

Missouri River Restoration at Issue

The Missouri Parks Association has taken a leadership role this spring and summer in rallying an array of conservation organizations in support of Corps of Engineers efforts to return the Missouri River to a more natural condition, beginning with a project affecting Arrow Rock State Historic Site.

The Missouri River story is a saga of truly Byzantine twists and turns, as misguided attempts to "improve" the river proceeded through the 20th Century. The Corps of Engineers sought to accommodate farmers, navigation interests, and politicians by providing increased control of the river through levees, revetments, and wing dikes that deepened, narrowed, and stabilized the river channel. Little value was seen in the natural state of the river — meandering through its floodplain, flooding annually, constantly eroding its banks, and car-

rying more than enough sediment to earn its sobriquet, the Big Muddy.

Unknown to these early manipulators of the river was the fact that having carried so much sediment for eons past, the river's fishes and wildlife species, much of its vegetation including its cottonwoods and willows, and even its very hydrology had become adapted to its muddy waters and constantly forming and reforming shallows and sandbars. When Congress adopted the massive Pick-Sloan Plan to build dozens of dams on the river and its tributaries, and the 1945 Missouri River Bank Stabilization and Navigation Project,



Jameson Island near Arrow Rock, showing Jameson chute (center right) begun in 2006.

which straightened and channelized the lower river from Iowa and Nebraska through Missouri, the river's sediment load soon was cut to less than 20 percent of what it had been previously, as measured at Hermann, Missouri.

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Celebrate MPA's 30th Anniversary in Ste. Genevieve Sept 28-30

Come to Ste. Genevieve to help MPA celebrate its 30th anniversary and to discover the treasures of Missouri's oldest European settlement and the state park system's historic site there.

The Felix Valle House State Historic Site, first opened to the public in 1983, now includes other structures not connected with Felix Valle. MPA early advocated for the addition to the site of a traditional 18th century French Colonial vertical-log building to complement the Federal-style 1818 Valle house built by a Jewish merchant from Philadelphia but long occupied by a scion of the town's leading French family. That was accomplished in 1993 with the acquisition of the Beauvais-Amoureux and the Delassus-Kern houses, as well as the rescue of the 1808 Bequette-Ribault House by the state's Revolving Fund for Historic Preservation (though the latter is not part of the historic site).

Plans for the "new" French Colonial buildings are still in limbo, owing in part to the state's lack of funds for capital improvements since about 1990, in part to controversy and indecision, and in part to an on-going National Park Service study of the community to recommend how it might better be protected and interpreted and what role the National Park Service might play.

MPA's 30th anniversary fall gathering and behind-the-scenes tours will include these and other structures and issues in Ste. Genevieve, including the extraordinarily important cultural landscape of the big common field, as well as a sneak preview of the new Don Robinson State Park southwest of St. Louis. Use the registration form in this issue or visit the new MPA website for a registration form.

Battle of Island Mound to be Dedicated October 27

by Jeremy Neely

The Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site, the newest addition to the Missouri state park system, will be dedicated October 27 during a sesquicentennial commemoration of the Civil War battle on the Missouri-Kansas border. The 1862 battle marks an important—though long overlooked—milestone in American history, the first time that African-American troops experienced combat during the Civil War.

Most Civil War buffs, including a good many historians, have long thought that this distinction fell to the men of the 54th Massachusetts, whose July 1863 attack on Fort Wagner, South Carolina, was made famous by the film *Glory*. That assault, however, came eight months after the First Kansas Colored Volunteers dispersed a band of pro-Confederate guerrillas in a brief but furious engagement in Missouri.

The organization of the First Kansas Colored Volunteers marked a fateful turn in the long, bloody struggle over slavery along the Missouri-Kansas border. Commissioned by controversial Kansas Senator James Lane, the regiment consisted of nearly 500 recruits. Its African-American members included a small number of free blacks and Cherokee-owned slaves. Most recruits had only recently escaped from slavery in Missouri and Arkansas; some volunteers had been liberated by Lane's own Jayhawker brigade just a year earlier. The regiment's Company D, led by William D. Matthews and Patrick Minor, was

perhaps the first American unit to be led by African-American officers.

