

Parks Dodge Bullets

MPA anticipated a rocky road in this year's legislative session owing to the furor over Gov. Nixon's unilateral creation of new state parks with limited legislative consultation (see *Heritage*, December 2015). It was very rough, up to the very end. But in the end, cooler heads prevailed, and Missouri's state parks managed to dodge the bullets coming their way.

With a dozen or more bills aimed at teaching state parks (or the governor) a lesson, plus cuts from three different budget bills pertaining to parks, legislative hearings and votes came at a dizzying pace in an array of different committees in both houses. Hearings are often scheduled

only the required 24 hours in advance, if that, and it is not always clear which bills will be heard or if hearings will be continued or rescheduled, so MPA's small corps of volunteers—all of whom lead busy lives—found it challenging to keep track of what was happening.

But we managed to have members speak up for the park system and talk with legislators at most hearings and during several citizen lobby days, often assisted by members of other conservation organizations, such as the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Audubon Missouri, the Nature Conservancy, and the Sierra Club. And numerous members of MPA and other groups

responded to alerts to write or call their own representatives about park issues.

The bills that garnered the most public attention, not only from sister organizations but also in the media, were a bill allowing ATV use on the Katy Trail by disabled people or those over age 55 (HB 2047) and bills mandating sale of lands acquired for a new state park along the Eleven Point National Scenic River in Oregon County (three bills, including HB 2187). The prospect of ATVs on the Katy Trail raised a firestorm of opposition from trail users, especially after they realized those with disabilities were already allowed to use battery or electric-powered vehicles and there are special tram tours available for the elderly.

The provision for sale of the Eleven Point parklands had a much longer life, to the very last day. As it languished on the Senate informal calendar, the sponsor, Rep. Robert Ross (R-Texas County), doggedly amended it to several Senate bills, including SB 682, which initially provided for public notification and hearings in the counties affected by any proposed purchases of land by the state, and SB 986, relating to conveyance of state lands. But SB 682 died on the House calendar the last day, and the Senate refused to concur in the Ross amendment to SB 986, forcing the bill to a conference committee where the amendment was stripped out before the bill was finally passed only a half hour before the end of the session.

(See "Bullets" on Page 5)

Parks and Soils Tax Vote on November Ballot

Governor Nixon announced Monday, May 9, along the Katy Trail in St. Charles that the mandatory ten-year vote to renew the State Parks, Soil and Water Sales Tax will be on the general election ballot November 8. He had the option of placing it on an earlier ballot, but chose the election with the largest number of voters.

In each of the three most recent renewals—1988, 1996, and 2006—Missourians voted more than two to one in favor of renewing the tax,



l to r: MPA President Steve Nagle, State Parks Director Bill Bryan, Sierra Club Missouri Chapter Director John Hickey and Governor Jay Nixon at the announcement.

and we hope for a similar showing this year. But with the turmoil over parks in the last two legislative sessions, some of which has been reflected in the news media, the Citizens Committee for Soil, Water, and State Parks will be ramping up the usual campaign to educate the voters and encourage support. All of us can help. For more information, visit: <https://soilwaterparks.com/> and watch for more information in the next issue of *Heritage*.

President's Message by Steve Nagle:

Seniors to Parks — One Year Later

What a difference a year makes! Harkening back to our July 2015 *Heritage*, I announced a new program being designed to provide better access to state park experiences for senior citizens. The Seniors to Parks program, made possible by a bequest from Ben and Bettie Breeding of Kansas City, was launched last summer and has been met with overwhelming success and popularity!

Our dedicated state park staff have done an outstanding job administering the program, expanding from the original start-up concept based on MPA's successful Urban Populations Outreach Program (UPOP) for urban youth. This year the program is projected to provide 80 senior citizens from community centers and retirement communities in the Kansas City area with outings to Weston Bend and Wallace State Parks, Battle of Lexington and Confederate Memorial State Historic Sites, the Missouri State Museum, and an overnight in a group camp at Mark Twain State Park. Six half-day Katy Trail tours via tram for a total of 150 seniors will depart from Hermann, Boonville, and Sedalia during the fall color season. And 125 seniors in the St. Louis metro area affiliated with assisted living or Urban Impact centers will be able to visit Washington, Route 66, or Confluence Point State Parks or First Missouri State Capitol or Scott Joplin House State Historic Sites.

