

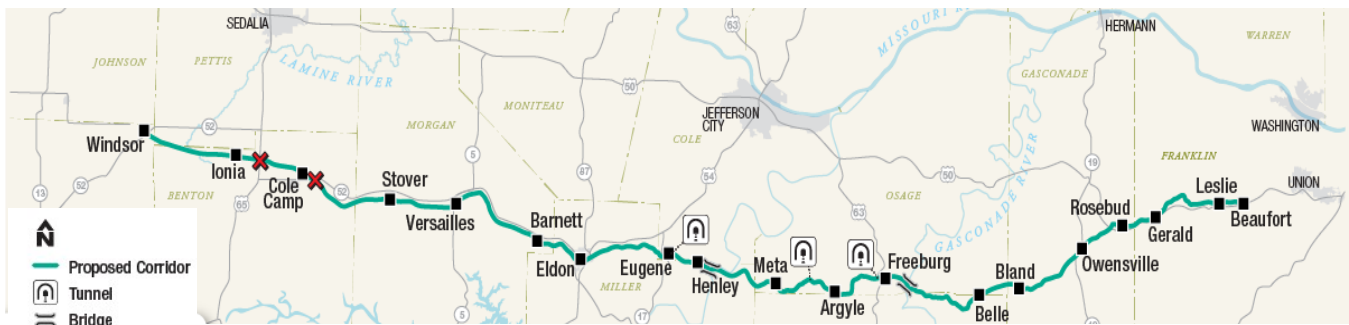
## Another Extension for DNR's Rock Island Decision

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced on August 14 that the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) has granted another extension to December 31, 2019, for DNR and the Missouri Central Railroad (a subsidiary of Ameren) to enter into an Interim Trail Use Agreement to railbank 144 miles of the Rock Island corridor from Beaufort west of St. Louis to its junction at Windsor with the Katy Trail and the existing Rock Island spur trail to Kansas City.

in developing various segments, has contributed funds for the study, which is expected to be completed by December in time to inform DNR's decision.

The Missouri General Assembly in spring 2019 approved a Rock Island Trail State Park Endowment Fund to sequester funds donated for the trail. Park officials consider this a bipartisan vote of confidence in the new park, when for several years legislators were arguing against any new parks. Because

A "trail opportunity analysis" prepared by University of Missouri Extension (October 2018) noted that nearly 99 percent of the 8,500 responses received by DNR during a 2017 public comment period supported the project; the analysis found an exceptional economic development opportunity for the RIT project, comparing it to a 2012 "Katy Trail Economic Impact Report" that documented a total annual impact of \$18.5 million, 367 jobs, and \$8.2 million in payroll for Katy Trail State Park.



The extension allows more time for potential partnerships to be explored and the feasibility of raising significant non-state-park funds for trail development to be studied as part of DNR's due diligence in determining whether it can take responsibility for the corridor without jeopardizing other units in the existing state park system.

The Missouri State Parks Foundation (MSPF), which was established in 2001 to undertake major gifts fundraising on behalf of the system, has contracted with a consulting firm to do the study. Principals of the firm have been meeting with MSPF, state park officials, and leaders of other support organizations including MoRIT (Missouri Rock Island Trail, Inc., a coalition of communities, businesses, and organizations seeking to preserve the corridor), and the Missouri Parks Association, among others, to lay the groundwork. MPA, which has strongly advocated that DNR accept the corridor and pointed to the potential for private-public partnerships

the DNR administration does not want to take title to the corridor until it is confident that sufficient funds will be forthcoming from individuals and organizations to begin development and operation—about \$10 million of the estimated \$65 to \$80 million projected costs for development—it is likely that two years would be allowed for initial fundraising. The State Park Foundation would lead the effort and hold donations until sufficient funds are raised for DNR to take title to the corridor and MSPF to transfer donations to the legislatively designated fund.

Unlike the Katy Trail, which goes through only a few larger communities like Boonville and Sedalia, the Rock Island passes through twenty-some communities along the 144-mile corridor, 16 of which are incorporated with a total population of about 20,000.

These communities, as a state park official noted at a recent Conservation Federation affiliate summit, are "chomping at the bit" to get underway on the trail.