Union officers sent the First Kansas Colored into Bates County, Missouri, in late October with orders to clear out a gang of guerrillas that had taken refuge at Hog Island, a brushy mound along the Marais des Cygnes River. The Kansans commandeered the home of Enoch Toothman, just north of the river, and dubbed their new position "Fort Africa." Two days later—on October 29, 1862—a diversion force clashed with mounted guerrillas as a foraging party left to find corn meal and salt. The Missourians set fire to the tallgrass prairie, and advancing Kansas forces were soon overtaken by guerrillas on horseback. The ensuing skirmish was marked by fierce hand-to-hand combat and

resulted in nineteen casualties, including eight deaths, for the Kansans and an unknown number for the guerrillas, who abandoned several horses and nearly a hundred cattle in their retreat.

The tenacity of the First Kansas Colored Volunteers chal-

lenged assumptions among many southern whites about the fighting abilities of former slaves. Days later after the skirmish, guerrilla Bill Turman reportedly told friends, "Those black devils fought like tigers." In January 1863, the Kansans were mustered into federal service, joining more than 170,000 African-Americans who would eventually fight for the Union army. By war's end, the service of these veterans

proved to be a critical factor in their push to gain the ballot and other civil rights.

Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site is located nine miles from the town of Butler, just west of U. S. Highway 71. On Friday evening, October 26, a reception at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center in Kansas City will open the weekend's commemoration. The dedication will follow on Saturday, along with living history and military demonstrations at the historic site and the Bates County Museum in Butler.



The site of the Battle of Island Mound.

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There were other changes, too. By the 1970s with the river stabilized and its chutes eliminated, most of the hundreds of islands had accreted to the mainland. Adjoining farmers organized to build even more levees along the new shorelines at the far side of the former islands, to protect their new-found land from flooding. The Missouri Department of Conservation in a 1974 study of channel changes documented the loss of more than 45 miles of river and 98 percent of the surface area of islands in Missouri alone. The commercial fishery was almost extinct. Meantime, with much of the river's floodplain no longer available to accommodate high flows, the height and destructiveness of floods greatly increased.

More recent studies have documented a loss of more than 522,000 acres of riverine fish and wildlife habitat as a result of these river

"improvement" projects, and more than 300,000 of those acres have been lost in Mis-

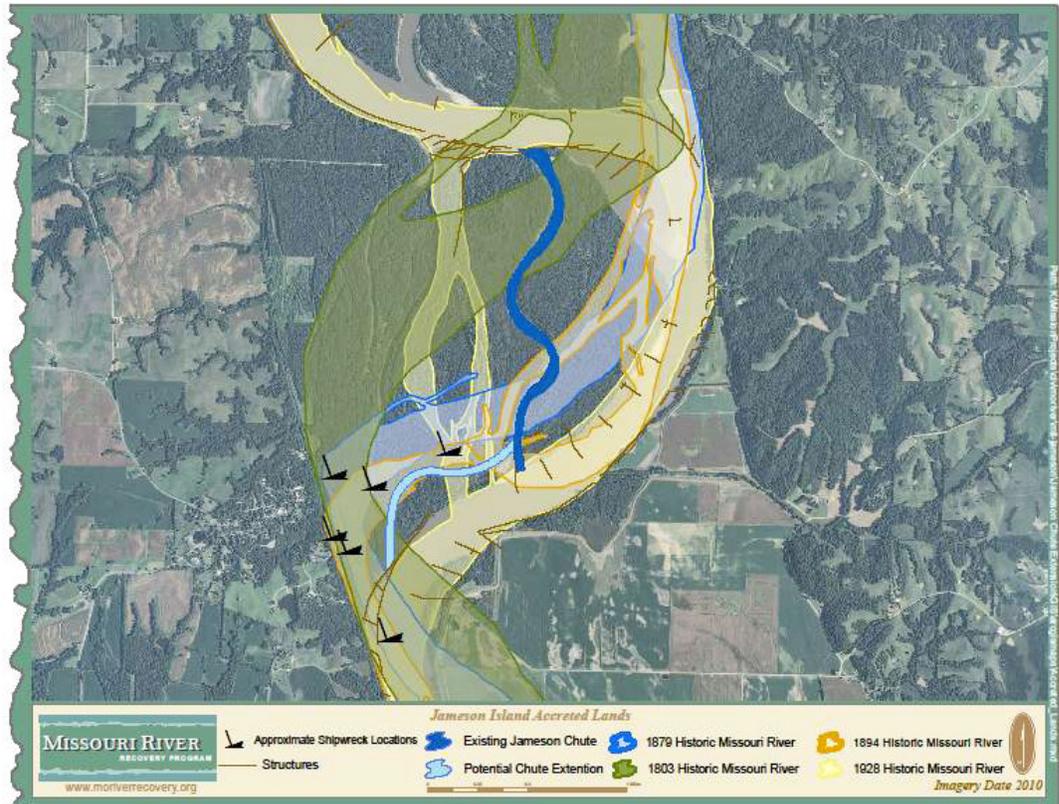
ssouri alone. Fifty-one of 67 native fish species are now uncommon or decreasing, cottonwood reproduction has largely ceased, and aquatic insects key to the survival of native species have been reduced by 70 percent. Declines of three species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act—the least tern, the piping plover, and the pallid sturgeon—have been attributed to Corps engineering of the river. The bank stabilization project is now recognized as perhaps the most destructive of ecosystem values as any in the history of federal river management, and the state of Mis-

