

Ste. Genevieve National Historic Park is Now Law!

A National Park Service presence in Ste. Genevieve was proposed at least as early as the 1930s, but local folks did not much trust the federal government, so the idea went nowhere. Nor did it advance when refloated numerous times since then. By the turn of the 21st century, however, efforts of the Foundation for Res-



The 1792 Amoureux House will anchor the new National Historic Park.

toration of Ste. Genevieve and others had begun to bear fruit, as citizens and public officials began to

realize that the imprimatur of the National Park Service could bring more attention—and more visi-

tors—to Ste. Genevieve. But first it would be necessary to secure an NPS study of the area, State Park Director Doug Eiken explained to advocates.

Spurred by a number of Francophiles, Senator Kit Bond introduced the first bill for a French Colonial Heritage Study Act in late

2001, followed by other bills in 2003 and 2005. Somewhere along the way state park officials

(See "Ste. Genevieve" on Page 6)

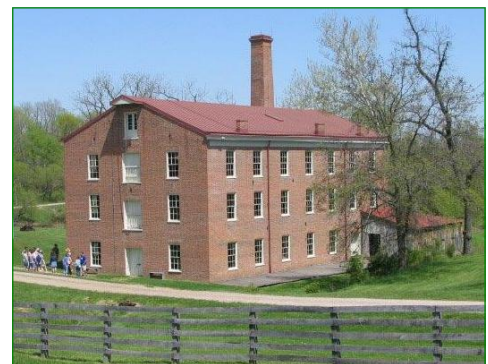
MPA to Gather at Watkins Mill October 5-7

Plan now to attend MPA's 36th annual gathering at Watkins Mill State Historic Site and Park October 5-7. The mill is a National Historic Landmark, the most intact, best preserved 19th century textile factory in the nation, and we will have a behind-the-scenes tour, so this is not to miss. Lodging will be at the historic Elms Hotel and Spa in Excelsior Springs, where a block of rooms at a special rate of \$149 is being held for MPA until September 14, so book your rooms now by calling 1-816-630-5500 or 1-800-THE-ELMS and ask for the MPA rate. There are also motels in the vicinity and a fine campground at Watkins Mill.

For those arriving early, there will be a special tour at Confederate Memorial SHS at 1pm with discussion of an issue regarding removal of Confederate statues. You can then visit nearby Battle of Lexington SHS and its fine museum before crossing the river en route to The Elms, where we plan a social with heavy hors d'oeuvres and possible program.

Saturday we meet at 8:30 at the visitor center at Watkins Mill for the annual state of the parks address by Ben Ellis and a panel on cultural

resource stewardship (a complement to the panel on natural resources last year). Then the tour of the mill, historic site, and park followed by our annual dinner. Sunday morning's annual members and board meetings will begin at 8:30, likely at The Elms. If you have time before heading home, be sure to visit nearby Weston Bend or Wallace State Parks. Registration will be available in August, but reserve your lodging now.



Watkins Mill State Historic Site.

Meet your Missouri State Parks Team by Sue Holst

Matt Carletti – Superintendent, Weston Bend State Park

For Matt Carletti, serving as superintendent at Weston Bend State Park is a natural fit. It offers many of the things he is passionate about – a stunning natural environment, ties to history, and outstanding opportunities for recreation. These are the same elements that make Weston Bend State Park a popular state park for visitors.

Located on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River in northwest Missouri, the area's history includes an association with Lewis and Clark Expedition's 1804 river journey and the nearby town of Weston, which was once recognized as the largest hemp port in the world. Five tobacco barns in the park serve as reminders of another once-thriving industry.

The area's history was a natural draw for Carletti, who earned a degree in history from William Jewell College in Liberty. His experience includes work at a living history farm in Urbandale, Iowa, as well as work at Watkins Mill State Park and Historic Site, Mark Twain State Park and Lewis and Clark State Park, which he continues to oversee.

When he came to Weston Bend in 2011, Carletti also embraced the park's other aspects, including a rugged river hills landscape that offered plenty of recreational opportunities. Today, the park offers eight hiking and bicycling trails and Carletti's goal is to connect all eight of them to form one 10-mile loop. The park features a popular modern campground, and its location along the river makes it a world-class birding area, drawing birders from across the Midwest.

