

A Resounding Tax Renewal and Four New Parks!

The last two months have given state park lovers lots to celebrate during the centennial year of the state park system: an unimaginable 80 percent of Missouri voters said YES on November 8 to renewal of the parks and soils sales tax; the long-awaited opening of the Rock Island link to the Katy Trail completed a hiking and biking route across the breadth of the state; and Governor Nixon announced the forthcoming donation from Ameren of another 144 miles of the Rock Island Line east of Windsor for another trail through the northern Ozarks, plus acquisition of land for three new parks in the lower Ozarks. Yet to come, the dedication of Don Robinson State Park in Jefferson County.

Missouri voters proved their love for state parks at the polls with an astounding 80 percent YES vote, including majority votes in every county of the state, for renewal of the one-tenth percent State Parks, Soil and Water Sales Tax, which funds operation of the system. In an election season of upsets, in which well over \$100 million was spent in Missouri alone on statewide office races and ballot issues, somehow the modest \$100,000 campaign of Citizens for Soil, Water, and State Parks managed to break through the chaos.

The tax supports fully 75 percent of the system's operating costs—staff salaries, benefits, water and electricity—leaving only a small amount for maintenance and repair. We still need to find a solution to

plete the trail to Kansas City through cooperative agreements between Pleasant Hill, Jackson County, and various non-governmental groups.



Trail enthusiasts join the governor at the opening of the Rock Island Trail.

the mounting backlog of infrastructure rehabilitation and other capital needs, estimated at more than \$400 million, but for now we celebrate a remarkable public vote of confidence in Missouri State Parks.

On a blustery December 10 with a thin mantle of snow on the ground, nearly a hundred bicyclists and hikers gathered in Pleasant Hill on the outskirts of Kansas City to celebrate the completion of the 47-mile stretch of the Rock Island Trail from Pleasant Hill to its junction with the Katy Trail at Windsor. Plans are already under way to com-

Meanwhile, salvage of the rails is underway on the 144 miles of the Rock Island from Windsor to Beaufort on the outskirts of St. Louis, after which Ameren will donate the rail-banked right-of-way to the state for Rock Island Trail State Park. Development of this spectacular stretch, which includes three tunnels and a mile-long trestle over the Gasconade River, will likely be protracted, but state park officials are encouraging public-private partnerships with communities and organizations to work on various segments that could be opened for use as they are completed.

President's Message by Steve Nagle:

MPA's 34th Annual Gathering at Echo Bluff, October 14-16

We experienced another memorable gathering of our members October 14-16, this time at Echo Bluff, Missouri's newest state park. The week-end was filled with something for everyone, including kayaking on

Sinking Creek, hiking the Laxton Hol-low Trail in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry, viewing elk in the elk restoration zone at Peck Ranch, visiting the old grist mill at enchanting Alley Spring, a hike with Governor Nixon follow-

ing the dedica-
tion of the
new Centen-

nial Trail at Current River State Park, and a tour of the new Echo Bluff State Park via the tram donated by MPA for the new Seniors to Parks program. Families with children enjoyed wading and swimming in crystal Sinking Creek and we all reveled in the view of the bluff and the creek from the deck at the lodge.

Friday evening with perfect October weather we gathered at the lookout pavilion for Dutch oven treats, a bonfire, and music by the local bluegrass band, the Bressler Brothers. After a field trip Saturday morning to showcase other public lands within the orbit of Echo Bluff and a BBQ lunch at Current River State Park, Bill Bryan delivered his annual "State of the Parks" address Saturday afternoon, discussing plans for the state park centennial, work underway or completed at existing parks and other new parks, and the importance of relevancy, diversity, and inclusion in state parks. Ozark National Scenic Riverways Superintendent Larry Johnson reported on the national park system centennial and recent developments at the Riverways, and both fielded numerous questions.

Saturday evening we gathered at the lodge for a social hour, dinner, and an uplifting address by Governor Nixon. MPA took advantage of this opportunity to honor the governor for his dedication to Missouri's outdoor heritage and support of state parks and historic sites by presenting him with a framed picture of—what

else?—Echo Bluff. Also, in recognition of their staunch volunteer support and sponsorship of state park programs, we presented a framed picture in appreciation to Big "O" Tires.



