

## J. SCOTT CHRISTIANSON

### Conservation department seeks public input on long-range plan



The Missouri Department of Conservation is putting together its next five-year strategic plan and is inviting public input. This is a great opportunity for Missourians to help set the conservation department's goals and priorities for conserving natural resources.

Strategic planning provides a long-term vision and direction for the department. The department developed its first strategic plan in 1988, laying out goals and guiding projects and programs through mid-1994. The department hopes to have a new strategy in place when the current plan expires early this summer.

"The scope of the strategic plan tends to be very broad," Dan Zekor, department planning coordinator, said. "Once we have goals and objectives in the strategic plan ... each division then identifies what they need to do in their division to help achieve the goals that have been set for the next five years."

The department has scheduled a series of open meetings to receive public input on the plan. These meetings will begin with a brief presentation about the department, then participants will be able to talk or ask questions. Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire about department priorities for the next five years.

Participants should focus comments on state and department issues rather than specific incidents or problems. Detailed complaints about a department timber sale might be

too specific to help in the planning process, for example, but such complaints might provide valuable information if they were used to illustrate the need for new policies for resource management.

"Surveys, polls and thousands of personal contacts annually provide us with a lot of information regarding public expectations," Zekor said. "However, meetings are an important dimension, because they convey feelings as well as data and encourage better understanding among citizens with competing interests."

The following meetings have been scheduled.

■ **St. Louis area:** 7 p.m. Thursday at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, 11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood.

■ **Kansas City area:** 7 p.m., Feb. 22, Adam's Mark Hotel, 9103 E. 39th St., Kansas City.

■ **Springfield area:** 7 p.m., Feb. 22, Springfield Conservation Nature

Center, 4600 S. Chrisman, Springfield.

■ **Mid-Missouri area:** 7 p.m., March 1, Rock Bridge High School Performing Arts Center, 4303 S. Providence Road, Columbia.

Don't miss this important opportunity to voice your ideas and concerns.

"Through professional resource management and solid public support we have been able to protect and restore many species and habitats," Jerry Presley, director of the conservation department, said. "Missourians are proud of their natural heritage and have consistently supported a conservation program second to none. Their help in developing our plans for the future can assure that we keep doing the right things."

If you are unable to attend any of the meetings and would like to submit written comments, write Zekor at the conservation department, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, Mo., 65101, or call 1-751-4115.

If you have a suggestion for a column, a gripe, a success story or whatever, write it down and send it to me, care of the Columbia Daily Tribune, PO Box 798, Columbia, Mo., 65205.