



Mississippi River Connections Collaborative Founding Group. Photos: MRT, Inc.

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2012

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Forest Lake Area Trail System (FLATS)
Kirksville FLATS
2. Mississippi River Trail & Collaborative Support
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
3. Wears Creek Restoration & Missouri River Trails
City of Jefferson City
4. Parr Hill Park Restoration
City of Joplin
5. Ava Nature Trail
City of Ava
6. Ozark National Scenic Riverways Equestrian Access
Show-Me Missouri Backcountry Horsemen

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Recent Successes

Mississippi River Connections Collaborative Gathers in St. Louis

Mississippi River Connections Collaborative (MRCC) members convened in St. Louis, Missouri November 14 - 16, 2011, to share successes and strategies to move forward with their mission to provide people with physical and thematic connections to the river, thereby tapping unrealized potential to restore and protect this nationally significant resource.

Partners attended from every stretch of the 1,500 mile Mississippi River Corridor for the purpose of planning cross promotion of Mississippi River national park units and wildlife refuges (59 total) along with further development of the Mississippi River

Trail (MRT) to connect these iconic resources by alternative transportation means. The collaborative embraces all forms of outdoor trail activities including paddling, hiking, biking, wildlife watching, boating, and other forms of active living.

2012 has been designated the "Summer of Paddling" by collaborative members. Led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

"Working with Midwest and Southeast region RTCA representatives has been pure pleasure. Their work has been integral to the success of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative."

- Terry Eastin,
Executive Director,
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

Current Projects

1. Forest Lake Area Trail System

Project Partner: Kirksville FLATS
NPS Contact: Kim Shafer
Location and Congressional District:
MO-9

Project Goal

Creation of a four-mile paved, multi-use trail system connecting resources within Thousand Hills State Park and, eventually, connecting the park to the City of Kirksville, MO.

NPS Role

RTCA will work with the FLATS team to develop a Master Trail Plan for a multi-use trail system connecting the city of Kirksville, MO with Thousand Hills State Park, to reach out and seek input from the local community in the planning process, and to identify potential sources of funding for the project.



Volunteers help with trail clearing at Thousand Hills State Park. Photos :FLATS

AR-1, 4; IA-2, 4; IL-4, 12, 16, 17, 19;
KY-1; LA-1, 2, 3, 5, 6; MN-2, 3, 4, 5, 6,
8; MO-1, 2, 3, 8, 9; MS-1, 2, 3; TN-7, 8,
9; WI-3

Project Goal

Outreach to local communities to encourage improvements to the MRT for improved recreation, tourism, and community development; continued technical assistance in the development of an organizational strategic plan to support the Memorandum of Understanding objectives and increase

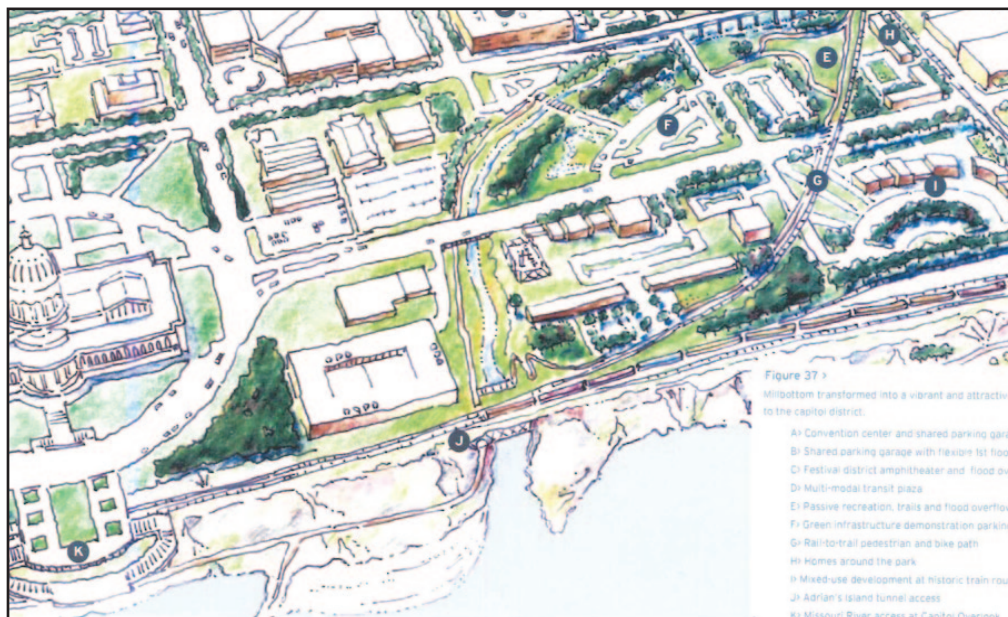
long-term organizational viability; further development of the Mississippi River “blueway” portion of the trail system; additional technical support for identification as part of the President’s Great Outdoors Initiative.

NPS Role

Provide support and services, including assisting the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative with organizational development, outreach to other organizations and agencies, and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Assistance will also be provided to increase MRT’s capacity to help develop water and land based trail along the Mississippi River.

