

## Celebrating State Wild Areas

*by John Karel*

In 1977, Missouri DNR inaugurated a special program for certain state park lands, called Wild Areas, that was intended to preserve a very limited and dwindling outdoor resource. MPA has strongly supported this system since our founding in 1982.

Many would argue that one of the most original and powerful contributions to world civilization coming out of the American experience has been the concept of preserving wild lands as a distinctive resource. As the nation's development accelerated, a rough consensus emerged that the rapidly disappearing pockets of untrammelled wilderness held meaning and value, and that at least some portion of them should be protected as part of our

American legacy. This consensus resulted in 1964 in Congressional establishment of the National Wilderness Preservation System for selected federal lands. In the 1970s and '80s, several federal tracts, such as Mingo and the Irish Wilderness, were designated in Missouri. In a parallel way, some states developed similar systems for qualified state lands.

Many people have come to highly value the opportunity to renew an elemental encounter with our native wild lands, spacious landscapes not manipulated by modern man but only by the forces of nature. Outdoor recreation in such places is cherished as a cultural or even a spiritual experience. Indeed, it is a great comfort to many that our society has mustered the discipline to leave at least some wild land alone.

Starting in 1977, Missouri state parks were surveyed to determine what areas might be suitable for inclusion in this program. The criteria were based

on federal wilderness standards, modified in recognition of the state's less expansive holdings, but still requiring 1000 acres or more with minimal human intrusions. Park staff were careful in selecting areas to minimize potential conflicts with other park re-

14,000 acres of wild land, one of the largest such expanses in our state.

Not all our Wild Areas can boast such impressive acreage, but each one embraces a unique setting, with individual character and beauty. And each enjoys the loyalty of a cadre of visitors who have a special bond and fondness for it. A good example is the Whispering Pines Wild Area at Hawn State Park, where the Friends of Hawn, who relish that area's piney hills and the clear waters of Pickle Creek, have leapt to its defense in the face of a proposed nearby silica mine that could disrupt the local water table and quiet beauty of the area.

Another is at Rock Bridge State Park, where, despite its quite modest size, the Gans Creek Wild Area has earned a loyal following

for its intricate bluff-lined hollows and impressive oak groves. When a local developer not long ago sought to change the zoning to permit a large subdivision adjacent to the area and intruding upon its integrity, the defense of the Gans area was immediate and ferocious, leaving no doubt about its importance in the civic life of central Missouri and beyond. In these cases and others, defenders of the wild areas, in standing up for a beloved untrammelled place, were at the same time defending the respective parks, the park system as a whole, and more broadly a precious Missouri legacy.

In light of this history, our 2023 annual meeting in October at Lake of the Ozarks will include a panel discussion about the Wild Area System, its history, status, and prospects. We also plan to conduct a field trip to one of the very first designated wild areas, Patterson Hollow. We expect a most enjoyable and informative experience, so please plan on joining us there.



*Goggins Mountain Wild Area*

sources, values, and programs, so the system has been relatively conservative, with a roster to date of twelve Wild Areas totaling about 23,000 acres. This is a modest program compared to some other states, but it has been durable, and it promises to enrich experiences for park visitors far into the future.

Most, but not all, of our state wild areas are located in our larger parks in the Ozarks. Several, including the largest, Goggins Mountain at 5,000 acres in Johnson Shut Ins, are in the St. Francois Mountains, where ancient igneous bedrock weathers to a steep terrain with expansive remote woodlands and rocky outcrops offering inspiring vistas. Goggins happens to be directly adjacent to the Bell Mountain Wilderness on the Mark Twain National Forest. These adjoining areas, rich in scenic grandeur and traversed by a popular stretch of the famous Ozark Trail, protect over

## The Legacy of Pat and Ted Jones

*President's message by Larry Larson*

This spring I was fortunate enough to attend two significant dedications, each celebrating a new project made possible by Pat and Ted Jones. Pat, a former president of MPA, and Ted Jones were both nature, park, and bicycling enthusiasts who wanted to share what Missouri has to offer with all its citizens. They were key advocates for the Katy and Rock Island Trails and actively supported other state parks and conservation areas. Years after their deaths, Ted and Pat are still making sure the parks they loved are cared for.

