

HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS MEANT FOR CONSERVATION IS BEING DIVERTED! YOUR SUPPORT NEEDED TO STRENGTHEN THE LAWCON FUND!

By Barbara McKasson

Each year \$900 million in offshore oil and gas royalties flow into the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON Fund). This money is supposed to be used to preserve open space, wetlands, and natural areas. However, for the last 15 years, Congress has been diverting over two-thirds of that money to other programs and to reduce the budget deficit. There are many areas that will soon be eaten up by urban sprawl, roads, resorts, and airports, if they are not preserved soon. Local and state governments are begging for that money before open space and natural areas are gobbled up.

Now it looks like we have a chance to change this practice and get this money appropriated for its original purpose. Because of lobbying by environmental groups, the amount being appropriated for land and water conservation has begun to increase. Last October, Congress appropriated \$325 million, up from less than \$300 million in past years. There is now momentum to increase that amount even more in the next Congress. In fact, House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) has introduced a measure that would require use of the full \$900 million for conservation. Now it is up to us to let our U.S. Representatives and Senators know that we wholeheartedly support the Gephardt measure.

Some of the special places that will be protected with LAWCON money appropriated in October are parcels at Big Sur (CA), Columbia River Gorge (OR/WA), lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge (TX), Baca Ranch (NM), and along the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail.

Please call or write your U.S. Representative and ask him/her to support **Gephardt's** measure to use the full \$900 million for land and water conservation. Also, send a copy of your letter to Rep. Richard Gephardt to help him in building support for the measure, or give his office a call at the general number for the U.S. House: (202) 224-3121. The **addresses** for Rep. Costello and the General Address for all U.S. Representatives are given below.

Representative David Phelps (Gephardt, etc.)
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jerry Costello
2454 Rayburn Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515



SHAWNEE OUTINGS

by Sandy Anderson (Call 618-893-4545 for more information)



Saturday--December 12: Hike Report--"The hike on Buttermilk trail, 6 miles, walked to the dam, had a picnic lunch, then walked back"(from excom minutes, 17 December)

Friday--January 1: New Years Day Stone Soup Picnic--Giant City State Park, Shelter #2 at 10:30 am. Bring hopeful attitude for the New Year, eating utensils, and dish to share. You may also bring something to add to the stone soup.

Costa Rica--Is there interest in a trip to Costa Rica for a fun-filled week of hiking through virgin rainforest, birding, river rafting, snorkeling plus various interesting eco-activities, and unlike other tours interacting with indigenous and local cultures? Land cost under \$1000. A date of February 15 is being contemplated. Contact Sandy if interested.