

Feral Hogs, State Parks, and the Mark Twain

The struggle to eradicate feral hogs from Missouri is at a critical juncture with a public comment period now open on a US Forest Service proposal to ban hunting of hogs on the Mark Twain National Forest. Missouri state parks, along with other lands both public and private in hog-infested areas of the Ozarks, have a lot at stake in the success of the ban.

It is imperative for state park lovers and other conservationists to submit comments in writing to the Mark Twain by the July 23 deadline.

Feral hogs are a scourge in the Ozarks and wherever they spread.

They multiply rapidly, with sows able to breed at age six months and produce about 12 piglets a year, and they have few natural predators. A sounder (social group) of hogs can tear up 20-30 acres of crops, pasture, or woodland glade in one night. They love to root and wallow in moist areas like wetlands, fens, marshes, springs and streamsides, the very places park and conservation stewards have worked hard and long to restore. Hogs are omnivorous, eating eggs and young of ground-nesting birds (like wild turkeys) and other wildlife, along with berries, roots, nuts, and other human and wildlife foods. They carry diseases such as swine brucellosis, tularemia, and pseudorabies that can be spread to wildlife, domestic livestock, pets and humans.

Hunting of feral hogs is part of the problem. Feral hogs are not native wildlife; they are domestic invasives, often released to the wild by people who like to hunt hogs with dogs or make money by guiding others. The most effective method of reducing hog numbers is by trapping entire sounders,

a process that requires weeks of baiting and monitoring before springing the traps. But hunters and dogs can destroy the effectiveness of traps by killing a

While clearing trails in 2002, Superintendent Jerry Toops came upon a torn-up glade along the Ozark Trail on Goggins Mountain, and from a friend

with a farm adjoining the park he learned of severe hog damage to pastures too. After consulting with USDA staff and Oklahomans with long experience with hogs, he tried numerous methods of killing them, including shooting at night, but he had the most success using traps he himself designed, installed, and monitored each morning before work. Over the next few years he trapped some 200 hogs on private lands adjoining both Johnson's and Taum Sauk Parks, since park officials at the time were leery of trapping on park land.



Hogs Rooting in a Spring

few hogs and allowing the rest to scatter and become trap-wary. MDC and USDA trappers have experienced intentional interference from hog hunters—one trapper on 7 of 11 straight days he worked. In the process, a culture of hog hunting—or hog dogging—is created, exacerbating the problem.

In Missouri, hogs began to be a problem in the 1990s. Having originally been brought to the continent as domestic stock by European colonists, free-ranging hogs became ubiquitous; but they began to die out in the 20th century, until recreational hog hunting gained popularity in states to the south and in a few pockets in Missouri in the 1980s and led to intentional (though illegal) releases of hogs in order to spread the sport to new areas. Feral hogs have now been reported in nearly forty counties in Missouri.

The first state park to report feral hog damage was Roaring River around 1990, but Johnson's Shut-Ins made the most sustained early efforts at control.

Missouri was the first state to try to control hogs through a voluntary partnership of state and federal agencies and private landowners. Because feral hogs are not legally wildlife or game animals in Missouri, nor are they confined livestock, they cannot be regulated statewide by the Department of Conservation (MDC) or Agriculture (MDA). An informal partnership, begun in 1999, was strengthened in 2007 by Gov. Matt Blunt's Governor's Feral Hog Task Force, co-chaired by the directors of MDC and MDA with representatives of other state and federal agencies (including state parks and the Mark Twain), disease experts, private landowners and the Conservation Federation. By 2008 MDC developed a comprehensive plan to eliminate feral hogs from state conservation areas using multiple methods, including trapping and hunting. *Yet hogs continued to increase and spread.*

