



Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission

River Currents

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Christmas on the Illinois River

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From what I am hearing from the news media this week, it appears that we have a better than 50-percent chance of experiencing a *White Christmas* this year.

It's been many years since we have had the white stuff on Christmas Day. If the forecasters are accurate, the white stuff will transform our state's scenic river areas into a beautiful wintertime wonderland.

Speaking of wonderland, I am observing a genteel atmosphere for this time of the year that I haven't similarly experienced in many years. From my co-workers and neighbors to those of you I serve and the public at-large that cross my daily path, there seems to be a distinctly different Spirit of Christmas floating about which I can not recall since my childhood days.

At the recent Tahlequah Christmas Parade, it became even more apparent as I was taken back by those many hundreds of children that lined the street with their smiles and who offered their innocent Christmas-time greetings to all participants. It seemed as though the children were sincerely witnessing to all of us in the parade about the season being celebrated.

Those of you my age and older bemoan the demise of what we thought Christmas was in the "Old Days," as it now seems it has become a commercialized holiday where we do nothing other than spend, spend and spend on those things that most won't use, followed by a day spent with that dreaded family member(s) which otherwise we would not see anytime else during the preceding year.

Yet, the take home message at the parade from those children with their radiant faces beaming on that cold night has caused me to stop and re-think Christmas this year.

It's as though they were re-writing Charles Dickens' book *The Christmas Carol*,

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A view of the
river from the
Combs Bridge



OSRC Board and Agency News

Election Results

The Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission conducted an election on Tuesday, December 1st for two At-Large members of the Board of Commissioners. The At-Large Commissioners represent Cherokee, Adair and Delaware Counties and are elected for a term of four years. The incumbents were Ed Brocksmith, who had previously held an appointed position and was completing his first term as an At-Large Commissioner and Larry Clark, who was completing his second consecutive term on the board. Both Brocksmith and Clark ran for re-election, along with Richard DeGeorge, Archie (Trey) R. Peyton, III, and Shannon Tate-Robertson. Clark and Peyton were elected and will hold their positions for a four year term, ending in December 2013.

2010 OSRC Meeting Dates

OSRC business meetings are held at 5:30 pm at the Tahlequah Armory Municipal Center located on 100 North Water Street in Tahlequah, OK. The public is welcome to attend.

Tuesday, **February 16**
Tuesday, **April 20**
Tuesday, **June 15**
Tuesday, **August 17**
Tuesday, **October 19**
Tuesday, **December 21**

Christmas, continued from pg. 1

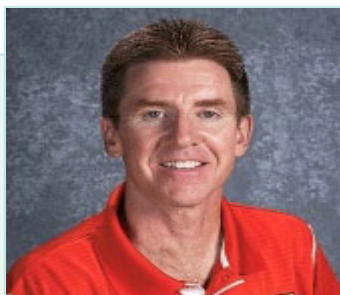
published in 1834. In that book, Dickens stresses the meaning and importance of Christmas. What's especially interesting is the book's backdrop (particularly the men during the Industrial Age) seems like a similar time as today when we see our families focused on earning money and laboring long hours. They had lost sight of the real meaning of Christmas.

Those children lining the parade route reminded me that Christ is the focal point of this season along with our families and, particularly, our children.

If we do happen to receive that white stuff on Christmas Day, let me encourage you to gather up your families to take a drive out along one of our state's designated scenic river areas. Simply, it will be one of those drives that will leave a life-long impression as there are few natural resources as beautiful when it is snowing.

On behalf of the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission Staff and Board Members, I would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Ed Fite, Administrator



David Spears

David Spears was born in Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1961. As a child growing up in Oklahoma, David took an interest in the scenic rivers and lakes. One of his first loves as a child was skiing on Lake Tenkiller, an interest which grew throughout his life and remains with him today. David has been a teacher at Tahlequah Public Schools for the past 15 years. He currently works at Tahlequah Middle School as a physical education teacher. David, along with his father Jack, also owns and operates the popular Arrowhead Resort, a business he has been a part of for 20 years. He considers it a privilege to be able to operate on the Illinois River and to work alongside his father, a pleasure not many people get to experience.

