

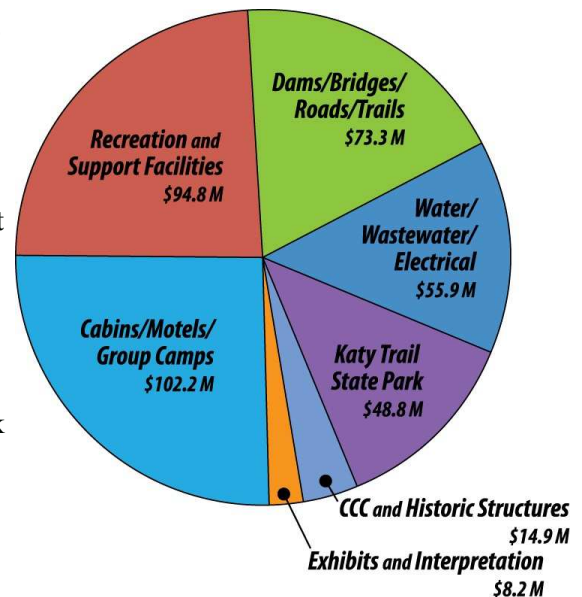
A Wild Ride in the 2013 State Legislative Session

Missouri State Parks had a wild ride in the Missouri General Assembly during the session that concluded May 17. But in the end, parks came out better than in any recent year.

With the November elections over, veto-proof majorities in both houses, and continued low interest rates, Republican leaders in both houses seemed to buy the logic of a bond issue for higher education, state buildings, and infrastructure rehabilitation. New House Speaker Tim Jones listed a Fifth State Building Fund bond issue as one of his priorities for the year, sponsored a joint resolution (HJR 14) similar to one introduced by Democratic representative Chris Kelly the previous four sessions, and then appointed

Kelly chair of a special appropriations subcommittee on Infrastructure and Job Creation to shepherd the measure.

With leadership support and a bipartisan list of 80 co-sponsors on the House bill, it appeared that 2013 would finally be the year for the long-sought bond issue. MPA and other park support organizations arranged a special legislative day in early February to explain what park officials calculated was now almost \$400 million needed for infrastructure repairs and improvements in the park system.



Meanwhile, Senator Kurt Schaefer, chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, introduced a companion bill in the senate, SJR 3. Like HJR 14, it provided for a \$950 million bond issue primarily for institutions of higher education, with \$250 million reserved for state agencies, including "no less than \$40 million" for state parks. It was heard and reported Do Pass from his committee by February 27, but then put on hold while Kelly's subcommittee worked out further details in the house.

With a Democratic chair of a largely Republican House committee, there was a good deal of horse trading during a series of hearings and work sessions over the next several months in Kelly's subcommittee and the parent budget committee. A new 2012 study that showed state parks generate more than \$1 billion in economic activity

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MPA ANNUAL GATHERING - SAVE THE DATE

MPA's popular annual gathering of members with tours, panels, dinner and events has been set for October 11-13 at Lake of the Ozarks State Park with headquarters at the brand new rebuilt lodge and dining hall at Camp Pin Oak. The historic dining lodge, beloved by generations of Girl Scouts who camped at Pin Oak every year from its opening in 1938 until 2004, was struck by lightning and burned to the ground in September 2010 in the depths of economic crisis. Governor Nixon pledged to rebuild, and that has been accomplished in an extraordinary partnership effort. Come see and hear all about it—you won't want to miss this year's event. Accommodations will be available in rustic cabins in Camp Pin



The rebuilt dining hall at Camp Pin Oak.

Oak and elsewhere in the park as well as at nearby motels. Please mark your calendars now and stay tuned for registration details. This year's conference promises to be a unique and memorable adventure.

President's Message by Steve Nagel:

MPA Honors Park Employees

In a salute to Missouri State Parks the *St. Louis Business Journal* reported that more visitors took advantage of the state's parks last year with attendance rising by roughly a quarter-million people for a total of over 18 million. Lake of the Ozarks State Park, where MPA will hold its annual gathering next October 11-13, had the most last year with 2.2 million. According to a recent study, visitors to state parks generate more than \$1 billion in sales, adding tremendous value to local economies.

Why do we see the rising tide of visitors and what is it that makes Missouri's state parks continue to rank high nationwide?

There are two reasons that work hand in glove. Our state park system has repeatedly been ranked as one of the top four state park systems in the nation because each park and historic site offers a quality experience. However, to accomplish this it takes a dedicated park staff of hardworking professionals who care deeply about the mission of the system and their responsibility as state park employees to administer and operate each of the 87 parks and historic sites. The work involves land and water stewardship, maintenance of buildings, trails, campsites, drinking water, wastewater and electrical systems, and most importantly providing the interpretation and public relations that give park visitors a safe and enjoyable experience.

