

Missouri Parks Association NEWS RELEASE

(For immediate release) Susan Flader, 573-442-1058

PARKS GROUP ASKS FOR RECONSIDERATION OF STAFF LAYOFFS

COLUMBIA, MO, OCT 27, 2009. The Missouri Parks Association is petitioning Gov. Jay Nixon to support the Department of Natural Resources in re-evaluating the recently announced decision to lay off 100 workers from Missouri's state park system. A resolution adopted during its 27th annual meeting, held in Babler State Park Oct 24-25, requests a reconsideration of the lay-offs in favor of less stringent measures such as temporary park closures and furloughs, and allowing employees to participate in job sharing and other cooperative efforts to reduce park system spending.

The Missouri Parks Association is a statewide organization of over 3,000 members who act in support of Missouri's state parks and sponsor such activities as UPOP, a program to provide outdoor state park experiences for urban youth. The group also wrote and brought into publication *Exploring Missouri's Legacy*, a full-color book featuring the state parks and historic sites.

The focus of this year's meeting was the crisis in state park funding, brought about by a decline in Parks and Soils Sales Tax revenue and inadequate funds for capital improvements. A panel discussion addressed this issue, featuring participation by State Representative Chris Kelly, Conservation Federation Executive Director Dave Murphy, and other informed park and recreation officials. Department of Natural Resources Director Mark Templeton, State Park Director (and Deputy DNR Director) Bill Bryan, and State Representative Timothy Jones also participated in portions of the meeting. Retired University of Missouri professor Susan Flader was elected in-coming president of the organization. In addition to discussions of the funding issue, the group also toured several state parks in the St. Louis and Franklin County area, reviewing progress as well as problems related to lack of funds.

"The crisis in funding for Missouri's state parks and historic sites is our number one priority at this time," MPA President Flader said. "We must assist the Department of Natural Resources in finding adequate revenue to operate the park system. Our association will support necessary actions to reduce costs, but we feel this must be achieved without causing extreme hardship to the dedicated staff that is largely responsible for Missouri's park system being rated as one of the best in the nation."

#

Attachment: Missouri Parks Association Resolution, 10/25/09