The first dedication was in April at the Pleasant Hill trailhead on the Rock Island Spur connecting the Katy Trail with Kansas City, long a dream of the Joneses and other trail lovers. The corridor of the former Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) Railroad, better known as the KATY, was made possible by the 1983 Rails-to-Trails Act, and through a personal donation from Ted and Pat Jones in 1987. Avid cyclists since they met on a 1940 bicycle trip through the Ozarks, Ted and Pat worked relentlessly to make the Katy Trail a reality in the face of strong opposition from some legislators and landowners along the corridor.

The Jones's generosity and commitment to rails-to-trail projects continues today with the announcement of the construction of the Ted and Pat Jones Bridge. Thanks to a final gift from the Ted Jones Trust, the new bridge spanning currently active railroad tracks will replace a detour on busy roads and provide direct access from the Rock Island Spur of Katy Trail State Park to the Pleasant Hill trailhead, which also serves as the nexus to a trail through the western suburbs into Kansas City already largely developed by a coalition of municipal agencies and citizen organizations.

The second event in May was a groundbreaking ceremony for a new trail at the Edward "Ted" and Pat Jones Confluence Point State Park, named after them at the park's dedication in 2004 in honor of all their work and contributions to the system and a significant donation from Pat to help secure the land at the confluence. The trustees of Pat Jones's estate – retired Edward Jones partners – worked with Missouri State

Parks since her passing in 2018 to provide funding for improvement of a hiking/biking path along the Missouri River to the actual confluence point and then along the Mississippi River one-half mile upstream. Once the new trail is constructed, visitors will have a one-mile panoramic view of the park and the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

### The Switch Is Thrown — And Now the Katy Trail Goes 185 Miles



*MPA President Pat Jones helped officially open the Katy Trail State Park this fall after the completion of the missing link: the 40-mile stretch between Mokane and Treloar. Now you can go nonstop (or slower) from Sedalia to St. Charles — a 185 mile journey through breathtaking views, wonderful old towns, and Missouri history.*

*In this photo Pat is doing her best with David Shorr (center), director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and Doug Eiken, director of the Division of State Parks, to get an old M-K-T Railroad switch to work. Once the solid "chunk" sounded, it was official: The Trail was open — and now everyone can enjoy a unique Missouri experience through the very heartland of the state*

Ted Jones was a managing partner for Edward Jones Investments. At each of the events, volunteers from Edward Jones honored Ted and Pat's love of nature. At the event in Pleasant Hill, volunteers planted 33 trees in honor of the 33rd anniversary of Katy Trail State Park. At the Confluence, volunteers planted native grasses in the area. I'm not sure how many sore muscles were added to the special memories of these special events, but I am sure that most came from the smiles of those in attendance.

These two events continue to show the importance to Missouri's trails and award-winning state park system mad possible

thanks to the vision and generosity of individuals like Ted and Pat Jones and other Missouri citizens who have shown their support since 1984 by passing and renewing the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax five times.

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.** I need to explain that as of another special event early this summer (see the article that follows), we no longer have a "Rock Island spur" of the Katy Trail from Windsor to Pleasant Hill. That 47-mile stretch is now the first completed segment of the 191-mile Rock Island Trail State Park stretching from Beaufort to Pleasant Hill. YEA!!!

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Readers of MPA's Missouri State Park book will know that it has a chapter about Rock Island Trail State Park, the name by which the park was known as the book went to press in November 2015. Ted and Pat Jones were foresighted about that too, having funded a trust for a Rock Island Trail State Park prior to Ted's death in 1990.

*Heritage Dec. 1996*



## Rock Island Trail is our 93rd State Park

by Kendra Varns Wallis

Beneath the old railroad trestle where the Katy Trail crosses over the Rock Island Trail heading west from Windsor 47 miles to Pleasant Hill, State Park Director David Kelly on June 30<sup>th</sup> announced the establishment of Missouri's 93<sup>rd</sup> state park, Rock Island Trail State Park. The trail follows what was once the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, which ceased operation in 1980 after nearly 130 years in service. State acquisition of the Rock Island corridor was first contemplated in 1993, but MoDNR didn't officially take ownership of the 144 miles east of Windsor to Beaufort until December 14, 2021 (see *Heritage*, March 2022).