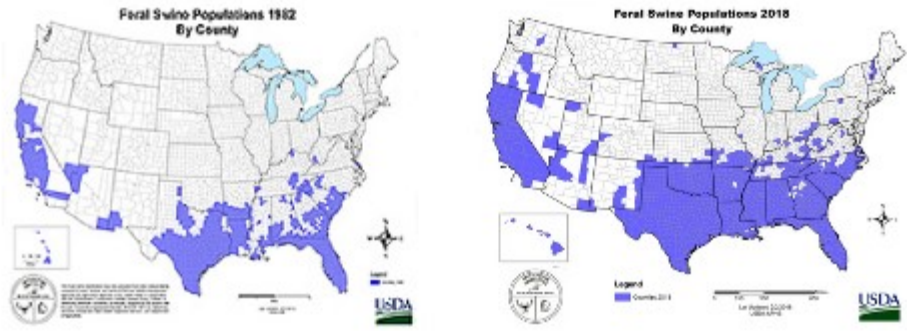
(See "Feral Hogs" on Page 2)

(“Feral Hogs” from Page 1)

The experience in Missouri and in neighboring states led MDC in 2016 to ban hog hunting on lands it controls. In states to the south and west—Arkansas, Oklahoma, and the Gulf tier from Florida to Texas—with strong hog hunting cultures, hog numbers have mushroomed and are now considered out of control. Texas alone is estimated to have 3 million hogs. In Tennessee, after 50 years of no legal hog hunting during which feral hogs had largely been confined to several relatively small areas where they had been introduced on private game preserves and escaped, the state yielded to political pressure in 1999 to allow hog hunting statewide; by 2009, hogs had spread statewide (abetted by illegal transport and release), so state officials reinstated the hunting ban, concentrated on trapping, and began to show success reducing the populations, leading MDC to follow suit.

The Missouri Feral Hog Partnership issued a statewide strategic plan in 2017 for feral hog elimination. Developed through collaboration among more than thirty state and federal agencies and organizations, including the Missouri Farm Bureau and corn, soybean, cattle, and pork associations, the Conservation Federation and many of its affiliates, the Missouri Forest Products Association, the L-A-D Foundation, and several rural water and health associations, it prioritizes public education, banning or discouraging of public hunting and illegal hog releases, and more coordinated trapping in priority zones. The greatest success to date has been in the Stockton, Pomme, and Truman reservoir area, where hog hunting is prohibited on state parks, MDC, and Corps of Engineers lands and there is no Mark Twain land.

The weakest link in the plan has been the 1.5 million-acre Mark Twain National Forest, with eight non-contiguous units throughout the Ozarks. Mark Twain officials have cooperated with the Missouri partnership from the start, but have not felt able to prohibit hog hunting on the forest owing to lack of support from the state’s congressional delegation, which



Feral swine populations in 1982 compared to 2018

has been passionately lobbied by a small number of well-organized hog-hunting enthusiasts to pressure the U.S. Forest Service in Washington. Hogs are still being illegally released in many areas of the Mark Twain, mostly at night, and spreading from there to neighboring lands. *Only a strong showing of public support for the Mark Twain’s proposed ban on hog hunting will allow it to take effect.* It is critical for the Mark Twain to ban hog hunting; if they do, national forests in other states as well as the Ozark National Scenic Riverways and national wildlife refuges here in Missouri would then likely follow suit.