These proposals for spring, summer, and fall 2016 and other programs involving parks in other parts of the state, such as Lake Wappapello, Prairie, and Knob Noster State Parks were wholeheartedly approved by the MPA board in April. Also exciting was the approval to purchase a "Seniors in Parks Tram." The passenger tram is designed for easy transport around the state behind any authorized state park truck. This is a conforming activity because the Breeding Fund goal is "to provide support for the transportation, assistance and supervision of our Missouri seniors and disabled for day and overnight trips." The tram will



identify the Breeding Fund and MPA as sponsors.

In other news, our MPA membership continues to increase—the report for April 2016 shows 3,230 members. As we continue to grow and offer programs such as Seniors to Parks, UPOP, Poets in the Parks, our new park book, and of course our unceasing advocacy efforts—all featured in this issue—we can anticipate even more support and appreciation for our wonderful state parks and historic sites.

Seniors visit the plaza at Lewis & Clark State Park.



Deb Schnack and Susan Flader and photographer Oliver Schuchard sign books at the official launch party for the new state park book in Columbia Feb 1.

The following day, MPA and Missouri Life distributed copies of the book to all state legislators, and during March and April more than 860 copies of the book were shipped to high school and public libraries throughout Missouri, made possible by special donations from the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the L-A-D Foundation, the Missouri State Park Foundation, MPA, Missouri Life, and Scholastic, Inc. The book is available for purchase from MPA at special events around the state, at most state park visitor centers, many bookstores, and from publishers' websites: www.missourilife.com and <http://parks.missouri.org> (special price for MPA members).

UPOP Going Strong for 16 Years *by Shirley Wolverson, MPA UPOP Chair*

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” MPA’s **Urban Populations Outreach Project (UPOP)** was founded in 2000 by Mary Abbott of Kansas City, a longtime MPA director and president. She saw a great need for inner-city youth to experience the wonders of the outdoors and a sense of history through up-close-and-personal activities in nearby state parks.

Abbott worked with the MPA board, state park staff, and a local coordinator she identified—initially Nan Leiter and for the next six years Shalonn “Kiki” Curls, now a Missouri state senator and still an enthusiastic UPOP advocate—to design, fund, and secure participants for the program. MPA committed seed money for bus transportation, lunches, snacks, and other expenses for field trips for hundreds of youngsters from six different urban agencies, most of whom had never before experienced a state park.

In 2002, Abbott and Curls helped St. Louis MPA and other conservation leaders organize a UPOP headquartered at the Green Center and coordinated initially by Michael Nelson. Then in 2004, Tony Robyn, executive director of a new Audubon center at Wildcat Glades in Joplin, still in the development stage, teamed with former MPA vice-president and UPOP enthusiast Jim Goodknight and his McCorkle Foundation to launch a Joplin UPOP, and in 2006 Meredith Donaldson and Friends of Rock Bridge began a UPOP in Columbia. All four UPOPs are still operating.

Each UPOP, being unique in population, natural history, nearby parks, and organization, has developed its own program:

Kansas City: Undergirded by annual grants from the R.A. Long Foundation since 2010, the partnership of Kansas City UPOP with Missouri State Parks and the Discovery Center has now begun to develop a year-round program. More than 300 youths and 150 family members participated last year in events at Knob Noster, Lewis and Clark, and Wallace State Parks as well as Battle of Lexington State Historic Site.

In **St. Louis**, The Green Center coordinates the UPOP program through its “Show Me Science & Arts Summer Experience,” in concert with Carlotta Lewis, state parks Interpretive specialist. Participants from city schools and Boys & Girls Clubs enjoy a four-day-long program that may take them to Babler, First Missouri State Capitol, and Castlewood State Parks. The youths explore the different ecosystems and cultural resources found in the parks, engaging in the authentic

practice of science and the arts to interpret and reflect on their experiences through creation of personal portfolios of their writings and art.

Joplin has an amazing resource in the Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center. The year 2016 will be a special challenge following last December’s floods, which impacted a large portion of the property; however, plans to bring 100-150 area youths from Boys and Girls Clubs to Wildcat Glades and Prairie State Park are in the works. Past years have also included trips to Roaring River State Park.