The 47-mile Rock Island Spur of the Katy Trail, as it was called when it opened for public use in 2016, enabled cyclists headed west on the Katy Trail to get to Kansas City via the Rock Island, and vice versa. That spur has now officially become the first completed section of Rock Island Trail State Park. Only the 47.5-mile trail from Windsor west to Pleasant Hill is open for public use; the rest is still officially closed.

After the 2023 legislative session, where *federal grant funding* earmarked for the Rock Island Trail was *again* blocked in the Senate Appropriations Committee, local communities stepped forward with planning for their sections of the trail. At the ceremony announcing the 93<sup>rd</sup> state park, officials from Pleasant Hill and Windsor told how the trail has already invigorated their communities; several along the 144-mile eastern section spoke about how their towns have been planning, designing, and funding their sections of the trail.

The Rock Island Trail has already begun to generate economic investment for new and existing businesses looking to expand in anticipation of future demand from trail users. Eldon, Belle, Owensville, and Versailles received federal grant funding that these rural communities matched with their own funds, demonstrating their commit-

ment (or other refreshments) as the attendees celebrated under the midday sun with temperatures approaching 100°F.

MoDNR Director Dru Buntin summed it up: "What better opportunity to strengthen rural communities and provide opportunities for agritourism, better quality of life, and improvement of health than to further expand on an already existing asset that we have with the Katy Trail!" The Katy Trail is the nation's longest developed rail-trail, stretching 240 miles between Clinton in Henry County and Ma-chens in St. Charles County. Once completed, the two trails will create a cross-state continuous loop some 400 miles along river valleys, over rivers, across the plains, and through the old hills of the Missouri Ozarks.

The time has come again for the old song: "The Rock Island Line is a mighty good road; The Rock Island Line is the road to ride." It will be a challenge to complete the development of the 93<sup>rd</sup> state park, requiring significant fundraising and numerous private/public partnerships. Efforts of individuals, organizations, and local officials will be critical to reaping the benefits of this new state park for Missourians and our economy!



*Park Supporters at Dedication*

ment to completing their sections of the trail. So far, \$2 million and eight miles of trail have been committed by local communities, and some are expected to have their sections finished by fall 2023.

In addition to development for recreational and economic activities, towns like Owensville and Gerald are planning on using the trail to create Safe Routes to School, a healthy alternative. Owensville Mayor John Kamler said his city worked diligently to get its \$500,000 in grant money to complete its three-mile section. "Our kids can't even ride a bike or walk to school," he said. "When this is done, they'll be able to do that, so it's a wonderful thing." Kamler said he hopes to have shovels ready to begin trail work by September. Belle Mayor Daryl White said his city has already put in a campground and is getting engineering studies. And all the speakers bragged about their town's ice

Updated information is available at <https://mostateparks.com/park/rock-island-trail-state-park>.

Donations for trail development can be made online at <https://www.missouristateparksfoundation.org>.

## A Tribute to Mary Abbott, Founder of UPOP

*By Kendra Varns Wallis*

Honorary board member, former MPA president and UPOP founder, Mary Abbott passed away in May 2022 at age 92. Mary had a career that took her all over the world. In the 1950s she worked as secretary for the CIA in Munich and assisted C.L. Sulzberger at The New York Times Paris bureau. In the 1960s she led the press office for the newly formed Peace Corps. Having grown up in Kansas City where she had legions of friends, Mary returned in the early 1980s and worked as a real estate agent with Reese & Nichols for nearly two decades before retiring. She held many volunteer roles in civic and environmental organizations, including the Missouri Parks Association and the Nature Conservancy.



*Mary Abbott and John Karel 1993*

I met Mary and got to know her over the years when I moved to Kansas City to work for Missouri State Parks in the Kansas City Outreach office. One of the programs I coordinated was MPA's own Underserved Populations Outreach Project (UPOP), which introduces young people to the wonders of Missouri State Parks. UPOP was Mary's brainchild. She thought MPA should be doing more than just advocating for state parks, and saw an opportunity to partner with youth service organizations to help underserved young people experience the wonders of nature and gain a sense of history and culture through up-close-and-personal activities in nearby state parks.

