



Blue Springs Nature Preserve

Steering Committee Newsletter / September 2008

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Steering Committee Member,

This issue of the newsletter explores the link of geology in the history of Ragland and National Cement and the future of Blue Springs Nature Preserve.

The positive opportunities that the geology of the area have provided to the City of Ragland throughout its history are plentiful. From its beginnings as a coal-mining town, to its agricultural heritage and to the long-term growth of the cement industry, Ragland has certainly taken advantage of what the Earth has given it.

Blue Springs Nature Preserve provides yet another opportunity. The natural beauty, ecological diversity and the plentiful wildlife of the site are very much a product of the soil and rock below it.

We believe that the geologic history of Ragland is an important story that can be told through the Blue Springs Nature Preserve. There is much that students can learn from the site in terms of geology's role in nature, and how this area is ideal for the manufacture of cement.

I hope that you enjoy this installment of our newsletter.

Sincerely,
Spencer Weitman



Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee

Spencer Weitman
National Cement Company of Ala.
Steering Committee Chairman

Lyman Lovejoy
Lovejoy Realty
Finance Chairman

Bill Phillips
Envision Ecology
Land Use Chairman

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In This Issue:

Geology ties Blue Springs Nature Preserve, National Cement together

Blue Springs receives international attention



Blue Springs lies on solid foundation

Geology plays a significant role in the history of National Cement and BSNP

If there is one word that ties together the Blue Springs Nature Preserve, its ecology, wildlife and benefactor, National Cement, it is “geology.”

Ragland lies in the Alabama Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province, which is composed of northeast-to-southwest trending valleys and ridges that include the foothills of the Appalachian Trail. Much of Ragland lies over the Pottsville Formation, which consists of shale and siltstone interspersed with coal deposits. And although the town was born due to the availability of coal, the materials underlying the ridges and valleys near Blue Springs shaped another industry.

According to Randy Gray, Vice President of Development at National Cement Company, Inc. and member of the Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee, the ridges that surround Blue Springs Nature Preserve were formed by the uplift and tipping of earth layers by about 20 to 30 degrees. The youngest rocks are found at the top of the ridge and come from the Mississippian, a subperiod of the Carboniferous geologic time

period that dates back some 350 million years. Geologic map data shows that rock formations at the top of the ridge consist of primarily Fort Payne Chert. These harder rocks “cap” the mountain and, as a result, there is less erosion.

Underlying that layer is the Frog Mountain formation, which consists of sandstone and shale

laid down during the Devonian Period, which makes the rock in this formation more than 400 million years old. Because of its age, this formation usually includes fossils like brachiopods and corals, because much of Alabama was under water during this point in Earth’s history, which is also known as the “Age of Fishes.”



Rock outcroppings at a flooded quarry near the Blue Springs Nature Preserve site demonstrate the geologic assets available in the area.

About National Cement

National Cement Company of Alabama, Inc. is a major producer of cement in the Southeastern United States, employing approximately 450 people.

The company is highly committed to environmental stewardship and supporting the communities in which it operates.

About Blue Springs Nature Preserve

Blue Springs Nature Preserve, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is located in the town of Ragland in St. Clair County, Ala. The 147-acre preserve was made possible thanks to a land donation from National Cement Company of Alabama.

For more information, please contact Tommy Palladino at (205) 328-9334 or send an e-mail to info@bluespringspreserve.com.

The next identifiable layer was deposited during the Ordovician Period, which dates back 500 million years. It extends from the foot of the ridge to the valley area and consists of Little Oak Limestone.

The soils at the site, derived from the underlying rock formations, have nurtured an interesting array of trees and plants, including goldenrod in the meadows, pawpaws in the wetlands and rare trillium and other lilies on the ridges. These plants attract certain types of animals to the site. Likewise, the geology of the site has yielded ideal soil conditions for agricultural uses, which has been its primary use since the 1830s. For instance, the

Brannon family planted cotton and corn on the site.

The abundance of limestone and chert, as well as two types of sand, have also created the perfect conditions for the manufacture of cement. This influenced the Atlantic and Gulf Portland Cement Company – the pre-cursor to the modern-day National Cement Company – to establish and construct a cement plant in Ragland in 1908.

In the 1970s, National Cement purchased three parcels of land from the Brannon family. The first two parcels were developed into quarries. While the third parcel shares the geologic makeup of the quarry sites, it has instead been

set aside for Blue Springs Nature Preserve.

The agricultural heritage of the site, however, has also changed the hydrology of the valley, according to Bill Phillips, President of Envision Ecology and Land Use Chairman of the Blue Springs Nature Preserve. These wetland areas are evident from small pockets of trees scattered throughout the property.

Part of the master plan for Blue Springs includes restoring and re-creating streams and wetlands on the site. Trout Creek provides a drainage area of 25 square miles, which will be helpful in restoring the wetland areas of the site.

BSNP receives international attention

Blue Springs Nature Preserve gained international recognition recently when it was featured in Vicat News, a quarterly, internal publication that is distributed worldwide to facilities and employees of the Vicat Group.

The Vicat Group is the parent company of National Cement Company, who has set aside the land to establish Blue Springs Nature Preserve.

The story leads with the community unveiling of the Blue Springs Nature Preserve master plan to community leaders. Philippe Latournarie, Chief Operating Officer of the Vicat Group in the United States, was also in attendance.

“The attention given to Blue Springs Nature Preserve at the corporate level demonstrates the Vicat Group’s commitment and interest in the project,” said Spencer Weitman, President, National Cement Company and Chairman, Blue Springs Nature Preserve Steering Committee.

The article also included a Q&A with Weitman regarding Blue Springs and quotes from Steering Committee members Stan Batemon, Chairman of the St. Clair County Commission; Gary Daffron, Mayor of Ragland; and Lyman Lovejoy, President of Lovejoy Realty.





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