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CONSERVATIONISTS SEE TAUM SAUK DEAL AS SELL-OUT

Columbia, Missouri, November 28, 2007 — Conservation leaders in Missouri regard the vaunted \$180 million settlement between state officials and Ameren for the Taum Sauk Reservoir disaster as a complete sellout to Ameren. It does nothing to protect Church Mountain, the most critically threatened resource in the Taum Sauk Region, the largest and most biodiverse complex of state-owned wildlands in Missouri.

"We are bitterly disappointed by this settlement," said Terry Whaley, President of the Missouri Parks Association, "because we and virtually the entire spectrum of conservation organizations in Missouri have repeatedly said to public officials that securing Ameren's land on Church Mountain for the people of Missouri far outweighs in importance any other possible land or monetary settlement."

Organizations joining with the Missouri Parks Association in efforts to protect Church Mountain and secure it for the state include the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the Nature Conservancy of Missouri, Audubon Missouri, the Open Space Council for the St. Louis Region, Ozark Chapter Sierra Club, the Missouri Coalition for the Environment and many smaller groups.

Governor Blunt, DNR Director Doyle Childers, and Attorney General Nixon all indicated at various times during the past year that Ameren's property on Church Mountain was part of the settlement negotiations, along with a Katy Trail extension to Kansas City. They apparently caved in because of Ameren's refusal to give up Church Mountain, on which the utility has long planned to construct a second and much larger reservoir, and probably also because of the exorbitant price tag on other elements of the settlement. Of the \$180 million settlement total, the negotiators agreed to a value of \$33 million for the extension of the Katy Trail into Kansas City, for example, allowing Ameren a \$15 million credit for the recreational value plus a payment of \$18 million for construction of a new co-linear trail, an exorbitant cost made necessary by Ameren's refusal to give up its right-of-way on the Rock Island Line.

In the settlement, Ameren is giving the state only a 20-year right of first refusal in the event Ameren decides to sell its property on Church Mountain to a third party, but it is reserving to itself "and any affiliated entity" the right to develop or "otherwise utilize" the property—likely for a second pumped storage hydroelectric plant.

The negotiators for the state reportedly accepted Ameren's price-tag of more than \$60 million for its approximately 1300 acres on Church Mountain, then gave up their efforts to acquire it. Yet Ameren acquired most of this acreage around 1960 when the going rate for such land was about \$5 per acre, and even at the going rate of about \$1000 per acre for wild land in the Ozarks today the value would be only about \$1.3 million. The exorbitant price tag likely reflects the value to Ameren of a second pumped storage plant on the mountain. Ameren's entire cost for the \$180 million settlement and for the rebuilding of the Taum Sauk Reservoir will apparently be covered by insurance, while Missourians' interest in the protection of the natural resources of the Taum Sauk region is being sold out.

"In the wake of the reservoir disaster," said MPA's Terry Whaley, "it is simply unthinkable that these lands so critical to the complex of state-owned wildlands and natural areas in the immediate vicinity would remain vulnerable to industrial development."

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