

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.

The next board meeting is Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM at the Gilbert Shelter.

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Melissa Hutchens Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Steve Ferguson, Meredith Donaldson, Robin Rotman, Board Members.

President's Column

Dear Friends,

As I write this message, I am waiting for a very welcome thunderstorm to arrive. We are several inches behind in our rainfall this Spring and we could use a good dowsing. The forest is still green, the birds still seem happy, and the tree frogs are still calling. I hope with the continued stress of the new weather patterns that we can keep healthy populations of all of the animals that we have grown to know and love.

As we get ready to roll into Summer, it is a good time to think of our youth programs that we run at the Park: Nature Detectives and UPOP (Urban Population Outreach Program).

Nature Detectives was created in 2013 to help pre-school children and their caregivers learn how to have a safe, positive, educational, and fun experience in nature. Each month during the spring and early summer there is a different themed program with storytelling, and nature exploration about the cave, bats and streams, plus craft activities.

UPOP aims to reach children and local youth who might not otherwise be able to participate in outdoor experiences. In cooperation with local youth agencies such as Boys and Girls Club, Fun City, and Central Latino, FoRB offers outdoor activities in the park that include camp skills, nature study (Bats, Stream and Habitat), and Connor's Cave tours. The Missouri Parks Association provides financial support to FoRB, and the Boone's Lick Chapter of the Missouri Master Naturalist has provided program support. I am excited to see how these reinvigorated programs deliver for our youth this year. Best wishes to all the staff working on these!

Take care and be kind. I hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Superintendent News

Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

Things are picking up in the park for the on-season. We are very fortunate to have a full crew of seasonal help working on stewardship and maintenance. The stewardship crew has been getting after all of the invasive plant species and our maintenance team has been busy mowing and fixing the boardwalk. We had a great spring school group season and we are extremely grateful for all of the help that Friends of Rock Bridge provides with these. Steve was a little short on help for one group, so I put on my interpreter's hat and pitched in on a stream program.

In addition to all of that, we have been busy hosting trail runners for their Thursday Night Trail Race series and, starting in June, we will be hosting local mountain bikers on Wednesday nights in June for a practice race series. We've been keeping our maintenance crew busy mowing trails, firelines and parking areas, including the special use camping area.

Now that we have a pretty good routine going with mowing, we will be checking off numerous other projects soon. For example, we plan on expanding the shooting star parking lot to accommodate a few more vehicles and Boone County will be widening the road in that area to provide more designated spaces for truck and horse trailer rigs. Speaking of horses, Equestrian riding season starts June 1st. Similarly to mountain biking in the park, equestrian use is

only permitted when the trails are dry. Always check the hotline (573-398-7001 ext 3) before hitching up your steed.

Other projects in the park include an HVAC replacement at the curatorial building near the main entrance and constant work on the boardwalk at Devil's Icebox Trail.

On the Katy trail, we are working on repairing and repainting our trailhead infrastructure as well as the usual mowing and trail surface repairs.

The Katy recently hosted the Pedaler's Jamboree which was a huge success. About 2,000 riders went from Columbia to Boonville listening to music along the way and at Kemper Park in Boonville. Everything went really smoothly and we worked hard on keeping our bathrooms stocked up. Big thanks to Steve Ferguson and his family as well as all of the other volunteers that helped.

As always, we are extremely grateful for the support of the Friend of Rock Bridge. We couldn't do it without you!

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