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# Trout



# Talk



**“Fishing Buddies”**  
by **Chris Roden**

**May 2022**

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# New resort coming to Niangua River

Developers say they are bringing ‘the coast to the country’ at new Bennett area resort

**CHRIS RODEN  
FOR TROUT TALK**

A familiar sign on Missouri 64 will soon come down. Longtime outfitter Fort Niangua is no more.

Soon, a new sign will appear, announcing a new Niangua River resort, the Coastal Country Resort and Lagoon.

Coastal Country Resort and Lagoon is the brainchild of Cherry Blossom Resort Development co-owners Shelby Corle, operation manager, and Sharra Smith, developer.

“We’re going to bring the coast to the country. We’re going to build a four-acre lagoon close to the river. It’s going to have its own sand beaches. It’s going to be like you’re at the beach in Florida. We’re just bringing the coast to the country,” Corle said.

Phase One of Coastal Country’s development is a \$2.1 million investment that began a few months ago and will eventually be a \$40 million door resort with a myriad of amenities.

CONTINUED on PAGE 4



Submitted photo and photo by Chris Roden  
**Above, eco-homes like this Glacia 3 model are** put together in segments and made from recycled landfill material encased in polyresin. The eco-homes will have eco-friendly sod-covered roofs that make them very energy efficient. Right, Sharra Smith and Shelby Corle pose in front of the eco-home segments that will go together much like a Quonset hut does for the military.

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A saltwater pool, a professional 18-hole Frisbee golf course, MegaChess, featuring four foot tall chess pieces, and MegaCheckers, sand volleyball, a nine-hole putt putt golf course, a mini-playground and 300+ acres to hike with hiking trails are in the near future.

However, the very unique feature of Coastal Country will be its eco-homes.

The eco-homes, sometimes called hobbit houses because they will have sod placed over their roofs, are structured more like the military's Quonset huts than the often round, earth berm homes featured in "The Lord of the Rings." The sod remains the same.

"They've got about 16 layers and a berm over the top so they're 76% energy efficient. Because of the way that they are built, they can be utilized as a storm shelter if needed," Smith said.

Two will be put up during Phase One and ready for the grand opening slated for sometime in June.

"They are made from recycled material out of landfills – plastics, metals, the things that do not disintegrate. Then they're melted together with a polyresin that keeps them together, so it looks like and feels like fiberglass almost," Smith said.

Smith said the eco-homes are catching on with various businesses and locales like Chicago as well as the military who uses much larger versions for hangars. The ones designed for residential use are as large as 3000 square feet and will be available at Coastal Country later.

"We're really excited to bring them to Missouri," Smith said.



Trout Talk photo/Chris Roden

**The rubble pile that once was the Fort Niangua bunkhouse** behind Coastal Country co-owner Shelby Corle shows how much has changed during Coastal Country phase one development.

Future plans for the resort are even more extravagant.

Ultimately, Coastal Country will offer a spa and wellness center, a 6,000 square foot restaurant with a pavilion and event center, a lodge, a lazy river from the cherry blossom-shaped lagoon with a swim-up bar, a children's indoor activity center with an outdoor multipurpose

court for tennis, basketball or four square beside it, a catch and release pond and waterfalls with natural habitats.

They will add other Coastal Country resorts to the Cherry Blossom family in the future. However, this location is the first and consequently unique.

"This is our flagship location for

Coastal Country," Corle said.

Smith is a Brooklyn transplant who moved to Houston, Mo. when she was 15. Her parents owned campgrounds there before retiring.

Corle grew up in Rader and now lives in the Conway area where she has a travel agency.

CONTINUED on PAGE 5

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Submitted photo

**Glamping, or glamour camping, is** one option at Coastal Country. Glamping is popular in Europe and is becoming so in America.

The two met when Smith was trying to convince Corle's husband to do some contract work for her development company. He was unconvinced, but Corle and Smith became best friends.

"It turned out she dabbled in an area that I wanted to get into, which was vacationing, doing more than just extravagant develops for hotels and resorts. I wanted something a little different," Smith said.

Corle's experience with the travel business and her degree in business administration made her a good business partner as well as a friend with shared interests.

And they soon shared a goal.

"We wanted to develop a brand that was family friendly, that was economically important to the environment and to communities, which is one of the reasons we picked Dallas County because of the low economics here. We wanted to bring families back to the Niangua River," Smith said.

The emphasis will also be on

healthy living with fewer chemicals by using eco-homes made from recycled materials to limit the carbon footprint.

It is not only their building that will be eco-friendly.