On April 8 MPA was honored to be on hand at Camp Rising Sun in Lake of the Ozarks State Park to help host a dinner and award ceremony for state park employees. MPA is very pleased to extend our appreciation to the entire park staff and to rec-

ognize selected individuals in five different categories as State Park Employees of the Year. Deb Schnack and I had the privilege of introducing each of the winners and presenting them with monetary awards along with a plaque and engraved clock. Also MPA board member Nonie McClammer, who during her career with state parks had been superintendent at Lake Ozark, was on hand to assist with the awards and take photos of the winners.

Gerald "Zero" Phillips won the award for maintenance with 29 years of outstanding service. He has performed countless upgrades and "miracles" in fixing and improving water and electrical systems at Cuivre River, Onondaga Cave, Washington, Lake of the Ozarks, and other state parks.

Mary Dunlap has worked at Montauk State Park for 15 years and received the MPA award in the field staff category. Handling payment invoices for six different facilities, she also volunteers for special assignments working with bison, elk and the Prairie Jubilee at Prairie State Park assists with deer counts at Truman, Pomme de Terre and Stockton. She is the go-to person for accurate budget information and accounting of materials and equipment. I could tell that Mary truly enjoys working for state parks and her positive can-do attitude reflects the way she communicates with all park visitors and employees.

Erik Otto, although a relatively new employee, was honored in the interpreter category, having already developed 45 different programs. He has been instrumental at Robertsville State Park in

overseeing campground operations, facility maintenance, supervision of seasonal and State Park Youth Corps staff and is also responsible for all revenue processing, shelter reservations, and monthly reporting for the park. He has also taken on additional responsibilities working on concept planning for the new Don Robinson State Park. He is very enthusiastic about his work and after meeting and getting to know Erik there is no doubt that he deserves the award.



MPA honors park employees(l-r): DNR Director Sara Pauley, Bill Bryan, Trail Blazer Deb Schnack, Gerald Phillips, Mary Dunlap, Wanda Doolen, Erik Otto, Chris Fritsche, MPA President Steve Nagle.

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in Missouri annually and account for more than 14,000 jobs helped to make the case for state parks. MPA leaders then watched anxiously over the weeks as others advocated at length for mental health (a new \$200 million State Mental Hospital at Fulton), repair of the state capitol (with an estimated \$100-200 million price tag), water systems in north Missouri, and special allocations for St. Louis, Kansas City, and public elementary and secondary education as well as higher education—so many requests that Kelly advised and the committee agreed to cap the measure at \$1.2 billion.

MPA and other environmental and outdoor organizations have been arguing for years that state parks, which received approximately ten percent (about \$60 million) of the previous bond issue in the 1980s, ought to receive ten percent of any new measure, especially since well over half of the buildings and water and wastewater systems that the state of Missouri is responsible for maintaining are in state parks. But in this session they were reduced to scanning each successive version of the bill to make sure that the language providing "no less than \$40 million" for parks remained in place.

Periodically during the session other brush fires required flurries of activity. A bill to encourage wireless communications passed the House and was nearly ready for a vote in the Senate before anyone noticed language that would have stripped authority from the park division and other agencies to regulate the placement of cell towers on public lands. Park supporters, through their lobbying alliance, were successful in adding an amendment to exempt park and conservation property.

Another bill would have transferred DNR's soil and water program to the Department of Agriculture and state parks to the Tourism division of the Department of Economic Development. As it turned out, no one came forth from the packed hearing room to testify in favor, owing largely to broadly shared support for the parks and soils sales tax and other synergies of the two programs within DNR.

A long-sought measure to retain the interest generated by the Park Earnings Fund within the fund instead of being transferred to General Revenue (and hence unavailable for parks) was paired with a renewable energy pilot program for a selected park—which, while laudable, could be more costly and less energy efficient than upgrades in several different parks. The sponsor agreed to remove the pilot program when this was explained. The earnings fund

language was then incorporated in a huge "omnibus bill" of DNR-related items, which also included a provision to establish a commission form of governance for state parks with representation by congressional district. Enactment could have caused more problems and expense than the loss of interest from the earnings fund. A compromise was finally worked out that provided for annual open meetings in each of the three main park districts in order for citizens to bring their concerns directly to park system leaders.

By mid-April, park supporters were hearing that it was unlikely the bond issue would move, in part because it was being preempted by unrelated controversies. Then, unexpectedly, it began moving again, receiving first round approval on May 2 and clearing the House on May 15. That was too late for Senate action, according to President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey, who had earlier indicated he thought the bonding measure should be a two-year process in order to allow adequate time for consideration of projects. He apparently intends to facilitate such discussion during a statewide tour with regional meetings this summer.

