

# MISSOURI PARK AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION'S MISSION:

"To advocate the quality of life through effective use of parks and recreation opportunities, education and resources."

MPRA works to ensure the growth and improve the quality and accessibility of urban and rural parks, open spaces, recreational lands, facilities, and programs. We promote research and information dissemination on park, conservation, health and wellness, recreation, and leisure issues.

MPRA strives to maintain high standards of professional ethics and practices, promoting continuing education for its membership. The association encourages the support of college and university curricula to enhance research and assure a well-trained stream of future professionals.

MPRA cooperates with public, private, and volunteer agencies to assure provision of quality park, recreation and conservation programs.



## MPRA Officers

- President.....Gabe Huffington  
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- President-Elect.....Jeff Stubblefield  
Maryville
- Immediate Past President.....Phil Stiles  
Jefferson City
- Secretary/Treasurer.....Michael Biedenstein  
St. Louis Area
- Executive Director.....Gary Gates
- Assistant Executive Director.....Sarah Veile
- Legislative Representative.....Kyna Iman, LLC

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- Bob Belote ..... Springfield
- Brian Nowotny.....Jackson County
- Chad Shoemaker ..... Mexico
- Chad Unterreiner ..... Marshall
- Chris Deal ..... Harrisonville Area
- Clark Allen ..... Poplar Bluff Area
- Emily Wagemann ..... Ballwin
- Ryan Graham ..... St. Charles County
- Jim Kent ..... St. Louis Area
- John Shelton ..... Lebanon
- Michael Biedenstein ..... St. Louis Area
- Miki McKee Koelsch ..... Webster Groves
- Rodney Sadler ..... Kirksville
- Tracy Anderson..... Maryland Heights
- Vicki Ventrella-Meyer ..... Bridgeton
- William Lockwood ..... Jefferson City Area
- Brittanie Propes.....Parkville
- Tera Baker..... Shrewsbury
- Troy Bock.....Moberly



Missouri Park & Recreation Association

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Sources: *National Recreation and Park Association, 2016, "Americans' Engagement in Parks;" www.TheBestLife.com, 2016, Missouri Department of Tourism.*

# 2023

## STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## Missouri Park & Recreation Association

[mopark.org](http://mopark.org)

# STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



mopark.org

## BUILDING HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

**OBESITY** Public parks and recreation facilities offer low cost opportunities for citizens of every age, ability, and income level to increase their level of physical activity, improve nutrition, and better connect with the natural environment, thereby preventing chronic and costly health problems. MPRA encourages the adoption of statute revisions that would allow local parks and recreation departments to increase recreational opportunities for its citizens, regardless of income level. **"52% of people who visit park/recreation facilities do so to exercise."**



**SMOKING** MPRA has endorsed initiatives to create smoke-free environments for all citizens and support the increase of tobacco tax, currently the lowest in the nation, which would encourage smoking cessation. Additionally, **we support the use of the increased tax revenue to be used for programs that promote healthy and active lifestyles.**

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE** Alcohol and drug use is widespread and ranks as one of the nation's most serious health problems. The problem should be addressed at the individual, community, state, and national levels, working together to lessen the demand for alcohol and other drugs. **MPRA stands ready to cooperate fully to assist our communities to promote a drug-free society.**

**FUNDING** The state should take the lead in developing policies, practices, and funding infrastructure to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles that best utilize parks and recreation facilities that currently exist. **We recommend support for making parks and recreation agencies eligible for all state programs targeting youth and adults for healthy physical activities, development of life skills, environmental education, and crime prevention/intervention programs.**

**FUNDING INITIATIVES** MPRA supports a comprehensive bonding package that provides increased funding for Missouri state parks and trails, along with its higher education institutions. Parks and trails provide an enriched quality of life for all Missourians regardless of geography or socioeconomic status. Modernized, state-of-the-art facilities prepare Missouri students for real world experiences and allow for a seamless transition into the workplace. Support for such initiatives will enhance the lives of all Missouri citizens. **MPRA encourages elected officials to consider the specific differences between capital expenditures and maintenance when considering bonding decisions.**

## FUNDING FOR TOURISM

Communities across Missouri benefit from visitors who not only learn about all there is to offer in the state, but also contribute significantly to the local economy. The robust marketing of tourism opportunities is critical to drawing those visitors to every part of Missouri, and the Dept. of Tourism is the logical source of those efforts. **MPRA supports the restoration of funding to the Missouri Dept. of Tourism, returning to 2016 levels. "Tourism in Missouri generated \$1.4 billion in local and state tax revenue in FY2016."**

## TAX INITIATIVES

Missouri's cities rely upon sales and property taxes for general fund, operations, and capital improvements. **MPRA urges the Missouri General Assembly to respect the voice of local voters by requiring sales taxes that are collected from online sales to be apportioned by the Missouri State Revenue Department to funded entities in Missouri in exactly the same apportionment as sales taxes collected locally within Missouri.**



## TRAILS

Access to safe, well-maintained community connections is a priority for Missouri's citizens. In 2013-14, Missouri was named the "Best Trails State" by American Trails, reflecting the efforts put into the development of major trail systems, including Katy Trail State Park. Such systems, soon to include the Rock Island corridor, contribute significantly to local economies, support conservation, promote alternative transportation, and connect communities to nature and to each other. **MPRA supports initiatives that enable local and state agencies to develop and promote trail connections across Missouri. "Walking is the #1 preferred form of exercise for Americans."**



## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The State of Missouri should help take the lead in supporting and implementing practices statewide, which protect human life, preserve the environment, and conserve valuable natural resources. Municipal, county, and state parks and recreation departments assist in promoting a commitment to clean air, water, the wise use of our natural resources, and stewardship of public and private lands. **We oppose any changes to the makeup of the Conservation Commission or to the process by which the Commission is appointed. We oppose any attempts to infringe on constitutional mandate under which the Commission carries out its mission. Any disposal of public lands for use(s) other than public recreation should be cautiously considered and be approved by a vote of the public.**

Additional priorities can be found at mopark.org: Parks as Safe Havens, Americans with Disabilities Act and Inclusion, Support for Higher Education, and Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Included as Qualified Health Care Professionals.