

# 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).

**The next board meeting is Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Park Office.**

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

## President's Column

Dear Friends,

Welcome! As I sit writing this message, I am worrying about the 80-degree days today and yesterday. It will drop to the 20s tonight and then back more to normal. Along with the atypical temperatures we have also messed up rain patterns, an almost completely dry February. I believe that anthropomorphic driven change has caused most of this exaggerated variation. We are making some headway on slowing this freight train and I hope that we can reverse it in my lifetime. These variations in weather also put additional stress on the environment, including the flora and fauna of our Park. Please keep this in mind and pay attention to the notices that come from the Park concerning how to best protect our "Jewel".

Last week, I was reading an article by a dear friend of mine, and she reminded me of the importance of seeing our natural world through the "eyes of a child." It seems that as we age into adulthood, we often lose this ability as we focus on work, family, life and don't have as much opportunity to be "shocked and awed" by the beauty all around us.

As many of us reach or will soon reach retirement age, now is the time to recapture that ability to be amazed by nature. Whenever we go outside for anything, but especially if you are in a special place like our Park, practice being mindful, or present in our awareness of all that is beautiful and amazing around us. The Red-Shouldered Hawk pair calling and setting up their territory, the Pileated Woodpecker calling from a section of the Park that you have not heard before, the spring peepers calling, the bluebirds and Carolina Wrens looking for a nesting site.

Check out the creek for minnows and invertebrates, look under bark and rocks and be amazed at the community that is there.

One way to get outside and to work to protect our Park is to come and help us with our first 2024 Rock Bridge Renew. It will be held on April 13<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at the Devil's Ice Box parking lot at 8:30 and have pizza for lunch. This is a great way to meet with fellow, like-minded tree huggers and do a good deed all at once. I hope to see you there.

Keep up with park events at the FoRB website: <https://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>.

I hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,  
Kevin Roberson

## Naturalist News

**Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist**

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, a crew of 24 people conducted a prescribed burn for a new 170-acre unit in the northern part of the Gans Creek Wild Area, West of Wagon Wheel trailhead.

Many ash trees in the park have died from the emerald ash borer, a non-native invasive species. Park staff and volunteers have been cutting down the dead trees in the picnic area which could potentially pose a hazard to visitors. These trees will be missed.

A multi-agency crew did a hibernating bat survey in Devil's Icebox Cave on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. They identified and counted: 69 tri-colored, three big brown, seven little brown, two gray and one

Indiana for a total of 82 bats, up slightly from 70 bats two years ago. The bats appear to be surviving White Nose Syndrome as only two little browns showed any sign of WNS.

### **Launch of the Greater Bonne Femme Watershed Initiative!**

**Lynne Hooper, Boone County Urban Hydrologist**

Boone County and project partners are pleased to announce the launch of the Greater Bonne Femme Watershed Initiative. Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is one of those partners working together toward the goal of clean and healthy streams both above ground and below ground.

Since 2012, there have been six stream segments in the Greater Bonne Femme Watershed (Little Bonne Femme and Bonne Femme Watersheds) (GBFW) on the Clean Water Act 303(d) list of impaired waters for exceedance of the *E. coli* water quality standards. To restore these waterways and to protect Outstanding State Resource Waters in the GBFW, Boone County Resource Management and partners developed a 9-element watershed-based plan (WBP) which was approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency on June 12, 2023 and is available for review at [www.cavewatershed.org](http://www.cavewatershed.org).

The WBP outlines a path forward to improve water quality in the GBFW by installation of best management practices (BMPs) on the agricultural landscape—the BMPs have great potential to reduce the loading of *E. coli* into streams, as well as mitigating nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment transport from stormwater runoff. Additional highlights from the WBP include: a 21-year time frame to achieve water quality goals as installation of the recommended BMPs by landowners is entirely voluntary; a cover crops pilot project with edge-of-field monitoring to provide feedback on BMP effectiveness, a demonstration project highlighting riparian corridor restoration and management, outreach and education for agricultural landowners and a septic system maintenance program.

Boone County Resource Management and partners felt that the WBP did not offer all of the restoration and protection measures necessary given the bountiful natural resources in the GBFW, including Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. The Greater Bonne Femme Watershed Initiative takes a broader approach on water quality and ecosystem health in the GBFW and will work toward creation of a watershed management plan that will be adopted by Boone County, the City of Columbia and the City of Ashland.



*In a photo from February 2004, ice flows over limestone above Little Bonne Femme Creek. Photo by Jim Gast. Used by permission.*

We are very excited as we launch the Initiative. Beyond implementation of the WBP, the Initiative will create a watershed-wide wildlife habitat restoration plan, offer education and outreach to all landowners in the watershed, and incorporate concepts of One Health, focusing on healthy water and soil for humans, wildlife and the ecosystem.

Please stay tuned for additional updates as we move forward on the Initiative!