We pledge to you our dedication and allegiance to the mission of Missouri State Parks and the Missouri Parks Association and to keep you informed of our activities and challenges in 2017.

Thank you for all you do in support of Missouri's State Parks and Historic Sites. Wishing you peace and good will for 2017 and hoping to see you enjoying our parks throughout the coming centennial year!

Annual MPA Awards

MPA officers presented MPA's annual Employee of the Year Awards to state park staff at three separate staff conferences held this fall at Echo Bluff in order to allow a larger number of state park staff to experience the new park. In keeping with annual tradition, MPA hosted dinners for staff and presented awards to outstanding park employees before their peers in five different functional categories. The awardees, selected by an MPA committee from nominations submitted by their supervisors or colleagues, receive a plaque and a check. We were pleased to present the 2016 MPA awards to the following outstanding park employees:

Dawn Fredrickson (central office—grants management), was recognized for her leadership and dedication to improving the grants management capability, bringing the section back to full staff and creating new, more efficient grant application processes. She trained and guided staff in improving the Land & Water Conservation Fund and Recreational Trails programs, which benefit local communities, and in producing the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), used by governments at local, state, and federal levels, and assisted with the annual Katy Trail ride and other projects. State Parks is fortunate to have

(See "MPA Awards" on Page 6)

("Four New Parks" from Page 1)

The three new parks in southern Missouri—Eleven Point State Park in Oregon County (4,167 acres), Bryant Creek State Park in Douglas County (2,917 acres), and Ozark Mountain State Park in Taney County (1,011 acres)—were the subject of a news release from Gov. Nixon's office on December 16, though the largest, with six miles of frontage along the Eleven Point National Scenic River, had been generally known (see "Promise and Perils of New Parks," *Heritage*, December

eral and state trustees were intended for the primary purpose of land acquisition and ecosystem restoration. Each of the three parks contains landscape features identified through public meetings and staff research as natural history gaps in the 1992 *Expansion Plan* for the park system and in the subsequent *Missing Masterpieces* survey of 2004, and they are all in a part of the state with very little other park land. Park naturalists and officials of partner agencies and organizations are excited about the underlying geological features and natural heritage values in the lands acquired and their potential for meaningful restoration to outstanding resource-based state parks.

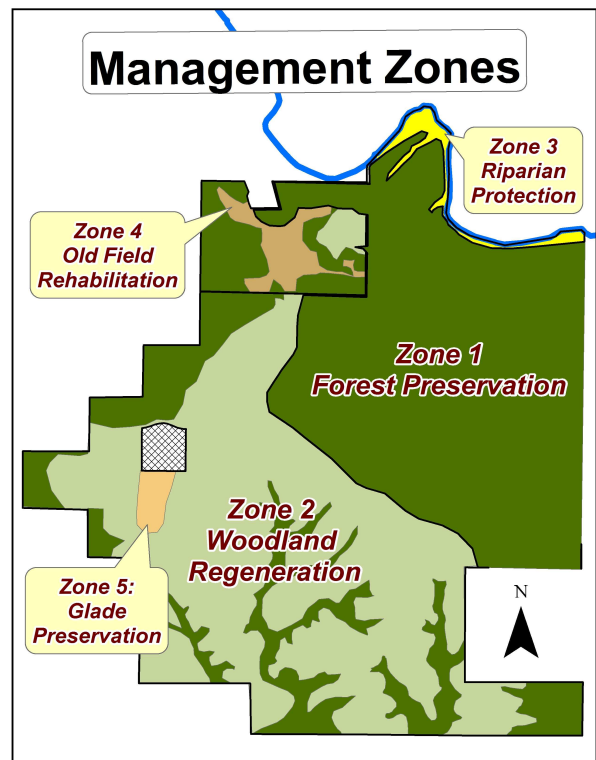
While the Eleven Point lands were acquired with NRD funds through a settlement resulting from the bankruptcy of the lead-mining giant ASARCO, the Bryant Creek and

Ozark Mountain lands were acquired through a settlement case involving groundwater pollution by Tronox LLC and Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, and hence are intended to preserve and restore groundwater

recharge areas.