Mary persuaded the MPA board to allocate seed money, raised other funds locally, found a local coordinator, and worked with state park staff to start a pilot project in Kansas City in summer 2000. Her first coordinator was Nan Leiter and then, for several years, Shalonn "Kiki" Curls, who subsequently won election as a state representative and senator but remained an enthusiastic UPOP advocate. In 2002, Abbott and Curls helped MPA directors in St. Louis to organize a UPOP headquartered at the Green Center and coordinated initially by Michael

Nelson, a veritable Pied Piper for the kids.

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. Meredith Donaldson and Friends of Rock Bridge began a UPOP in Columbia in 2006, and in 2020 a program began in Salem in partnership with the Bonebrake Center and I Can Too Learning Center. All five UPOPs are still going strong this summer.

Thanks to Mary's vision and dedication, thousands of underserved youth have experienced Missouri state parks and historic sites and the wonders of nature, many for the first time. They discover and learn outdoor skills and engage in science projects, historical re-creation, stewardship efforts, and nature exploration. They visit forests, wetlands, and prairies as they learn from naturalists about ecosystems and native plants and animals. Some will camp overnight, bike and hike on trails, go swimming and fishing. Most importantly, participants will have FUN and make memories for many summers to come exploring, playing, and learning in Missouri State Parks.



*UPOP Participants at Babler Memorial State Park*

To contribute to UPOP, donations by check can be sent to Missouri Parks Association (UPOP) c/o The Callaway Bank, P.O. Box 10, Fulton, MO 65251 or online at <https://missouriparksassociation.org/donate>.





**MPA 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Gathering**

Lake of the Ozarks State Park, October 13-15, 2023

**Plan now** to attend the 41st Annual Gathering of the Missouri Parks Association at Lake of the Ozarks State Park – Camp Clover Point. Join us on Friday for a tour of Ozark Caverns and a reception with state park leaders. The Saturday morning program will feature the annual State of the Parks address and a panel discussion on State Park Wild Areas. In the afternoon you may choose an educational tour of Lake of the Ozarks State Park or a hike in Patterson Hollow Wild Area. The annual members meeting and a board meeting will be Sunday morning.

A block of rooms is available for Friday and Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, at Holiday Inn Express Osage Beach, 4533 Osage Beach Pkwy. Call the front desk at (573) 302-0330 and ask for the Missouri Parks Association block of rooms. They must be reserved by September 29<sup>th</sup> to get the room rate of \$134 (Double Queen). A campground is available at Lake of the Ozarks State Park; reserve your space online at <https://icampmo.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/>. If interested in staying in a sleeping unit at Camp Clover Point, please contact Executive Director Kendra Varns Wallis at [kendra.wallis@missouriparks.org](mailto:kendra.wallis@missouriparks.org) or 816-210-3413. Also note the **October 5th cut-off date for annual meeting registration with meals** (Saturday lunch and dinner).

**Friday, October 13 at Ozark Caverns in Lake of the Ozarks State Park (optional)****3:00 pm** Registration**3:30 pm** Ozark Caverns Tour**5:00 – 6:00 pm** Reception

Dinner on your own

**Saturday, October 14 at Lake of the Ozarks State Park, Camp Clover Point**

Breakfast on your own

**8:30 – 9:00 am** Registration and Networking**9:00 am** Welcome to MPA 41st Annual Gathering

State of the State Parks Address, State Park Director David Kelly

**10:15 am** Break**10:30 am** Panel Discussion on State Park Wild Areas: John Karel, Ken McCarty and others**12:00n** Lunch**1:00 – 3:00 pm** Behind-the-scenes tours of Patterson Hollow Wild Area or Lake of the Ozarks State Park**5:00 – 6:00 pm** Happy Hour at Public Beach #1 Shelter (near the campground)**6:00 – 7:30 pm** Dinner**Sunday, October 15 at Lake of the Ozarks State Park—Camp Clover Point**

Breakfast on your own

**8:30 am** Annual meeting of members**9:30 am** Meeting of MPA board of directors (all are welcome to attend)**12:00n** Adjourn**Flat Rate Registration with Event Counts for Planning**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

#Persons \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$60; Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (includes all meals, tours)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary needs (indicate) \_\_\_\_\_