The Rock Island corridor has come close to being accepted as a state park twice before, beginning more than a quarter century ago in 1993, when the state came "within a hair's breadth" of acquiring the corridor from the Southern Pacific, its then owner, as recalled by MPA board member Darwin Hindman. Hindman had been deeply involved in the negotiations on behalf of Pat Jones, whose husband Ted—savior of the Katy Trail—had donated money for a possible Rock Island acquisition before his death in 1990. The DNR filed a formal request with the then-Interstate Commerce Commission (now STB) in 1993 for a 197-mile segment of the line, but in the tangle of interests the deal faltered, largely (as Hindman recalled) owing to opposition from towns along the route who held out hope, however slim, for resumption of rail service on the line.

(See "Rock Island" from Page 2)

(“Rock Island” from Page 1)

By 2014 when Ameren announced its intent to sell the 144-mile stretch now at issue and DNR reiterated its interest in the corridor, the communities along the line—with the economic impact of the Katy Trail north of the Missouri River now clearly documented—saw conversion to a hiking and biking trail as their salvation. In December of that year Ameren and DNR filed official notices with STB of their intent to negotiate a transfer under the 1983 Rails to Trails Act (see *Heritage*, Dec. 2014). In December 2016, Governor Nixon cut the ribbon to open the western 47-mile segment of the Rock Island from Pleasant Hill in the eastern outskirts of Kansas City to its junction with the Katy Trail at Windsor, and several weeks later at an event at Ameren headquarters in St. Louis celebrated Ameren’s impending donation of the eastern 144-mile segment from Windsor to Beaufort in the western suburbs of St. Louis.

Then in January came a new administration committed to doing its due diligence to examine realistically the costs as well as the benefits of the new trail (see *Heritage*, Sept 2017; and <https://mostateparks.com/rockislandlinecorridor#tabs>).

The reality was that the benefits would accrue largely to communities along the trail and the state as a whole, while the costs threatened to jeopardize the rest of Missouri’s award-winning state park system. Hence the public meetings and comment periods, repeated requests to STB for extensions, and now the effort to see if Missourians will back up their overwhelming enthusiasm for the trail with willingness to help fund it.

## What You Can Do

For more information on how you can contribute to the Rock Island Corridor fundraising efforts, please contact MPA Executive Director Kendra Varns Wallis.

[Kendra.Wallis@missouriparks.org](mailto:Kendra.Wallis@missouriparks.org)

## Trails Champion Darwin Hindman 1933-2019

Missouri lost an extraordinary leader and passionate advocate for trails, parks, and healthy outdoor recreation with the passing June 17, 2019 of Darwin Hindman, a longtime director of the Missouri Parks Association, leader of the Katy Trail Coalition, and Columbia’s longest-serving mayor (1995-2010).

Darwin—Darry to his legions of friends—grew up in Columbia, leading his chums on expeditions along the MKT tracks that led south of town to join the Katy mainline along the Missouri River. After college at Mizzou, he joined the Air Force in 1955 as a B-47 bomber pilot with the Strategic Air Command, and retired from the Reserves as a captain in 1962 after earning his law degree at MU. He married his wife of 59 years, Axie, in 1960, and practiced law in Mexico for six years before opening his own firm in Columbia in 1967.

Beginning at least as early as the 1970s, Hindman became involved in environmental campaigns, including the effort to stop the Meramec dam and the long struggle for the Irish Wilderness. Then came Columbia’s celebrated container deposit ordinance. When the five-cent deposit on beer and soda cans approved by Columbia voters in 1977—having reached the ballot through an initiative petition campaign led by MU students was challenged in court, Hindman volunteered his legal services pro bono. For the next four years, he pitted student testimony against the best attorneys and witnesses Anheuser-Busch and Coca Cola could hire, and won all the way to the Missouri Supreme Court.

During those same years, he led the successful effort for city acquisition of his childhood railway haunts, as Columbia’s development of the 4-mile MKT rail-trail became one of ten national pilots for the new concept. Then came the big chance, when the MKT (Katy) in 1986 announced it would abandon its



199-mile mainline from Sedalia to Machens.