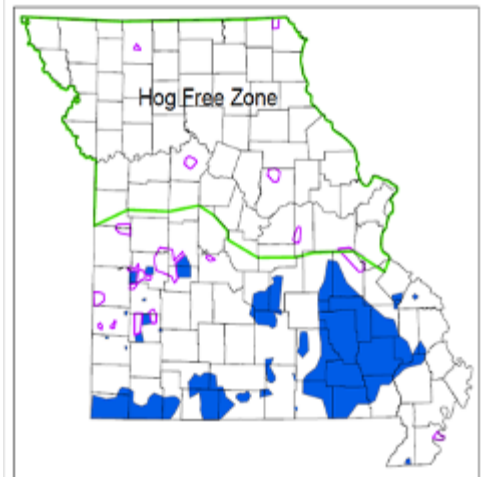
Meanwhile, the impact of hogs on state parks continues. Parks with known hog damage—in addition to Johnson’s Shut-Ins, Taum Sauk, Roaring River and Stockton—include Hawn, Elephant Rocks, St. Francois, Washington, Sam Baker, and Wap-papello. Park lovers will recognize these as parks with extraordinary natural resources, including carefully restored glades, prairies, woodlands, fens, wetlands, and high-quality streams attractive to hogs. All are in proximity to units of the Mark Twain and groups of active hog hunters and hence in danger of continued hog damage despite vigilant trapping by park staff and professional federal trappers, and there are other parks similarly situated that are also in danger. A spring 2019 survey of known sites of the federally threatened and state endangered Mead’s Milkweed, which has its most viable populations on glades in the St. Francois Mountains Natural Area (Taum Sauk), found that 20-25 percent of the known Mead’s sites were impacted by hogs in the past year; one previously flagged site was devoid of any Mead’s stems.

What you can do.

It is critical for large numbers of conservationists and private landowners to **submit written comments by the July 23 deadline** supporting the Mark Twain’s proposal to ban hog hunting on the forest. Small but well organized groups of avid hog hunters are working hard to oppose the ban. This is the time to demonstrate that Missouri conservationists care.

Email comments to the Mark Twain: SM.FS.MTFeralSwine@usda.gov.

Mail comments to: Forest Supervisor, Attn: Feral Swine Comment, Mark Twain National Forest, 401 Fairgrounds Road, Rolla, MO 65401.



2018 feral hog distribution (solid) and areas from which hogs have been eliminated (open shapes)

Legislative Session Baffles Park Supporters

This was the year the legislative session was projected by State Capitol watchers to return to more like normal, except that no one seems to know what is normal. The usual troublesome bills seeking to hobble the park system were introduced again this year, but few were heard in committee. MPA leaders' main goals were to prevent bad things from happening and to right—if possible—a budgetary wrong done last year.

General Revenue for Historic Preservation Revolving Fund. Last year, \$574,372 from the State Park Earnings Fund (SPEF) intended for ecological restoration in the new state parks was surreptitiously transferred by the senate to the Historic Preservation Revolving Fund (HPRF), replacing the same amount in General Revenue (GR), with no one able or willing to explain to whom the GR had gone. Moreover, this was not ordinary GR; it came from the Athletes and Entertainers Tax Fund that had been dedicated by statute since 1994 to a number of specified entities, including HPRF. It was a switcheroo that, if not rectified, could end up costing the Park Earnings Fund more than \$.5 million for years to come for something that was not part of the park system, or depriving the HPRF of an equal amount. (see Heritage, June 2018).

Fortunately, the Department of Natural Resources in its budget submission to the governor for FY2020, requested that the GR be returned to the HPRF. But the governor's budget as submitted to the General Assembly in January did not include the request. Despite numerous discussions between park supporters and representatives or their staffs, the house did not make the requested change. Attention then turned to the senate, where there were more receptive decisionmakers; the senate version of the budget returned the GR for the Revolving Fund, setting the stage for the conference committee, where park and historic preservation supporters thought there would be enough votes for the senate version. But the issue was apparently decided so quickly in favor of the house version that no one was able or willing to explain what had happened or why.

Forced sale of Eleven Point State Park. Representatives Jeff Pogue of Salem and Robert Ross of Yukon have introduced bills mandating sale of the 4,200 acres acquired for the new Eleven Point State Park for several years, but the bills were not even assigned to a committee for a hearing. Same thing this year. Until late in the session, when Pogue managed to introduce an amendment to an obscure and otherwise uncontroversial land conveyance bill on the floor of the house where, despite spirited opposition from several alert Democratic members, virtually every Republican voted for the amendment, and in that form the bill passed the house, with the Eleven Point sale having had no public hearing whatever. After MPA and other conservation organizations sent alerts to their members to contact their senators—THANK YOU!!—the senate stripped the amendment, and the forced sale never passed.