The park also includes picnic areas and shelters. The Bee Creek Shelter, a converted tobacco barn, is an enclosed shelter that can accommodate 125 guests. Popular for weddings and reunions, the shelter is one of the highest grossing shelters in the state park system. To accommodate its popularity, the park has begun reserving it two years in advance. As of March, the shelter had already been booked every weekend in 2018 and part of 2019.

When Carletti first came to Weston Bend, he began asking visitors and the commu-

nity what recreational feature should be added to the park. The overwhelming answer was a dog park. With assistance from the city of Weston Bend and Platte County Parks and Recreation, the first dog park in the Missouri state park system was developed. Carletti says the dog park has become very popular and brings in people who would not otherwise visit the park.

Weston Bend State Park also serves as home to Carletti's family – his wife Martha, who is a professor at Benedictine College in Atkinson, Kansas, and their children, Meg, eleven, Kate, eight, and Zack, five. Carletti hopes the park serves as his home into the future. "I like the people I work with and I enjoy working for state parks. Plus, there are many more projects I want to complete here to make the park even better."

Matt Carletti demonstrates how an apple cider press works. In the early 1900s the Harpst family had an apple orchard in the vicinity of the current Harpst Trail. The fall event is held in conjunction with Weston's Applefest.



Another Strange and Trying Legislative Session

Despite all the turmoil of legislative investigations and lawsuits against the governor throughout the session, many observers concluded that the Missouri General Assembly was more productive this year than in the previous few years. But it was a trying year again for state parks.

Last year some two dozen bills to hobble the parks were introduced into the session, but only one made it to the governor's signature in the general disfunction that limited the number of total bills passed. Most of the same bills were introduced again this year. But after the appointment last July of new park director Ben Ellis and his assiduous efforts to meet with key legislators to discuss their concerns and to provide ample background materials for all members, very few of the bills even won a hearing and the atmosphere regarding parks seemed calm and even supportive.

Ironically, the strangest series of events late in the session was triggered by what DNR Director Carol Comer apparently considered an olive branch to legislators. She asked them for their approval of an item in HB 2006, the operating budget for parks and other conservation agencies, authorizing DNR to refund \$574,372 currently residing in the State Park Earnings Fund to the Natural Resource Damages Fund in the federal treasury. The monies had been granted to state parks for ecological restoration in sev-

eral of the new state parks acquired by former Governor Nixon with grant money from the same source.

The overwhelming expression of public support for the new parks in local hearings in fall 2017 likely persuaded the Greitens administration not to try to sell or otherwise dispose of the new parks, as a few legislators had been demanding, so DNR officials were now offering to return the only federal grant funds remaining unspent, those intended for restoration. The legally required restoration could still be accomplished by park stewards without the funds, they said, though park supporters feared the money would come instead from funds slated for

repair, maintenance, and stewardship at other parks.

The House of Representatives approved the budget bill without any discussion of the item, and likely with next to no one even knowing about the proposed refund. When the bill reached the Senate, park supporters and their lobbyists talked with Appropriations Committee members or staff, none of whom knew anything about the refund; their reaction: why give back money that state parks so obviously needed? At the committee hearing, however, the chair and a few senators pulled back from their microphones for a few seconds to say something inaudible, after which the chair indicated they would be going with the DNR request.

And then an even stranger development. When the Senate committee's substitute for HB 2006 was released the next week, the House language authorizing the refund of the \$574,372 (Sec. 6.310) had been deleted but the \$574,372 had now mysteriously migrated to the Historic Preservation Revolving Fund (Sec. 6.285), which is in DNR but not in state parks and from which an equal amount of general General Revenue (GR) was removed.

When the bill was taken up on the Senate floor later that same day, an amendment intended to solve the problem by restoring the House language was approved; but it turned out that Sec. 6.310 from the House version had indeed been restored but the Senate's wording of Sec.



MPA President Deb Schnack at our table for Conservation Day at the Capitol.

(See "Legislative" on Page 4)

("Legislative" from Page 3)

6.285 had not been changed. Thus, the \$574,372 granted to the park division for ecological restoration was now appropriated for two purposes: it was authorized for refund to the federal treasury and it replaced general revenue in the Historic Preservation Fund. It was a double hit to the state park budget!

