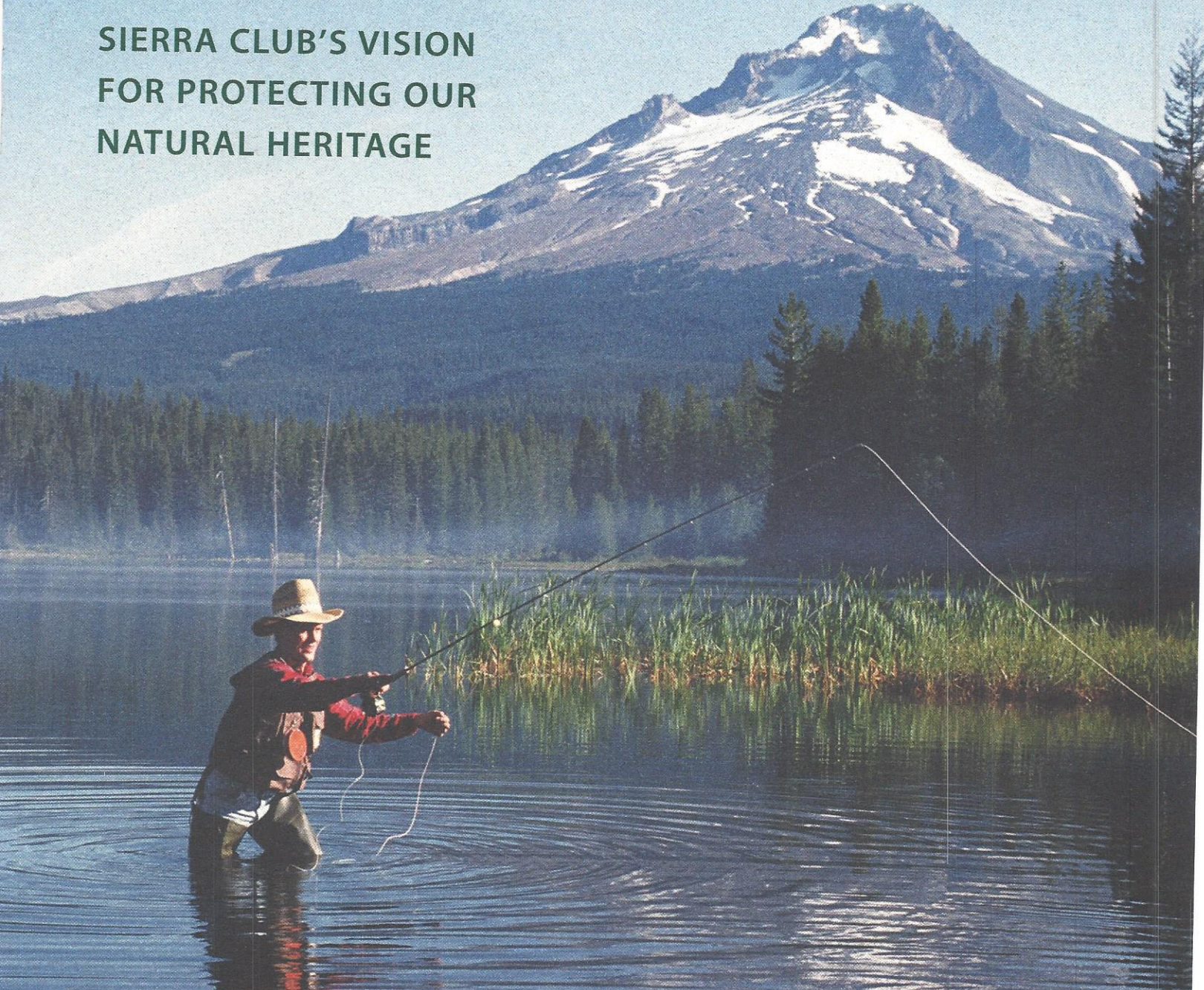




Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS

SIERRA CLUB'S VISION
FOR PROTECTING OUR
NATURAL HERITAGE



LOST RIVER KARST SYSTEM

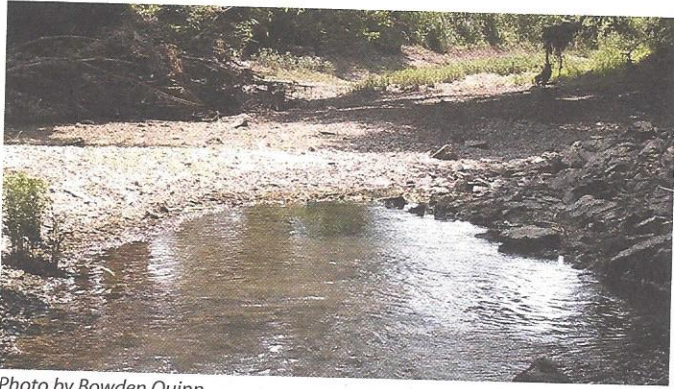


Photo by Bowden Quinn

One of the most complex hydrological systems in the world winds through southern Indiana, dotted with deep springs, caves and sinkholes. Except after heavy rains, a 22-mile section in the middle of the river is dry, while the water continues to flow underground, coming back to the surface in impressive springs called "rises." The water flows underground at depths of up to 150 feet.

The Lost River has been called an "underground Grand Canyon" and "three-dimensional river delta." Without warning the caves can quickly fill up with water, and people are discouraged from

going into the caves because they are too fragile and too dangerous. While people do not go into the caves it does not mean they are without life. The caves are home to at least 24 cave species — 19 of which are endangered or rare and five of which can be found only in this region — including the northern cavefish found only in Indiana and Kentucky. This system ranks among the top 10 caves in the country for species richness.

Because relatively little is known about subterranean systems, it is important that we tread lightly and work to protect this complex and fragile Karst system. A proposed management plan for the Hoosier National Forest would allow a 31 percent increase in logging. New homes with septic systems are also a potential threat to the river system, while current road construction projects and roads associated with the logging could also harm the Lost River.

Sierra Club supports designating this unique river system as a Wild and Scenic River and extending the boundaries of the Hoosier National Forest to provide a buffer area of protected habitat for the Lost River Karst system.

