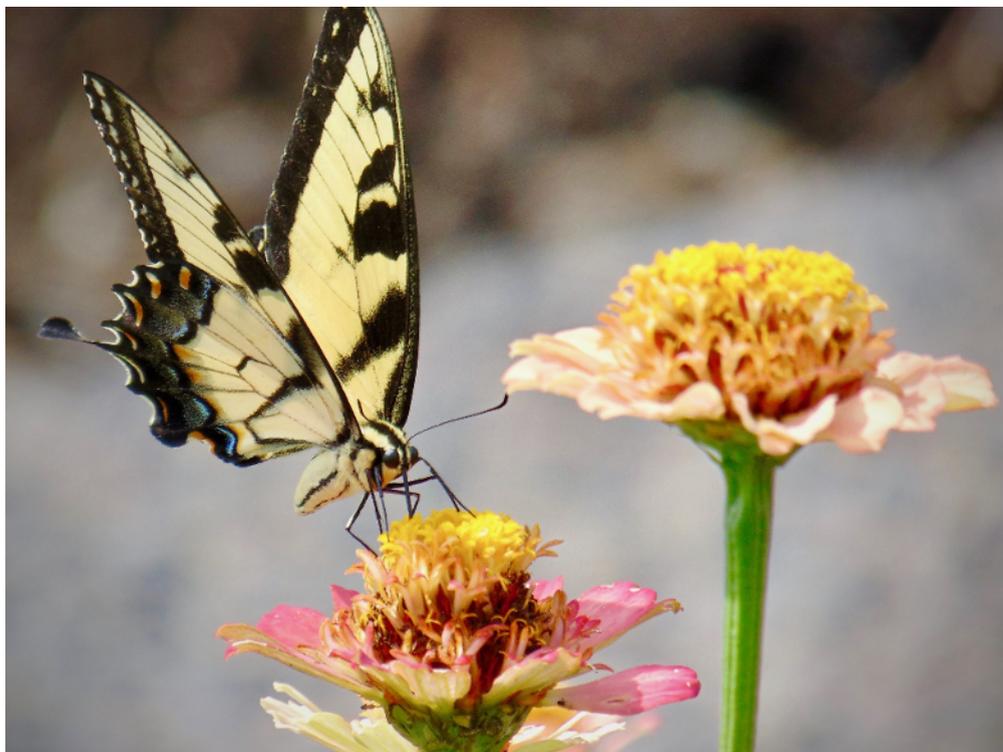


SIERRASCAPE

Eastern Missouri Group - Missouri Chapter Volume 40, Number 1 - Spring 2023



Welcome spring! Welcome pollinators! Photo by Courtney Iberg.

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**SIERRA
CLUB**

Enjoy, Explore & Protect the Planet

Upcoming EMG member events



We are excited to announce the return of EMG member events (previously called EMG monthly member meetings). The 2023 events calendar consists of 4 educational events and a potluck picnic at Tower Grove Park on October 14. We hope you will join us for engaging presentations followed by Q & A and discussion. RSVP for these upcoming events via Campfire at sierraclub.org/missouri/eastern-missouri



Attendees enjoy a program at Tower Grove Park for the March event co-hosted with St. Louis Audubon Society. Photo credit: Dave Campbell.



Featuring Natural Resource Program Director Ken McCarty

Missouri's New State Parks Talk

June 22 at 6:00pm
Urban Chestnut Brewing Company



Featured Speaker TBD

Electric Vehicle Presentation

September 28 at 6:00pm
Forest Park Visitor Center



Featuring EMG Outings Leader Louise Bullock

Backpacking the John Muir Trail

December 14 at 6:00pm
Urban Chestnut Brewing Company



Save the Date for Roger Pryor Trail Building!