Coastal Country has "active stewardship with intention" status, which means they will consult the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Audubon Society and Private Land Conservation groups to create a resort that benefits both humans and nature.

Another change is the general public will no longer be able to launch their watercraft at the river access for a fee. Until the development is finished and a permanent gate is installed, a temporary gate will keep trespassers off the property.

However, people that float the Niangua through Big Bear River Resort will have Country Coastal as a pull out point option after their float.

CONTINUED on PAGE 6

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Phase One of the development includes remodeling what were formerly quadplex cabins into more spacious duplexes that will sleep six adults and two children.

"They'll each have two queen beds in the bedroom. They'll have a loft area where they'll have two twin beds perfect for children. Each one will have a little kitchenette area and a fold-out sofa that turns into a double bed," Corle said.

The cabins will have new bay windows, redone fireplaces, new exposed beam ceilings and lighter-colored paint added to the cabins to make them feel "like home."

Twenty glamping tents will also be installed this season. Glamping is glamour and camping combined. Glamping, popular in the United Kingdom, is catching on here.

The 250 square foot tents are round and will hold two full-sized air mattresses to accommodate four adults and two kids.

"The nice thing with these tents is you don't have to put them up or take them down. They're there, so you show up, climb in and start camping," Corle said.

"It was our compromise with the community because we're not allowing people to just pitch a tent anymore," Smith said.

Half the glamping tents will have electricity while the other half are designed for more rustic camping fans.

Fifteen RV camping spots should be available this season.

"Our demographic is people who want to be with their families and be able to experience the river, but also want to be in a clean environment that understands the value of luxury



camping," Smith said.

Corle said young couples are another group that Coastal Country River Resort and Lagoon will serve.

Environment-friendly items like sheets made from bamboo, soaps made from hemp, chemical-free cleaning agents will limit unnecessary exposure to chemicals.

A saltwater pool will reduce exposure to chlorine and other chemicals that may be allergens.

The pool will be L-shaped and 50 foot by 50 foot with interior L being 25 feet long each way. A wading area will allow children to play safely and will be wheelchair accessible. A splash pad and a deep-end with a slide will interest kids and adults.

A refurbished shower house will service the glamping tents with plans for an additional larger shower house in 2023 when a storm shelter gets added as well.

Tents shaped like pods that will hang from trees and sleep four to six people are also in the near future.

Prices range from \$40 a night for non-electric glamping tents and \$50

for electric ones. Remodeled cabins are \$225 a night. Coastal Country has just one two bedroom, two bath apartment for \$315 a night.

The eco-homes are \$200 per night for the current version. The builder offers 20 different varieties of different sizes, which Corle and Smith plan to sample.

When construction is complete, they plan to open Coastal Country to hikers with a \$5 per car fee. Day passes for the lagoon will be for sale as well.

Located near the highway will be its main store with parking, and further down the hill, an elaborate gate that will make Cat Hollow Trail a gated neighborhood for three residences as well as Country Coastal.

Three years of planning are coming to fruition thanks to solid financial backing.

"We really have strong backers that believe in what we do," Smith said.

For construction alone, Coastal Country has 35 employees that keep Corle and Smith occupied.

"It's like directed wonderful chaos," Smith said.

"I call it herding cats," Corle said.

Corle said her husband, Matt, is a certified builder of the eco-homes and enthusiastic about their construction.

"We probably don't give them enough credit, but we probably wouldn't be where we are if it wasn't for our husbands," Corle said.

Locals will benefit from Coastal Country Resort and Lagoon beyond the opportunity to use the resort. In its first year, Corle expects to hire 15 employees with about 50 being possible the second year.

Smith and Corle are proud of the uniqueness of their project.

"This is not the first resort to be built, but it's the first of its kind. This is the first resort ever in the US to be what we call 'a lifestyle resort,'" Smith said.

Country Coastal will also offer investment opportunities since people may buy their own eco-homes to place on Country Coastal property and to rent them out when they are not using them themselves. They will pay a maintenance fee but pocket the rest of the rental charge, which could allow them to pay off their eco-home in three years.

They can sell the eco-home back to Country Coastal as well.

When Corle and Smith give a visitor a tour this early in the project, it takes some imagination to see the resort's future.

A first glance early in phase one shows a pile of broken concrete that was the old bunkhouse, the guts of the store and shower facility lying outside after the ceiling was demolished to remove the black mold and replace non-standard construction oddities.

However, after the owners have shared their vision of what will be where, a visitor can see that Coastal Country River Resort and Lagoon could be as welcoming and restful as its cherry blossom shaped lagoon with its lazy river stem is unique.

