Citizen’s Guide to the Current River released

Environment Missouri educates thousands about threats to our river gem

In preparation for the release of the National Park Service’s General Management Plan, which will govern the Current for the next 20 years, Environment Missouri published an informative booklet about the Ozark Scenic Riverways and the threats to the Current River.

One of the finest natural wonders
The booklet, titled “A Citizen’s Guide to the Current River,” contains information on park history, the flora and fauna that call the region home, and sites to see along the river, such as the old mill at Alley Springs. The guide also contains a brief primer on the most pressing dangers the park faces and a list of ways to get involved in protecting, preserving and enjoying one of Missouri’s finest natural wonders. Environment Missouri distributed the guide at locations around the state.

“Missourians should be proud that the Current, one of the most beautiful and unique waterways in America, runs through our state,” said Stuart Keating, state advocate, at a press event for the release of the guide. “There’s so much history, tradition, and natural wonder to be found throughout the park. We are excited to provide a guide that explores some of the countless fascinating aspects of the park and enriches visitors’ park experiences.”

10,000 doors, 5,000 conversations
Environment Missouri also continued its citizen outreach campaign to educate Missourians about the threats to the Current and press the National Park Service to release a strong a plan as possible to restore the river back to health. Through May and June, our grassroots canvassers knocked on approximately 10,000 doors and talked with 5,000 Missourians about the threats to the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers, which make up the Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

“It’s really neat to see young people stand up for what they believe in and work to educate others about what’s at stake,” said Rebecca Schranz, a canvasser who now volunteers as an intern on the Current River campaign. “I think that our canvassers really understand how important these rivers are to Missouri.”
The end of July marked my one-year anniversary as Environment Missouri’s state advocate, and I’m happy to say that in only a year, we’ve accomplished a lot.

Perhaps most exciting, we’re on the cusp of securing a strong general management plan for the Current River from the National Park Service. We also helped extend critical tax credits for Missouri’s fledgling wind industry, permanently protect funds for our state park system, and convince the Legislature to give our state parks $20 million for infrastructure repairs.

It’s always daunting to start a new position, but having a staff like I do and members like you across the state, I’m lucky to be the state advocate of an organization that gets things done.

Sincerely,

Stuart Keating
State Advocate

No time for cutting back on energy efficiency

When the House Energy and Commerce hearing on the Department of Energy’s budget took place on June 13, Stuart Keating, state advocate with Environment Missouri, released a statement advocating for two important energy efficiency programs. The Weatherization Assistance and State Energy Programs help many families and are a step in the right direction in the plan to tackle global warming. However, in the past year, Congress has slashed both budgets.

The Weatherization Assistance Program helps low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities make energy efficiency improvements to their homes. The State Energy Program (SEP) provides financial and technical assistance to states for developing strategies to address their energy priorities and adopt energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. SEP also saves $256 million annually in reduced energy bills.

“Clean energy and energy efficiency programs are vital global warming solutions we need right now,” said Keating. “We’re counting on Congress to protect and strengthen these programs, and in so doing, also protect our health and the environment.”

EPA balks at cleaning up factory farm pollution

Last August, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that it would work on a nationwide rule to limit pollution from factory farms. But in June, the agency announced that it would not be issuing a standard to clean up pollution from the nation’s factory farms.

According to Food and Water Watch, the 2.8 million hogs, 43 million broiler chickens, 5.6 million egg-laying hens, 27,000 beef cattle and 15,500 dairy cows on factory farms in Missouri produce as much untreated manure as 73 million people—12 times the population of Missouri.

“We’re sorely disappointed that the EPA is balking at setting tough new standards for protecting our waterways from factory farm pollution,” said Stuart Keating, Environment Missouri advocate.
What President Obama’s climate plan means for Missouri

On June 25, President Obama announced a climate plan that will set limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency and increase the nation’s commitment to renewable energy. In the aftermath of last summer’s severe drought and extreme heat waves, the president’s plan to address global warming was loudly applauded by Environment Missouri and many others.

“All of us who have felt the effects of global warming, or simply worried about what’s in store for our kids, can take comfort in knowing that President Obama has put the nation on a path toward a cleaner, healthier and safer future,” said Stuart Keating, Environment Missouri advocate.

More heat, unhealthy air days

Left unchecked, global warming is projected to bring Missouri more intense storms and unhealthy air days. Scientists have warned that the window is rapidly closing for making the necessary cuts in carbon pollution to protect future generations from the worst consequences of global warming. To respond to this threat, the president’s plan contains several key components. It will:

• Limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants. The president directed the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which currently lack any such federal limits, despite being the largest single-source of the carbon pollution fueling global warming.

• Invest in energy efficiency. New efficiency measures for buildings and new appliances will cut carbon pollution by reducing our overall energy demand.

• Build more renewable energy. The plan focuses on expanding production of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar, especially on public lands.

• Support affected communities. The president’s plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for and recover from the impacts of global warming.

• Rebuild U.S. leadership internationally. The president’s plan calls for the U.S. to actively engage in international efforts to address global warming.

Focus on carbon pollution

Environment Missouri offered special praise for the president’s pledge to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants. More than 3.2 million Americans submitted public comments last year in support of the president setting limits on carbon pollution from power plants.

“Carbon pollution from power plants is a huge part of the global warming problem. President Obama acknowledged this and mapped out a plan for cleaning up this pollution,” said Keating. “We also know that this plan is just one important step in a multi-year effort, and that the proof of the plan’s success will be in the pudding.”

Harnessing our wind power potential

Did you know that Rockport was the first community in the country to be powered entirely by wind energy? It’s true. Missouri has massive wind power potential—enough to power 110,000 homes. But unfortunately, we still import the majority of our energy in the form of coal from Wyoming.

Last January, alongside our national federation, we helped renew a critical tax credit for wind power, and since then, we’ve been drumming up support to see Missouri become a national leader in wind energy.

“Harnessing the power of this incredibly abundant energy source would be a big step forward to tackling global warming and would build upon the already-growing wind industry here,” said Environment Missouri Advocate Stuart Keating.

According to our report “Wind Power for a Cleaner America,” if construction of new wind energy projects continues from 2013 to 2016 at a pace comparable to that of recent years, the United States could reduce global warming pollution by an additional 56 million metric tons in 2016. The wind industry also currently employs 1,400 Missourians and will hopefully continue to grow.

“We’ve already made a lot of progress on this issue, but until Missouri stops getting the majority of its energy from out-of-state coal, our job’s not done,” said Keating. “We’ll continue to press our leaders to take a stand for the clean, renewable power right at our fingertips.”
Missouri’s Legislature recently took the first steps towards addressing our state parks’ aging sewer systems, worn down roads, and more than $400 million needed in other repairs and maintenance. First, $20 million in budget surplus was allocated to the state parks division, and then we helped pass legislation that prevents interest from the State Parks Earnings Fund being swept into general revenue. Both the budget and the legislation await final approval from Gov. Jay Nixon.

Additionally, the Missouri House overwhelmingly passed legislation authorizing a $1.2 billion bond issue for infrastructure projects around the state by a vote of 136-23.

"With one day left in the 2013 legislative session, we applauded Missouri’s legislators for their efforts to preserve our state parks for future generations and urge the Senate to act quickly to approve the building bond issue," said Keating. "We know that our state parks enjoy the support of Missourians from all walks of life. The Senate should seize this opportunity to protect Missouri’s parks."