2. Mississippi River Trail (MRT) & Collaborative Support

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
NPS Contact: Rory Robinson, David Thomson
Location and Congressional Districts:



Mill Bottom Transformation visioning. Image: Greening America's Capitals

3. Wears Creek Restoration and Missouri River Trails

Project Partner: City of Jefferson City
NPS Contact: Kim Shafer
Location and Congressional District:
MO-4

Project Goal

Development of a two-mile trail network in the Mill Bottom area will provide a connection to the existing Greenway system as well as to the new Missouri River bridge bicycle/pedestrian pathway that links the city to the

Current Projects cont.

nationally recognized State Katy Trail north of the Missouri River. The trail connections will have a transformative impact on outdoor recreation in this area and the region, providing residents and visitors to the state capitol access to trails and the river.

NPS Role

RTCA will assist in building relationships with Union Pacific railroad to facilitate Missouri River front access. The railroad divides the River from the City. RTCA will also assist with implementation of a river access plan, building on the suggestions of the EPA's Greening of America document, including developing and finding additional funding opportunities for implementation of any of the ideas listed in the "Greening of America's Capitals" document, including designing trails, a park in the Mill Bottom, and a preserve on Adrian's Island.

4. Parr Hill Park Restoration

Project Partner: City of Joplin

NPS Contact: Kim Shafer

Location and Congressional District: MO-7

Project Goal

Reconstruction of Parr Hill park (3.3 acres) that was significantly damaged in the May 22, 2011 tornado that leveled one-third of the city of Joplin, MO. Revegetation of the park to increase natural water filtration, create wildlife habitat (over 100 mature trees were lost in the tornado), and improve outdoor recreation opportunities.

NPS Role

Rebuilding parks and trails was noted as a priority by Joplin residents in public input sessions held in July 2011. RTCA will provide assistance with the review of park reconstruction plans, identifying funding opportunities, and with partner engagement and public outreach.



Equestrian Trail at Big Creek. Photo: Allison Schottenhaml

5. Ava Nature Trail

Project Partner: City of Ava

NPS Contact: Kim Shafer

Location and Congressional District: MO-8

Project Goal

The result of this project will be 3,877 linear feet of compacted gravel trail providing a corridor through a wooded area along Prairie Creek connecting Ava City Park to the Ava elementary and high school campus. In addition, erosion problems along the creek will be mitigated and native vegetation will be restored to an area previously cleared for sewer line replacement.

NPS Role

RTCA will assist in planning and implementation for the design of a recreational trails system. RTCA will also assist in public outreach and input during the planning process to build public and stakeholder support.

6. Ozark National Scenic Riverways Equestrian Access

Project Partner: Show-Me Missouri Backcountry Horsemen

NPS Contact: Mary Hanson

Location and Congressional District: MO-8

Project Goal

The goal is to create a continuous 250 mile long distance trail for equestrian packing and riding and hiking that will attract new visitors to Missouri and increase appreciation of the natural beauty of the Missouri Ozarks.

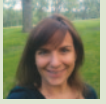
NPS Role

RTCA will assist the partners to:

1. Collaborate on a plan that will create a sustainable trail system through the Ozark region linking US Forest Service, National Park Service, and private lands.
2. Address trail design issues that provide access to natural areas without negative impact on the natural resources.
3. Create educational opportunities for trail users to learn more about Leave No Trace principles and the natural resources found in southern Missouri.
4. Research and strategize on funding opportunities.

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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2011 Nationwide Partnership Success

- 1,991 Miles of Trail Developed
- 1,925 Miles of River Conserved
- 33,230 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected
- 94% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



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Recent Successes cont.

Service in concert with the National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and MRT, paddling events will be featured all along the corridor in the new year. From the upper reaches of the River at Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, through the 260-mile stretch of River corridor managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Winona, Minnesota, to the ARCH in St. Louis, Missouri, as well as Memphis, Tennessee, Helena, Arkansas, and Natchez, Mississippi, these events will ignite the passion of River lovers from Minnesota to New Orleans.

2013 has been designated the “Year of Cycling” by the group. In conjunction with the Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s 75th anniversary, cycling events up and down the corridor will draw vast numbers of River residents and visitors for a number of fun-filled rides and cycling activities.

The purpose of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative is to coalesce Americans and visitors from around the world around the need to preserve the corridor and will place emphasis on the Mississippi River through conservation, recreation and river access; through history, culture, and lore; through education and stewardship; and by co-creation and co-delivery of resource-based messaging and programs.

Established by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by four regional directors of the National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the Board of Directors for MRT, Inc., this model represents a new approach in river-long resource restoration and protection that relies on a network approach to amplify the depth and reach of individual parks, trails, and refuges.

The Mississippi River Connection’s lead private partner is Mississippi River Trail, Inc. MRT is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to be the leader in connecting people and communities with the river through promotion and development of separated trails and on-road cycling routes.



MRCC members “take a ride” on the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge in St. Louis. NPS photo.