With the bond issue again being put off, but tax revenues for the year exceeding expectations, Governor Nixon broached with legislative leaders the possibility of using some of the windfall revenue for one-time investments in strategic priorities, citing especially the needs and economic benefits of state parks. In a governor's amendment to the fiscal 2014 budget announced on May 2 he asked for \$13 million to design a new Fulton State Mental Hospital, \$28 million for repairs to the state capitol, and \$45 million for improvement at state parks. With a scant week before all spending bills by law had to be completed, the House quickly decided to approve \$50 million for the state capitol (which that very week celebrated the 100th anniversary of its groundbreaking), \$13 million for design of the Fulton hospital, and \$38 million to build a new Department of Transportation headquarters (apparently so the current DOT building near the capitol could be used for expansion of some offices from the overcrowded capitol), and trimmed state parks to \$20 million, for a total of \$121 million. The senate followed suit, and all spending bills went to the governor on time.

Appropriations from the park sales tax and the earnings fund for operations of the park system generally followed administration requests. The

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appropriations or re-appropriations in the biennial capital improvements bills reflect a continuing effort to use savings from a reduction of park staff to take small bites from the massive backlog of infrastructure rehabilitation needs. The bills also reflect some policy decisions by the governor's office that have enabled state parks to compete for modest grants from various federally funded water, energy, and transportation programs for which state parks had not previously been deemed eligible.

The legislative result for parks turned out better than in any of the five years since MPA began spotlighting the growing backlog of park infrastructure needs. The \$20 million for parks, assuming the governor signs the appropriation bills with park funding intact, is only a down payment on the need, but it is still highly significant. Unlike a bond issue, which would have to be approved by a statewide vote of the citizenry, this appropriation would become available immediately to address some of the most pressing needs.

Moreover, the 2013 session marks the first substantial infusion of state general revenue into the park system since the loss of all general revenue for park operations in a budget-cutting move in 1990. That cut forced virtually all staff salaries and benefits to be covered by the Parks and Soils Sales Tax, which had been approved by a statewide vote of the citizenry in 1984 primarily to provide for more con-

sistent maintenance and improvement of park infrastructure, but which now must fund fully three-fourths of annual state park operating costs. This de facto shift in the purposes of the sales tax fund marked the start of the incredible nearly \$400 million backlog of park capital improvement needs.

The remaining one-fourth of operating funds comes from the park earnings fund—camping fees, park concessions, and other fees for service as well as miscellaneous income—the interest on which will now for the first time, as a result of final passage of the DNR omnibus bill in the closing minutes of the session, remain in the fund to be used for park purposes. The amount will vary depending on interest rates and the timing of earnings and expenditures. Expected to be in the low six figures, it is not a large amount of money, but with nearly two-thirds of similar state funds already retaining their interest by law, it was a reform that was long overdue.

A bond issue with a significant allocation for state parks is still urgently needed, and MPA will continue to make the case for it, but now at least there is something to show for years of educational efforts in the legislature and among the citizenry. It was a wild ride through this session of the Missouri General Assembly and it ended with unexpected results: no bond issue yet, but a much-appreciated \$20 million appropriation from general revenue for infrastructure upgrades.

Park Briefs

Missouri is Best Trails State, says American Trails, a national trails organization, which has selected Missouri for its biennial award in recognition of the state's system of almost 1,000 miles of trails for walking, hiking, cycling, and horse riding, its effort to inventory, manage, and coordinate trails and trail data, including the recently released *Trails of Mis-*

souri State Parks, and its broad spectrum of partnership efforts. The award was presented to park director Bill Bryan at the International Trails Symposium in Arizona



in April. Honored at the same occasion with the association's "Trail Worker Award" was Russell Martin, chair of Showme Missouri Backcountry Horsemen, for his leadership and cooperation with an array of organizations in developing an equestrian trail for the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry.

St. Louisans pass Arch-Parks sales tax. Voters in St. Louis city and county approved a 3/16ths cent sales tax in April elections to support renovation of the Arch grounds and extension and improvement of trails and bike paths across multiple jurisdictions. City-Arch-River and Great Rivers Greenway will each receive an estimated \$11.4 million and St. Louis County Parks \$6 million of the projected \$38 million annually for the next two decades. St. Louis city parks will also benefit as well as county municipalities through an allocation to the St. Louis County Municipal League.

SPYC enters fourth year. The State Park Youth Corps, an award-winning program begun in 2010 at a time of economic crisis to provide summer employment and outdoor experience to youths age 17-23 will enter its fourth year this summer. A cooperative effort of Missouri State Parks and the Division of Workforce Development funded by largely by federal grants and private contributions, the program has employed over 2,000 young people who have put in more than 500,000 hours on an array of projects throughout the park system.