Columbia’s UPOP from the start has thrived on the innovation and enthusiasm of Master Naturalist Meredith Donaldson, in cooperation with Friends of Rock Bridge State Park and with frequent funding from a Columbia Optimist Club. She and other master naturalist volunteers lead activities such as stream monitoring at Rock Bridge, fishing at Finger Lakes State Park, service projects such as litter pick up and invasive plant removal, and a range of hands-on activities that reinforce the theme of an interconnected natural world for which we must be stewards.

MPA and inner city families count on your MPA membership as well as special donations from individuals, corporations and foundations to fund this worthwhile program. For more information about UPOP, or to donate to the program, visit <http://parks.missouri.org/Programs/UrbanPopulationsOutreach-Program.aspx>



Mary Abbott (right) presents a copy of the park book to James Bernard Jr. and Ann Thompson of the R.A. Long Foundation in gratitude for their strong support of Kansas City UPOP.

Poet in the Parks — Patrick Overton

MPA's new Poets in the Parks program, the brainchild of former board member Mary Barile, launched in 2014 with a residency at Arrow Rock by Patrick Overton.

Though the typical residency envisioned by program planners and cosponsors—Missouri State Parks, the Missouri Humanities Council, MU Libraries, and MPA—was only two to five days, Patrick Overton proposed a longer residency from April 2014 to October 2015, being pastor of the Federated Church in Arrow Rock, as well as a published poet, college professor, director of community arts agencies, and 1999 recipient of the Missouri Arts Award. After hearing him talk and read poems inspired by his residency at MPA's annual gathering last November, the MPA board enthusiastically approved his proposal for an extension during 2016 and 2017, the centennial of the state park system, to help further develop the program in Arrow Rock and to explore the possibilities in other parks and their nearby communities.

Among the poems Overton read at the MPA gathering was a moving reflection inspired by a presentation by Teresa Habernal, who grew up in Arrow Rock, at a Black History symposium there on April 15, 2014, his first day as poet-in-residence. It is excerpted here, but you can read it in full on MPA's website at <http://parks.missouri.org/Programs/PoetsintheParks.aspx>.

A Coming Home in Four-Part Harmony

I heard a song today, it came quite unexpectedly,
a song so sweet and pure it took my breath away.
It was a story told in lyrics sung from deep within,
a coming home in perfect four-part harmony.

.....

And in-between the songs, she gave us glimpses of a lifetime lived, as she shared her own experiences growing up in this small village in Missouri:

Of sitting outside the Lyceum Theater at 9 years old, watching people go inside a place she could not go because she had a different colored skin; to just a few years later being given a ticket, sitting in the balcony of that same place because that was the only place she was allowed to sit; then, as an adult, declaring her intentions – buying her own ticket and striding down the aisle with pride and dignity - sitting in the front row, inviting everyone to see who she really was.

And, as if that was not enough, today, walking up the steps, singing A Cappella all the way - sharing the gospel of community in her life by singing the old, rugged hymns her Mother taught her how to sing.

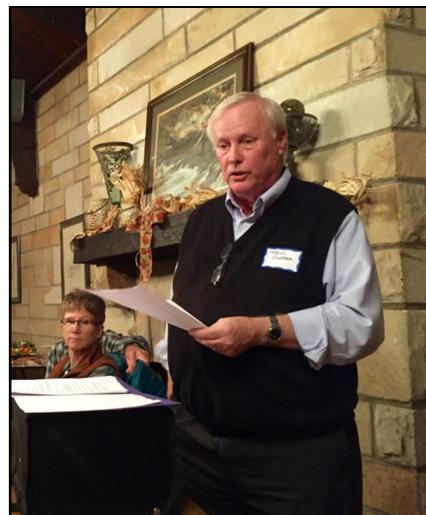
That is when I realized as she had grown, she had become her own quartet -- her life a song page filled with choices made about the way she chose to live; now content to be the Spirit's messenger, reminding all of us that prejudice is what we use to take away and tolerance is what we choose to give.

.....

