New action to restore state parks

Parks at a critical juncture

Across the country, from Ohio to Florida, state parks are under assault. Unfortunately, Missouri is no exception—our park system now faces $200 million in critical rehabilitation projects, from aging water and electrical systems, to cabins and bridges in need of urgent repair.

This summer, the threats to our parks grew as extreme weather lashed the state, and the Missouri River flooded to historic levels. Strong storms and winds damaged Wakonda and Babler state parks, and floods closed portions of Katy Trail, Big Lake, Lewis and Clark and Big Oak Tree state parks. All the while, Environment Missouri continued its campaign to address our parks’ shortfalls and secure adequate funding for much-needed repairs.

The time has come for our state legislators to give our park managers the resources they need. This year Environment Missouri rallied the public on behalf of our parks, and we’re seeing progress.

A groundswell of grassroots support

During the legislative session, we successfully supported a bill that protected the State Parks Earnings Fund, a key parks funding source. Unfortunately, the session ended without action on the huge backlog of critical repair needs.

So this summer, Environment Missouri hit the streets and spoke with over 15,000 Missourians face to face about protecting our state parks. We gathered nearly 2,500 comments from citizens, urging our legislators to prioritize our state parks next session. Many Environment Missouri members and activists called, wrote and emailed their legislators. We leveraged the media, and met with legislators and officials in Babler State Park to chart a roadmap for securing the future of our parks.

“We are blessed with one of the best state park systems in the country, from the historic Katy Trail to the rock pools of Johnson’s Shut-Ins,” said Ted Mathys, advocate for Environment Missouri. “In the coming legislative session, we’ll keep the pressure on to ensure our state parks remain some of the best in the nation.”

To read more, visit our website: www.EnvironmentMissouri.org

 Visitors to Castlewood State Park deliver a message to our state leaders: Save our parks!
2011 has been a tough year for Missouri. The Joplin tornado was a tragedy that touched the lives of all Missourians and shook the nation. Record floods and severe storms damaged some of our most pristine open spaces and threatened our communities. And in Jefferson City, those of us who love Missouri’s environment fought tough battles against factory farm pollution, a dangerous nuclear reactor proposal, and rollbacks to our state’s renewable energy policy.

But Environment Missouri came through the first half of the year strengthened. We saw progress on our state parks campaign, continued to defend the EPA’s clean water plan against attacks in Congress, and are helping shape the policies that will guide the Ozark National Scenic Riverways for years.

It’s the passion of everyday citizens and members like you that enables us to defend the places we hold dear and win concrete results for the environment.

Sincerely,
Ted Mathys
Advocate

Recent action

Missouri Legislature passes “Dirty Air Resolution”
Dirty energy pollutes the air we breathe, threatening our health and the environment. Coal-fired power plants in Missouri are our biggest air pollution culprits, emitting tons of dangerous smog-forming pollution, soot, air toxics and global warming pollution.

Nevertheless, over strong objections from Environment Missouri, state legislators passed a resolution calling on Missouri’s Congressional delegation in Washington to impose a moratorium to stop the EPA from following through with new air quality standards for at least two years, and to work aggressively to block the EPA from moving ahead with new policies to curb global warming pollution.

Our state legislators are asking our Congressional delegation to side with polluters. In response, Environment Missouri will keep fighting for stronger, safer air quality standards in Congress and hold accountable polluters and politicians who are trying to derail the EPA’s much-needed clean air upgrades.

New bill helps clean water, state parks
On July 11, Gov. Jay Nixon signed into law an Environment Missouri-backed bill that reinstates Missouri’s water pollution fees and protects a key funding source for our state parks.

Under the Clean Water Act, polluters who discharge into Missouri’s waters have long been required to obtain a permit, and then pay a fee to support clean water monitoring and enforcement. But last year, a handful of state legislators held up the program and let it expire. The new legislation, House Bill 89, reinstates the permit fee program—and now we and our allies are working to strengthen the fees.

In addition, the bill protects the State Parks Earnings Fund from being swept away into general state coffers every few years. At a time when our parks face millions of dollars in critically-needed repairs, protecting this cornerstone fund was a crucial step.

How do you want to be remembered?
You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Missouri.
For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMissouri.org.

