

Kentucky

"THE CLIFFS" -- KENTUCKY

Proposed New Park Area

Recommended for Purchase under

Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act

Prepared By Walter B. Ringo
(Name)

Inspector - Ky.
(Title)



View from "Buzzards Ball Yard". This photograph was taken from an overhanging ledge more than 300 feet above floor of canyon. The dense foliage hides the bottom of the gorge and does not give one an idea of its depth. At almost any time hundreds of buzzards can be found in the trees and on the rocks. This point is reached by a precarious, almost vertical, climb through a very narrow crevice in the face of the cliff.



"Buzzards Roost" from opposite side of canyon. The dense foliage hides the gorge, approximately 250 feet up at this point.



"Bear Rock", view along Clifty Creek. Note the yellow birch clinging to top of boulder in right foreground.

Bottom of photograph shows gravel and silt thrown up by turbulent streams during heavy rains. This caused the stream to constantly change its course, yet except during heavy rains the water is always clear and cool.



"Dripping Rock". This is a huge slab entirely cut off from main bluff. . It is some 200 feet square and 30 to 40 feet high. The sides are perpendicular, making it impossible to reach the top without ropes or ladders. There is a constant trickle of water the year around from near the top of the rock.

"THE CLIFFS" -- KENTUCKY

Proposed New Park Area

* * * * *

1. Location of the Area:

The area known as "The Cliffs" is located in southwestern Kentucky in the corners of Todd, Logan and Muhlenberg Counties, the majority lying in Todd County. This is a distance of 55 miles north of Nashville, Tennessee, 85 miles south of Evansville, Indiana, and 185 miles southwest of Louisville, Kentucky. The area can be easily reached by main United States Highways, all hard surfaced. The attached map indicates location in State. No data is at hand to prepare a proposed boundary map. This material will be forwarded as soon as it can be obtained. However, the area is estimated to contain between 5000 and 7500 acres of submarginal lands.

2. Description of the Present Land Use and of the Land-Use Problems Associated Therewith:

This area is cut up by approximately 25 to 35 miles of ravines ranging from 30 to 300 feet deep, and bounded by perpendicular bluffs. The land on the flats above the ravines is very poor, most of it unfit for farming. Fingers from the larger ravines cut back into the fields and the cultivation of the land only encourages erosion.

The country is thinly populated and very little farming is undertaken. Wheat, corn and some tobacco is raised. A few acres are cultivated in the floor of the canyons, but what little is raised is difficult to take out. The erosion of the stream in the canyon often cuts up the fields and destroys the crops.

While there is a large quantity of fine timber in the canyons, there is only a fringe of good timber remaining around the rim. Most of this has been cut for commercial purposes. There remains, however, a nice growth of small timber.

3. Contribution of Land Purchase to a Solution of the Problems:

The chief reasons for purchase of the area are:

- A. To set aside and preserve this splendid and interesting area which is being rapidly vandalized
- B. To retire and reforest the barren and unfertile lands and to overcome erosion
- C. The purchase of the land (which could hardly be sold for other purposes) will give the inhabitants an opportunity to relocate on more suitable farming lands
- D. Stop the waste and devastation of man-made fires in the area
- E. See attached letter from Park Director

4. Character of Lands Recommended for Purchase:

The area is thinly populated. As an estimate ten percent (10%) of the land is used for farming; thirty percent (30%) used for grazing and pasture. The remainder is good land but is used for little else other than hunting and trapping. However, during summer seasons many picnickers and nature lovers visit the Cliffs.

5. Position of the Area with Respect to Areas Now Under Some Form of Organized Public Land-Use Control:

Fifty miles from Resettlement Project in Christian County Kentucky. None other known to be near the Cliffs.

6. Proposed Use of Land After Purchase:

We believe this area should be set aside for a State Park and maintained by the State Division of State Parks. (See attached letters by the State Park Director and State Supervisor, Recreation Study, and Technicians)

7. Estimated Acreage of "Submarginal" Land that Should be retired by Purchase:

There are perhaps 2000 acres of land now being used for grazing and farming that should be retired. There are approximately 3000 additional acres of land that are idle due to their ruggedness.

8. Estimated Average price per acre of "Submarginal" Land:

This land should be purchased at an average of \$25.00 per acre, or less.

9 - 10. Other Lands Proposed for Purchase:

Approximately 3000 acres of cliffs and canyons, including timber, should not exceed \$15.00 per acre.

11. Estimated Total Cost of All Land for the Project:

Estimated 2000 acres "Submarginal"	
Land @ \$25.00 per acre	\$50,000.00
Estimated 3000 acres Other Land	
@ \$15.00 per acre	45,000.00
TOTAL for 5000 acres	\$95,000.00

The recreation survey has not been completed in Kentucky, but an excerpt from a letter by Mr. Fred M. Mutchler, State Supervisor, is attached, wherein he recommends "The Cliffs" for a much needed area to take care of the recreational requirements of northwestern Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky.

There follows letters and comments from various technicians and others, who for years have worked to have "The Cliffs" set aside as a scenic and recreation area that can be preserved to posterity.

If this proposal merits consideration, every effort will be made to furnish any data requested.