Trail building is May 15th-19th

Contact John Feldmann to RSVP johnfeldmann@msn.com

SIERRASCAPE

A biannual publication of the Eastern Missouri Group

EMG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chapter Chair: Ken Schechtman
- Vice Chair: Caitlin Zera
- Secretary: Stephanie Todd
- Treasurer: Jim Rhodes
- John Feldmann
- Glenn May
- Jean Nock
- Diana Oleskevich
- Matthew Self

For a full directory of committee leaders, please visit www.sierraclub.org/missouri

MISSOURI STAFF

- Michael Berg
- Leah Clyburn
- Billy Davies
- Jenn DeRose
- Sara Edgar
- Marisa Frazier
- Andy Heaslet
- Andy Knott
- Ashton Kuehnel
- Brian Smith
- Ed Smith

Gretchen Waddell Barwick
Chapter Director





30x30: A Square Deal for the Planet

BY CAROLINE PUFALT
EMG Conservation Chair

30X30 is a global movement that seeks to conserve 30 percent of lands and coastal waters by the year 2030, or 30X30.

Biologists tell us we're in a global crisis for biodiversity, as countless species of animals and plants continue to be threatened with extinction and our natural systems strain to carry on ecological functions. Currently only 12% of our lands are protected.

It's a daunting goal, but also a way to focus on real accomplishments. Conserving lands can mean achieving far reaching protection, such as a federal Wilderness area, or a more modest achievement in expanding local parkland with natural areas.

Missourians are up to the challenge though. In

Photo credits: Sunflower by Courtney Iberg; Public Lands photos by Matthew Self

recent years, Missouri Sierra Club has helped keep Eleven Point State Park from sale and worked to secure sound conservation plans for some of our other new state parks. Some protection efforts are more dire. Instead of adding acres, the Sierra Club is fighting to protect Bangert Island Park in St. Charles from degradation by unwise development.

More recently, Sierra Club volunteers have supported the formation of a new Wildlife Refuge in Ste. Genevieve County. We are engaged at several levels to restore and add wildlife areas along the Missouri River.

What can you do to support 30X30? Think big, small, and in between. Remember that the basics matter, like support for funding city and county parks. A popular phrase is that "the world is run by people who show up". There's truth to that, so show up for 30x30. Be sure to check out the all new **30X30 Toolkit for Activists** at sierraclub.org/missouri.

EMG volunteers help improve public lands

BY MATTHEW SELF
Outings Leader & EMG Executive Committee

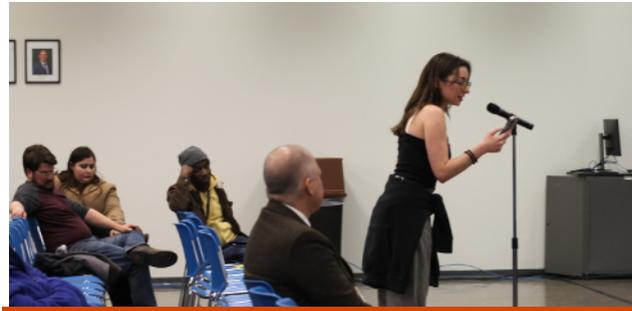
The EMG Outings leaders have planned a series of service opportunities for volunteers to help conserve our beautiful, local public lands. Coordinating with the superintendent at Castlewood State Park, volunteers come out on the third Friday of each month to engage in stewardship activities at the park. For many people in the St. Louis area, Castlewood State Park is the closest option they have for a 4-mile hike in the woods, and the park continues to see high visitation for a relatively small full-time staff.

On Friday March 7 volunteers came together for a workday at Don Robinson State Park. This recent addition to the Missouri State Parks system has also received a lot of love from visitors, largely because of its unique sandstone canyons. With a lot of love comes a lot of needed work and support. In December



Photo credit: Matt Self

2022, Natural Resource Coordinator Erik Otto led a group on a wonderful hike through the park to highlight upcoming restoration projects for EMG to help with. One of the first tasks will be thinning and burning cedars, which are quick to colonize disturbed areas and overtake other ecologically-appropriate species. If you're interested in volunteering and learning, you can find the event details on the EMG website or on MeetUp!



