

Parks Infrastructure Funding Collapses in Wake of Camp Zoe Controversy

This was the year state parks expected finally to win a significant share of a long-sought bond issue for rehabilitation of infrastructure in state facilities. Everything was lined up, but then in the final chaotic days of the session, parks suddenly were undercut by legislative wrangling over Camp Zoe, and time ran out before cooler heads could prevail. The result was a devastating blow to the park system that heretofore almost every legislator had professed to love.

For six years Rep. Chris Kelly (D-Columbia) had sponsored a bonding bill primarily for new construction at higher education institutions, but that evolved to include \$40 million for state parks. That bill nearly passed in the first year, but fared worse in succeeding sessions. Then, in 2014, a bonding bill sponsored by Sen. Mike Parson (R-Bolivar) was adopted that authorized \$600 million for maintenance and repair of state facilities.

Sen. Parson's bill had a companion list of projects, developed in consultation with senate and house leadership, including approximately \$200 million for state facilities (among them state parks and the capitol building), \$200 million for the Fulton State Hospital, and \$200 million for higher education. All ex-

cept the Fulton hospital project were restricted only to maintenance and repair of existing facilities. Park supporters had long advocated for infrastructure rehabilitation, pointing to the system's \$400 million backlog that had mounted since general revenue support was withdrawn in 1990; they argued that

guished, though some thought that even if the list was not taken up, the governor had sufficient authority to sell the bonds and allocate the funds for the purposes generally intended.

For parks, the 2015 session began relatively calmly, with no hint of measures for transfer of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways to



MPA participated in the April 2 Conservation Day in the capitol before the clouds rolled in.

well over half of all the buildings and water systems the state is directly responsible for maintaining are in state parks. Parson's list was approved by the senate but not taken up by the house.

For the 2015 session, Sen. Parson again worked with senate and house leadership and the governor's office to refine the project list. State parks were included for \$50 million, allocated to projects scattered across the system statewide. By late January the senate approved the list and sent it to the house. There it lan-

the state, which had so roiled the 2014 session. But it turned ominous in April, when several representatives from the Ozarks began casting about for ways to stop purportedly unauthorized construction then underway on new park visitor facilities on the Camp Zoe tract adjacent to Current River State Park. Freshman Rep. Jeff Pogue (R-Salem), whose district included Camp Zoe, had introduced a bill to that effect, Rep. Robert Ross from neighboring Texas County (who had led the 2014 effort to transfer the Riverways to state parks) threatened to

(See "Funding Collapses" on Page 4)

President's Message by Steve Nagle:

New Program for Senior Citizens in Missouri State Parks

The Missouri Parks Association in partnership with Missouri State Parks is proud to announce a new program to provide better access to state park experiences for seniors, thanks to a bequest from the Ben and Bettie Breeding Gift Fund of Kansas City. A "Seniors to State Parks Program" recently approved by the MPA Board of Directors will offer special opportunities for seniors who might not otherwise be able to explore and enjoy Missouri's magnificent state parks and historic sites. The program will be designed to help people age 65 and older, especially those without transportation, spend a day or more in various state park areas.



Seniors on a tram tour on Katy Trail and listening to ragtime at Scott Joplin House, where the plan was for twenty, but forty seniors showed up.



The start-up concept is a program for seniors modeled after the highly successful Urban Populations Outreach Program (UPOP), which provides for transportation and activities for urban youth. The idea is

to use the bequest to build a sustainable program over time. Initially approved by the MPA board is \$13,500 for pilot tours this summer and fall to parks in the St. Louis and Kansas City areas plus three Katy Trail tram tours for seniors originating in Hermann, Boonville and Sedalia.

Examples of activities that may be developed include:

Katy Trail State Park Tram Tours - for the past several years Missouri State Parks has provided a fall color tram tour near Rocheport for those unable to walk or ride bikes on the

Katy Trail. The new funding will expand the tours to other sections of the trail, working with local senior centers and community centers.