Walter B. Ringo

Walter B. Ringo
Administrative Inspector - Kentucky

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM COMMENTS ON NEW AREAS MADE
BY FRED M. MUTCHLER, STATE SUPERVISOR, RECREATION STUDY:

"It is believed that this is a most excellent opportunity to again encourage the acquisition of the area known as The Cliffs, located in Todd County. The Recreation Study in Tennessee has reached the stage where it is possible to make detailed analysis of needs. We have definitely shown that there is an immediate need for an area of large size located so as to serve holiday and week-end needs, in a scenic setting, somewhere north of Nashville. Such an area is needed not only as an outlet for Nashville, but to supply the needs of several rather important towns, such as Clarksville and Springfield, Tennessee, and Hopkinsville and Bowling Green, Kentucky. We have shown a tentative location for such an area northwest of Springfield, Tennessee. We have also shown that an area is needed some seventy-five miles southwest of Nashville.

It is not believed that lands in the vicinity of Springfield will qualify under the conditions of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act. We are not therefore submitting at this time any proposals north of Nashville.

It is felt that The Cliffs area, which would qualify as submarginal land and which we all know to have excellent park qualifications, would therefore meet this need. We would suggest, in view of these facts, that the Todd County Cliffs be given initial rating in your recommendation for new areas".

March 16, 1938.

Mr. Walter B. Ringo, Inspector
National Park Service
Frankfort, Kentucky

Dear Mr. Ringo:

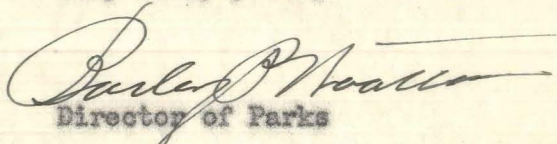
Referring to our recent conversation with reference to the feasibility of the State taking over the area known as the Cliffs in northern Todd County and operating it as a State Park, in event the Federal Government retires this area from cultivation, will say that the area is admirably located for a park and recreational area, as well as for a wild life sanctuary. The State of Kentucky through its Division of Parks would be glad to maintain it for such purposes in event it is purchased by any agency of the Federal Government and turned over to the State for that purpose.

You will recall having gone over this area once or twice with the writer and know its possibilities and the desirability of removing that area from cultivation. It is located in the poorest section of Todd County and it is impossible for the farmers to make a living on that soil.

In what is termed the Cliffs is a deep canyon surrounded by a high cliff some one hundred and fifty or two hundred feet high with a small area of land at the bottom in timber, and a smaller area which has been cleared. There are the heads of some streams in this canyon fed by springs and it would be an admirable place for fish and a refuge for birds, etc. An area of say, five or six thousand acres, possibly seven thousand acres, would take in this cliff with all the adjacent small farms, and would include land in Todd, Logan and Muhlenberg Counties, none of which is suitable for cultivation although there are numerous little farms on top of the rim of this canyon and extending back from it.

I will be glad to cooperate with you or anyone from your Department in the acquisition of this land and its ultimate utilization for the purposes mentioned.

Very truly yours,


Director of Parks

C O P Y

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Great Smokey Mountains National Park
Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Elkton, Tennessee
June 7, 1937

Mr. Walter B. Ringo, Inspector
National Park Service
Mariemont Inn
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Mr. Ringo:

Dr. E. Luch Braun of the Botany Department of the University of Cincinnati has expressed interest in the Cliffs Area near Elkton and plans to visit the area with me June 15 and 16, as indicated on copy of enclosed letter. Dr. Braun, as you know, has been active in the "Save Kentucky's Primeval Forest League", and has been a valuable supporter of the National Park Service. Her assistance in acquiring the Cliffs Area should be of considerable importance. I feel that especially since she lost her fight for the Leatherwood Forest in Perry County we should help her however possible, and encourage her efforts on other worthwhile projects.

I would be glad if you could come down and go with us. If not, would you give me the names of the farmer who acted as our guide and of two or three of the Elkton business men whom we might talk with?

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Willis King
Assistant Wildlife Technician

WK:RP

cc: Wildlife Division, Washington
Region I
Mr. Howard
King, files

C O P Y

- 8 -

Cliffs Area, near Elkton, Kentucky.

It was my privilege to make a second trip to the Cliffs Area, near Elkton, Kentucky, July 15 and 16. At this time I was showing the area to Dr. E. Lucy Braun and Miss Annette Braun of Cincinnati, Ohio. Dr. Braun has served as Chairman of the Save Kentucky's Primeval Forests League, and was interested in the acquisition of the Leatherwood Tract in Perry County. Since the latter is being exploited by a lumber company, and also has complicating mineral rights, I feel that Dr. Braun should be shown some consideration, and her attention directed to the Cliffs Area which has some virgin forest and offers exceptional opportunities for preservation of natural features, as well as for recreational development. We spent one day down in the gorge, and a second day driving around the area on very poor country roads, checking boundaries. Several tributary gorges and forest areas in the headwaters were examined, and we discovered that the state-county geological maps are greatly in error, in that the main fork of the stream is omitted, while Clifty Creek itself empties into another river from that shown on the map.

This area, which is roughly egg-shaped, appears to include about 7500 acres of desirable forest and sandstone gorge in Todd County. It is of good State Park caliber, and I understand has been selected for investigation as to National Park status. I believe I have seen enough of the area to report that it is not of national importance or character. In my judgment, additional field inspections by National Park Service representatives would draw too much local attention, and would make the acquisition of the land by local parties more difficult.

/s/ Willis King
Assistant Wildlife Technician