For more information and to learn how to help please contact Bowden Quinn at bowdenq@earthlink.net.

THE LOESS HILLS

The 660,000-acre Loess Hills contain a small vestige of the vast prairie that once blanketed Iowa. Intersecting ridge tops provide a unique corridor of wilderness with 12 Special Landscape Areas, as designated by the National Park Service. The Loess Hills' remnant prairies and steep peaks form a unique topographic and geological landform not found anywhere else in the United States.

Nestled near the Missouri River, The Loess Hills provide a valuable wildlife corridor for many indigenous and migratory species. Finding refuge in the Hills are wild turkeys, bobwhites, foxes, mink and badgers. Herons, ducks, hawks and songbirds nest here. Burrowing in the Hills are plains pocket mice, ornate box turtles, Great Plains skinks, and rare prairie rattlesnakes.

Yet, within 15 years these virgin prairies will disappear if not protected. Without a comprehensive plan and consistent budget for resource protection, The Loess Hills will fall victim to the negative impacts of mining, development, off-road vehicle (ORV) misuse, invasive species, such as the eastern red cedar and wind and water erosion. Sedimentation, pesticide and fertilizer run-off have affected streams in the area

The Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club is campaigning with allies to protect the Loess Hills through conservation easements or acquiring

wild places in 12 special landscape areas, adding 20,000 acres of protected prairie by 2020 to an estimated 5000 acres present protected. The Club also encourages enforcement of bans on ORV use in publicly protected areas to prevent the scarring of these sensitive lands.

To join the effort, contact Neila Seaman at 515-277-8868.

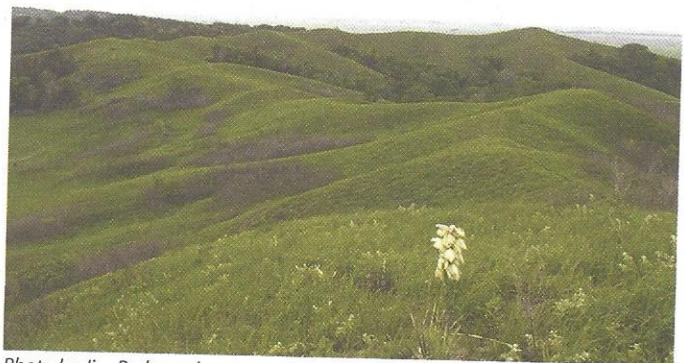


Photo by Jim Redmond