State Park Omnibus Bill. Several measures desired by state park officials were combined toward the end of the session into a state parks "omnibus" bill (SB196) that

finally passed. The bill included a Rock Island Trail State Park Endowment Fund that had had a strongly positive hearing earlier in the session, indicating that bicycling and hiking groups, local communities, and other supporters of the Rock Island were now willing to step up to the task of raising non-state-park funds for the proposed trail. Park officials are still negotiating with Ameren and considering signing the Interim Trail Use Agreement. The current deadline to complete negotiations set by the federal Surface Transportation Board is August 20, 2019. If an agreement is not reached by that time an extension to the negotiation period could be requested.

The bill also includes changes to statutes governing state park concession operations to make them more efficient and effective and a provision authorizing DNR to award grants to preserve, protect, or restore county courthouses, though no funds have been appropriated for the purpose.

MPA and Park Briefs

Darwin Hindman, trail and park advocate and principal leader of the Katy Trail Coalition, Columbia's longest-serving mayor (1995-2010), and director of MPA both before and after his years as mayor, passed away June 17 at age 86. He was a friend to all and an eternal optimist who loved bringing people together to improve their environment and their quality of life. He would always put a smile on your face, and we will all miss him.

Weldon Woods. MPA directors approved a resolution April 30 asking the University of Missouri System Board of Curators and the St. Charles County Council to halt the proposed sale of the Weldon Woods property adjacent to the Katy Trail in St. Charles County for a 300-home development and retain the property for public recreation and ecosystem preservation.

Bryant Creek and Ozark Mountain State Parks are hosting public information meetings June 11 and June 27 respectively to receive input from the public on future use and development of the properties at an early stage in MSP's conceptual development planning process for the new parks. MPA members will also have an opportunity to visit the two parks and learn about the planning process at MPA's October 25-27 annual meeting in Branson (see registration information on page 5). There will also be a public meeting June 27 at the Viney Creek Recreation Area on Table Rock Lake, a Corps of Engineers facility that MSP has been operating for six years but would like to turn back to the Corps.

Big Rivers Floods. Record-high flood levels on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers this spring have put Big Lake, Lewis and Clark, and Confluence Point State Parks and parts of the Katy Trail under water again this spring, forcing cancellation of the annual Katy Trail Ride and other events. The waters will have to recede before the damage can be assessed and help sought from FEMA.

Meet Your Missouri State Parks Team:

by Sue Holst

Mike Ohnersorgen, Program Director, Cultural Resources Management Program

A love of discovering and protecting cultural resources has taken Mike Ohnersorgen on a winding journey from southern California to Missouri State Parks (MSP), where he is the new director of the Cultural Resources Management (CRM) Program.

Ohnersorgen (or Dr. Mike as he is often called) was always interested in archaeology and National Geographic specials were his favorite TV shows as a young boy. He started his undergraduate work at the University of California-Santa Barbara in biology, but after doing some volunteer work in archaeology, he switched his focus to anthropology with a specialty in archaeology. During his graduate work at Arizona State at Tempe, he worked on a number of archaeological projects in Mexico.

After completing his Ph.D. in 2001, Ohnersorgen worked as an archaeologist for the Arizona State Historic Preservation Program and then for the Arizona Department of Transportation. He subsequently returned to teaching and research at Arizona, the University of Alabama, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis. In 2014, he was hired as an archaeologist for Missouri State Parks.

Dr. Mike was promoted to program director in December 2018, but he had little time to get used to the idea before being tasked with leading a new initiative to re-emphasize the importance of cultural resource stewardship in all the parks and historic sites (see *Heritage*, February 2019).

An internal team developed a set of goals for the new initiative, the first of which is to complete the inventory and develop protocols for care and management of archaeological collections (housed mostly at the Rock Bridge Curation Facility in Columbia) and artifacts out in the parks and historic sites. "There are hundreds of boxes of artifacts from places like Towosahgy and Van Meter, many of which still need to be catalogued," Ohnersorgen says, explaining that this inventory, which will meet the requirements of the Native

American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, will be helpful for both state parks and for the State Historic Preservation Office. He has already hired a new archaeologist for his old position, plus a collections manager and a half-time archaeologist for the effort at Rock Bridge.