With his lifelong experience and commitment to fostering community conversations, his profound sense of place, and his love of rural and small town Missouri in which many of our parks and historic sites are located, Dr. Overton proposes to visit parks in various regions of the state during 2016 and 2017, convening local poets, writers, artists, musicians, and community collaborative partners in a series of short residencies on the general theme of *essence of place in Missouri state park places*. The purpose would be to encourage artists in various communities to explore ways to be part of the Poets in the Parks project in their own places.

He hopes it might even be possible to draw community artists from various regions to a statewide creative arts celebration in Arrow Rock in 2017 on the theme: "Missouri State Parks Centennial—*Celebrating a Century of Preserving Missouri's Future*."

If you—a writer or artist, an MPA member, a state park staff member—have ties to other creative artists or people who enjoy local history and the arts in the vicinity of one or a cluster of Missouri's state parks in your region and would be willing to help Patrick Overton convene a one-to-three-day residency in your community, please write to him at pmoverton@msn.com. Let's celebrate the creative arts in Missouri state parks.



Patrick Overton reading "Coming Home" at MPA's annual gathering at the CCC lodge at Bennett Spring.

("Bullets" from Page 1)

Other bills attracted much less public and media attention, but they were no less potentially damaging to state parks. One would have deposited fees for visitor services (such as camping, lodging, and tours) in the state's general revenue, where it could be appropriated for non-park purposes, and others would have required payments of property taxes on park lands. The most ominous (HJR 101) proposed a constitutional amendment to repeal the parks and soils sales tax (which by law is up for renewal this coming November) and replace it with a new version requiring payment of property taxes in perpetuity, raising the specter of two competing versions of the tax on the same ballot, thus creating massive public confusion. Thankfully, none of these bills passed.

Most damaging of all were House amendments to three different budget bills to cut a total of some \$37 million from appropriations for state parks. The punitive nature of the cuts is illustrated by an amendment cutting State Park Director Bill Bryan's salary in half, then another on the floor of the House cutting the other half.

The largest cuts were made from capital improvements bills, including

\$27 million from the bill for re-appropriation of funds for work already underway, and \$8 million for new projects. These funds were almost all for vitally needed rehabilitation of infrastructure in parks statewide, including water and sewer systems, campgrounds, cabins and lodges, roads and trails at beloved parks like Montauk, Elephant Rocks, Hawn, Watkins Mill, Washington, and Lake of the Ozarks. A relatively small amount was intended for new construction at Echo Bluff, Rock Island Trail, and Don Robinson, but much of this work would have been completed by the end of the current fiscal year in any case.

These punitive cuts by the House were starkly reminiscent of the \$15 million in re-appropriations for parks and \$50 million in bond funds, all for state park infrastructure rehabilitation, cut by the House last spring, of which the Senate was able to restore only \$10 million in bond funds. It is a sad commentary on the state of the media that these draconian cuts to funds for state parks to this day have not been reported by any media in the state except for MPA (see *Heritage*, July 2015). A few media outlets reported last spring that parks had received \$10 million in bond

funds, but none mentioned the cuts to parks, and parks alone, of funds that had been designated for state parks in the various versions of the bonding bill for seven years until it finally passed.

Fortunately, some legislators knew what had happened to parks last spring, and this spring there was a bit more time for cooler heads—mostly in the Senate—to prevail, so virtually all the cuts were restored by the Senate and then approved by the House. None of this news about the park budget has been reported by any state media we have seen to date, other than by MPA, despite significant media attention to other aspects of the state budget.

Among legislators who were helpful to state parks during the session were Senators Kurt Schaefer (R-Columbia), Mike Parson (R-Bolivar), David Pearce (R-Warrensburg), Jason Holsman (D-Kansas City), and Scott Sifton (D-St. Louis County), and Representatives Kip Kendrick (D-Columbia) and Tracy McCreery (D-St. Louis).

In the end, unlike last spring, state parks were able to dodge the bullets, with help from key legislators and numerous citizens.

NPS Ste. Genevieve Study Released

The National Park Service on May 9 released the long-awaited final Ste. Genevieve Special Resource Study and transmitted it to Congress.

