

# Claytonia

Newsletter of the Arkansas Native Plant Society

"To promote the preservation, conservation, and study of the wild plants and vegetation of Arkansas, the education of the public to the value of the native flora and its habitat, and the publication of related information."

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We're a bit late, folks, so we'll cut short the palaver and get right to business. The fall general meeting is scheduled for El Dorado on October 7-9. Other field trips are planned both before and after that. A central environmental issue requiring our attention is Congressman Bethune's wilderness bill.

--The Editor

## WILDERNESS LEGISLATION

Earlier this year, Ed Bethune introduced in Congress an Arkansas Wilderness Bill supported by the Arkansas Conservation Coalition, of which ANPS is an affiliate. As you may know, it proposes to add 11 wilderness areas to the US Forest Service wilderness system in our state. Support of the Conservation Coalition represents broad-based backing for this carefully-thought-out proposal.

The US Forest Service has proposed a more modest plan providing for seven additions to the wilderness system, some of which are smaller than corresponding parts of Ed Bethune's bill. Forest industry and US Forest Service people have actively lobbied against the Bethune bill. In a letter on US Forest Service letterhead from a District Ranger, Richard A. Mills, are the following statements:

- (1) "More than a third of the entire National Forest system is being held hostage by virtue of being classified for wilderness study areas, or by indecision and dispute over its use. This idle land does not contribute to the relief of unemployment, nor add to county, state and federal treasuries.
- (2) Special interest groups are recommending additional wilderness and study areas. They disregard boundary lines, wilderness attributes and social and economic impacts. This is a costly alternative for an issue that has been examined twice already.
- (3) Everyone agrees that a certain amount of wilderness is needed. The only views that present a problem are those on the extreme ends of the spectrum."

Congressman Bethune wrote immediately to the Chief of the US Forest Service R. Max Peterson in protest. Here are a few excerpts from his letter:

- (1) "I am extremely distressed to learn of the blatant political activity in opposition to my wilderness proposal being conducted in Arkansas under the apparent auspices of the National Forest Service.