Learn 2 – The very popular Learn 2 Camp and Learn 2 Paddle Programs will be adapted to offer special programs for seniors. New programs could include fly fishing, nature photography, and even Dutch oven cooking. The Breeding gift will fund transportation and the cost of instructors, although state park staff also help with instruction and supervision.

Senior Citizen Rewards Card - This is an opportunity to develop weekday discounts on lodging, which would offer incentives for seniors to visit state parks.

Historic Site Tours for Seniors – Behind-the-scenes tours and special living history programs could be developed for senior citizens with presentations on topics such as the Santa Fe Trail, the Civil War, and other historic events.

These are just a few examples of how, over time, the Breeding Gift will bring numerous benefits to seniors and to those with disabilities.

Research shows that nature and outdoor experiences for people of all ages help sustain mental and physical well-being. As a senior myself, the opportunity to share this positive message with you is a blessing. Stay tuned for more details and how to participate.

As the now familiar adage goes: "No child left indoors." Let us now embrace an even newer one: "No seniors left indoors,"

where both young and old enjoy the benefits of Missouri's great state parks .

MPA Welcomes New Association Manager

MPA board members were introduced to their new association manager, Marian Fleischmann, at their April meeting. Marian, who has recently retired from a 29-year career at Missouri State Parks, will help to coordinate MPA Seniors to State Parks and Missouri Populations Outreach Programs, the annual MPA members gathering, and other meetings and events. She will work on an as-needed basis, and her duties may be expanded over time. Welcome, Marian.

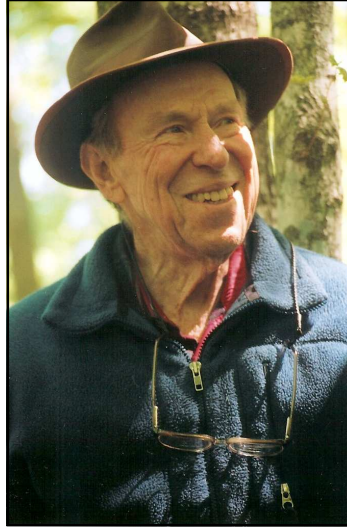
Leo A. Drey, 1917-2015

Leo A. Drey, beloved Missouri conservationist and a founding director of the Missouri Parks Association, died May 26 in his St. Louis home at age 98.

He was probably best known as the owner of Pioneer Forest, a 150,000-acre sustainably managed enterprise that he assembled in the 1950s from numerous small cutover tracts and one huge 90,000-acre purchase centered on the Current River in Shannon and nearby counties. His aim was to demonstrate that cutover, eroded Ozark land could be restored to diverse, healthy, and profitable woodlands by using uneven-age, single-tree selection harvests. This he continued to do all through the 1970s and '80s, when clear-cutting was the standard practice of nearly all foresters nationwide. When citizen objections to clear-cutting on public lands finally forced another look, Pioneer Forest was there as a beacon and model of sustainable management.

Less well known is Leo's role in protecting parks and other places of special natural and cultural value in the public interest—not because people don't know and love many of the places he saved, but because he was too modest to take credit for it. He was a key leader in the early 1960s of the successful effort to protect the Current, Jacks Fork, and Eleven Point Rivers as free-flowing, federally designated streams. He donated scenic easements along more than thirty miles of Pioneer Forest bordering the Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

At about the same time, he established the L-A-D Foundation to oversee these and



other special areas he saved when they were threatened, and the foundation in turn leased some of them to the Conservation Department as state natural areas: Clifty Creek in Maries County; Dripping Springs, Horseshoe Bend, and Piney River Narrows in Texas County; Hickory Canyons and Ball Mill Resurgence in Ste. Genevieve and Perry Counties; and Rocky Hollow in Monroe County.

Better known to MPA members are three areas leased to the state park system, though people may not realize it was Leo Drey who saved them: Grand Gulf State Park in Oregon County, a National Natural Landmark; Dillard Mill State Historic Site in Crawford County; and

more than fifty miles of primitive hiking trails in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry, including the first completed segment of the Ozark Trail. He also donated a key tract for Montauk State Park, and through the L-A-D Foundation helped repeatedly with special projects at various important sites.

