

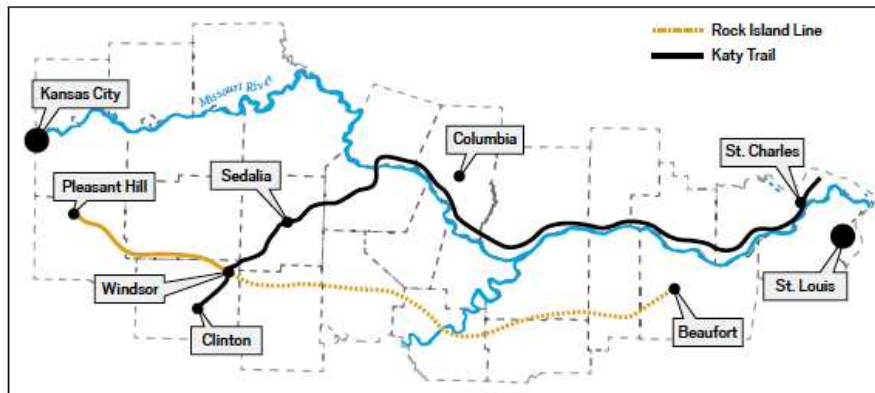
New Parks Under Review

In a flurry of activity last December and early January, Governor Nixon's office announced the establishment of five new state parks (see *Heritage*, December 2016). At three of them—Eleven Point, Bryant Creek, and Ozark Mountain—state park staff held guided hikes the first weekend of January, each attended by 60-80 mostly enthusiastic local residents, to introduce the parks and solicit comments regarding development.

Shortly after the western stretch of the Rock Island from its junction with the Katy Trail junction at Windsor to Pleasant Hill on the outskirts of Kansas City was officially opened in December, an event was held at Ameren offices in St. Louis amidst state officials, civic leaders, and trail supporters to announce Ameren's intent to donate its 144-mile Rock Island right-of-way from Windsor east to Beaufort to the state after rail salvage was completed in 2017. And only days before new governor Eric Greitens's inauguration, land previously acquired as an addition to Taum Sauk Mountain State Park was announced as the new Jay Nixon State Park.

The fate of the new parks seemed to hang in the balance during the legislative session, as irritated lawmakers introduced some two dozen bills to force the sale of some of the new parks, rename Nixon Park, prevent new land acquisitions, or otherwise

hobble the system (see *Heritage*, June 2017). The session ended with no major damage, and personable new State Park Director Ben Ellis took over in June, but park supporters continue to be concerned as the future of the new parks remains murky at best.



Ominous, to some, was DNR's solicitation of public comment on whether the state should enter into an official Interim Trail Use Agreement under the federal Rails-to-Trails Act and take possession of the corridor, an intimation that the Greitens administration might *not* accept the trail. The new state park officials explained that they were simply doing due diligence on a very expensive project that they provisionally estimated could cost well over \$50 million.

The Missouri Bicycle Federation, Missouri Rock Island Trail, and the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy held an August 11 rally on the steps of the capitol at which public officials and business leaders from communities along the route and hundreds of others touted the "once-in-history" opportunity for the trail with its multi-million dollar economic impact.

The Missouri Parks Association has long supported the addition of the

Rock Island to the state park system and strongly encourages DNR and State Parks to take possession of the corridor in order to secure it for the future. But MPA also recognizes higher priorities in existing parks for any available state funds, so that any

development of trail segments would likely require partnerships with local governments or organizations.

Recently there have been rumblings in various media that the state might be

considering the sale of some of the new park lands, since Nixon Park has been closed (no surprise there, as it has no legal road access and no trails) and the state park website announces "Park Closed" for the other new parks (indeed, they had never been opened). Director Ben Ellis has been reported as saying the agency is looking at all options, and is concerned about maintenance and repair of existing parks.

Leaders of MPA have on many occasions conveyed to state park and DNR officials the association's strong support of the new parks, which are high quality lands in areas where the state has long sought new parks. We have indicated we would oppose any attempted sale, which we do not believe would be legal in any case. But MPA does not have any inside information, though we expect the subject to surface at our annual meeting in October. Come join us, and stay tuned.