The Bryant Creek tracts on either side of County Route N southeast of Ava protect the steeply dissected river hills that feed the groundwater and springs of Bryant Creek, a state outstanding resource water and major tributary to the North Fork River. The north boundary includes a 1.7-mile reach of the creek lined with stunning bluffs, a high quality

(See "Four New Parks" on Page 4)



Restoration zones in Bryant Creek State Park.



Coon Den Bluff overlooks Bryant Creek.

2015, which discusses the ensuing political controversies). All three were acquired largely with federal funds from natural resource damage (NRD) settlements related to mining and other polluting activity in Missouri. While the bulk of the settlement funds were allocated to remediate hazards in the damaged sites, a portion was also intended by the CERCLA law, or Superfund (1980), to compensate the general public for lost natural resource values in the general ecological region of the damages.

Thus all three new parks for which funds were approved by fed-

erate and state trustees were intended for the primary purpose of land acquisition and ecosystem restoration. Each of the three parks contains landscape features identified through public meetings and staff research as natural history gaps in the 1992 *Expansion Plan* for the park system and in the subsequent *Missing Masterpieces* survey of 2004, and they are all in a part of the state with very little other park land. Park naturalists and officials of partner agencies and organizations are excited about the underlying geological features and natural heritage values in the lands acquired and their potential for meaningful restoration to outstanding resource-based state parks.



Pine Woods at Bryant Creek State Park.

(*"Four New Parks" from Page 3*) canebrake, springs, and well-developed riparian forest. Most of the north half of the property has mature white oak, black oak, and shortleaf pine, with a biologically rich native understory. Much of the southern half was logged about a dozen years ago and then, after years of drouth, burned by a large wildfire, but the soils and native understory are still largely intact, providing excellent potential for restoration of shortleaf pine woodland that characterized the area historically and is thought by scientists to be appropriate in a warming climate.

The Ozark Mountain property northwest of Branson along Highway 465 features five largely open 400-foot tall rounded hilltops known to ecologists as White River Glades, but in local parlance "bald knobs." They are highly evocative of the *Shepherd of the Hills* country and to many people nationwide represent the essence of the Ozarks, with natural grasslands, oak savanna and woodland as well as springs, losing streams, and related groundwater resources. The park is traversed by 2.2 miles of Roark Creek, which then flows through a corner of the adjacent 1,500-acre Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area to rapidly urbanizing Branson and into Lake Taneycomo.

Long operated as a horse and cattle ranch, the tract retains remnants of its distinctive native prairie and oak woodland flora and fauna; it also has significant encroachment by red cedar and exotic invasives, but it has excellent potential for restoration of both uplands and bottomlands and, in concert with the Henning area, recovery of many rare and distinctive species.

The Eleven Point property of course is most noted for its more than six miles of frontage on a national scenic river administered by the Mark Twain National Forest, so restoration of the river corridor will be a major priority and will require cooperation with the Forest Service and other public and private partners. The property also has areas of open pasture that will benefit from reestablishment of native grasses. And to a greater extent than the

other new parks, it has significant cultural resources, both native American and recent, including a 1920s Ozark Giraffe-style rock ranch house characteristic of the region, in which the Beatles stayed when they disappeared for several



