

STATE PARK BENEFITS — The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

The Missouri state park system has a nearly 100-year-old tradition of preserving and interpreting the state's most outstanding natural landscapes and cultural features while providing recreational opportunities to the public. Missouri State Parks is a division of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

ABOUT THE PARKS, SOILS AND WATER SALES TAX

- The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax is a statewide one-tenth-of-one percent sales tax that provides funding for Missouri state parks and historic sites and soil and water conservation efforts. The tax is divided equally between the two efforts.
- The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax was first approved by voters in 1984, and has since been reapproved by voters three times. In 1988, 1996 and 2006, the tax was renewed by more than two-thirds majority of Missouri voters.
- Missouri State Parks relies on the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax to operate and improve the state park system. Funding from the tax accounts for approximately 75 percent of the park system's budget to operate and improve parks and historic sites.
- The portion of the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax that supports state parks averages about \$7 a year per Missourian.
- The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax is placed on the ballot every 10 years to reaffirm the voter's support of the park system and soil and water conservation efforts.
- The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax is set to expire if not renewed by voters in 2016.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR

SERVICES

- Unlike most states, there are no entrance or day-use fees in Missouri State Parks. The public can enter every state park and historic site at no charge.
- The tax allows staff to provide service directly to visitors by maintaining parks and historic sites, upgrading facilities or assisting guests.
- New initiatives have focused on engaging youth in the wonder of the outdoors. In 2014 alone, nearly 55,000 interpretive programs were presented in state parks and historic sites.
- The park system works to offer new services to guests, including:
 - New lodging opportunities such as yurts and camper cabins
 - Upgraded campground amenities, including shower houses

- Expanded recreational resources from additional miles of trail to new opportunities to kayak and canoe

FACILITIES

- The consistent funding from the sales tax has allowed Missouri State Parks to maintain and upgrade the state park system to better serve the needs of visitors and protect resources.
- This includes repairing, renovating and maintaining buildings, restrooms, shelter houses and cabins, while also stabilizing and protecting historic structures. Recent examples include:
 - Cabin renovations at Montauk State Park.
 - Roof repair at Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site.
 - Restoration of the historic Civilian Conservation Corps Alta Shelter at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park.
- In order to provide more opportunities for the public to experience nature and explore history, the funding helps support the development of new state parks and historic sites. A recent example is Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site, which was opened in 2012. The site marks the first time African-American troops were engaged in Civil War combat.
- Missouri State Parks manages a wide variety of structures and facilities. These include:
 - 49 regulated public water systems
 - More than 2,000 structures
 - 260 miles of paved roadway
 - More than 130 shelters
 - 96 wastewater systems
 - 1,000 miles of trail
 - More than 3,500 campsites

THE RESPONSE

- More than 18 million people visit the state park system each year.
- Missouri State Parks consistently receives a 97 percent approval rating from guests.
- The park system is consistently ranked among the top four park systems in the country and Missouri has received national recognition as the best state for camping and for having the best trail system in the country.
- Missouri's state parks and historic sites contribute to a healthy economy. Results of an economic impact study released in 2012 estimated that annual expenditures of state park visitors total approximately \$778 million.

- The overall economic impact of these expenditures is estimated at \$1.02 billion in sales, \$307 million in payroll and related income, and \$123 million in federal, state and local taxes.
- Visitors' expenditures support 14,535 jobs.
- For every dollar spent by Missouri State Parks to operate the state park system, Missouri's economy sees a \$26 return on investment.
- Scientific evidence suggests that parks and recreation are improving the health of communities and citizens. Missouri State Parks contributes to improving visitor's health and well-being.

PUBLIC INPUT

- All state parks and historic sites host annual informational meetings, which provide opportunities for public input.
- Comments cards are available at all state parks and historic sites. Comments can be given directly to staff at the parks and sites or sent to the division's headquarters in Jefferson City.

ONGOING EFFORTS

- In order to continue to operate an outstanding system of state parks and historic sites, ongoing stewardship, repairs, maintenance and improvements are necessary.
- Missouri State Parks is committed to providing a high level of visitor services. To accomplish this goal, there must be enough staff to provide clean and safe facilities; enough interpreters to present the significance of each of the parks and sites; enough law enforcement personnel to ensure visitor safety; and enough general staff to provide adequate service to the public.