Letter from the Director

A whirlwind of new programs blossomed this year and I watched with awe at the display of persistence, talent and skill within our river community.

Our outdoors education component grew with two exciting projects—a multi-day workshop for educators and a residential summer camp for teenagers. These experiences provided a chance to engage people’s innate sense of wonder while deepening their sense of responsibility for the river. These young people, and those students our workshop educators will touch, are becoming the next generation of stewards.

We also hosted our first conference—what I liked to call an “Un-Convention” for Missouri River Action Teams.

Money from the two-year EPA Environmental Education Grant provided the financial foundation to boost River Relief’s expansion. The EPA grant even provided $22,750 for MRR to award mini-grants to eight non-profit organizations. We’re excited to pay forward with this generosity after being bolstered by our community for the past 16 years.

At the same time, we maintained a constant drumbeat of river cleanups, boat trips, speaker series, booths and more—as you can see in the following pages of this report. It takes institutional and individual support to sustain these accomplishments and we have so much gratitude for supporters like you—THANKS !!!

Jeff Barrow
Director, Missouri River Relief
Missouri River Action Team Network

For many years, Missouri River Relief has helped bridge communication between different Missouri River communities and organizations, helping people find allies in other locations and connecting people that need to know each other. We are now moving forward on making this work more formal by creating the Missouri River Action Team Network (MoRATs). With the support of a massive U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant, we are working on two projects to help formalize this growing network of river lovers and to support organizations that are turning their focus to the Missouri River.

2016 Mini-Grant Recipients

Last year we awarded $22,750 of EPA cash to eight organizations in three states through the “Missouri River Action Team Mini-Grant” program. This mini-grant program is focused on supporting projects that will expose people to, increase knowledge about and change people’s perception about the Missouri River.

We also organized and held the first in a new series of gatherings called the Missouri River Rendezvous. Held at Klondike Park in Augusta, MO. 85 attendees and presenters from 30 organizations shared knowledge, inspiration and ideas about art, history, river management, activism and a whole lot more. With river and town tours, an outdoor gallery, nature walks, river trips and clean-ups, there was a LOT to do. We are proud of the turnout and excited with the new connections made in this growing MoRAT Network.

Boonslick Heartland YMCA - “Big Fish, Big Tales and the Big Muddy: Missouri River Community Art Project” – (Boonville, MO)
Earth’s Classroom - “Curriculum Design for Paddle MO” (Missouri River Wine Country: Hermann to St. Louis)
Mississippi River Water Trail Association - “Leave No Kid on Shore (LiNKS): Missouri River Youth Paddling Program” (St. Louis, MO)
Kansas City Art Institute - “Missouri River Experience” (Kansas City, MO)
Kansas Association of Conservation and Environmental Education - “Teaching the Missouri River” (East Kansas)
Burroughs Audubon - “Wings Over Weston and the Iatan/Weston River Corridor Important Bird Area” (Platte and Jackson Counties, MO)
Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River - “Yankton Area Events” (Yankton, SD)
Little Blue River Watershed Coalition - “Missouri River Watershed Festival” (Kansas City, MO)
Missouri River Relief - “Missouri River Rendezvous” (Augusta, MO)
New River Generation

After their son returned home from the Missouri River Academy, a parent wrote the following: “My son is still bringing up things he learned and did at the Missouri River Academy. The Academy was better than outstanding, not only did he learn about the river, he learned teamwork, problem-solving and looking at the environment in a whole new way. The impact on his life cannot be understated; He seems surer of himself and his love of science grew.”

This five-day camp was the first year that MRR hosted the Academy in New Haven, Mo. The new location gave the Academy the ability take another step toward growth by incorporating a “Missouri River Action Project” into the curriculum. Each students chose an issue, such as invasive Asian Carp, to investigate and map its impact. Students created objectives they could achieve in their community and developed plans for involving others. At the end of the Academy, students shared their experience with an audience of Missouri River advocates as well as their families. “I enjoyed every second of the Academy and I hope that I get to come again next year,” one student shared.

“Each year, MRR learns more and strengthens the Missouri River Academy” Kristen Schulte, MRR Education Coordinator, says. This year, the organization focused on using cooperative learning strategies to allow students to explore their thoughts and feelings on issues that the river faces.

Missouri River Relief received outstanding support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-Region 7 and Missouri Environmental Education Association.

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS:

- 830 Students
- 164 Teachers
- 26 Educational Booths
- 15 River Excursions
- 4 Educator Workshops
- 25 Public Presentations
- 14 Outreach Events

This 12-year-old Missouri River Academy student was our youngest participant and travelled 300 miles from Plattsmouth, Nebraska.
Workshop Energizes Educators

Awakening to the Nixle’s text “Heat Advisory – Dangerous heat will affect the area today” didn’t dampen the spirits of 11 eclectic educators. They were on a mission. 99 degrees, full sun — So be it. For four packed days, these educators were eager to learn about the Missouri River and bring that message back to their students.