ssouri has been its greatest victim.

To compensate for some of the degradation, Congress authorized a series of mitigation plans, beginning in 1986 and culminating in 2007 with the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Program, with appropriations of \$50-70 million per year, the majority of which was intended for restoration efforts in Missouri. The Corps was authorized to buy flood-

citizen commissions assigned to the Department of Natural Resources, approves such permits.

Officials of DNR (which also operates the state park system) had sought such a mitigation program and were pleased to cooperate with it, probably owing in part to the more than twenty state parks and historic sites along the great rivers. Some, like Big Oak Tree, Trail of Tears, Ar-



The dynamic Missouri River shifted its course often near Arrow Rock until stabilized on the far side of its floodplain by the Corps of Engineers. Note the sites of 19th century shipwrecks very close to the town.

plain land from willing sellers and to partner with other federal or state agencies to design, construct, and manage projects. Goals included developing shallow water pools, emergent sandbars, and bottomland forest habitat, often by reconstructing chutes through accreted bottomlands, thus recreating former islands and more natural hydrologic function.

The Corps must secure a Clean Water Act 401 Certification from the state for such projects just as any other entity. In Missouri, the Clean Water Commission, one of several

row Rock, Van Meter, Lewis and Clark, and Big Lake, had been acquired early, before the worst of the bank stabilization. Others, like Towsahgy, Wakonda, Confluence, Katy Trail, and Weston Bend were acquired more recently, after the rivers were already channelized. Some of these parks and sites were degraded or less representative of the natural and cultural heritage of Missouri as a result of the changes and could potentially benefit from land acquisition and restoration projects in partnership with the Corps.

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Arrow Rock is a case in point. The historic town was named for its dramatic bluff along the Missouri River, identified as pierre a fleche in early French records. Its cherty bluff was known to the Indians, noted by Lewis and Clark on their journey up the Missouri, and traders headed for far Santa Fe crossed the river on the ferry there. When the 1834 Huston Tavern was purchased by the state in 1923 with additional lands soon thereafter, Arrow Rock became Missouri's first state historic site. But after the river shifted to the far side of its floodplain during a 1904 flood and the BSNP hardened its channel there, Arrow Rock sadly lost its connection to the river.

As a result of the massive flood of 1993, however, Congress authorized the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service subsequently acquired the former Jameson Island, now accreted to the mainland on the Arrow Rock side of the river, for a unit of the new refuge. Jameson became an obvious site for a cooperative restoration project, and in 2006 the Corps, under a general permit from MDNR, began constructing a chute to restore fish and wildlife habitat and some semblance of more natural hydrologic function, including future meanders of the chute.

But when the chair and other members of the Missouri Clean Water Commission realized that the Corps was discharging sediment directly into the Missouri River (as provided in the original plan), they raised concerns about water quality, Gulf of Mexico hypoxia, and a "permitting double standard," since developers were required to prevent erosion from construction sites owing to storm water runoff. The Corps initiated soil and water testing at the site that showed no contaminants that would exceed state water quality standards. But the commission, unsatisfied, then issued an order declar-

ing sediment a pollutant in the waters of Missouri and prohibited any further discharge of sediment from any habitat restoration projects "now or in the future."