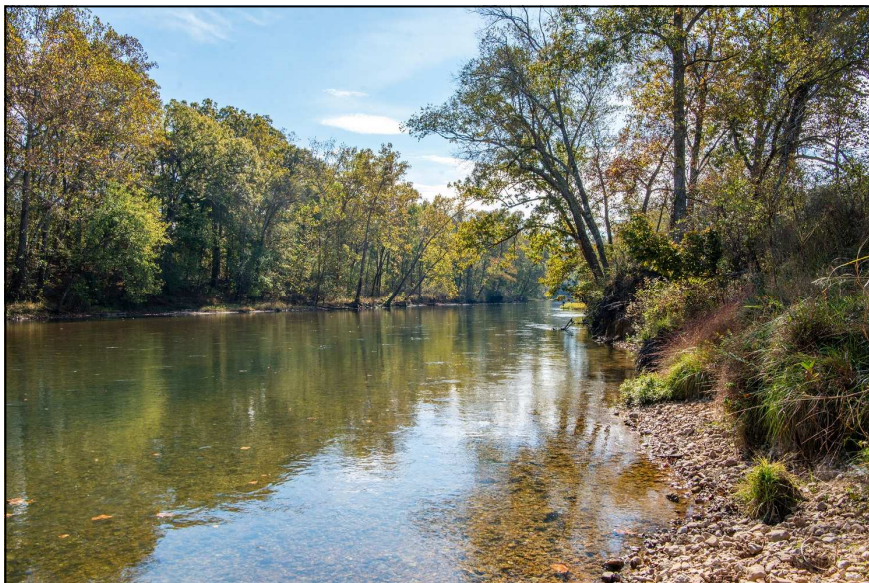
Portion of a "bald knob" at Ozark Mountain State Park..

days during their first American tour in 1964.

These new park projects include NRD funding for restoration as well as acquisition. Park staff are already at work with various partners on natural resource restoration and management plans for each park, including baseline biological surveys, work plans and timelines, monitoring protocols, and benchmarks for implementing adaptive

management. Concurrent with these efforts, likely within the coming year, park officials will be engaging the public in conceptual develop-

River view
at Eleven
Point State
Park.



ment planning for each park to determine public uses, facilities, and layout. Since funding for facilities is decidedly limited in the system as a whole, new visitor facilities will likely be quite limited at the start, except as potential for local cooperative efforts emerges, and in any case in keeping with the resource preservation purposes of the parks. Guided hikes have already been announced at each park in the first

week of January, and the lands will probably be open to the public very soon, even before planning is completed, for backcountry hiking and other day use.

Funds from various NRD settlements have also been approved for important additions to several pre-existing state parks, including Bennett Spring, Roaring River, Pershing, Taum Sauk, and Johnson's Shut-Ins, all in biological hotspots with great restoration potential. Most significant, perhaps, are long-sought tracts that connect the Gogins Mountain Wild Area in Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park in Reynolds County with the Bell Mountain Wilderness in the Mark Twain National Forest in Iron County. In all, the settlements have resulted in the addition of more than 12,000 acres to the state park system for the benefit of Missourians, and there may be more to come.

It is fortuitous that funds became available from NRD settlements at the same time as Governor Nixon and DNR and state park officials were assessing the progress of the park system and seeking to add new lands in preparation for its centennial in 2017. Governor Ashcroft, DNR, and park officials had done much the same thing prior to the system's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1992, when they added five new parks and additional acreage to existing parks totaling some 17,000 acres, using a variety of creative partnerships.

For all the creativity and superb management exercised in the development of Missouri's state park system over the years, we should remember also the generosity of individual Missourians and cooperation with other units of government that has resulted in well over half of all state park units and acreage since the system's establishment. As

Heritage goes to press, we await word of the official opening of Don Robinson State Park in the St. Louis suburbs of Jefferson County. The park was a bequest to the state of 843 extraordinary acres valued at more than \$5 million at Robinson's death in 2012, one of the most valuable gifts in the century-long history of the system.

To top off the year, the governor's office announced that the goal of increasing annual visits to Missouri State Parks to twenty million by 2020 was topped in November 2016, another sign of Missourians' love for their parks.

Park Briefs

Sara Parker Pauley resigned in October after six eventful years as director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to accept a new role as director of the Missouri Department of Conservation. She was hailed at a farewell celebration October 28 for her remarkable vision, her leadership and support for her staff, and even as Supergirl. We all wish her well in her new endeavor and look forward to more good things to come.

Harry Bozoian, with a background in the attorney general's office and elsewhere in state government, was appointed to succeed her.