Dr. Mike Ohnersorgen

The initiative's second goal is to update the CRM Plans for each of the state parks and historic sites. Abstracts for all the plans, using a template Dr. Mike and his staff developed, have now been submitted and are being reviewed and revised for scheduled approval by the end of the year; this effort lays the groundwork for developing full plans in upcoming years.

The third goal is to assess the condition of historic buildings out in the parks, using GIS technology and survey protocols developed in cooperation with MSP's Planning and Development Program; the data and associated maps and photos can then be readily incorporated in management plans and used to prioritize maintenance and capital improvement projects. The software has been tested at three facilities and assessments of 19 of the historic sites are scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

The fourth goal is to increase cultural resource training for staff in all

facilities, an effort that has already begun with training of teams in each region to assist with historic structure assessments and systemwide training on compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and on historic artifact collections management. There is also interest in reviving an annual cultural resource conference for park and historic site staff.

Although the initiative may seem overwhelming for a new director, Ohnersorgen and his team are already making headway. "I have always loved resource management and public outreach," he says, and adds that he feels very lucky that his staff is dedicated and ready to take on the challenges. At the same time, they all continue to perform their regular jobs and deal with other pressing issues as they arise.

An example of the unexpected was an electrical fire May 17 that destroyed the kitchen of the 1834 J. Huston Tavern at Arrow Rock, the very first historic structure in the park system (see *Heritage*, Feb. 2019, p2). Site administrator Mike Dickey, who happens also to be station chief of the local volunteer fire department, and his crew were able, thankfully, to save the remainder of the building, but all of the interior furnishings, artifacts, and surfaces were covered in soot. Dr. Mike and CRM staff, including State Museum staff, have been coordinating with Dickey and others on a plan to remove artifacts from the building for proper cleaning and restoration. Meanwhile, work began on a 30x60 foot wooden platform for a carpeted dining tent that, together with a mobile kitchen, allowed for foodservice to resume June 14—another example of the can-do spirit of state park staff!

The new program director has a daughter Ana studying at Boston University but most of his family remains in southern California. Dr. Mike, however, has found a home in Missouri State Parks: "There are so many different stories associated with all the state parks and historic sites that there will always be something more to learn."

MPA 37th Annual Gathering at Table Rock, October 25-27, 2019

Join us at Table Rock State Park for a special focus on the planning process for new parks in the state park system. Come early on Friday to tour and discuss issues at Bryant Creek State SP en route to our evening reception at the State Park Marina on Table Rock Lake. We'll be at Table Rock and Ozark Mountain SP Saturday, featuring the annual State of the Parks address and a panel on planning a park from concept to reality in the morning, a tour of Ozark Mountain SP in the afternoon, and dinner at the Table Rock State Park Shelter House with interpretive programming. Note that the members and board meetings Sunday morning will be at Lodge of the Ozarks, 3431 MO-76, Branson, MO 65616.

Book your own lodging at Lodge of the Ozarks in Branson by September 25 (call Renee at 417-335-2555, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm and ask for the MPA rate of \$114.95) or the campground at Table Rock State Park (<https://icampmo1.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/>). Also note the **October 10th cut-off date for registration with meals** (Friday reception with food, Saturday lunch and dinner).

Friday, October 25

12n Meet at Bryant Creek State Park, 1228 Co. Rd. 337D Ava, MO, at 12 pm for tour and discussion of the new park en route to Table Rock State Pak. There will be a tram tour available for a short tour of the property and a longer, rugged hike for more experienced hikers.

