



Blue Springs Nature Preserve

Steering Committee Newsletter / Spring 2009

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Steering Committee Members,

I wanted to take this moment to thank you all for your continued interest and support in Blue Springs Nature Preserve. Your contributions have been immeasurable, and I assure you that they will make this vision a reality.



We are certainly immersed in uncertain economic times. It seems that everyone has been affected in some way or another. According to a CNN survey of the 100 largest United Way agencies, nonprofits are expecting a decline in charitable giving by upwards of 5.5 percent. However, it is important to remember that the economy is cyclical and will run its course as it always has.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter. This month, we are exploring the variety of tourist attractions in St. Clair County. Blue Springs Nature Preserve would be yet another getaway destination for visitors to the county.

Sincerely,
Spencer Weitman

Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee

Spencer Weitman
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Steering Committee Chairman

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Lovejoy Realty
Finance Chairman

Bill Phillips
Envision Ecology
Land Use Chairman

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St. Clair County EDC
Facilities and Infrastructure

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Tourist Destination: St. Clair County (and Blue Springs)



Visit us on the web at www.bluespringspreserve.com.

St. Clair County: Tourist Destination

Blue Springs Nature Preserve adds to county's tourism assets

For fans of outdoors recreation, history and culture, St. Clair County offers a wealth of attractions. The prevalence of attractions in and around St. Clair County would help attract visitors to Blue Springs Nature Preserve.

With its proximity to major population centers in Birmingham and Atlanta, St. Clair County is ideally positioned as a getaway destination. In addition, St. Clair County neighbors Jefferson County, the second most-visited county in the state.

St. Clair County has earned a reputation as a fisherman's paradise. While lakes, streams and rivers are abundant throughout the county, Logan Martin Lake is its biggest draw for fishing enthusiasts. Logan Martin extends nearly 50 miles from Neely Henry dam on the Coosa River and contains 15,263 acres. The lake is rated third in the state in terms of catch quality. The lake has been the site of numerous fishing tournaments, including several BASS Masters Classics during the 1990s.

Logan Martin Lake has also been a popular getaway attraction for vacationers, particularly for



Logan Martin Lake attracts fishing enthusiasts such as Texas Pete to St. Clair County. Blue Springs Nature Preserve will provide another outlet for anglers touring the area.

(Photo courtesy of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources)

recreational boaters. Logan Martin's vacation scene was recently featured in the *New York Times*.

Recent retail additions enhance St. Clair County as a fishing destination. Last year, Bass Pro Shops opened its 150,000 sq. ft. store in Leeds. Known as a destination retail store, Bass Pro Shop boasts a restaurant, 35-acre nature park, 18,500-gallon freshwater aquarium, archery range and gaming arcade on its 110-acre site. Developer Daniel Corp. also plans to construct a 340,000 sq. ft. outlet mall and a

106-room Hampton Inn as part of its Grand River development neighboring Bass Pro Shop.

Fishing is not the only outdoor activity available to sportsmen visiting St. Clair County. The Alabama Skydiving Center in Pell City, the only full-time professional skydiving center serving Alabama, caters to those in search of extreme thrills. The rock zoo at Horse Pens 40 draws rock-climbers from across the Southeast.

Outdoor recreation has proven to be a lucrative tourism attraction.

About National Cement

National Cement Company of Alabama, Inc. is a major producer of cement in the Southeastern United States, employing approximately 450 people.

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, a 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 visit www.bluespringspreserve.com, contact Tommy Palladino at (205) 328-9334 or send an e-mail to info@bluespringspreserve.com.

According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey, 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 that year hunting, fishing and observing wildlife - an amount approximate to domestic spending at all spectator sports, casinos, motion pictures, golf courses, country clubs, amusement parks and arcades combined.

St. Clair County is also bookended by two major racing destinations. To its east is Talladega International Raceway, which hosts two NASCAR races per year. To its west is the Barber Motorsports Park, which attracts a multitude of auto and motorcycle racing events and hosts the Porsche Sport Driving School.

While the tracks are located in neighboring counties, St. Clair County enjoys the overflow of guests in its hotels. It is not uncommon for hotels throughout St. Clair County to reach full occupancy on a NASCAR race weekend.

In addition, the Alabama International Dragway in Steele draws professionals and amateur racers to compete on its quarter-mile track.

St. Clair County has a wealth of treasures for fans of culture and history as well. In fact, the county's web site proudly



The Ashville to Montevallo Stagecoach Route is one of numerous historic landmarks that attract tourists to St. Clair County.

proclaims that it is “A County Older than the State.” One such attraction is the Montevallo-Ashville Stagecoach Route, the longest-lived stagecoach route in Central Alabama and now a state-designated scenic byway.

Homestead Hollow in Springfield hosts more than 150 arts and crafts vendors and demonstrations in various festivals throughout the year.

History buffs also enjoy the Ragland Depot Museum, which houses many artifacts of railroad history and Ragland itself, and the Old Ashville Masonic Lodge Museum, which displays memorabilia of St. Clair County and the surrounding area's past.

The variety of outdoors recreation and historic exhibits that are

planned for Blue Springs Nature Preserve will enhance the robust attractions available to Alabama tourists. Hiking, fishing and primitive camping are available for outdoorsmen. The proposed cultural preservation exhibit would allow visitors to relive the history of St. Clair County through artifacts and exhibits, such as a cotton gin from the Civil War Era.

“Tourists 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, creating new jobs and income for area residents.”



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