President's Message by Steve Nagle:

Stewardship of our State Parks

The *Centennial Passport* beckons us to celebrate 100 years of protecting and interpreting Missouri's exceptional natural and cultural resources and to get out to enjoy the outstanding recreational opportunities found in our parks. Outdoor recreation is a primary motivator for many park visitors, but let us pause to consider that the quality of our award-winning state park system owes most to the remarkably diverse natural and cultural resources our parks and historic sites protect and interpret and the careful, often pace-setting stewardship they have received from devoted park staff over the years.

In other words, the strength of our park system rests on a proverbial three-legged stool: preservation and interpretation of the finest examples of Missouri's natural resources and its most outstanding cultural landmarks as well as provision of healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities for all Missourians and visitors to the state. This is the three-fold mission of our state park system that MPA from its origins 35 years ago has been committed to defend.

Stewardship is a broad subject with many-faceted details, including an intimate knowledge of geology, soils, waters, plants and animals, integrated through the science of ecology; a deep understanding of history and respect for cultural and natural diversity; and sustained practice of the arts of management. It is easy to assume that simply saving outstanding resources in public parks is enough. But decades of exclusion of fire from fire-evolved landscapes, increased pressures of development and use, invasion of exotic species, and the challenges of climate change pose ever-increasing threats. I think it is vital for all of us to be sensitive to these threats and to embrace proactive stewardship of both natural and cultural resources in our parks during this centennial year and into the future.

To give you a "heads up," be sure not to miss an exciting and informative panel discussion of stew-

ardship needs featuring key leaders of park stewardship efforts over the past four decades at our annual MPA gathering at Arrow Rock. It will take place during our Saturday morning program following the State of the Parks message.

As an example of the importance of stewardship of natural and cultural resources, we recently visited Graham Cave State Park and of course got a Passport stamp. Graham Cave, located in the hills above the

Loutre River in Montgomery County with easy access off I-70, exemplifies how well state park staff and volunteers have labored to manage both cultural and natural resources. The cave was the first archaeological site in the nation to be designated a National Historic Landmark, but its 10,000-year accumulation of cultural deposits

had been degraded by burrowing animals and erosion, necessitating a stabilization program.

The woodlands and glades of the park, some of the best in Missouri, have also benefitted greatly from removal of invasive cedar and bush honeysuckle, careful prescribed fire, and other stewardship efforts. Today, the cave is well protected and interpreted and the trails are in tiptop shape, taking visitors through a beautifully diverse landscape characteristic of that inhabited by humans who sheltered in the cave for ten millennia.

Autumn soon will beckon many of us to visit our favorite parks to enjoy the season of color and cooler temperatures. Being closer to nature will feed our souls, and while we camp, hike, picnic, fish and float, let's also appreciate, say thanks, and maybe even volunteer for the work it takes to be good stewards of the resources that bring such quality to our parks and joy to our recreation. Can't wait to see you all at the 35th annual MPA gathering October 6-8 at Arrow Rock, where we will see and learn about other examples of cultural and natural resource stewardship.



Graham Cave by Steve Nagle



Graham Cave Natural Area by Bruce Schuette

MPA 35th Annual Gathering at Arrow Rock, October 6-8, 2017

Join us at Arrow Rock, Missouri's oldest state park and a National Historic Landmark, as we celebrate the centennial of Missouri State Parks. We will have a tram tour on the Katy Trail (on the MPA Seniors to Parks tram), an in-depth tour of Arrow Rock including Black cultural sites, and an optional Sunday visit to the American Indian Cultural Center and sites at nearby Van Meter SP, as well as the annual State of the Parks address by new MSP director Ben Ellis and a special panel on Stewardship for the Next Century Saturday morning. Our Centennial dinner that evening is at the Huston Tavern, the very first facility in the park system.

Book your own lodging: go to www.arrowrock.org/directory.php and scroll down to lodging (B&Bs) or book a motel room in Boonville or Marshall, each about 13 miles away; Holiday Inn Express at I-70 Exit 101 in Boonville offers an MPA rate at \$139/night; call 660-882-6882 by September 21. Campsites at Arrow Rock are being held for MPA until September 25; call 660-837-3330 from 9am-4pm. **Also note the September 25 cut-off date for registration with meals** (Friday reception with food, Saturday lunch and dinner).