In 1988 he saved Greer Spring, Missouri's second largest and most pristine spring and 7,000 surrounding acres from being sold for a bottled water plant, by buying and holding it for eventual acquisition by the Mark Twain National Forest. And in 2004 he and his wife Kay donated the whole of Pioneer Forest to the L-A-D Foundation to perpetuate its role as a demonstration of superb management and sustainability in the public interest.

Leo was an active director of MPA for nearly a quarter century, and since then in honorary status. He regularly attended meetings, and when he agreed to do something, he did it within days and immediately reported back. His colleagues in MPA and in other organizations he founded—the Missouri Nature Conservancy, St. Louis Open Space Council, and the Coalition for the Environment—loved him for his unassuming manner and waited with bated breath for his perfectly timed

one-liners that went straight to the heart of whatever issue was being discussed.

We will miss Leo's clear-eyed vision and gentle spirit in our midst, but we are deeply grateful for the special places he saved and for the generations of Missouri conservationists he inspired during his long life well lived.



(*"Funding Collapses" from Page 1*)

strip funding from parks over the Zoe issue, and several Ozark newspapers ran articles about the scope, speed, and lack of transparency at Zoe; *The Salem News*, citing public documents, estimated the cost at \$32-\$38 million.

At a House Budget Committee hearing April 16 on capital improvements (CI) bills, there was considerable discussion regarding Zoe—when and why the decision was made to develop it, sources of funds, and why no prior discussion with the General Assembly. Although members seemed to concede that the expenditures had been legally authorized, it was clear that they felt left out of the process. Several of them also questioned why park officials were asking for \$50 million in bond funds when they had money for Camp Zoe.

When projects will take more than a year to complete, the funding has to be re-appropriated for continued spending authority, typically a routine matter. However, in the budget markup session on April 29, committee chair Tom Flanigan (R-Carthage) introduced an amendment to the reappropriations bill (HB 17) that stripped some \$15 million from parks. These were funds remaining from a 2013 appropriation of \$20 million intended to be used for highest priority water and wastewater upgrades, campgrounds, renovations of CCC buildings, and road and bridge repair in parks statewide.

Some of these projects had completed plans and were ready to go to bid; others were already under construction. Park Director Bill Bryan cited some \$3 million in projects already underway at Roaring River and Montauk for which the state might not be able to honor its commitments to local contractors. But Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick, vice-chair of the committee (in

whose district Roaring River was located), reiterated concerns about the ongoing construction at Camp Zoe. Although some decried Flanigan's amendment, the committee approved it in a party-line vote.

The committee also heard a substitute for a new CI appropriations bill (HB 19) that had just been offered by committee chair Flanigan, which included Sen. Parson's list of projects for bonding approved months earlier by the full senate. It is not clear whether committee members or observers understood that the Flanigan substitute had left out the entire section with \$50 million for state park projects, since there was reportedly no discussion to that effect before the committee voted to approve the list.

Park supporters exchanged a flurry of emails about the need to get the \$15 million restored in the Senate—being unaware that the \$50 million in bond funding was also stripped—but they were told by their lobbyists that Sen. Parson and other leaders were working on a deal to restore funding and that any citizen efforts to call legislators could upset the negotiations. With a May 8 deadline for completion of all spending bills, it seemed that there would be no time for any senate-house conference committee, so house leaders would have to agree with any change in advance. An AP report in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and a few other papers May 3 said Sen. Parson was pushing to restore the park funds, but even that story concerned only the \$15 million, with no mention of the \$50 million in bond money, though noting that the controversy over parks threatened to derail the entire bond issue.