Event Counts: To Plan Activities and Confirm Meal Count

#Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Ozark Caverns Tour and Reception

#Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Lake of the Ozarks State Park Tour (Low Physical Activity) #Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Lunch

#Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Patterson Hollow Wild Area (Moderate Physical Activity) #Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Dinner

Make check payable to Missouri Parks Association and mail with form **postmarked by October 5<sup>th</sup>** to Missouri Parks Association, P.O. Box 8531, Kansas City, MO 64114. If you would like to register and pay online, please visit <https://forms.gle/YUFov2WMkpPrFhyP7>. **For questions email:** [kendra.wallis@missouriparks.org](mailto:kendra.wallis@missouriparks.org)



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## Park Updates and Briefs

**Eleven Point State Park.** With the lawsuits resolved, we are happy to report that state park staff are now engaged in conceptional development planning, the next step to create this long-sought state park along the National Wild and Scenic Eleven Point River (See *Heritage*, December, 2022). Park supporters were invited to an open house on May 13 with presentations about various aspects of the park and its operations, guided hikes on the property, and a tour of the Pigman Ranch house built in the giraffe stone vernacular typical of the Ozarks. The ranch house—and the bunkhouse where the meeting was held—were in excellent shape and staff had prepared information about the property and welcomed visitors and discussions. MPA was represented by directors Larry Larson, Melissa Hope, John Karel, Cindy Bridges, and Shirley Wolverson and other members. Local residents were also there, including a county commissioner, a neighbor from across Y Highway, and others who had followed Eleven Point and Oregon County issues for years. There were many smiling faces, happy to begin the new chapter for this beautiful property.

**Hawn State Park and Nexgen Silica Mine.** The July 2022 *Heritage* reviewed the issues surrounding a silica sand mining and processing operation proposed by Nexgen Silica LLC opposite the entrance road to Hawn State Park from Highway 32 in Ste. Gene-

vieve County. The proposed mine threatens Hawn and its natural and wild areas as well as nearby Hickory Canyons Natural Area and Horton Farm Conservation Area.

The Missouri Mining Commission (MMC) met on January 5, 2023, and recommended that MoDNR rescind the land reclamation permit; it was based, however, on only *one of the two reasons cited* by the Administrative Hearing Commission (AHC) in its November recommendation. Appeals of the MMC decision were filed by Nexgen and Operation Sand (the local landowner group opposing the mine) in the Eastern Missouri District Court of Appeals because each of them thought one of the decisions was in error; oral arguments in the consolidated case will be heard September 6, 2023 at Division 3 in the Old Post Office in St. Louis.

The MoDNR water permit — Draft Missouri State Operating Permit MOG491545 — received complaints from Friends of Hawn, Operation Sand, and the Sierra Club. An AHC hearing was held in April, but just before the AHC was scheduled to issue its recommendation, Nexgen on May 5 withdrew its permit application, MoDNR terminated the permit, and on May 9, the AHC dismissed the case.

Meanwhile, there have been no significant developments in the lawsuit filed by Nexgen against the Ste. Genevieve County Commission and the County

Health Commission seeking injunctive relief from the June 2022 county ordinance with setbacks that would prevent a mine at the site. The mine appears to be stymied at present, but the threat is not over. To help support legal efforts in opposition to the mine, go to [www.operationsand.org/donate](http://www.operationsand.org/donate).

**Missouri State Legislature – 2023 session.** The state park budget submitted to and recommended by the governor fared quite well this year. Capital improvements worth \$187.5 million in previously appropriated funds remain on the books, including revenue bond projects and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) water and wastewater infrastructure projects in parks statewide. New project funds approved from the Park Sales Tax Fund and the Parks Earnings Fund include a bridge replacement at Bennett Spring State Park, deck replacement for the Route 66 State Park bridge over the Meramec River, and staff and development for the new Bryant Creek and Shepherd of the Hills State Parks. The one exception was funding for development of the Rock Island Trail, which was again blocked in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

There were relatively few other park-related bills in the 2023 session compared with recent years, a real relief for our MPA team. The team was concerned about a number of bills that would have negatively affected the initiative petition process, but they luckily were left behind in the disfunction at the end of session.