Sharra Smith and Shelby Corle hope their flagship resort will see repeat business from satisfied customers.

"We want people to be like 'Oh my gosh! I feel so much better. Let's do it again!'" Corle said.

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# Bennett Spring State Park Rules and Hours

## FISHING REGULATIONS

The spring branch is stocked daily during the regular fishing season, which is March 1 through Oct. 31. Daily permits are required to fish on the spring branch and zones are set aside for different kinds of lures. Permits are available at the park store. For more information, call (417) 532-4307.

**ZONE 1:** From the hatchery dam upstream to the end of the area. Only flies are permitted.

**ZONE 2:** From the hatchery dam to the whistle bridge. Only flies and artificial lures are permitted.

**ZONE 3:** From the whistle bridge to the Niangua River. Only soft plastic bait (unscented), natural and scented bait are permitted. All flies and artificial lures are prohibited, even if natural bait or scent has been added.

Zone areas are marked in the park and maps are also available in the Park Store.



Trout Talk photo/Chris Roden

See 'HOURS' / page 10 **Anglers fish** from a jetty at Bennett Spring State Park on a warm day in April.

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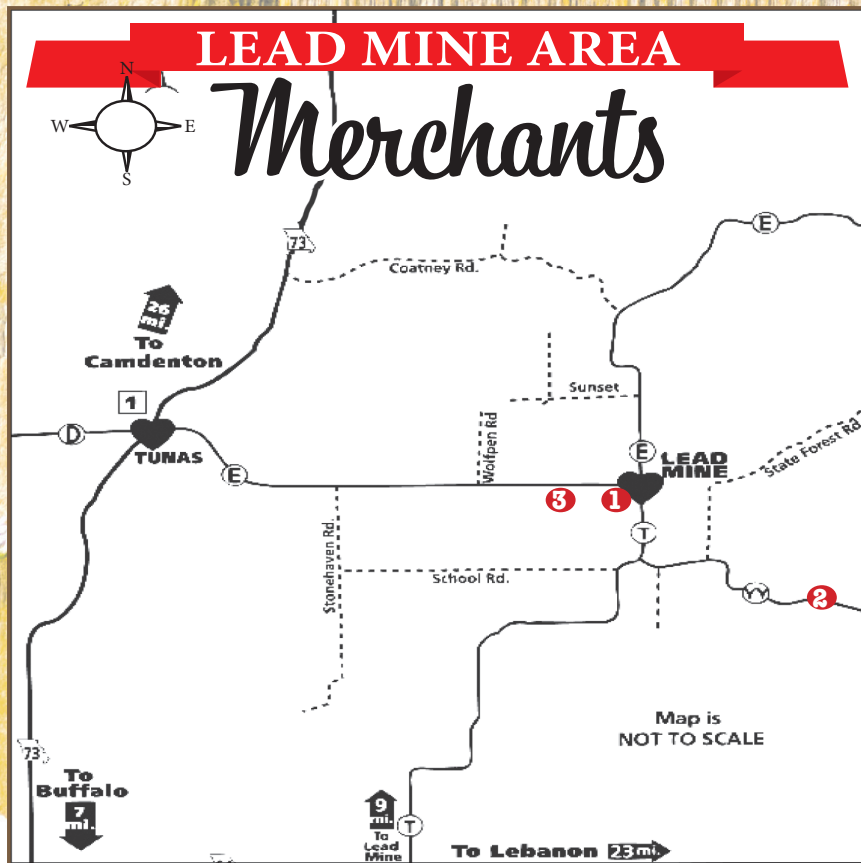
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## Hours from page 7