Several bills related to state parks similar to those that failed to pass in the 2016 legislative session have already been prefiled for the 2017 session, so MPA expects another challenging year.

Joe Jaeger, who served 15 years as director of state parks, died in May 2016 at age 97. He served two stints, 1955-63 and 1966-73, separated by a U.S. State Department appointment to help Jordan develop its park system. He was a politically astute leader known for his efforts to professionalize the state park staff and develop state historic sites and historic preservation in Missouri.

Denny Bopp Retires *by John Karel*

At the end of this year, state park Deputy Director Dennis R. Bopp will retire following 42 years of service. No one in state parks knows our system better than "Denny," as he is known to all, and few, if any, are held in higher regard. Denny has held virtually every line position in the field and in the central office, and done so with energy, insight, compassion, and distinction. He is well known and universally admired by his fellow park employees and many outside the agency who have had the opportunity to work with him.

Of particular interest to MPA members, Denny has always embodied the values that we strive to encourage among park staff: enthusiasm, skill, dedication, and above all, personal and professional integrity. Missouri's park system is a national leader for many reasons, but for no reason more than the excellence of its career staff. There has been no individual who personifies that excellence better than Denny Bopp. We thank and congratulate Denny for a splendid career, and sincerely wish for him a long and deeply satisfying retirement.





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(“MPA Awards” from Page 2)

Dawn with all her passion and dedication.

Anna Persell (facility manager—Crowder SP), who leads by example, can be found working in the park all times of the day, often starting before sunrise and finishing after sunset. She supports and motivates her staff by pitching in wherever needed, whether that be leading camp-ground or



children's programs, assisting with 4 H, conducting special events and hikes, or emptying trash cans and cleaning restrooms. She helps with prescribed burns and events at other parks and is also heavily involved with projects and committees statewide, making our park system better and more efficient.

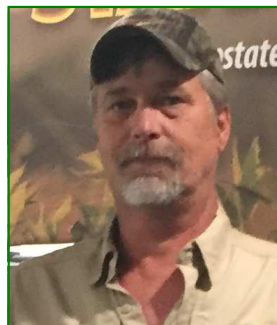
Steve Schell (interpreter—Trail of Tears SP), a former Conservation Department employee with a focus on the Mississippi River, uses his knowledge to educate visitors about water quality, fish species, invertebrates, and the importance of side channels. He uses his knowledge of the Cherokee Removal and park

history to interact with the sensitivity required for visiting Cherokee



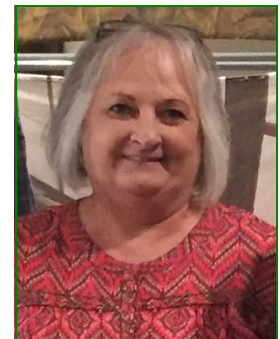
and previous landowners. He has also been extremely committed to natural resource stewardship, especially prescribed fire, not only at Trail of Tears but at Taum Sauk, Johnson's Shut-Ins, and the new Don Robinson SP, volunteering for the hottest, steepest, and most difficult work.

Jeff Williamson (maintenance & construction—Bootheel units) was honored for his efforts to learn important period skills to restore the Hunter-Dawson House, including hanging wallpaper and regraining baseboards, stairway elements, doors and frames, taking time to research and practice the processes to ensure historical accuracy. He has also been effective in supervising the maintenance of Morris, Big Oak Tree, and Towosahgy state parks.



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Joy Schuelke (field—Bennett Spring), senior office support assistant, voluntarily stepped up to fill the void of four vacant staff positions for nearly six of the busiest months, prioritizing her own daily tasks, recruiting volunteers, directing youth corps workers, managing schedules, and making herself available to seasonal staff and volunteers for questions and assistance during her own time off. She has remained professional and positive during a multitude of stressful circumstances as she maintains the continuity of a quality experience for park visitors.



As a postscript to our review of the five 2016 MPA awardees, we note that each nominee, and indeed all parks staff, deserve our respect and deep appreciation for their dedication and service to our award-winning system of state parks and historic sites. We congratulate you on a job well done!