Coming together to advocate for

EMG members testify to oppose Ameren rate increase

BY STEPHANIE TODD
EMG Executive Committee

Ameren Missouri needs to focus on renewable energy projects, stop increasing our rates when customers already cannot afford their bills, and stop burning coal that's polluting our air. In early 2023, hundreds of Sierra Club members and utility justice community partners took action on Ameren's request for a \$316 million rate increase, which would cost customers an average of \$12 per month. The hearings, held Jan. 31 - Feb. 9, were well attended by Ameren customers, with over 30 Sierra Club members and partners testifying in opposition to the rate increase. Additionally, we gathered 365 petition signatures and submitted them to the Public Service Commission, which regulates Ameren's rate increases, to show the large number of Missourians standing in opposition to the utility's greed.

It is unconscionable that Ameren wants us, its customers, to pay for its legal fees incurred when defending the indefensible – Ameren's decision to violate the Clean Air Act at its Rush Island coal plant south of St.

Louis. For more than a decade and

counting, Ameren released sulfur dioxide in violation of laws established by Congress. In addition, it is wrong that Ameren wants customers to pay for its membership dues to the Edison Electric Institute, which actively lobbies against environmental safeguards that are not in the best interest of the utility's customers. Plus, Ameren wants to increase the fixed fee on our utility bills by the same amount, regardless of whether someone lives in a studio apartment or a mansion. It's regressive and will harm Ameren's low-income customers the most.

Ameren has been slow in the transition from coal to clean energy. That's why Ameren received a low score in Sierra Club's Dirty Truth About Utility Climate Pledges report released last year. We should not be forced to subsidize Ameren's continued use of coal via a rate hike. Not only are coal plants a major source of pollution, but they are also inefficient and costly to operate. For example, Ameren spends approximately \$500 million/year importing coal from other states. That's just the cost for coal, not the costs to operate its coal plants. It's money that could be spent on homegrown renewable energy that has the benefit of free fuel from the wind and sun.

A state law passed in 2021 enables Ameren to accelerate the retirement of its coal plants and provide capital for new renewable energy investments, all while saving money. The problem is that Ameren has yet to take advantage of this law, yet here we go again with another rate hike after following a rate hike in 2021.

The Ameren rate hike essentially goes to subsidizing coal plants polluting our air and water while exacerbating climate change. The Sierra Club, Missouri Chapter is working across the state to justly transition utilities to clean, renewable energy.





For a more just & healthy Missouri

Sierra Club protects the initiative petition process

BY ASHTON KUEHNEL

St. Louis Grassroots Organizer & Statewide Democracy Organizer

For the 4th year in a row, the Sierra Club is working with partners across Missouri to protect the people’s initiative petition process from status quo politicians and wealthy special interests that are trying to destroy our constitutional right to petition. The initiative petition process, which is the process of gathering signatures from supporters across Missouri to place policy onto the ballot so that voters may ultimately make their decision on the given policy, has allowed Missourians across the political spectrum to circumvent the partisan politics of Jefferson City to get things done for the people, by the people.



When people have to take the power and put it in our own hands to get things done for the people of Missouri, the legislature doesn't like that - they want to hold on to that power.

Ashton Kuehnel in an interview with KMOV



As the people continually pass popular policies (such as ethics reform, Medicaid expansion, etc.) at the ballot box, sore losers in the Missouri Legislature are trying to rig the rules and take away the people’s power to make the necessary changes our state needs.

As a part of the Will of the People of Missouri Coalition, we are educating and organizing Missourians to take action on initiative petition issues as they come up in the Missouri Legislature. Our coalition, which is comprised of



more than 75 organizations that span the political spectrum and represent a variety of issues, works together to protect our 115 year old democratic process.

Currently, there are over two dozen pieces of legislation filed that would negatively impact the initiative petition process. So far, HJR 43 is the main vehicle in session, as it has moved from the House and is currently waiting to be brought up for Senate debate. Join the grassroots movement to protect Missouri’s historic initiative petition process!

SCAN to sign in support of protecting the initiative petition process!