***please note it is an hour and forty-five-minute drive from Bryant Creek to Table Rock State Park**

5:30-8pm Registration and Reception with hors d'oeuvres at State Park Marina, Table Rock State Park

Saturday, October 26

Breakfast on your own (if staying at Lodge of the Ozarks, continental breakfast is provided)

8:45 am Welcome to Table Rock: MPA Pres. Deb Schnack and Table Rock SP Manager Carl Bonnell (Dewey Short Visitor Center, Army Corps of Engineers, 4500 State Highway 165 Branson, MO 65616) State of the Parks Address by State Parks Director Ben Ellis

10am Break

10:15am Panel on planning a park from concept to reality: Planning and Development Staff

12n Lunch at Table Rock State Park Shelter House

1-4:30pm Behind-the-scenes tour of Ozark Mountain SP: Missouri State Park Staff

5:30pm Happy hour with interpretive stations: Table Rock State Park Shelter House

6:30pm Dinner and Campfire Dessert: Table Rock State Park Shelter House

Sunday, October 27 at Lodge of the Ozarks, 3431 MO-76, Branson, MO 65616

Breakfast on your own (if staying at Lodge of the Ozarks, continental breakfast is provided)

8:30am Annual meeting of members

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

12n Adjourn

Flat rate Registration with event counts for planning

Name(s) _____ Full (meals, tours) _____ persons @ \$80

Address _____ Total \$ _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Special Dietary needs (indicate) _____

Event Counts:

#Persons _____ Friday Bryant Creek SP Tour

#Persons _____ Saturday Lunch

#Persons _____ Friday Evening Reception with food

#Persons _____ Saturday Dinner

Make check payable to **Missouri Parks Association** and mail with form **postmarked by October 10** to Marian Fleischmann, MPA Manager, 32875 Mount Hope Rd., California MO 65018.

For questions email: marianm8084@gmail.com



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MPA Employee Awards

The 2018 MPA Employee of the Year Awards were presented this spring to four outstanding park employees. These awards are given annually to state park workers who demonstrate exceptional work and are nominated by their peer group for their efforts. It is a prestigious honor for MPA to recognize the best of the best within Missouri State Parks for their commitment and dedication.

Kelley Brent (Central Office, Planning & Development), was involved in several large-scale projects during her tenure with the division as the trails coordinator, including the trails inventory system and the recent web-based trails management system. The task to create the web-based system was met by challenges along the way. Kelley rose to the task to keep the project on track with her dedication, project management skills, and perseverance. The web-based trails management system went live in 2018 and is a great benefit to state parks and the general public.



Kendra Swee (Interpreter, Resource Management & Interpretation Program), in her role as the lead interpreter for Missouri State Parks, she developed

and presented numerous programs to the public and taught workshops on interpretation to full-time and seasonal interpreters. Through her interpretive programming Kendra has touched the lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands of park visitors. Beyond that she has inspired many young seasonal interpreters to pursue careers in resource stewardship



and interpretation. Her service benefited the division as a whole and enabled Missouri State Parks to achieve their mission.

Dustin Webb (Field—Northern District Office), was honored for his outstanding work ethic and leadership. He is always willing and able to assist or guide fellow coworkers in any situation that may arise at a park or site. Dustin leads by example, whether that be helping a park with a maintenance project or assisting an



employee with a budget issue. Under any circumstance he approaches the situation from a positive manner. He is also heavily involved with projects and committees statewide, making our park system better and more efficient.

Alan LaBoube (Maintenance and Construction, Resource Management & Interpretation Program), has served as a carpenter with Field Exhibits for over 25 years. His skills in cabinetry, exhibit design, and problem solving have touched practically every park and historic site in the Missouri State Parks System. His knowledge and skills were especially significant when the Resource Management & Interpretation Program (RMIP) suffered major staff shortages. Alan not only worked on exhibit projects for parks and historic sites, he also assisted with general maintenance duties and with small maintenance and repair projects for the Missouri State Museum and Jefferson Landing State Historic Site. Alan's exhibit work benefits the entire division and significantly helps our visitors make lasting memories.