Missouri River Relief brought to life the rich environment of the Missouri River. Specialists in fields such as fisheries, biology and ornithology deepened educators’ understanding of and appreciation for the complexity of the river’s ecosystem. Educators also honed their skills by exploring ways to help students develop creative thinking skills. They came to realize the environment touches everything they teach, giving them a wide range of possibilities in the classroom.

Among those educators were Candy Marshall and Angie Rogers from Boonville, Mo., and Theresa Thomas from Columbia, Mo. Angie, a high school zoology teacher, shared that she looked forward to bringing a new perspective of the river into her classroom, starting with a lesson plan on local fish found in the Missouri River. Candy, a high school biology teacher, said she is focused on bringing the Missouri River food web and the implications of invasive species into the classroom.

Theresa Thomas, Boone County Stormwater Educator, shared that she was initially fearful of the Missouri River, but after exploring over 30 miles of the river she felt affirmed, and tearfully stated: “that is my river.”
Capital Clean-up is a Community Work of Art

The 2016 Jefferson City Missouri River Clean-up was held at beautiful Wilson’s Serenity Point overlooking views of our State Capitol and the historic river town. The community gathered at the banks of the Big Muddy on a gorgeous, sunny day.

220 volunteers helped clean up five tons of trash, via 13 boats from the Missouri Department of Conservation, Columbia Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office, Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge, Missouri River Relief and some local friends. Volunteers scrambled up muddy banks, scoured the shores and searched the woods along 10 miles of the river.

In the afternoon, the mud-painted volunteers listened to live music from the Lonesome Companions while they enjoyed an appreciation lunch, and participated in a spirited and rambunctious trash contest. Boats delivered trash to the clean-up headquarters, while volunteers sorted through the mountains of trash and recycled the majority. Event painter Cindy Scott captured the lively activities in real time on the beach as the day unfolded.

Event painter Cindy Scott turns kinetic events into iconic works of art with her business Too Rooster Artistry.
34 Tons of Trash
removed from the river, including...

956 bags trash • 126 bags recyclables • 454 tires
without rims • 443 tires • 27 coolers • 1 Mr.
Potato Head • 2 fence posts • 19 propane tank
(small) • 15 chairs • 2 chest freezer • 1 American
flag • 1 section rusted iron gate • 1 “Pittsburgh”
US Geological Survey life vest • 16 - 55-gal. plastic
barrels • 39 - 5-gal. buckets • 4.5 buoys • 1 oxygen
tank
1 bunch fake grapes

3,037 people
IMPACTED IN 4 STATES

1,472 Volunteers
from groups such as Washington Middle School Environmental
Club, Washington High School National Honor Society, Tamil
Sangam Youth Volunteer Organization, Mississippi River Stream
Team 168, Arnold Stream Team 211, League of Watershed
Guardians, Bourbeuse River Stream Team, Walmart 172, Cox
Conserves, Fontenelle Forest, National Indemnity Companies,
Pacific Life, BSA Troop 326, Izaak Walton League, Harrah’s Casino,
Great Adventures Ministry and a bunch more!

24 Communities
Easley/Providence, Boonville, New Haven, Orrick,
Florissant, Huntsdale, Jeff City, Columbia, Augusta, St.
Louis, Nixa, Alton, Kansas City, Fenton, Sugar Creek,
Bellevue, Omaha, Owensville, Williamsburg, Washington,
Maryland Heights, Springfield, Higbee, St. Charles

63 EVENTS
CLEAN-UPS, EDUCATION, RIVER RACES, FILM
FESTIVAL, BIG MUDDY SPEAKER SERIES,
RIVER EXCURSIONS, RIVER FESTIVAL & MORE
MR340’s Groundbreaking Year

One project River Relief has proudly partnered on for 9 years is the Missouri American Water MR340, a canoe & kayak race across the state. Hundreds of paddlers make a 340-mile human-powered dash across the state using the original cross-state highway, the Big Muddy itself.

River Relief supplies four safety boats for the race, with our hard working and river skilled volunteers giving up an entire week to travel along with the racers to the finish, supplying support and first response. It’s a great way to build river skills and learn deeper lessons of Missouri River navigation. Plus get inspired by hundreds of people pushing their bodies and hearts to new limits.

This year, a brand new Missouri River Relief boat operator joined our crew. Kevin Tosie is our liaison with the Sustain Mizzou organization. He jumped in head first and helped with every event he could. He hopped on the 340 safety crew for the entire race, refining his river chops and shepherding racers across the state for four days.

It was his first time on many stretches of the river. “I grew up in the St. Louis area, and I just think of the Missouri River as this industrial river,” he said. “But we spent whole days without seeing a city. People don’t think how wild some of these parts of the river are.”

Providing opportunities for people to experience the river on a deeper level is what we are all about. In the 11 years since the race started, a new community of engaged and knowledgeable Missouri River citizens has been born. And we are proud to be a part of it.

