

## **Spring Creek Coalition Special Board Meeting April 27, 2021 Minutes**

The meeting of the Spring Creek Coalition Board was called to order on April 27, 2021 at 6:01 pm. by President Beth Rooney for a special meeting to consider the pros and cons of Spring Creek becoming a Scenic River.

**Present** were George Kamp, Beth Rooney, Travis Fite, Jessica Spencer, Karen Harris, Bill Chambers, Angela Brazeal, and Jennifer Owen. Guests present were Ed Fite, GRDA VP of Water Quality and Ed Brocksmith, Save the Illinois River.

Ed Fite gave an overview of the history and the rules of the Scenic Rivers Act. He stated that the scenic river designation is the highest and best protection the state offers. The Act was formulated after the National Wild & Scenic River Act was passed. The initial purpose of Oklahoma's Scenic River Act was to stop dams from being built and to control trash.

Some of the rules that could benefit a Scenic River (see Chapter 15 Rules.docx for more and specifics):

- Recreational vehicles may not be driven in a Scenic River riverbed.
- Containers made of glass or Styrofoam are not allowed.
- Gravel mining is prohibited.
- Watercraft not allowed (could be important in the future with technology advances)

To become a scenic river requires a bill to be passed. No additional bodies of water have been added since the Scenic River Act was enacted. Attempts to add the Blue River and portions of the Cimarron River failed, for example, due to opposition by farm interest groups and sand and gravel operations.

If we decide we would like to pursue Spring Creek becoming a scenic river it would be important to get our state legislatures behind us first and find out what the residents and stakeholders want.

In his new role as VP of Water Quality for GRDA, Ed recently toured the Spring Creek watershed. Some of the issues he saw were:

- Indiscriminate logging/clearing of land
- Gravel mining
- Marijuana farm proliferation without regulations: people living in mobile homes/tents without septic systems, nutrients discharged to the stream
- Algae growth
- Erosion
- Church at Teresita putting in rip rap without a permit
- The stream becoming braided.

Some board concerns:

- Public access areas being created on Spring Creek
- Keeping Spring Creek private – could the very designation of ‘Scenic River’ bring additional people to the creek

Ed Fite noted that eminent domain cannot be used to take land on a scenic river. The commercial operations already existed on the Illinois River when it became a scenic river; the operations were grandfathered in. The Scenic Rivers Commission for the Illinois capped the growth of commercial operations. Land for access points was given to GRDA and helped keep people from trespassing on private land.

Ed Brocksmith noted that people already know about Spring Creek.

A suggestion was made that we try working with what GRDA can already provide for Spring Creek for a year and see how that goes.

Ed Brocksmith ended the meeting by asking us to think forward to the year 2030 and what Spring Creek will look like then if nothing is done. Then think of yourself looking back and saying: “In 2021 I had a chance to do something about this, and I didn’t do it.”

Minutes submitted by Beth Rooney