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**June and July:** 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
**August:** 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
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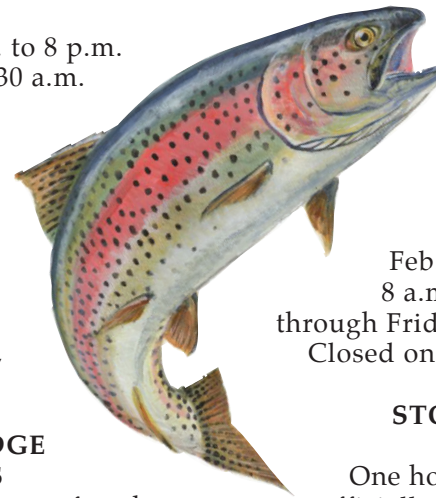
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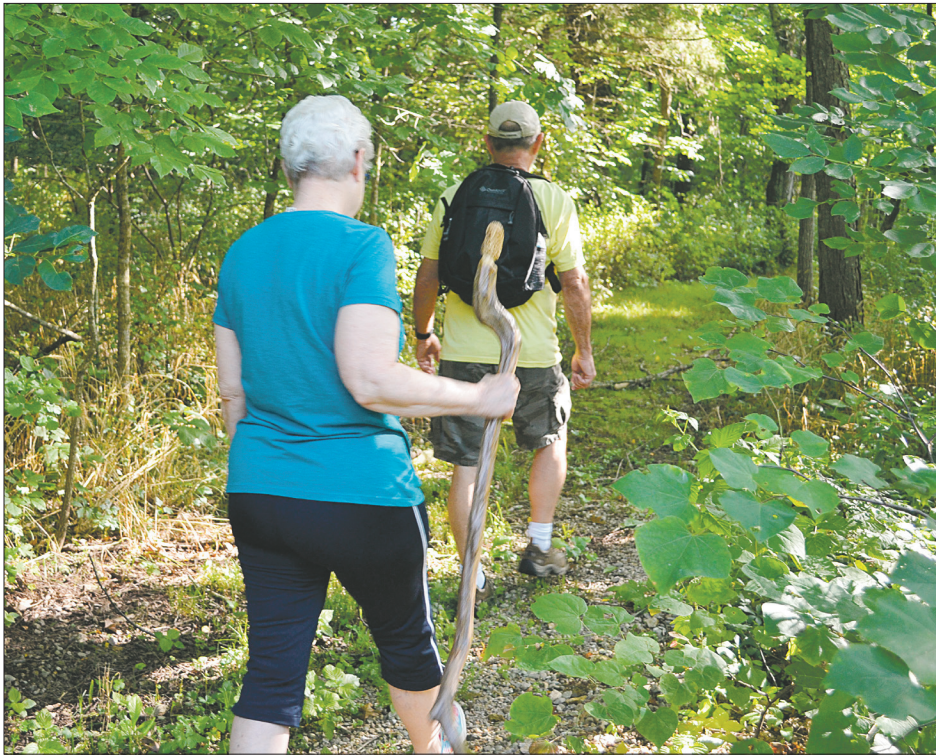


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**A pair of hikers takes** a walk down the Oak Hickory Trail at Bennett Spring State Park. The trail is located behind the Bennett Spring Nature Center.

Trout Talk photo/Laura Valenti

# Hiking around Bennett

Bennett Spring State Park has more than 12 miles of trails for hikers to enjoy

## **LAURA VALENTI • FOR TROUT TALK**

After fishing, hiking is no doubt the most popular activity at Bennett Spring State Park.

A number of different hiking trails are free and open to the public, ranging in length from less than half a mile to the 7.5 mile long Natural Tunnel trail that begins south of the spring. With such a variety in length, hiking trails are available to beginners and the very young to more experienced hikers who are ready for more of a challenge. Those trails include:

■ The Old Hickory Trail, a .3 mile loop and the Bride Trail, a .7 mile hike, both of which are located behind the Bennett Spring Nature Center.

■ The Whistle Trail, a mile long trail that runs along the spring and up the bluff and begins at the Wooden Bridge near the Niangua River is also a popular trail.

See 'HIKING' / page 13

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# Hiking

from page 11

■ The Trail Head offers two trails, the Savannah Trail is 2.5 miles and runs behind the cabins in the spring area and takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete. And finally, the Natural Tunnel Trail is the park's longest and takes an estimated four hours and twenty minutes to complete. This last one features several small caves, bluffs and a water crossing before reaching the Natural Tunnel, the trail's main feature.

According to Bennett Spring State Park's Naturalist Resource Interpreter Patricia Chambers, the park's trails are one of its most popular features. There are more than 12 miles of trails around the park. Chambers said that during the pandemic, people from all over the country have come to the park to hike

them.

Park visitors of all ages and backgrounds enjoy the trails, like Sean Willoughby of Kansas City, Mo., one of many who come from the state's urban areas and Emily Perry, Grace Baker, Hannah Esther and Maggie Mebruer, who live just up Missouri 64 in nearby Lebanon.

The trails also offer various levels of difficulty, making hiking available to the inexperienced as well as older, more skilled hikers. No matter the age and stage of the hiker, basic safety practices still apply like using sensible shoes, application of insect repellent and sun screen, and staying well hydrated, especially on the warmest days of summer.



Trout Talk photo/Laura Valenti

Above right, Sean Willoughby of Kansas City, Mo., prepares to take a hike to see Bennett Spring State Park's Natural Tunnel, pictured above. The rock formation is located at the end of a 7.5 mile long trail. The picture of the Natural Tunnel is courtesy Bennett Spring State Park.