This year, MRR accommodated 4 river races and nearly 1,000 paddlers!
2016 Partner of the Year: Les Bourgeois Bistro

In 2008, we partnered with Troy Gordon of Friends of Big Muddy and the Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge to host a series of talks on Missouri River science. This became the Big Muddy Speaker Series.

We quickly outgrew the small cabin on the refuge that hosted the talks and needed to find a new location, preferably near the river and preferably with food and beverages. You couldn’t design a better place than Les Bourgeois Bistro, with one of the finest Missouri River views in the valley and locally sourced food, wine and beer. It’s been over six years since our first talk at Les Bourgeois.

Since then, Catering Director Chelsea Bessey and her partner Mary Lathrop have helped us work around their busy schedule of weddings and parties, and they have bent over backwards to make sure we can pull off our monthly talks. They now open the restaurant on Tuesdays just for us.

This is one part of the statewide success of the Big Muddy Speaker Series, where local venues and organizations like Greenway Network and Healthy Rivers Partnership team up to spread Missouri River knowledge. We’re proud to be a part of it.
2016 Finance Report

As Mark Chambers settles in Des Moines, IA, we will miss his naturalist knowledge, experience as a hardworking crew member and his wisdom as president of the board of directors.
A Big Muddy thanks to our sponsors

Our projects would be impossible without the generous donations of our many sponsors. Our gratitude is heartfelt.

Sponsor of the Year

Hulston Family Foundation

$20,000 to $55,000

Rio Vista Fund
(Greater St. Louis Community Foundation)

$10,000 to $19,999

Boone Electric Community Trust

$5,000 to $9,999

Thomas & Anne Smith Charitable Fund
Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District
REI
Bass Pro Shops

Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation
UMKC (Student Environmental Coalition)

$2,000-$4,999

Burns & McDonnell Foundation
City of Columbia – Stormwater Greenway Network
Healthy Rivers Partnership
Bryan Johnson
Ben Ruh
New Belgium Brewing
Saint James Winery
Missouri Environmental Fund

Missouri Scholars Academy
Ruthie Moccia
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Musical Theater Heritage
Northrup Grumman
Open Space Council of St. Louis
Orchids & Art Custom Framing
Osage Paddle Sports
Piasa Palisades Sierra Club
Republic Services (Saint Charles/Bridgeton)
River Des Peres Watershed Coalition
Jan & Clayton Schnarr
South Dakota Challenge
Racin’ Dave Stevens
Still 630
Dave & Fran Stous
Sustain Mizzou
Laura Sweets
James Swope
True/False Film Festival
University of Missouri-- School of Natural Resources
Walmart Florissant #1265
Jan Weaver

$2,000-$4,999

Missouri Environmental Education Foundation
National Park Service-Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
St. Louis-Jefferson County Solid Waste Management District
Russell Wilson—Joe Wilson Memorial

$500-1,999

Alpine Shop
Alton Marketplace Association
Gloria & Michael Attoun Baumeister
Augusta Brewing Company (68.3 Bierfest)
Augusta Bottoms Consort
Marilyn Barrow
Francis & Case Baum
Boonville Tourism
Broadway Brewery
City of New Haven Colliers International Columbia Convention & Visitors Bureau Columbia Public Schools Commerce Trust Joe Engeln Great Rivers Greenway Florence Heiman Charitable Trust Lynne Hooper & Ty Brix Stephen & Linda Jackson and the Boatacious Blondes Katy Land Trust Brian Mahieu Terry Merritt

Hulston Family Foundation

Missouri Arts Council
Enduring, Together

Eight years ago, I snapped on my life vest at a River Relief clean-up for the first time. Little did I know, that snap connected my childhood imagination to reality.

Flashback to me, age 12: I was an over-protected only child, and a book about Sir Ernest Shackleton’s Antarctica expedition turned into obsession. To me, their adventure story paled next to the complexity of the crew. I’d pore over their portraits and biographies: Shackleton’s square jaw frowned at Frank Wild’s jaunty pipe. Surgeons doubled as dog sledders. The motor expert was also the store keeper. Eclectic as they were, they relied on each other to live each day.

Now, I study my fellow River Relief crew members around the evening camp fire with as much fascination as I had over those books. We are truck drivers, jewelry makers, veterinary college professors, mechanics, students, writers and engineers. We share adventurous spirits and a sense of purpose, but at work on the river we morph into cooks, boat operators, dispatchers, photographers, event day cheerleaders and fire starters. “The crew is crucial to Missouri River Relief,” Jeff Barrow says.

Unlike preparing to man “The Endurance,” none of us join MRR through formal interviews or even with a particular goal in mind. “All you need to do is show up,” Jeff says. That’s what makes it so fun. We simply answer an opportunity to serve, step up to what needs to be done, and come back for the next event. The river pulls us together, and we’re honored to help MRR stay on course.

Tina Casagrand, publisher of The New Territory magazine, also works with several environmental nonprofits across the state.

Missouri River Relief crew relaxes riverside after New Haven clean-up. DAVE MARNER.

Portrait: Tina Casagrand. MADELINE STANLEY