David was appointed to the OSRC Board of Commissioner's in 2008 by the President Pro Tempore, Glenn Coffee. He has thoroughly enjoyed his short time on the board and is looking forward to the rest of his term, which will end in 2012. David believes that his tenure as an OSRC Commissioner will provide an exciting learning opportunity. One of his specific goals as a Commissioner is to see that the Clean Water Act is followed and respected by the various business that affect the Illinois River. David hopes to fulfill his duties as a Commissioner to the fullest.

Spotlights in the River Basin

Illinois Shines During Off-Season



As the leaves change near Houston Bluff.

A few of the views one can see on a drive down Highway 10.



The Illinois River is gifted with a picture perfect natural beauty that attracts thousands of visitors each summer. Vacationers and recreationists alike bask in the charm of the Illinois as they float, swim and relax along the gravel bars. The warmer months do not present the only opportunity to enjoy the river, however, as the autumn and winter seasons also showcase the unique allure of the Illinois.

Along with cool breezes and the beginning of the holiday season, fall brings an enchanting change of scenery to the river basin. The leaves begin to reflect an artists palette of golden yellows, burnt oranges, and light reds. An autumn afternoon is one of the loveliest times

to take a scenic drive along Highway 10, enjoy a hike along the Sparrow Hawk Primitive Area trail, or have a relaxing picnic at one of the many public access areas.

Winter casts another hue of beauty along the river basin. Snow and ice settle across the landscape, creating a winter wonderland that any visitor willing to brave the chill will find breathtaking. This striking scene is a fantastic setting for a visit to the river. It is a great time of year for eagle watching and fishing. Visitors can have fish fries and cookouts along the river banks. It is also an optimal time to enjoy summer's most popular activities, floating. Floating in the off-season affords visitors to experience the serenity of the Illinois.

on the **W**ild Side....

'Tis the Season of Gigging

Winter has arrived, bringing bitter cold and biting winds that permeate the river basin, along with nights that seem to stretch as long as the Illinois herself. Even in these bone chilling conditions, people from across the Ozarks flock to Oklahoma to take advantage of the fantastic fishing on the river. One of the most popular winter fishing methods is gigging.

Gigging is the practice of fishing with a long pole tipped by a multi-pronged spear, commonly referred to as a gig, or with a spear. According to 2009 state-wide fishing regulations, gigs and spears cannot contain more than three points that have no more than two barbs on each point. Gigs and spears are legal for taking nongame fish and white bass. The most common fish gigged for include hogsuckers, flathead catfish and carp.

A clear night on the Illinois provides optimal conditions for gigging. In the past, gigging fisherman or 'giggers' would wade through the water, using lanterns to spotlight the fish. Today, giggers utilize jon boats. These boats are constructed specifically for gig-

ging and are equipped with mounted lights and railing on the bow.

December 1st marked the beginning of the Oklahoma gigging season. Dedicated giggers could be found setting up at exactly 12:00 AM on Tuesday morning, anxious to begin another successful season. The gigging season will continue through March 31st and is legal in all rivers and streams in Cherokee County. Gigs are lawful year-round in the rivers and streams of Delaware and Mayes counties.

The acts of giggers have a rippling effect on the Illinois river. When a gigger catches a fish, they will generally clean it on the jon boat and toss the remains on gravel bars. These remains draw the attention of one of the winter's most beautiful attractions, bald eagles, despite the fact that eagles tend to avoid places of human activity.

Giggers are not required to purchase any licenses except a standard fishing license. The most popular public access points along the Illinois for gigging include No Head Hollow and Peavine.



Giggers flock to No Head Hollow public access point, eager to begin the season. Shown above, a group pose before pushing out. They wear several layers of water proof clothing in order to protect themselves from the cold. To the right, a family stands in front of their jon boat.