On Monday, May 4, the full house voted as expected to approve the CI bills, and the Senate Appro-

priations Committee scheduled a meeting "upon adjournment" (around noon) the next day. By 11:30 Tuesday morning, the corridor outside the locked senate hearing room was full of anxious agency officials, lobbyists, and a few leaders of citizen organizations, all awaiting the markup session. Park supporters were told that house and senate leaders were still conferring about parks, but that the speaker of the house had simply been unavailable for earlier meetings and was unwilling even to say what he might like in exchange for a deal on parks.

Around 3 pm, when the hearing finally began, it became clear that the senate would not be adding back any of the \$15 million zeroed out from the reappropriation bill. But committee chair Kurt Schaefer (R-Columbia) explained he was recommending that \$10 million be added to the bond issue for parks. Though several senators decried funds stricken from parks—one questioned why \$8 million for a business incubator at UMSL was "being put into the speaker" when he had killed the bonding for parks—the bills were approved as recommended by the chair. In that form—with the \$10 million for parks allocated among the six park administrative regions in proportion to the amounts in the original \$50 million allocation—the bills were approved by the full senate May 6 and sent to the house, which adopted them May 7.

The governor had reportedly earlier that week signaled his willingness to sign the bonding bill despite what had happened to parks. Further, the senate's attempted negotiations with house leaders had likely been severely complicated by a growing scandal involving the speaker of the house and a female intern that was revealed by the *Kansas City Star* May 14 but had

been brewing since early April.

The speaker, who resigned May 15, was said to have made a deal with Rep. Robert Ross and likely also Reps. Pogue, Fitzpatrick, and Flanigan to strip funding from state parks over the Camp Zoe issue.

Fitzpatrick was described as the key hold-out in the closed-door negotiations between senate and house leaders on May 5—until he angrily

threw up his arms, said "Do whatever you want," and walked out of the room.

Sen. Schaefer then proposed \$10 million in bond issue funding for state

parks and the other conferees agreed. The news media, if they said anything at all about parks, reported the \$10 million as if a gain, with no mention of the \$50 million that had previously been stripped—a stunning \$40 million difference. Very few outlets noted the \$15 million reappropriation that was also zeroed out, sadly the remnant of the first significant general revenue parks had received since 1990 (See *Heritage*, May 2013). The net result was a loss of \$55 million in desperately needed funding for infrastructure rehabilitation statewide. No other entity in the reappropriation bill or in Sen. Parson's list of projects in the bonding bill lost funding.

It was one of the most devastating legislative sessions ever for state parks. Stripping reappropriations for projects already in the works is virtually unheard of, and major state building bond issues like this come

around only once in twenty or thirty years (parks had received ten percent of the previous such bond issue in the mid-1980s). The actions were a major blow to the morale of state park staff, who lost funds on which they had been counting to rehabilitate facilities statewide that they had been struggling to maintain for decades with duct tape and baling wire, as they often said. The defunding was a loss also for legislators state-



Gravelling the Rock Island Trail.

wide who had allowed a vendetta by a few house members to deprive their districts of park improvements, and especially a loss for their constituents, both park users and local businesses statewide.

Some thought the action might be more broadly interpreted as an overwhelmingly Republican General Assembly venting its ire at the Democratic governor, a park advocate who was thought to be directing development at Camp Zoe with speed and secrecy in order to create a legacy for himself. But the defunding did nothing to impact funds for the facilities at Zoe, which is still scheduled to open in summer 2016. Both funding sources stripped were for infrastructure rehabilitation, not new construction.

When the dust settled, park officials had \$10 million to allocate among projects already in the works

from the earlier \$15 million list or those projects intended to have been funded from the \$50 million in bonds. Until the June 30 end of the fiscal year, they could also spend whatever they could from the un-reappropriated \$15 million. Although work on some projects under construction could be paid for another month, those in the bidding stage could not responsibly proceed.

