

CONSERVATION LOBBY DAY 2010

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missouri

State Park Funding

Sixteen million visitors to Missouri state parks and historic sites generate over \$700 million in economic activity for Missouri annually, including 7,660 jobs (2003 data).

The Missouri park system is only mid-sized among state park systems and below average in funding, yet it has been recognized as one of the best in the nation owing to the quality of its natural and cultural resources and its management. That reputation is now in severe jeopardy.

Missouri state parks are facing a \$200 million backlog in vitally needed capital improvements (CI).

- Major project funding for parks has come from federal funds in the 1930s, '60s and '70s and from bond issues and donations. The last major infusion of CI funds was 10% of the \$600 million Third State Building Fund in the mid-1980s.
- With the loss of general revenue for salaries in 1989 and increasing diversions and exemptions from the Parks and Soils Sales Tax (half of 1/10th of 1%), the park system has been unable to keep up with critical infrastructure rehabilitation, resulting in a growing CI backlog now exceeding \$200 million.
- The economic downturn has reduced Park Sales Tax revenue from \$41 million in FY 2008 to a projected \$36.7 million in FY 2010, resulting in the recent elimination of 120 staff positions (20% of total merit staff), but parks received no extra federal funding in the last legislative session.

State Park Funding Priority

HJR 77, an \$800 million Fifth State Building Fund bond issue with up to \$250 million for state agencies other than higher education has been introduced by Reps. Chris Kelly (D), Steven Tilley (R), and others.

We advocate an amendment to HJR 77 to specify that 10% of the total (\$80-100 million) be designated for state parks.

- The measure will likely qualify as Build America Bonds, for which 35% of the interest may be paid from federal stimulus funds, and it could utilize the annual revenue stream freed by the impending retirement of the Third State Building Fund, hence **no new taxes**.
- The referendum would have to be approved by a vote of the citizenry; the 71% "yes" vote for renewal of the PSST in 2006 is a major selling point for including state parks in HJR 77.

**State Park Capital Improvement Needs
Total \$200+ million**