Proposed Development adjoining Rock Bridge. A Columbia developer is asking for annexation to the city and rezoning of a 36-acre tract to permit construction of a new residential area along Route K immediately north of Rock Bridge State Park. Although the project has been repeatedly delayed for redesign in an effort to meet public objections grounded in the need to protect water quality and visitor experience in this sensitive karst area, the new Parkside Estates, if approved, would still be the most dense development bordering a state park anywhere in Missouri. MPA favors maintaining the current 10-acre minimum lot size of the bulk of the tract and will vigilantly seek to protect the park.

Taum Sauk Reservoir and Church Mountain. MPA joined with Great Rivers Environmental Law Center and Missouri Coalition for the Environment on March 31 comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regarding its environmental assessment for the relicensing of AmerenUE's Taum Sauk Pumped Storage Hydropower Project adjoining Johnson's Shut-Ins and Taum Sauk Mountain state parks. The groups made the case yet again for a full formal environmental impact statement, which has

never been prepared for the project, and asked that Ameren UE be required to transfer its holdings on Church Mountain and in the Taum Sauk Creek valley to the state in mitigation for the significant degradation of natural resource, aesthetic, and recreational values in the area. The state park system currently has a 25-year lease for trails on Church Mountain that is nearing its end. For more information, see: <http://parks.missouri.org/IssuesAction/ChurchMountain.aspx>.

Iliniwek Threatened. Archaeologists and other park supporters are concerned about a threat to Iliniwek Village State Historic Site in Clark County from a gravel mining operation that is seeking a permit on a 377-acre area near the site, which sits on a gravel terrace high above the Des Moines River. Marquette and Jolliet encountered Illinois Indians here in 1673 and described their village, which is known to have extended beyond the boundaries of state ownership. MPA and others are asking for archaeological survey of the extent of the site, screening of all mine operations, and other efforts to protect the park.

CCC Worker Statue Dedicated at Roaring River. Governor Jay Nixon dedicated a statue honoring the 1,500 Civilian Conservation Corps employees who worked out of Camp Smokey on facilities for Roaring River State Park between 1933 and 1939 and all CCC workers in Missouri and the nation on the 80th anniversary of the historic Depression-era jobs and public works program. CCC worker Richard Chrisinger, who spearheaded fundraising for the installation of the statue and other CCC veterans were joined at the ceremony by State Park Youth Corps members who have worked at Roaring River in recent years.



Governor Jay Nixon was joined in dedicating a statue honoring Civilian Conservation Corps workers by former CCC workers and State Park Youth Corps members.



May 2013

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Chris Fritsche works for the Missouri State Museum and won in the central office category. When museum staff began work in 2012 on a "signature" event, Chris became the guiding force with ideas, plans and coordination of the effort to develop and present "Missouri – The Cave State" at the state capitol. The event drew the largest attendance for any single program at the museum in the last ten years, including people who had never visited the museum before and students, state employees and other citizens who toured a constructed cave with exhibits.

Wanda Doolen of Lake Wappapello State Park was selected as awardee for facility management. She lost key staff when layoffs occurred, yet had to manage a self-run operation with cabins, store and other facilities as well as the State Park Youth Corps. When she was confronted with massive flooding, she found herself working with flood recovery workers, transitioning to concession operations, a new business plan, wildlife plans and a long list of routine responsibilities. She is recognized for her high standards and tenacity in getting the job done.

Special Trail Blazer Award for Deb Schack

Our own MPA vice president Deb Schnack was totally surprised when Parks Director Bill Bryan called her to the podium to receive the prestigious Trail Blazer Award for service, an award made possible through the generosity of Pat Jones. Deb's license plate says it all: "WeHike." Her 32 years of service to state parks have made it possible for hundreds of thousands of Missourians and other tourists to hike on trails that she developed.

Her tenure as the state trail coordinator and then as director of planning and development resulted in over 575 miles of developed trails in Missouri. One of her most significant accomplishments was her work on the Ozark Trail. But before all the hiking trails, she blazed a trail in 1973 as the first female superintendent in the system. For an added memorable touch to the moment, Bill Bryan unveiled her first state park uniform designed and made by her mother when she first came to work as a state park employee! What fun it was to see her so surprised and pleased to get the award. We couldn't be more proud of Deb and are so fortunate to have her continued service and advice.

A hearty congratulations to our 2012 MPA Award Winners and thanks to Bill Bryan, Dave Kelly and staff for their leadership and hard work in organizing the entire three day event, which also included workshops and informative sessions for park employees.

UPOP Kids Need your Help

MPA's Urban Populations Outreach Program (UPOP) is all set to go again this summer with educational field trips to introduce inner city kids to our state parks, working as usual with partners in Kansas City, St. Louis, Columbia, and Joplin. To help us serve more UPOP kids, please donate by check payable to MPA (for UPOP) and mail it to the Missouri Parks Association-UPOP, c/o The Callaway Bank, P.O. Box 10, Fulton, MO 65251-0010. You can also contribute online with your credit card at <http://www.parks.missouri.org/>.