SCAN to help us push Ameren towards affordable, clean renewable energy

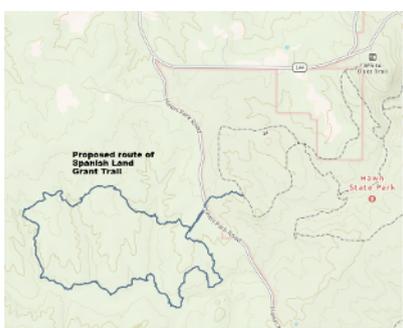
Photo credits: Page 4 - Sierra Club members and partners at Ameren rate increase hearings, photo by Jenn DeRose. Page 5 - Sierra Club members and partners at lobby day 2022 photo by Natalie Johnson and lobby day 2023 photo by Ashton Kuehnel. Will of the People logo courtesy of the organization.



Spring Trail Building at HAWN STATE PARK

Photo credit: John Feldmann

Sierra Club volunteers begin building the Spanish Land Grant Trail



“
Wow! This was truly exciting! I've hiked a ton of trails, but I've never ever been on a crew actually creating a NEW TRAIL! It gave me a better appreciation of everything that goes into making a trail. It was a cool experience to share with other volunteers. I couldn't believe we roughed in a mile of new trail. If you haven't done it before, NOW is your chance.
”
Dave Campbell, EMG Outings Chair

BY JOHN FELDMANN
EMG Trails Committee Chair

In February 2023, twenty Sierra Club volunteers joined together with volunteers from the Friends of Hawn Association to begin building a new ~4.5 mile trail in Hawn State Park.

The Spanish Land Grant Trail has been in planning and development for the past five years and marks an exciting new chapter for the park's trails system.

Located on the west side of the park, the trail will provide a new hiking opportunity for visitors as the rest of the park's trails are located on the eastern side. When completed, the trail will allow hikers to experience a combination of pine, oak and hickory habitat. Hikers will also spot numerous small caves and a section along Pickle Creek along the trail. Two additional backcountry campsites and a backcountry group campsite are also planned.

The Sierra Club EMG trail committee completed the first trail building session on the new trail on Saturday February 25 and constructed roughly a mile of trail.

The trail committee will be hosting additional trail building events in partnership with the Friends of Hawn Association. You can sign up for these events on the Sierra Club EMG website: sierraclub.org/missouri.

On building a sustainable outings program

Outings leaders offering expanded variety of 2023 opportunities

BY MATTHEW SELF

Outings Leader & EMG Executive Committee

So far this year, EMG outings attendees have enjoyed a broad range of hikes: I've led two, rugged 7 mile treks into little-seen areas. Rick Armstrong led a brave group through Meramec State Park to cross streams and discover caves. Rick has also been teaching orienteering skills—using a map and compass to their full effect is a wonderful tool for all hikers and leaders. Trudy Guinther led a more urban outing along the Meramec Greenway in Valley Park, a lovely option for a sunny winter morning. In the coming months, we'll also start planning some overnight offerings for camping, backpacking, and possibly lodge trips that offer a variety of options for a variety of participants. There's a significant desire for more time and the outdoors, and it's our privilege as outings leaders to offer some guidance for those seeking nature's invigoration and restoration.

Most outings currently offered by EMG are straightforward day-hikes. But there are times when you might be seeking a little creativity to engage with nature in a new way.

Do you need a deeper immersion into nature with an overnight backpacking trip? Does your mind crave an educational stimulation with a naturalist-led hike? Or maybe you want to see the Meramec River from a kayak rather than Highway 44 on your afternoon commute?

The beauty of the outings program is that all of these options are before you. Whether it's your first outing or your hundredth, you can choose what you want to experience today: easy-going or challenging, new or tried-and-true. Each outing you go on is a deeply personal decision, even when you just want a nice hike.

For outings leaders, it's imperative to recognize and respect the variety of relationships that people have with nature. To ensure a successful outings program, it's essential to attract strong leaders with



DON ROBINSON STATE PARK



CANOEOING THE ILLINOIS RIVER



DON ROBINSON STATE PARK WORKDAY



MYRON AND SONYA GLASSBERG CONSERVATION AREA

different backgrounds, interests, and skill sets. Then, we can offer more opportunities for a wider range of members. Everything doesn't have to be for everybody, but it sure is nice when everyone has the choice to find out what's best for themselves.

Ultimately, outings leaders want to help people build and strengthen their relationships with nature and with themselves. That's the community we should strive for and support. So come on out for a hike!

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