Friday, October 6

- 1-4pm** Katy Trail tour on the MPA Seniors to Parks tram (from north end of the Boonville Bridge on Hwy 87/B/5, turn west on Hwy. 87 about a half mile to the Katy Trail parking area on the right)
5-6:30pm Registration: Huston Tavern
6-8pm Reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres: Huston Tavern Lawn

Saturday, October 7

- Breakfast on your own
8:45-10am Welcome to Arrow Rock: MPA Pres. Steve Nagle and Site manager Mike Dickey (SP Visitor Center)
 State of the Parks Address and discussion: Ben Ellis, Director of State Parks
10:30-12n Park Stewardship for the Next Century: panel with Ken McCarty, John Karel, and Paul Nelson
12n-1pm Box lunch at park pavilion (near visitor center)
1-4pm Behind-the-scenes tour of Arrow Rock: Mike Dickey, Sandy Selby (leave from pavilion)
5:30-6:30pm Happy hour: Tavern lawn
6:30-9pm Dinner and program (Governor Eric Greitens invited)

Sunday, October 8

- 7-8am** Breakfast on your own
8:30am Annual meeting of members, including UPOP & Seniors to Parks reports: Visitor Center
9:30am Meeting of MPA board of directors (all are welcome to attend)
12:00n Adjourn
1:30pm Van Meter State Park & American Indian Cultural Center (meet at Van Meter Visitor Center)

Flat Rate Registration with Event Counts for Planning

Name(s) _____ Full (meals, tours) _____persons@\$65 \$_____
 Address _____ Children (to age 10) _____persons@\$40 \$_____
 Phone _____ Email _____ TOTAL \$_____

Event Counts:

#Persons_____Friday Tram Tour on Katy Trail #Persons_____Saturday Box Lunch
 #Persons_____Friday Evening Reception with food #Persons_____Saturday Dinner

Make check payable to **Missouri Parks Association** and mail with form **postmarked by September 25** to Marian Fleischmann, MPA Manager, 32875 Mount Hope Rd., California MO 65018. Registration is also available on-line at the MPA website: <http://parks.missouri.org>. For questions email Marian: marianm8084@gmail.com.



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*New Parks Under Review
Stewardship in State Parks
Meet with MPA Oct. 6-8 at Arrow Rock*

<http://parks.missouri.org>

Total Eclipse in State Parks

by Jo Schaper:

August 21, 2017 just might have seen the greatest attendance of any day in the history of Missouri's state parks. Forty-two parks and historic sites were in the zone of totality from Big Lake north of St. Joseph to Felix Valle in Ste. Genevieve. It was the first total eclipse of the sun to cross the state since 1869 and the first in central Missouri since 1442, a half century before Columbus reached American shores.

Park staff statewide began preparing two years ago, studying eclipse science and planning special events and multiple viewing areas at most parks in the zone. By eclipse weekend, every campground in the zone of totality was full, and staff guided desperate people to overflow areas. More than 4,000 people packed the south lawn of the State Capitol and thousands more spilled onto nearby streets, hosted by Missouri State Museum and Jefferson Landing staff and volunteers plus

staff of other city organizations. Their advance planning paid off when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) picked Jefferson City early in 2017 to be one of their seven live video and computer streaming sites, complete with retired astronauts and other special speakers.

Tiny Arrow Rock, population 79, hosted more than 6,000 visitors, and Rock Bridge State Park more than 2,500. Dozens joined naturalist Roxie Campbell on her "Journey with the Sun across the Gans Creek Wild Area," with its bluff top views. Park staff accompanied 500 bikers on the Katy Trail from Rocheport to

Jefferson City, but more than 180 miles of the trail from Sedalia to the outskirts of St. Louis welcomed visitors to totality.

A website with hashtag #getyoureclipseonrt66, in the midst of Route 66 and five other state parks along the Meramec River, had 150,000 hits, including hits from 80 different nations, and parking lots in parks everywhere in the zone re-

vealed license plates from all over the country. Missouri State Parks made lots of new friends on August 21.

Although total eclipses are moderately rare over any particular region, state parks in Oregon, Shannon, Reynolds, Iron, Madison, Ste. Genevieve, Cape Girardeau, Wayne, and New Madrid counties will get another shot at one on April 8, 2024, with an eclipse that will go from southwest to northeast and last twice as long, more than four minutes along the midline. Twenty-two state parks will be under totality in 2024, so get your reservations in early.



Corona during eclipse on Route 66 by Jo Schaper