With encouragement from Hindman and Ted Jones, who offered funds toward acquisition, Gov. Ashcroft and DNR immediately filed to acquire it. Vociferous opposition and a lawsuit by Farm Bureau-backed landowners was countered by even stronger support from the Hindman-led Katy Trail Coalition, and the state prevailed. Several years later, in a characteristic act of friendship, Hindman helped with his staunchest opponent’s campaign for county commissioner.

Hindman joined the MPA board at the height of the Katy struggle in 1989, led the early efforts to acquire the Rock Island corridor, then stepped down after he was elected mayor of Columbia in 1995, though he continued to support MPA and co-chaired the Citizens Committee for renewal of the Parks and Soils Sales Tax in both 1996 and 2006. After five mayoral terms he rejoined the MPA board.

As mayor he secured a \$22.5 million federal grant to make Columbia a bicycle and pedestrian-friendly city and was instrumental in the creation of Stevens Lake Park, the Activity and Recreation Center, the city’s Percent for Art policy, a Race Relations Task Force, and trails, trails, extending friendship, respect, and a gigantic smile to all, whether they agreed or disagreed with him.

At his memorial service, his son Skip noted that references to his father had changed from “former mayor” to “beloved former mayor,” and asked, “How does someone live their life so that they become beloved by an entire community?”

## John Karel in Missouri Parks Hall of Fame

Longtime Missouri Parks Association leader and former director of state parks John Karel was inducted into the Missouri Recreation and Parks Hall of Fame at the 2019 annual meeting of the Missouri Park and Recreation Association (MPRA), a statewide organization of park and recreation professionals. In that signal honor now shared by thirty Missourians he joins former state park directors Joe Jaeger and Doug Eiken and longtime MPA leaders Darwin Hindman, Pat Jones, and Leo Drey.

In its citation, MPRA writes that Karel's "vision, passion, perseverance, and love of history have literally changed the landscape of Missouri. His focus of preserving wilderness, managing lands for their natural, cultural, and recreational values, and inspiring others through his leadership and dedication have made him one of the most accomplished parks professionals in the history of our state."

Karel came into key leadership roles in his twenties, as founder and chief strategist of the Missouri Wilderness Coalition, which won designation of eight federal wilderness areas totaling 71,000 acres in Missouri through four separate acts of Congress, and as the state park system's first director of natural history and instigator of the new interagency Missouri Natural Areas Committee and a state Wild Area System. Then in 1979 at age 31 he was appointed director of state parks, where he oversaw the acquisition of ten new resource-rich state parks and historic sites, among them Ha Ha Tonka, Prairie, Weston Bend, Onondaga, Grand Gulf, Deutschheim, and Scott Joplin.

When the bottom fell out during a national financial crisis in the early 1980s and the system's budget fell to less than half what it had been, Karel skillfully positioned the park system for recovery by forging a shared sense of mission undergirded by careful planning, and spurred the establishment in 1982 of a citizen advocacy group, the Missouri Parks Association, to bring greater public understanding of the values at stake in the system. With his assiduous efforts in the state legislature and the support of MPA and other groups it rallied to the cause, the park system secured both citizen enactment of the Parks and Soils Sales Tax and approval of some \$60 million in state bond funds for a major renaissance of the entire system, including basic infrastructure, ten handsome new visitor center/museums, and careful restoration of historic structures and cultural and natural landscapes.

John Karel was also the motive force for MPA's work on the state park book, which began in 1982 but did not reach publication until 1992, by which time he had left state government and joined the MPA board and the team of

authors, penning a third of the essays and offering his penetrating insights to all of them. By this time he had already undertaken another role that would continue for more than

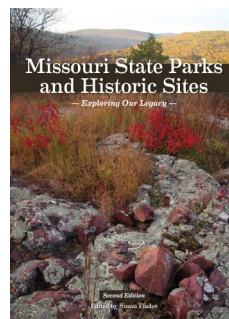


a quarter century as director of St. Louis's Tower Grove Park, which was badly in need of restoration. He began raising funds from the private sector, some \$27 million during his tenure (over and above annual operating funds) and had made enough progress by 1989 for the park to win designation as a National Historic Landmark. His efforts not only increased attendance from fewer than half a million when he began to 2.5 million when he retired, but also had a profound effect on revitalization of neighborhoods surrounding the park.

