Future of Current River decided this summer

Plan will guide river for next two decades

Last winter, after the National Park Service released a management plan to guide the Current River for decades to come, Environment Missouri sprang into action, mobilizing public support and meeting with the Ozark National Scenic Riverways Park Director Bill Black to gain strong protections for the river.

The Current River is often called Missouri’s river jewel, but in 2011, it was deemed one of the nation’s 10 most endangered rivers. Unfortunately, over the years, a growing number of illegal and unauthorized roads and trails have ripped through the forest and degraded water quality. Now there is at least one ATV or SUV road per mile, threatening the recreational experience for families.

Fortunately, the thousands of concerned citizens who have lent their voices to our call for a stronger plan underscore how popular the river is and how many people believe the river should be pristine and beautiful for generations to come.

Protection at risk

However, some decision-makers in the Missouri State House and in Congress are lobbying to block the plan. They’ve built up a coalition of vocal opponents to the plan, and use every opportunity they can get to object to the proposed protections. Rep. Jason Smith even introduced a bill to block the plan altogether. Some of Missouri’s state legislators have introduced a bill that would turn the entire park over to local control and essentially keep the status quo.

We will continue to educate and engage our citizen members in this effort, and we hope to amplify support for the plan in the media. We will coordinate with our allies who are working on the ground across the state to push for a stronger plan.

This summer, the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, which protects the Current, celebrates its 50th anniversary. As we celebrate, our imperative is clear: We must put the Current on a path toward restoration and better protection, to take the river back to the beauty and pristine water quality it enjoyed 50 years ago. Here at Environment Missouri, we are up to the task.

To learn more about our efforts to protect the Current, visit us at www.EnvironmentMissouri.org

↓ ATV damage along the banks of the Current River
To our members

I hope this note finds you well and gearing up for summer fishing or canoeing trips with friends and family, be it on the Current River or a waterway closer to your home, or a camping trip at a local park or forest. After a winter like this past one, feeling the warmth of the sun on your face or being out in the fresh air is a welcome relief. There’s simply nothing like summertime in Missouri.

Environment Missouri knows how our rivers, forests and parks make Missouri a great place to live—and we’re winning victories to protect them. You can read all about it in these pages. We’re looking forward to an amazing summer of working to mobilize public support for a strong and lasting protection plan from the National Park Service for the Current River. And none of it could happen without your support.

Thanks for all you do,

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Director

Recent action

Green Future Fund: A new way to honor supporters
Environment Missouri’s new Green Future Fund honors donors who ensure a greener future for Missouri by remembering Environment Missouri or our sister group, Environment Missouri Research & Policy Center, in their estate plans.

Including Environment Missouri in your planning costs nothing today, while protecting the places we love and the values we share for the future.

With your permission, we’ll recognize your gift in our publications, inspiring other members to make their own legacy gifts. Or you may choose to keep your gift private. Either way, any details you choose to provide about your gift will remain confidential.

To enroll in the Green Future Fund, or to learn more, call 1-800-841-7299 ext. 312, or email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMissouri.org.

EPA moves forward with historic carbon pollution rules
Tackling global warming may prove to be the greatest environmental challenge of our generation. As Missouri grappled with extreme cold and record snowfalls last winter, global temperatures last January were the fourth highest on record.

The good news is Missouri is already proving we can win. Right now, Missouri generates enough wind energy to power 110,000 homes, lessening our dependence on dirty energy and avoiding nearly 800,000 metric tons of carbon emissions a year.

But there is still work to be done. Missouri’s coal-fired power plants emit the 9th highest amount of carbon pollution in the country, and the Labadie plant is the 4th most polluting power plant nationwide. Thankfully, President Obama is poised to issue a new standard this summer that will limit carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants like the Labadie Power Station. With opposition from big polluters, we are prepared to roll up our sleeves and organize support for this critical measure.

Toward a greener future
Environment Missouri and Environment Missouri Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMissouri.org.

For photo information: MichaelMinn.net

Photo: Shotaku/Flickr

Photo: Staff
Working to gain protection for Missouri’s special places

From the Lake of the Ozarks to the Katy Trail, Missouri’s public lands and state parks are where we go to hike, bike or observe wildlife. Our parks are part of our natural heritage and what make Missouri such a great place to live.

Unfortunately, many of our parks are falling apart, due to a legacy of budget cuts and a backlog of nearly $400 million in critically needed infrastructure upgrades. Aging water and electrical systems and broken bridges and cabins are now commonplace in these amazing places.

In 2010, the National Trust for Historic Preservation called Missouri’s state parks and historic sites a “prime example” of the funding threat around the nation, adding our parks and historic sites to its list of the country’s most endangered natural, cultural and architectural heritage spots.

For too long, our legislators have looked the other way and diverted funding away from conservation.

Key funding set to expire

This spring, Environment Missouri celebrated a victory for our parks. President Obama took decisive action to protect Missouri’s public lands this spring when he fully funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund, America’s premier land conservation program, in his budget. The funding of the LWCF will protect and preserve Missouri’s 84,000 acres of parkland.

Over the last year, Environment Missouri and its sister organizations around the country collected thousands of public comments urging President Obama to use his authority to protect our public lands and built a coalition of hundreds of conservation groups, businesses and local elected officials. In February, we brought this public support to Washington, D.C., where we hand delivered these comments to Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell during an in person meeting.

“We still have a lot to do to protect America’s last wild places, but the recent progress we’ve made is noteworthy,” said Mary Rafferty, federal conservation program director. “We applaud the president for taking action.”

But now, as Congress decides whether or not to renew funding for the LWCF, which expires next year, the program once again is at risk. For the past five decades, the LWCF’s mission has been to protect America’s greatest—and often most threatened—places. For Missouri, that means places like the Ozark Scenic Riverway and Ha Ha Tonka State Park.

Without dedicated funding, park managers can’t afford to fix the unreliable water systems at Hawn State Park, restore aging cabins at Lake of the Ozarks, or repair stressed bridges along the Katy Trail.

Thousands act to support parks

We refuse to let our natural heritage crumble—and we have a plan to convince state leaders to get serious about funding for our state parks, from Katy Trail to Ha Ha Tonka. We’re bringing together Missourians from all walks of life to protect our parks. All of us—bird-watchers, hikers, tourism businesses and Missourians across the state—have something to fight for.

Now is our chance to tip the scales in favor of our parks. Visit our website to take action, and tell Congress to restore funding for Missouri’s special places.
Summer Report
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EPA announces historic rule to protect waterways

For more than a decade, Environment Missouri has been working to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left more than two-thirds of Missouri’s streams and rivers vulnerable to unchecked pollution.

In March, our work paid off when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to restore Clean Water Act protections to more than 72,000 miles of streams across Missouri—sources that provide the drinking water for 2.4 million Missourians. Along with our sister organizations across the country, we’ve had more than 1 million conversations with people about protecting our waterways, and we’ve built a coalition of local elected officials, small farmers, and small business owners to call on the EPA to act.

But we haven’t won yet. The EPA is asking for input on their plan this summer, and big polluters have lined up to stop it in its tracks. With your support we’ll urge the EPA to implement the strongest possible protections for our waters.

more inside

Future of Current River decided this summer; historic carbon pollution ruling; protecting Missouri’s special places, and more.

Meramec River in Castlewood State Park