairman Lyman Lovejoy served as master of ceremonies for the event, recognizing the various leaders present and introducing Dr. James Sampley from First Baptist Church of Ashville for the invocation.

"Our kids are watching too much television," said Lovejoy, President of Lovejoy Realty. "We need to get them outside and their feet on the ground. We need to get back to our roots and this is a golden opportunity for us to do just that."

Steering committee chairman Spencer Weitman gave the audience an overview of the project, before turning the presentation over to Drew Wharton from 4Site, Inc., who explained the elements of the site plan. Steering committee members Marsha Boswell and Charlie and Jerry Sue Brannon also shared their thoughts and visions.

"Our goal from the outset was to establish an outdoor classroom for



From left to right: Spencer Weitman; St. Clair County Commissioners Jimmy Roberts and Paul Manning; State Representatives Randy Wood and Blaine Galliber; Chairman Stan Batemon; Charlie Brannon; Lyman Lovejoy; Ragland Mayor Gary Daffron; and Greg Lein, Alabama Department of Conservation. Photo: Gary Hanner.

students of St. Clair County, while providing a recreation venue for the public to experience nature in its purest form," said Weitman, President of National Cement. "With the completion of this master plan, we believe we have an opportunity to create something that people throughout the region will enjoy for many years to come."

The plans for Blue Springs were met with enthusiasm from elected officials.

"This is something that can really add to the quality of life in St. Clair County," said St. Clair County Commission Chairman Stan

Batemon, who also serves on the steering committee. "The opportunities for an outdoor classroom for environmental education are almost unlimited ... not counting the tourism aspect of it."

"This may be the catalyst for Ragland," Ragland Mayor and steering committee member Gary Daffron told the St. Clair Times. "We have a wonderful area and community and we want other people to enjoy it."

The Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee will commence a fundraising campaign in 2008.

### About National Cement

National Cement 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](mailto:info@bluespringspreserve.com).

## An Educator's Vision of Blue Springs

As a member of this community for the past 32 years, a biology teacher, and a parent I am very excited about the possibilities for people of all ages to enjoy nature and learn science at the Blue Springs Nature Preserve.

My vision for Blue Springs is to provide developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor lab activities for kindergarten through 12th grade. These labs will be correlated to the Alabama Science Course of Study, to which I am a contributing author, Natural Science Standards, Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT), Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) and other state assessments.

Students will be provided "hands on science" in a manner that will enhance classroom instruction and promote understanding. An example of a lab for kindergarten through second grade is pitfall traps/hunt to study animal characteristics, behavior, and ecology. Grades three through six would

study different types of cells using microscopes after collecting various organisms from the pond, soil, leaves, etc. as well as studying food chains/webs with hands on activities. Grades seven through 12 would use digital pipettors, pH meters, and various forms of technology to perform experiments with soil and water quality. These are just a few examples in a portfolio of selections.

My goal is to make Blue Springs friendly to students and teachers while taking advantage of the local resources. Detailed lesson plans with correlations and follow up activities will be available for teachers in order to have field trips approved. Teachers will choose from a list of labs and activities.

Ultimately, I want students to say, "Wow, that was awesome!"

Marsha Boswell RN, BSN, MS Ed  
Biology Teacher  
Ragland High School



Bill Phillips, far left, looks on as Ragland High School students examine goldenrod specimen.

## Ragland Students Preview the Preserve

Marsha Boswell and nine junior and senior students from the Ragland High School Ecology Club took a two-mile hike and guided tour of the Blue Springs Nature Preserve site this month.

Lyman Lovejoy and Bill Phillips escorted the group through the pastures, wetlands and forests of the site. The guides identified local flora and fauna for the students. The group also observed deer rubs, raccoon tracks, and a beaver dam.

"The students saw a tree that had been cut down and asked, 'who cut this down?'" said Lovejoy. "They were delighted to hear it was a beaver that had done it. We were even able to show them the trenches left behind by beavers dragging trees through the woods."

During the hike, the students suggested names for areas of the site, such as Dueling Streams for the junction of Trout Creek and Blue Springs Fork.

"Even though they've lived in a rural area most of their lives, they have never actually had a chance to enjoy nature," said Boswell. "They had a great time, and they've already asked me if they can visit again soon."