An Environment Missouri-supported law protects our waters from excess pollution.
More polluter attacks on Missouri’s rivers

This summer, while we faced beach closings and rivers too polluted for swimming, polluters and their allies in Congress fought hard to dismantle the law that has cleaned and protected our rivers, lakes and streams for 39 years: the Clean Water Act.

Over 200 water bodies in Missouri currently have pollution levels too high to meet the basic federal standards set forth in the Clean Water Act.

The Clean Water Act has been extremely successful in limiting pollution across the country. But polluted runoff from farms, cities and construction sites is flowing into our waters, and legal loopholes are allowing developers to pave over wetlands and polluters to dump waste into streams that feed our lakes and provide drinking water for millions of Missourians. And now, Congress has attempted to revoke the Environmental Protection Agency’s ability to step in when states aren’t protecting their own waters.

The loopholes make 66 percent of Missouri’s streams, and thousands of acres of wetlands, vulnerable to pollution. These wetlands and streams feed and clean our iconic rivers, from the Meramec to the Missouri, and they also flow into the public drinking water systems used by over 2.4 million Missourians.

For the past year, Environment Missouri has been working with our national federation, Environment America, to close these loopholes and restore the Clean Water Act’s ability to protect all of our waters. This year, the EPA acted on them. In April, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a plan to close the loopholes created by the courts that are allowing polluters to pave and dump into the small waters that feed our great rivers. And following state laws spearheaded by Environment Maryland and Environment Rhode Island, the agency is also gearing up to cut sewage pollution by setting national standards.

“Legal warfare”

Polluting industries have already sprung into action. Mining companies, developers and corporate agribusiness have all urged their friends in Congress to stop the EPA from closing the clean water loopholes—ExxonMobil even threatened “legal warfare.”

Over the summer, polluters’ allies in both parties in Congress launched an unprecedented attack on the Clean Water Act. By mid-July, the House of Representatives had passed three separate measures attacking the EPA’s authority to protect our water.

We saw this coming, and had already begun building a campaign to defend the EPA’s clean water initiatives. We reached out to citizens and river advocates across Missouri about the attacks on clean water. Over 1,000 Missourians sent comments to Washington, urging the EPA to stand strong for our rivers, lakes and streams. We made our case in the media and lobbied the EPA and our Congressional leaders directly.

As we work to protect our waters, we’ll be sure to remind officials in Washington that Missourians love the Meramec and all of our waters, and want them protected.

Time for clean farms

In Missouri and across the country, corporate agribusiness imposes a heavy toll on the environment. Unsustainable farming practices pollute thousands of miles of waterways with nutrients, fertilizers, pesticides and animal wastes, causing countless water bodies to be unsafe for fishing, swimming and wildlife. Corporate agribusiness is also a significant source of global warming pollution, resulting from intensive fertilizer use, fossil fuel burning and animal production.

There’s another way to go about bringing food to the table. Small, sustainable farms are growing rapidly in the United States, and many communities are realizing the environmental and health benefits of local, sustainable agriculture. The number of farmers markets in the country has more than tripled in the last 15 years, and across Missouri, community-supported agriculture programs, farmers markets and farm-to-school programs are on the rise.

Environment Missouri is now working to protect federal resources that help strengthen local and regional food systems. In Missouri we are collaborating with food advocates to develop innovative policies to spur clean farming across the state. As the Missouri Legislature’s new Committee on Urban Agriculture begins to explore policies for our cities, we’ll press for smart solutions.

It’s time to reduce pollution from factory farming, break corporate agriculture’s stranglehold on our food system and political system, and give clean farmers a chance to succeed.
The spring-fed Current River and its major tributary, the Jacks Fork, make up the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Missouri’s largest national park.

But this summer the Current River was named one of America’s 10 most endangered rivers. Proliferating roads, deteriorating water quality and torn-up trails are taking a terrible toll. For over a year Environment Missouri has been drumming up grassroots support, meeting with members of Congress and the National Park Service, and pressing for management reform for the Riverways.

Right now, the National Park Service is revising the General Management Plan for the Current and Jacks Fork, a plan that will guide the management of the rivers for at least a decade. We’re calling on the Park Service to undertake a new environmental assessment of the resource degradation in the park, and to make the final plan as strong as it can be.

Visitors canoe along the Current River, in the Ozarks region. Visit our website, www.EnvironmentMissouri.org, to learn more about our work to clean up the Current River and restore the Ozark National Scenic Riverways.