Stunned by the commission's order, the Corps halted further construction on Jameson and asked the National Academy of Sciences for an independent review of the role of Missouri River sediment in river ecology and restoration, its implications for water quality and coastal restoration in the Gulf, and the effects of Corps restoration projects with respect to sediment and nutrients. Meanwhile, unable to mount any new projects in Missouri, the Corps stopped acquiring lands in Missouri and diverted funds to Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas, where restoration has reportedly proved quite popular among conservationists and farm groups alike.

The entire controversy played out in the commission and the press in a one-sided way. No one defended the Corps of Engineers' efforts on Jameson Island or explained the role of sediment in the Missouri River and as it moved on downstream to the Gulf. American Rivers and the National Audubon Society, national organizations which had worked on Missouri River issues for decades, seemed to be tired and discouraged. Missouri organizations, including MPA, seemed unaware of the issue and its implications or regarded it as none of their concern. For many, the Corps was an agency they loved to hate anyway.

Conversely, the opposition, including the Missouri Levee and Drainage District Association, the Farm Bureau, and navigation interests, did not rest. They continued to lobby public officials at federal as well as state levels and, with no effective counter to their efforts, they succeeded. By 2011, members of the Missouri congressional delegation won approval of amendments to prohibit further Corps expenditures on the Missouri River Ecosystem Resto-

ration Plan. They also tried but failed to prevent funding for ecosystem restoration projects in other states, but the cessation of the broadly participatory planning process and the likelihood of repeated efforts by the Missouri delegation to prevent funding for restoration anywhere along the river sent shockwaves through those upriver who cared about restoration.

In the spring of 2012, MPA members began to hear from colleagues in upriver states that the entire Missouri River restoration concept was threatened by actions of the Missouri congressional delegation. A few weeks later they learned that the Corps was renewing its quest for approval of a redesigned Jameson Island Project. The issue was taken up at the April MPA board meeting, and it being obvious that neither the Jameson project nor the threat to the entire river restoration program was receiving attention from Missouri environmental organizations, MPA adopted a resolution in support of restoration and began talking with government officials and rallying support among other conservation groups.

The first meeting soliciting public comment on the Jameson project, held April 17 at Arrow Rock, revealed the magnitude of opposition to a more natural river; more than a hundred people appeared to vociferously oppose the Corps' preferred alternative and to support the Clean Water Commission's order prohibiting discharge of sediment to the river. Only three people, one each from MPA, Missouri River Relief, and Friends of Big Muddy, offered favorable comment. Corps officials' explanation that their proposal was aligned with the 2011 National Academy of Sciences report on sediment management fell on deaf ears. Likewise, the fact that four federal agencies—U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and Corps of Engineers—all supported the restoration efforts to recreate a more natural river.

(See "Missouri River" on Page 6)

MPA 30th Annual Celebration in Ste. Genevieve, September 28-30, 2012

Plan now to attend the 30th anniversary celebration of the Missouri Parks Association September 28-30 in Ste. Genevieve. The gathering will include a sneak preview of the new Don Robinson State Park, a behind-the-scenes tour of sites in Ste. Genevieve, the annual state-of-the-parks address and panel Saturday morning, receptions and meals at historic homes, and the annual member and board meetings Sunday morning. All are welcome, especially MPA members, Missouri State Park Foundation directors, park friends groups and supporters, UPOP coordinators, and families with kids.

Book your accommodations now, as rooms in Ste. Genevieve fill quickly. A limited block of rooms is reserved at the Ste. Genevieve Microtel; phone 573-883-8884 and ask to book a room in the MPA block. Rooms may also be available at the nearby Triangle Inn Motel (573-883-7191) at highways 61 and 32 and at the modest Ste. Genevieve Hotel and several up-scale B&Bs in the heart of the historic district. Camping is available at Hawn State Park 15 miles west on Highway 32.

Friday, September 28

1:00pm Vans leave visitor center and museum at Mastodon State Historic Site (exit #186 from I-55 at Imperial south of St. Louis) for the visit to Robinson Park. Way finding and parking are difficult at Robinson, so plan to arrive early at Mastodon to see the museum before the 1pm departure. Return to Mastodon by 4:15pm.

4:15pm Leave in your own vehicles from Mastodon for Ste. Genevieve and check in at lodgings.

