To The Editor:

Our city friends outside the Ozarks have less public land than we do. Without much thought, they continue to want to compensate by imposing their idealized vision of wilderness preservation. What was once thought to be an asset has now become a burden by its sheer mass of acreage in rural counties. For example, in Oregon County we now have 1 in 5 acres and growing in the public domain. More public land is not an undiluted good, we now have too much of a good thing.

We welcome our friends and visitors, but they consistently fail to realize that we have to try and make a living on this marginal land that we all love, as well as provide a tax base for educating our children and other essential local services. When government agencies buy more and more private property we lose our future tax base and that is unacceptable.

The hyperbole of the Missouri DNR State Parks, MDC, Fish and Wildlife Service and U. S. Forest Service leadership does not go over well in Oregon County. According to government socioeconomic data, welfare payments have continued to rise for decades which can be expected after 50 years of environmental rule through the National Wild and Scenic River System. No one wants to admit that poverty travels side by side with the environmentalist dream of replacing cows with campsites on preservation land few others can access.

People need decent jobs and a decent education for their children and the rural Ozark region needs economic growth beyond the minuscule “ripple effect” of more and more government owned land. Just how much and what kind of land do these multiple state and federal agencies need to own? That is the question no one seems to be willing to address.

A good first step would be for our Congress to remove the Eleven Point River from the National Wild and Scenic River System. The environmentalist will howl and cry wolf, but the river would still have clean water protections and our county could prosper from real tourism on the waters of the beautiful Eleven Point. 50 years government regulated tourism is a failed economic model.

Of course, our state and federal government agencies continue to say they know what’s best for us. But, I firmly believe state and federal agencies should no longer be imposing their will without the consent of our elected local, state and federal representatives. And above all these same agencies should have to live by the same laws we do.

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