

# SAVE THE LEDGES !

Ledges State Park near Boone, Iowa, is one of central Iowa's most popular parks. Named for the unusual sandstone rock formations in the heart of the park, Ledges Park attracts over 400,000 campers, hikers, and nature-lovers a year. Iowans have a chance to experience nature firsthand in the canyon filled with trees, flowers, and wildlife.

But the unique beauty of the Ledges may soon be changed. Current Federal and state plans will damage the Ledges and alter present park use. Environmentalists and concerned individuals are working to change these plans.

## LEDGES IN JEOPARDY

Two major projects lie at the heart of the controversy. The Saylorville dam project by the Army Corps of Engineers will periodically flood the main recreational areas of the Ledges. The Iowa State Conservation Commission's proposed plans will change the character of the entire park.

The normal level of the new Saylorville Lake will create a conservation pool 17 miles long. However, during flood periods, Saylorville Lake will extend 35 miles up the Des Moines River, reaching into Ledges State Park.

The park has been flooded from time to time in the past. The highest flood recorded was 878 feet in 1954. However, the highest possible flood with the reservoir is 890 feet, twelve feet above the highest natural flood. At this elevation, a reservoir flood would devastate the park by standing in the Lower Ledges for weeks and even months longer than a natural flood. The plant community in the area is not adapted to the prolonged inundation of the reservoir flooding, and many species would be killed. A landscape such as Coralville and Red Rock could be repeated at the Park.

The attractive plant communities of the Lower Ledges will disappear and with them the homes of the birds and animals so many visitors enjoy! Receding flood waters will leave a blighted, debris-laden mud flat.

### A NEW LOOK FOR LEDGES

If the Iowa Conservation Commission carries out present plans, Ledges visitors may never have an opportunity to witness the damage caused by flooding.

3 To compensate for the flooding problem and to curb expected crowding in the main canyon, the Conservation Commission will change key recreation areas. The present road through the park's canyon will be closed off and traffic routed through the northeast part of the park. This will push visitors into the most untouched area of the Ledges that has been a sanctuary for birds rarely seen in Iowa.

The greatest loss will be the easy access for visitors wanting to see the cliffs and streams in the heart of the park along the Lower Ledges. Iowans will no longer be able to take their guests for a casual drive through the Ledges. Small children, the elderly, and the handicapped will find it nearly impossible to enjoy the unique sandstone bluffs of the park. The most fascinating area of Ledges Park will be closed to many visitors. Picnic and recreational facilities will be concentrated near the east entrance of the park.

### THERE IS A WAY

Environmentalists have suggested ways to minimize damage from flooding and overuse. Flooding alternatives include a barrier dam or changing operation procedures. A barrier dam separating Ledges Park and the Des Moines River would keep flood water out of the park. A pumping system would be needed to move water from the park's stream over the dam into the river.

Technically, the barrier dam would work. It will be a major project in itself, requiring 1 million cubic yards of landfill, and costing \$6 million.

THE TOTAL SAYLORVILLE PROJECT, WHEN COMPLETED IN 1975, WILL COST \$70 MILLION, \$76 MILLION WITH A LEDGES BARRIER DAM. OUT OF EVERY TAX DOLLAR FOR SAYLORVILLE, 8 CENTS WOULD PROTECT THE LEDGES. WHAT'S IT WORTH TO YOU?

To protect Ledges from over-crowding, environmentalists suggest making the present road on the canyon a one-way scenic drive with no parking. A parking area could be developed outside the canyon. Not only will this protect the fragile ecology of the untouched areas of the park, but Iowans will be able to use the area that makes Ledges State Park the favorite park of central Iowa.

### IT'S NOT TOO LATE

The voice of the people of Iowa can still be heard. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 gives citizens a tool to protect the Ledges.

Under NEPA, private citizens have a direct voice in environmental decisions. NEPA requires that Federal agencies describe any project plans affecting the environment. Their report must include the environmental impact of the project, unavoidable damage to the environment, alternatives to the project, resources that would be permanently lost, and the relationship of local, short-term uses to long-term improvement of the area.

The Corps of Engineers will publish a "draft" report on the Ledges July 6 and bring the decision-making process into the open. The public will have 45 days to comment--to oppose or support plans, suggest alternatives, and point out what is important to the people themselves. This draft report will be available to the public in Ames and Des Moines.

On August 21, the Corps will begin a final impact statement that includes the comments from private individuals and citizen groups. The concerns and comments of the public must be answered in the Corp's final impact statement. The President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) will examine the final impact statement. CEQ will make the final decision to complete Saylorville, implement an alternative, or stop Saylorville entirely.

The decisions will be made soon, so the people of Iowa must speak out now! If concerned citizens will look for all the facts, they will make an intelligent choice.

## **YOU CAN HELP !**

**write:**

U.S. Senator Richard Clark or Harold Hughes, Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

U.S. Rep. William Scherle, House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray, Statehouse, Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Your local representatives, all c/o Statehouse addresses.

Gerry Schnepf, Iowa Conservation Commission, Valley Bank Bldg., 300-4th St., Des Moines, Iowa.

**JULY 6-AUGUST 21 FILE YOUR COMMENTS WITH THE CORPS!**

Col. Walter H. Johnson, District Engineer; Rock Island District Corps of Engineers; Clock Tower Building; Rock Island, Illinois 61201

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR SPEAKERS AT MEETINGS:** Contact ISPIRG (Iowa Student Public Interest Research Group), room 6, Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50010 (Ph: 294-8094)

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