6:00pm Reception hosted by the Foundation for Restoration of Ste. Genevieve in the garden of the Guibourd-Valle House, 1 N. 4th St. (at Merchant St.). Dinner on your own or in groups at local restaurants.

Saturday, September 29

7:00am Breakfast on your own

8:00am Registration and program in County Services Building, 255 Market St., in the historic district; kids leave for activities at 8:45am, returning by noon.

8:45am Welcome and introduction to the park: MPA Pres. Susan Flader and Donna Rausch, Acting Site Admin.

9:00am State of the Parks Address and discussion: Bill Bryan, Director of State Parks

10:00 Break

10:30 Panel discussion on state and national park issues in Missouri with representatives of MPA, Missouri State Parks, and National Park Service

12:00n Box lunch in garden of Felix Valle House SHS with tours of house and nearby buildings

1:00pm Leave in vans for behind-the-scenes tour of Lalumondiere House, historic Memorial Cemetery, Delassus-Kern House, the big Common Field with Indian mounds and the Old Town site, site of New Bourbon, etc.

6:00pm Reception and dinner on lawn between Bauvais-Amoureux, Bequette-Ribault, and Creole Houses, with house tours, Les Petites Chanteurs, and speaker: Mike Reynolds (NPS Midwest Regional Director, invited); alternate (rain) location: County Services Building (with Amoureux House visit on afternoon tour)

Sunday, October 25

7:00am Breakfast on your own

8:30am Annual meeting of members: Creole House (includes UPOP discussion)

9:30am Meeting of MPA board of directors (all are welcome to attend)

12noon Walking tour of historic Ste. Genevieve with Bob Mueller, President, Foundation for Restoration of Ste. Genevieve

Registration Form

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Registration Fee	_____ persons	@ \$15	\$ _____
Robinson SP Tour	_____ persons (free)		
Reception Friday	_____ persons		
Lunch Saturday	_____ persons	@ \$10	\$ _____
Dinner Saturday	_____ persons	@ \$15	\$ _____
Walking Tour Sunday	_____ persons (free)		
Total		\$40	\$ _____

Make check payable to **Missouri Parks Association** and mail with form by **September 15** to Eleanor Hoefle, MPA treasurer, 1234 Hoyt Dr., St. Louis, MO 63137. For questions or late registration call Eleanor Hoefle, 314-869-6534, or Susan Flader, 573-442-1058.



August 2012

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MPA 30th Anniversary at Ste. Genevieve*

<http://parks.missouri.org>

("Missouri River" from Page 4)

A May 2 meeting of the Clean Water Commission went better. Eight conservation organizations including Audubon Missouri, the Coalition for the Environment, the Conservation Federation, MPA and Sierra Club supported the Corps project. Everyone and more—especially more farmers—gathered again in June to present formal testimony.

At its July meeting, the commission extended its deadline for issuing a decision another 60 days and directed the DNR staff to work with the Corps to develop a 401 certification proposal acceptable to both agencies. The Corps has apparently suggested a somewhat revised proposal for a slightly narrower chute and sidestepping of the top 36 inches of material with less deposition of material directly into the river, but what may happen at the September 5 commission meeting is not known.

What You Can Do

In this election season, talk with candidates for the U.S. House and Senate about the importance of cooperative restoration projects for the health of the Missouri River. They need to know that they have constituents who care about restoration of Missouri's Great Rivers. Check the MPA website and watch for alerts about action in the Clean Water Commission and the U.S. Congress.

At this writing, it seems likely that a decision on the Jameson project may again be put off, probably until the next MCWC meeting November 7, one day after the election. Similar delay is likely for U.S. Senate action on the House-approved Corps of Engineers fiscal 2013 appropriation bill, which was amended by Missouri congressmen to eliminate restoration planning and greatly reduce project funding. MPA will redouble its efforts to seek

Clean Water Commission approval of the Corps' Jameson proposal and removal of the offending Missouri amendments when the Senate takes up the Corps appropriation bill. The stakes for Missouri State Parks and the entire Missouri River could not be higher.



Arrow Rock lost its connection to the Missouri River, but is now regaining some of it thanks to new interpretive trails in the floodplain on land now part of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and to the proposed extension of the Jameson Island chute.