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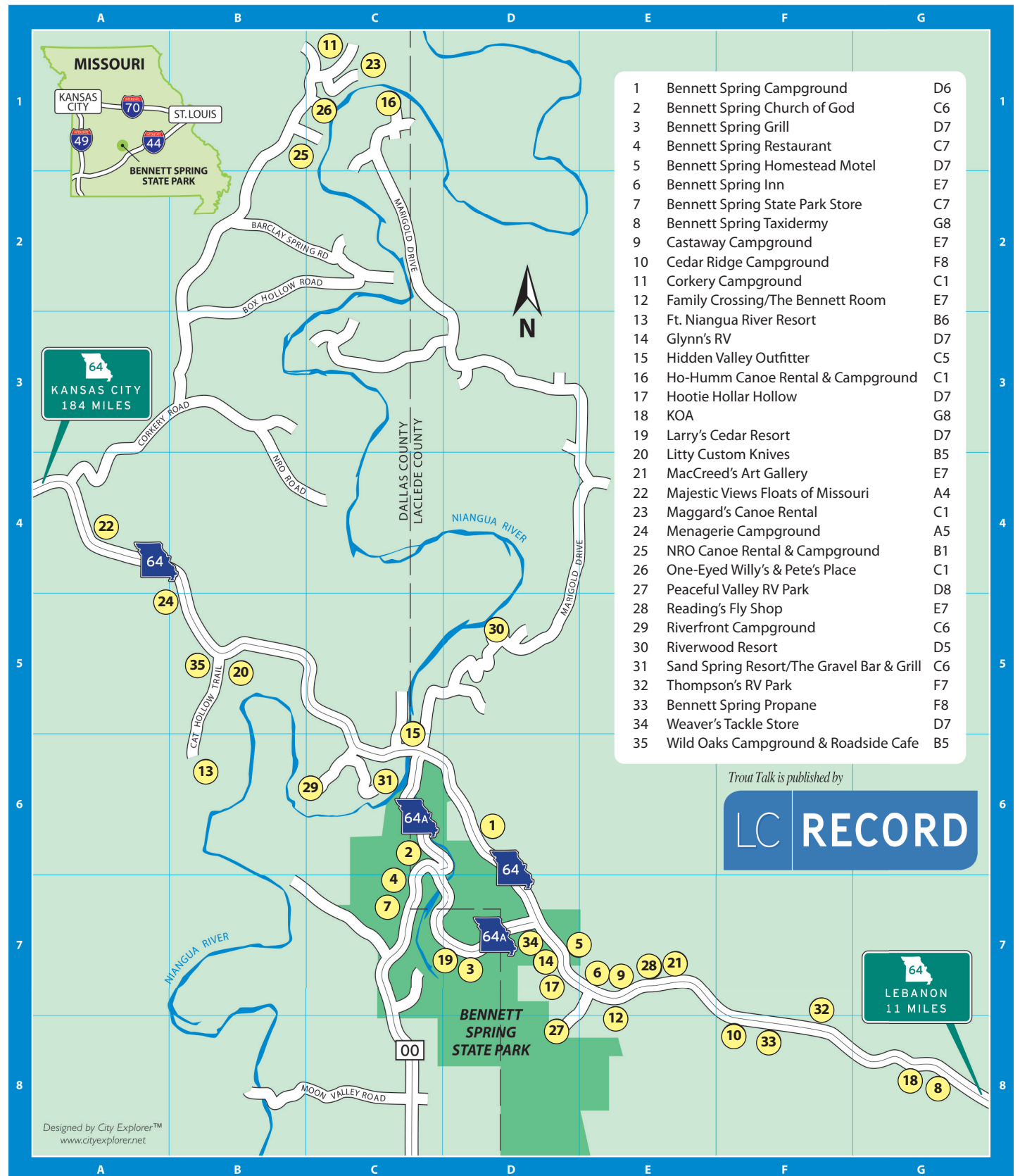
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# Trout Talk

## BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA



# Fish Stories

## Anglers show off their latest catches at Bennett Spring

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF BENNETT SPRING PARK STORE



Top left, Jerry Prewitt of Savannah, Mo., caught this 3-pound trout on March 28 in Zone 2 with a "killer" lure. Top right, Trevor Rowland of Tunas, Mo., shows off his 4-pound trout he caught in March Zone 1 with a black and white fly. Far left, Michael Wall of Savannah, Mo., caught this 3.4-pound trout on April 1 in Zone 2 using a yellow mega worm. Left, Terry Limpert of Cedar Hill, Mo. caught this 3.8-pound trout on March 29 in Zone 1 using a white floss jig.

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