Overlapping his service with state parks and with Tower Grove Park was his voluntary role as a director and then for eighteen years as president of the L-A-D Foundation, not to mention roles in other local, state, and national non-profits. When Leo and Kay Drey donated their entire Pioneer Forest, at more than 140,000 acres the largest private landholding in Missouri, to the foundation in 2004, it fell to Karel to oversee the development of the board and staff and restructuring of operations to undertake the enormous new responsibilities of running a business within a non-profit foundation. He also oversaw the leasing of some 65 miles of hiking trails in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry to the state park system as well as public recreation policies on other foundation lands.

Now retired and living in Ste. Genevieve, he has become increasingly active in local organizations, helped win Congressional authorization in 2018 of the new Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park, and has restored three historic buildings, two of them derelict, inspiring the whole community in the process. He still serves on the L-A-D and MPA boards and with many other organizations, continuing to inspire all of us with his vision and dedication.

### Give the Gift of State Parks this Holiday Season



*Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites: Exploring Our Legacy* makes a great gift for anyone on your list!

(\$40 for members, \$50 for non-members, plus \$10 for shipping).

Contact MPA Executive Director Kendra Varns Wallis for information on how to order.

[Kendra.Wallis@missouriparks.org](mailto:Kendra.Wallis@missouriparks.org)



Post Office Box 8531  
Kansas City, MO 64114

October 2019

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
COLUMBIA, MO  
PERMIT #286

Return Service Requested

*Rock Island Extension  
Darwin Hindman, John Karel, Debbie Newby*

[www.missouriparksassociation.org](http://www.missouriparksassociation.org)

Meet Your Missouri State Parks Team:

by Sue Holst

## Debbie Newby, Manager, Finger Lakes State Park

When Debbie Newby was growing up in inner city Little Rock, Ark., she was given the opportunity to attend a summer outdoor camp. That experience led to her love of the outdoors and recreation, a love she now helps others discover as manager of Finger Lakes State Park.



way to explore the park's lakes. The lakes also offer boating (electric motors only), fishing, and a designated swim beach.

The off-road trails are for motorcycles, four-wheelers and side-by-sides only. There is also a special youth riding area and a motocross track. A current project is to devel-

Beginning in the first grade, Newby attended the outdoor camp every year, eventually becoming a junior counselor, then counselor teaching outdoor skills to youth. She received a scholarship in basketball to Central Methodist University in Fayette where she also ran track. After graduating with a degree in recreation administration, she got a job at Gold's Gym in Columbia teaching group fitness classes.

She joined the staff of Missouri State Parks in 1996 as assistant at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park.

Although her passion is outdoor recreation, her experience is very diverse. She served eight years in the Army Reserves where she worked as a land surveyor and locomotive operator.

In 2000, Newby became manager of Finger Lakes State Park. She says she enjoys her job "because every

day is different. You don't know what you're going to walk into."

Finger Lakes may be best known for its system of trails in the off-road-vehicle section, but the park offers many other recreational opportunities as well. Newby says she is proudest of the development of the Kelley Branch Mountain Bike Trail, which adds mountain biking and hiking as opportunities at the park. Near the trailhead is a pump track and skills course for mountain bikers.

She is also proud of the new kayaking enterprise, an opportunity that started small but has grown quickly into a very popular recreation at the park. Newby said it started with three used canoes she got from Wakonda State Park. Today the park offers eight canoes, 15 kayaks (with plans to add 15 more) and eight stand-up paddle boards. A water trail has been developed providing a different

op more off-road trails and increase the width of certain trails to accommodate side-by-sides up to 64 inches in width. The park offers a comfortable campground and shady picnic sites. In the future, Newby would like to expand the campground and build a picnic shelter.

When she is not at the park, Newby is still busy. She is a certified kayak instructor, a fitness class instructor, and last year was coach for her daughter Serena's basketball team at Christian Chapel Academy. She also volunteers as the hurdles coach for the summer youth track club. She and her husband Greg and Serena are active in the Columbia Church of Christ and organized a camping trip in September in the church's backyard.

Love for the outdoors and recreation that began in the first grade has never left her and remains in everything she does.