

## ALERT: PLEASE WRITE TODAY TO HELP SAVE THREE WILDERNESS AREA CANDIDATES

U.S. Representative Costello has indicated in our past meetings that he would support the designation of three new wilderness areas for Shawnee Forest. Now we are planning to ask him to act on that commitment by being the primary signatory of a letter to the Forest Service (FS). The letter would urge the FS to protect the three remaining areas that qualify for wilderness protection at a level that would preserve their wilderness qualities in the new Shawnee Forest Plan.

A delegation of eight Sierra Club members from Illinois Chapter will be in Washington D.C. in mid- June to lobby the Illinois delegation on various environmental issues. One of the issues will be support of wilderness designation for Camp Hutchins, Burke Branch, and Ripple Hollow. In order to support their efforts, we need you to write letters to Rep. Costello.

We need your help NOW to show Representative Costello that there are many voters in his district who DO want more wilderness protection in Shawnee National Forest and DO NOT want to allow motorized vehicles, logging, mining, and construction to ruin Burke Branch, Ripple Hollow, and Camp Hutchins. Even if you have never been to these three areas, it is still YOUR national forest. We are protecting our children's rights to enjoy the peace, solitude and wildness of these areas, and the wildlife, which can be ensured in the long term only through wilderness protection.

We need many individual, personalized letters to make sure Costello follows through with his support of the three proposed wilderness areas. The letter does not have to be long. Below are some suggested points you could use in your own personal letter:

- Camp Hutchins, Ripple Hollow, and Burke Branch are all very biologically diverse areas, and very scenic. It is very important [to me] that these areas be designated wilderness areas to preserve the biological diversity of So. Illinois.
- We need these areas to be preserved as wilderness to provide a refuge from the busy, noisy, manmade world that we live in most of the time.
- Each of these areas is unique and special. Camp Hutchins rounds out the largest block of contiguous forest in Illinois. Ripple Hollow has steep slopes, limestone bluffs, and old growth forest communities next to the Mississippi bottomlands. Burke Branch harbors two Illinois Natural Areas plus Cretaceous Hills State Nature Preserve and many rare plant communities.
- OHVs (Off-Highway Vehicles), including four wheelers and motorcycles, should not be allowed in these three areas, because motorized vehicles can quickly destroy the native vegetation and unique beauty of these special areas.
- Logging, mining, motorized vehicles, and construction should not ever be allowed in these three areas because we must preserve their unique beauty, wildlife, and plant communities.
- I have enjoyed hiking and bird watching (and/or horseback riding, hunting, fishing, etc.) in these areas, and I want to make sure these areas are protected so that my children and grandchildren can also enjoy peaceful recreation in these special areas.

Please call or write before June 13th. Phone: (202) 225-5661 or (618) 529-3791

Please send your letters to Rep. Costello's local office (delivery to parts of the federal government is still very slow in D.C.)  
Representative Jerry Costello, 155 Lincoln Place Ct., Belleville, IL 62221

*Dear Representative Costello:*

*I strongly urge you to support the protection of Camp Hutchins, Burke Branch, and Ripple Hollow at the level of wilderness in the new Shawnee National Forest Plan. These are the only three remaining areas in Shawnee Forest that would qualify for wilderness status in Shawnee National Forest (SNF). These three areas comprise less than 5% of SNF. These areas plus the current wilderness areas equal less than 15% of Shawnee Forest. It is not asking too much to preserve 15% of the forest from the destruction caused by logging, mining, motorized vehicles and construction. Wilderness status will ensure that these areas in the SNF will be preserved in a wild state for wildlife and for many forms of recreation, including hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, and horseback riding.*

*These three areas have already been recognized by the public as areas worthy of wilderness designation, as well as in studies conducted at SIU-C and at Sangamon State University. Burke Branch and Ripple Hollow were designated as roadless areas in both RARE studies in the 1970s, and were recognized in the recent Roadless Initiative as candidates for roadless status. Camp Hutchins has been mentioned as a possible wilderness candidate in the Roadless Initiative EIS. I have enjoyed hiking with friends in each of these areas, and can personally attest to the beauty and value of all three of them.*

*These areas have been recognized as deserving wilderness designation for almost three decades. If these areas are not protected now, they will almost certainly be degraded by logging, mining, and motorized vehicles. Please help us convince the Forest Service to protect the wilderness values of these three areas in the new Shawnee National Forest Plan.* ☺

*Submitted by Barb McKasson*