

# The Bridge

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park (FoRB)

P.O. Box 7642, Columbia MO 65205-7642 <http://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>

Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is a membership supported 501(c)(3) organized to promote understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and preservation of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and the surrounding area.

Send your submissions to Jim Gast, editor at [FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com).

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Jan Weaver, Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Mark Hahn, Steve Ferguson Board Members.

## President's Message

### Kevin Roberson

Once more, into the void. On this beautiful early spring morning, we are girding our loins to attempt to make things better for the Park. Our Park is being threatened by a too-dense development on the sensitive edge of the Wild Area. We all would like for all good things to never change, but we are reminded, often, that this cannot be. What we can do is make the changes be as palatable as possible by having the changers, at the least, follow the regulations and guidelines. Change is inevitable, especially this close to the city. The city touches our borders now and they will continue to envelope the Park with the possible exception of the anomaly of Pierpont.

But what this issue has done for me is remind me of the power and responsibility that we have to help the Park and the Park-loving community. We have many members with experience in rallying people to a cause, know the regulations and how to read and interpret them, and how to face-off against the powerful.

This power has been used in the past to make things better and I have hopes that we can do that in this situation. We do not require or expect that all things come to a stand-still or that people cannot utilize their property, just that they have a respect for our wishes and the wishes of the members and the neighbors.

Which brings me to the last point: Please join FoRB. We work to support the Park and its staff and there is strength in numbers. <http://friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/join.html>

## Canton Estates Subdivision

### Jan Weaver

There are only 44 streams that are Outstanding State Resource Waters in Missouri. These are waters with significant aesthetic, recreational, or scientific value that have been designated outstanding by the Clean Water Commission. Gans Creek in Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is one of those 44 streams.



There are only 12 Wild Areas recognized by the Department of Natural Resources. DNR determined that the permanent preservation of large areas of undeveloped state park land as wilderness was necessary to provide opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation, as a reserve for native species and ecological communities for scientific study, and for its own intrinsic worth. The Gans Creek Wild Area is one of those 12 areas.

Canton Estates is a proposed development just north of the Gans Creek Wild Area, on the east side of Bearfield Road. Right now, the development proposes a density of about 2 houses per acre. Based on developments with similar density, 24% of the area would be impervious surface, things like roads, driveways, and roofs. Even with Best Management Practices (BMPs) for controlling stormwater runoff, it is not possible to maintain water quality when impervious surface is above 10%. This would degrade water quality in Gans Creek.

In addition, the nearness of so many homes and their residents on the edge of the Wild Area poses a threat to its wildness. Exterior lights would affect the behavior of bats, night-flying birds, and insects. Careless use of pesticides and fertilizers would, along with increased runoff, harm the animals living in Gans Creek. Preparation of the land for development would eliminate the existing plant community and make it easier for invasive plants to spread on the developed property and from there into the Wild Area. As currently planned, it would dramatically increase human influence in the wild area.

This area is not just important to the state. Columbia has also invested in the protection of Gans Creek and the Wild Area. When it purchased the Crane property for its Southeast Regional Park, the plan of the new park included setting aside the part next to the wild area as a buffer to protect it. Other developers have also made adjustments to protect the Clear Creek watershed of the park. Parkside Estates (in the northwest corner of the park) accepted a 15% impervious surface limit on its development. Clear Creek Estates (east of 163 by the first entrance) decided to develop under the Boone County's more restrictive A2 zoning of one house every 2.5 acres.

We must expect and demand even more

restrictive standards for a development so close to an even more sensitive part of the park. The Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park are asking for less than 15% impervious surface, moving any development away from the southern third of the property, and enacting a strict Homeowners Association policy similar to that in place for Parkside Estates. We need our members to help us make the case to the City of Columbia that Gans Creek and the Wild Area deserve this level of protection. Visit <http://friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/current-issues/canton-estates.html> for more details and updates on this project.

### **Naturalist News**

#### **By Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist**

The following observations were seen in March:

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, observed an estimated 900 snow geese flying high above the Karst area on their migration north.

March 3<sup>rd</sup>, we burned 15 acres of woodland in the Karst West unit.

March 9<sup>th</sup>, in the bottomland of Clear Creek, we saw two barred owls.

March 13<sup>th</sup>, Eighteen American woodcock males were heard or seen doing their courtship display in the High Ridge area. The high number is probably explained by the extra mowing we did last year and the pipeline company did that created lots of short grass areas that they prefer for courtship. Also, the bottomland along Clear Creek should provide an abundance of the earthworms and other invertebrates they feed upon.

March 21<sup>st</sup>, during the first frog and toad survey of the year, the group of volunteers and staff visited 10 ponds and reported: 1 pond with a pickerel calling, 5 ponds with southern leopard frogs, 8 ponds with western chorus frogs and all 10 with northern spring peepers. The spring peepers were at the maximum abundance rating of 3 and made it difficult to hear other species. They were very loud!

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, a group of volunteers monitored woodcock at the 4 locations we survey every year and observed a total of 6.

We were happy to learn that funding has been restored for hiring seasonal employees. We began work on recruiting. If you know of someone interested in stewardship or maintenance work, let us know at 573-449-7402.

#### Spring Wildflowers:

Spring wildflower interpretation will be like last year: 1) Watch videos of Randal Clark talking about and showing wildflowers on his Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/209287696973178>.

2) See the flowers in person along the Spring Brook Trail to the right of the Devil's Icebox kiosk. For the month of April, each species will be signed to help you identify them and learn a little about them. Visit the kiosk bulletin board for more information.

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