**Welcome to a Wilderness Experience.**

The East Fork Wilderness takes its name from the East Fork of the Illinois Bayou, which bisects the wilderness from northeast to southwest. The area encompasses 10,777 acres along the southern edge of the Boston Mountains. East Fork’s terrain is characterized by flat or gently rounded ridges separated by hollows with very steep slopes or sheer rock walls. The elevation ranges from 800 to 1,600 feet above sea level.

An unusual feature of the Ozark Mountains is that the “mountains” are actually plateaus, uplifted as a unit with few folds or faults. The ruggedness of these mountains is due to erosion of the plateaus caused by swift rivers flowing between them.

The most unique feature of East Fork Wilderness is the presence of three upland plateaus. These areas have exposed standing water during wet weather months and support plant communities normally encountered only in bottomlands. Some of the most beautiful scenery can be found by following the hollows upward from the creek. Waterfalls from a few feet to 20 feet high are common in these hollows. In some places the creeks are bordered by high, sheer sandstone bluffs.

White oak, red oak and hickory are the principal hardwoods, with overcup oak found in two natural seasonal pools. The usual understory trees, dogwood, redbud, serviceberry, sassafras and persimmon are common, along with sumac, red and Ohio buckeye and red maple.

Hiking is a popular recreational activity in this wilderness, as well as horseback riding. Many miles of old forest roads found within this area were closed after its designation as a Wilderness in 1984. A few roads have been maintained as a part of the wilderness travel system.

The Ozark National Forest offers five wilderness areas of undisturbed beauty for your enjoyment. Totaling 65,826 acres, these wilderness areas are open for primitive camping, hunting (in season) and fishing, hiking, swimming, nature study and to those seeking solitude with nature.

As the number of visitors to the wilderness increase each year, certain common sense approaches must be observed by all to maintain the wilderness characteristic. We ask that you also be aware of your responsibilities. Please follow the regulations and always leave the forest cleaner than you found it.

**Directions**

East Fork Wilderness is approximately 10 miles north of Hector, Arkansas and near the communities of Tilly and Witts Springs. To reach the wilderness, take Arkansas Highway 124 from Russellville, turn north (left) on Arkansas Highway 105 to Hector; continue north on Arkansas Highway 27 and go 12 miles. The wilderness area is on the east side of the highway and a parking area is available on the west side of Highway 27.

**History of the Area**

Despite the hard times of the early years, those who grew up in the Ozark Mountains have fond memories of life along the East Fork Creek. The area remains beautiful and forever changing with the old homesteads, still discernible along the creek bank and the old roads. Old home sites, which nature is rapidly reclaiming, are marked by rock fences and plantings of forsythia, daffodil and iris. The dwarf iris is common along the old roads which serve as trails, and spring rains bring out a profusion of colorful fungi, such as the Caesar’s Anemita. At least one pioneer cemetery still lies within the wilderness boundaries.