As it turned out, the best option for spending the expiring \$15 million productively by June 30 was on a park that was not on either list, though it was eagerly awaited by many Missourians—the Rock Island Trail from its junction with

the Katy Trail west toward the outskirts of Kansas City (see *Heritage*, December 2014). Earlier this year the federal Surface Transportation Board had approved rail-banking of the route, clearing the way for more rail-trail conversion. So, in June, the twenty-mile stretch from Windsor to Chilhowee saw massive graveling and stockpiling of materials for the newly cleared railbed. It required some sixty-six dump-truck loads of gravel per mile of trail, accomplished by contracting for nearly every available dump truck between Springfield and Kansas City. Considerable work by park crews remains and there will still be a twenty-mile gap to a short section east of Pleasant Hill completed years earlier, but work on the Rock Island Trail has advanced more rapidly than anyone could have imagined.

(See "Funding Collapses" on Page 6)



Post Office Box 30036
Columbia, MO 65205

July 2015

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBIA, MO
PERMIT #338

Return Service Requested

*Camp Zoe Controversy Collapses Parks Funding
Remembering Leo Drey*

<http://parks.missouri.org>

Plan Now to Attend MPA Annual Gathering October 16-18 at Bennett Spring

MPA's annual gathering of members and friends will headquarter at Bennett Spring State Park October 16-18. We meet in the district of Senator Mike Parson to thank him for his stalwart support of state parks in the bonding bill he sponsored. Bennett is also where we celebrated the publication of the first state park book, and we hope to be able to celebrate the fully revised second edition there as well.

Early arrivals meet at Bennett Spring at 1pm Friday and travel to Ha Ha Tonka for a glade hike and a boat tour. After a reception back at Bennett at 6pm with heavy appetizers (and dinner in the lodge for those who wish), we gather to hear

from Patrick Overton, MPA's first poet-in-residence, who explored the sense of place in Arrow Rock this past year, and then (we hope) inaugurate the new park book.

Saturday morning will be devoted to State Park Director Bill Bryan's "State of the Parks" address and a panel discussion of the funding challenges facing the system, including the sales tax renewal vote in 2016 and the continuing infrastructure crisis. In the afternoon we travel to the south side of Lake of the Ozarks State Park to visit Ozark Caverns, McCubbins Point, and Fort Leonard Wood Recreation Area. After a reception and dinner in the dining lodge, we hope to hear from

Sen. Parson and DNR Director Sara Parker Pauley. Sunday morning is the annual MPA members meeting, followed by the board meeting. Trout fishing, a canoe trip, or a hike, anyone?

Bennett Spring State Park has a motel and various sizes of cabins as well as campgrounds. Plan now to attend and reserve your lodging right away, because Bennett is beautiful in the fall. **For the motel or cabins, call concessioners Jim and Carmen Rogers (417-532-4307)**, telling them you are with the MPA group. A more detailed agenda with registration form will be available in the next issue of *Heritage* or on the MPA website by early September.

("Funding Collapses" from Page 5)

The unexpected boost to the Rock Island Trail notwithstanding, the loss of \$55 million for infrastructure rehabilitation in virtually every park in the system is utterly devastating and will remain a major problem for state parks for decades to come. In retrospect, it was a confused, chaotic situation, but there was culpability in virtually all entities of state government — the Administration, which proceeded with Camp Zoe development without the normal consultations with the General Assembly and then initially refused to respond as questions began

to be raised; a few house members seeking retribution in a fit of pique and house leaders and other members too willing to give in to them; a senate that was dealing responsibly with infrastructure problems but could have salvaged more for an agency responsible for more than half the buildings, water systems, and other infrastructure for which the state bears direct responsibility; insufficient communication among lobbyists for parks, their clients, and legislators; and even the media, who somehow missed the story. In the end, the citizens of Missouri and their highly popular and nationally

acclaimed state park system were left holding the near-empty bag.

The task ahead for us all is to deal with the trauma, and to build coalitions and find ways in the coming years to address the very real infrastructure rehabilitation needs of the parks. Most important in the immediate future is to educate the public about an even more vital challenge facing the system—to secure a positive vote from Missouri citizens to renew the parks and soils sales tax in 2016, without which parks will not even be able to keep the doors open.