To park supporters, this all seemed highly irregular, baffling, probably illegal, and foreboding for the park system. No one they asked could explain how this chain of events had transpired, whether it was even intended, by whom, why, or where the GR thus scavenged had gone. MPA leaders discovered that the general revenue intended for the Historic Preservation Revolving Fund (HPRF) was not ordinary GR that could be appropriated at will, but it was from a special fund—the Athletes and Entertainers Tax Fund—dedicated by statute since 1994 to several entities, of which HPRF was designated for ten percent annually. Moreover, GR once stripped from a budget is historically almost never regained, meaning that either HPRF could lose critical base funding or the Park Division could be on the hook to fund HPRF on into the future.

The only recourse was the conference committee on the budget, comprised of selected members of the house and senate committees. So park supporters and lobbyists again made the rounds of members to explain the imbroglio, and again virtually all agreed it had to be rectified and that they would support the original House version. But

when the conference group met, the chair asked that the Senate version be accepted, and it was approved. Again, no one could explain why, except for the chair's vague assurance that state parks would still have flexibility whether to refund the \$574,372 to the federal government and whether to take it from Historic Preservation. Park and historic preservation supporters surmised that the chair or someone saw a chance to garner some extra GR, but no one could (or would) say where the GR went.

After the session, park officials indicated that the \$574,372 would in fact be returned to the federal fund from which it had come, unless Gov. Mike Parson line-item vetoes the authorization. There is apparently enough GR remaining in the Historic Preservation Fund from the previous appropriation to make it unlikely to have to draw from state park funds in the coming fiscal year. Beyond fiscal 2019, however, there will not be enough GR and park funds will be in jeopardy.

* * * * *

Language from several other park-related bills that seemed

stalled showed up late in the session in omnibus bills that were approved. These included a measure (in SB 659) requiring DNR to report annually to the General Assembly regarding all maintenance, repair, and construction at each state park and historic site, along with revenue generated by each unit. This is information recorded annually in any case, so it is not considered a burden on state parks. A measure requiring the park division to maintain fencing along the Rock Island Trail from the Park Earnings Fund, which had caused concern in a similar 2017 bill because it put the entire responsibility on state parks, was changed this year to be more in line with existing policy for the Katy Trail based on partnership with landowners; in that form it passed as part of SB 782.

The State Historic Preservation Office, which lost more than \$.5 million in GR funding, also saw the cap on its Historic Preservation Tax Credits reduced from \$140 to \$90 million a year (SB 590). Also vexing, an amendment to the budget bill for maintenance and repair (HR 2018) appropriated \$.5 million from the Park Earnings Fund for



The swimming beach at Cuivre River State Park. Who needs a pool?

MPA Briefs

repair of a 1930s-era swimming pool in Cuivre River State Park; but the pool is too decrepit to be repaired and the park has a superb swimming beach, so the money will likely not be spent. More concerning was the deletion, late in the process, of “land acquisition” from the authorized purposes of two of the capital improvement bills and a cap of 20 acres on adjacent purchases for existing parks in the third bill (HB 2017).

On the plus side, millions of dollars in state park funds in a 2017 budget bill, which in the end was scuttled in order to balance the state budget (see *Heritage*, June 2017), were added to park funds available this year for maintenance and repair for a total of \$14 million, considerably more than usual. As a result, parks throughout the state can look forward to work on at least some of their longstanding needs. An appropriation of \$150,000 for a much-needed hydrologic study at Big Oak Tree State Park was also added.

Another plus, especially for Ste. Genevieve, is language added late in the session to an omnibus bill for land transfers authorizing transfer of several state park properties to the National Park Service for the newly approved Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park (see article on p. 1). In the end, state parks were both victim and beneficiary of strange and irregular legislative action, both state and federal.

Meanwhile, the constitutionality of a bill (SB 35) passed by the Missouri General Assembly in 2017 regarding acquisition of land for state parks is being challenged in a lawsuit filed in Cole County Circuit Court on May 17. The suit filed by Great Rivers Environmental Law Center on behalf of Missouri Coalition for the Environment contends that the bill imposes requirements on DNR not imposed on other state agencies. Stay tuned.

MPA Seeks an Executive Director

The Missouri Parks Association, which since its inception in 1982 has been operated almost entirely by volunteers, has grown to a point that the board of directors feels that hiring an executive director to help take it to the next level is a necessary step. The position was announced in May with a June 16 date for beginning to review candidates, but the association will continue to accept applications until the position is filled.