The report finds that the site indeed meets the criteria for inclusion in the National Park System, and recommends a small NPS unit fronting on the common field, including the 1792 Amoureux House and adjacent properties and the non-contiguous Delassus-Kern House, both part of the Felix Valle State Historic Site. The state has indicated its willingness to transfer these properties to the National Park Service, retaining the Felix Valle House and adjacent properties in the center of Ste. Genevieve in state ownership.

MPA strongly supports the NPS appreciation of the surpassing significance of the common field as a cultural landscape and the general contours of its recommenda-

tions, but has asked that the Old Town Archaeological Site, a 38-acre tract near the Mississippi River directly opposite the Delassus House, also be included with the properties authorized for NPS management. This is the only remaining portion of the original three-mile long settlement occupied from about 1750-1795, the rest having been obliterated by channel changes in the River.

The action now moves to the U.S. Congress, where Senator Roy Blunt is reportedly already working on legislation to authorize an NPS site, presumably in bipartisan collaboration with Senator McCaskill. MPA has been seeking their support to add the Old Town Site to the authorized NPS unit, and welcomes support from others. For more information, see *Heritage* (Dec 2012 and Sept 2015) and the MPA website: <http://parks.missouri.org/IssuesAction/SteGenevieve.aspx>.



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*Parks Dodge Bullets
MPA Programs—Seniors, UPOP, Poets*

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Plan Now to Attend MPA Annual Gathering October 14-16 at Echo Bluff State Park

The new Echo Bluff state park, expected to be dedicated in late July or August will be the venue for MPA's annual gathering of members and friends October 14-16. The park facilities, still just design concepts when MPA toured the site and nearby Current River State Park during its gathering at Montauk in November 2014, are now nearly complete and landscaping has begun. By the time we visit in October, it will be looking decidedly like a park with all facilities fully functioning.

The park is intended as a four-season destination for the Current River region of the Ozarks, with conference and dining facilities as well as comfortable lodgings in cabins, the big lodge, and full service and primitive campgrounds. From there visitors will be able to radiate out to other sites and activities in the area, including canoeing and kayaking on Sinking Creek and the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, hiking on the Current River Trail and trails in the two parks and in the neighboring Roger Pryor

Pioneer Backcountry, and visiting nearby big springs, natural areas, and cultural sites.

MPA meeting planners have not yet finalized the agenda, but you can be sure there will be an optional activity, possibly a hike or float, Friday afternoon, as well as the usual Saturday morning "State of the Parks" address by State Park Director Bill Bryan, a panel probably relating to the upcoming parks, soils and water sales tax vote November 8, a field trip Saturday afternoon, a gala dinner that night with books available for purchase and signing, and the annual member and board meetings Sunday morning.

Cabins and lodge rooms are currently being held for our MPA group, but a registration protocol is not yet available. Look for an email in a month or two with further information, but mark your calendar now to save the dates, October 14-16.

Park Briefs

The State Park Centennial Celebration was kicked off with the opening of an exhibit on the history of the system in the Missouri State Museum in the Capitol April 9 and is expected to continue with various special events through the remainder of 2016 and all of 2017. Also inaugurated was a new centennial passport to encourage people to visit all the parks by October 31, 2017. See <https://passport.mostateparks.com>.

Boonville Bridge. Advocates for saving the historic 1932 Boonville Bridge, which carried the MKT Rail-

road across the Missouri River and was part of the deal that railbanked the MKT corridor for the Katy Trail, including Governor Jay Nixon and MPA director Darwin Hindman, were present April 2 to celebrate completion of the \$900,000 first phase of the bridge's rehabilitation. Visitors may now walk from the south end as far as the central lift span.

Johnson's Shut-Ins Pipeline. A pipeline company has twice requested an easement across the park's Goggins Mountain Wild Area, which is contiguous to the USFS Bell Mountain Wilderness, an area in which DNR

and the U.S. Forest Service have recently acquired additional land to further protect its wild character and natural resource values. Although it is the shortest route to supply natural gas to a Doe Run battery recycling plant near Bixby, DNR has declined, on the grounds that it would be detrimental to the purposes for which the land was acquired and that such pipelines should follow existing utility corridors. When MPA learned of the requests, it formed a task force to further investigate the issue and seek the most effective ways to support the DNR position.