At this stage MPA seeks someone who would work as a contractor from home or other remote location with his or her own office equipment. The first prerequisite is knowledge of and a passion for the Missouri State Park System. For more information on qualities, qualifications, and services for which MPA seeks to contract see the MPA website, <http://parks.missouri.org> or email MPA President Deborah Schnack, deb-don49@aol.com. If you know someone who might be interested, please inform them of this position.

Member Meetup

MPA board member Lisa Groshong of Columbia organized a new event aiming to bring MPA members and prospective members together at a local state park for a fun day of learning, fellowship, and recreation. The event was held on a beautiful April Saturday at Finger Lakes State Park north of Columbia and attracted the target number of about 20 participants of a mix of ages and interests. Facility head Debbie Newby introduced them to the park fashioned out of strip-mined land that now features off-road vehicle trails, a hiking and biking trail, and a series of interconnected lakes as well as a popular campground and a swimming beach. After a tour by tram, some participants learned to kayak while others took a guided hike on the park’s Kelley Branch Trail.



Lisa would be happy to offer suggestions to other MPA members interested in organizing similar events at parks in their region. You can reach her at lisagroshong@yahoo.com.

UPOP Going Strong — Please Contribute!

MPA’s Urban Populations Outreach Program is going strong with educational field trips to introduce urban kids to our state parks, working with partners this summer in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Columbia. For more information about the program, see our MPA website: <http://parks.missouri.org/Programs/UrbanPopulationsOutreachProgram.aspx>.

We welcome your donations to help us serve more kids, for many of whom this may be their first visit to a state park. Donations may be made on the MPA website or by sending a check payable to Missouri Parks Association—UPOP, P.O. Box 10, Fulton, MO 65251-0011.



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*Strange Legislative Session
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<http://parks.missouri.org>

("Ste. Genevieve" from Page 1)

sweetened the package by expressing willingness to consider donating some state park buildings as the nucleus of an NPS site if one were to be authorized. Then in late 2006 Rep. Russ Carnahan's Ste. Genevieve County National Historic Site Study Act finally became law. It was 2010 before an NPS team even began the evaluation process and another six years before the study was completed and finalized. It recommended that Congress consider authorizing a small 13-acre NPS unit consisting of two state-donated vertical-log houses and adjacent properties, all fronting on the common field.

Senators Blunt and McCaskill and Congressman Jason Smith immediately introduced slightly different bills to that effect in the Senate and House; then in 2017 they introduced identical bills, both of which received favorable hearings and were voted out of committee. Since full approval was by no means assured in the gridlocked Congress, Senator Blunt also got the language placed in the 891-page high-priority energy bill and then, for good measure, managed to get a few critical words inserted in the 2,232-page, \$1.3 trillion appropriations bill signed into law by President Trump on March 23 to keep the federal government operating until October.

It was these six words—"Section 7134 (Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park)"—incorporating by reference six pages of language in the energy bill (S. 1460) that authorized the new park. Despite its inclusion in a \$1.3 trillion bill, however, there is no appropriation yet for the park. The park will be officially established when sufficient land is acquired for a manageable unit.

Hence, the next step was for the Missouri General

Assembly to authorize DNR to transfer the agreed-upon state park properties to the National Park Service. Fortunately, a bill (SB 906) providing for conveyance of various state properties was already on the informal Senate calendar, so on April 19 Senator Kehoe offered a substitute bill containing the tracts in Ste. Genevieve. The bill passed the Senate May 1, the House May 16, and was one of the 77 bills signed by Gov. Greitens on June 1, his last day in office.

The bill provides for transfer of the 1792 Amoureux House and adjacent properties and the non-contiguous Delassus-Kern House about three miles south. Other state-owned buildings, including the Felix Valle House, the Bossier (Shaw) warehouse, and the recently acquired 1790 Janis-Ziegler House (Green Tree Tavern) will continue to be operated as a state historic site.

The Amoureux and the neighboring, privately-owned Bequette-Ribault houses, both of which are of the oldest type of French construction, *poteux-en-terre* (post in ground), are expected to be the focus of the NPS site. Both were occupied by blended French and African-American families, likely a key NPS interpretive theme. Several more-recent structures will be removed in order to restore the highly significant cultural landscape of French vernacular vertical-log houses fronting on the big field.

MPA has long supported NPS involvement in Ste. Genevieve and especially welcomes the focus on blended families and the Big Common Field (see *Heritage*, Dec 2012). MPA will continue to advocate for the eventual inclusion of the Old Town Archaeological Site toward the Mississippi River from the Delassus House in the new NPS site.