2020
Inspiring Impact

Year in Review
Our Mission

To engage individuals and communities along the Missouri River in the exploration, enjoyment, restoration and care of the river through hands-on river cleanups, education programs and recreation.

From Our Director

Piloting a steamboat on the old Missouri River was a real challenge. Its sandy banks and riverbed were always changing. What was a passable channel the last time you boated this reach might be clogged with driftwood snags and sandbars the next time.

Charting a course through 2020 felt a lot like being a steamboat pilot on the old Big Muddy. We were stuck in port for several weeks, rewriting our navigation plans from scratch and trying to chart a safe path forward with incomplete information. But we never stopped making an impact.

The staff, volunteers and partners of Missouri River Relief are visionary, resilient and tenacious. Our in-person education programs shifted to a virtual format. But they kept all their heart and soul and found new audiences. We dipped our toes into COVID-safe river cleanups with a bunch of trusted Crew volunteers. Then replicated what worked in St. Charles and at Cooper’s Landing, removing even more trash from the river than with 3x the volunteers. The MR340 was a blast of fresh air for so many – a chance to meet new and old friends outside and spend a few days moving down the Missouri River.

Our community boosted us with inspiration, engagement and financial support. We wouldn’t have found the right channel without you.

THANK YOU. We cannot wait to see you on the river in 2021.

Steve Schnarr
Director, Missouri River Relief

See You on the River in 2021!

Our Staff

Kristen Schulte
Education Director

Melanie Cheney
Office Manager

Kevin Tosie
Operations Manager

John Brady
Fleet Manager

Josh McCarrol
Development Director

Katy Miller
Bookkeeper

Anna Miller
Americorps
For an organization who has based its identity on bringing large groups of people to the Missouri River for meaningful experiences, 2020 was a huge challenge. We’re proud to have made a big impact.

- Shifted the Big Muddy Speaker Series to an online format reaching thousands more people.
- Crafted several enriching online education programs highlighting the connection between where students live and the Missouri River.
- Safely restructured our river cleanup model to work with small groups over several days, removing 15 tons of trash from the Missouri River.
- Purchased a brand new heavy-duty passenger van with a grant from the Robert J. Trulaske Jr. Family Foundation.
- Hired a Development Director to strengthen the organization’s funding base.
- Inspired a movement of people organizing their own “Trash Mobs” cleaning up litter in local streams and neighborhoods.

Since 2001

- 187 River Cleanups
- 28,509 Volunteers
- 970 Tons of Trash
- 26,474 Students & Teachers
- 32 Communities Served
Annual River Field Trip Goes Virtual

What can effective virtual Missouri River experiences look like?

Amid school closures and the suspension of in-person education programming, this was a pressing question for our staff. Like many others in 2020, we started dipping our toes into best practices in distance learning. While we know distance learning can’t replicate an in-person experience on the Missouri River, we can still use our expertise on how people learn to guide our design of virtual offerings. These insights informed the reconfiguration of our annual river field trip for fourth-graders in Columbia Public Schools into a virtual format with a YouTube video and companion guide for teachers.

“Exploring the Big Muddy: A Virtual Field Trip” was viewed over 500 times and incorporates spectacular views of limestone bluffs, eagles’ nests, and enduring artwork. Insider knowledge about the river was imparted by AmeriCorps river guide Laura Waldo-Semken, boat captain Kory Kaufman, a teacher with Columbia Public Schools, and Missouri River Relief director Steve Schnarr.

The virtual field trip was inspired by place-based learning and took an interdisciplinary approach to educate students by placing topics in scientific, social and historical contexts. These approaches helped to reflect real-world learning scenarios and increased engagement amongst students. Thank you to Columbia Public Schools Science Department and The Documentary Group for your support; this virtual field trip is a unique tool for developing a deeper understanding of the Missouri River.
Watershed Expeditions at Home

An alternative to in-person Summer Camp

Missouri River Relief is dedicated to supporting families in our communities. That is why we pivoted to a virtual camp experience in the summer and fall seasons. Between the two runs of this program, River Relief virtually hosted over 100 students in the exploration of their local watershed. The Watershed Expeditions at Home programs combined weekly virtual meetings with an activity box that was delivered to the doorsteps of participating students. The box included supplies and instructions for exciting exercises where students explored the physical, conceptual and creative aspects of their watershed.

During the virtual meetings, students had the opportunity to meet with guest speakers from across the country. This included a tour of Living Lands and Waters trash barge, Watershed Cairns art studio, Sustainable Coastlines Hawaii and Mr. Trash Wheel.

Stories from these guest speakers inspired students when it came to their final projects. Students were tasked with designing a solution for a pollution problem in their local watershed. They had the option to focus on creating advertisements advocating for change or a prototype machine of their own making. The end results were full of ingenuity from the next generation of watershed guardians.

Innovative Education

2020 Education & Outreach Programs

- Environmental Education Meet & Greets
- Virtual Big Muddy Speaker Series
- Virtual Kansas City Educators Workshop with Shawnee Mission School District
- Great Missouri River Scavenger Hunt with Boone County Stormwater
- Missouri River Activity Books using Little Free Libraries
- “Make-a-Difference” Library Programs at three regional libraries across the state
- Watershed Expeditions at Home month-long summer and fall program
- Explore the Big Muddy river boat rides at Cooper’s Landing
- Just Plein Air & Water plein air painting with Columbia Art League
- Virtual Missouri River Trip & Guide for every Columbia Public School 4th Grader

By The Numbers

572 Students
50 Teachers
62 Missouri River Presentations
32 Educator Programs
### Cleaning Our Rivers

#### Trash Mobs

*Small groups making a big impact in their community*

In March, many of us were suddenly stuck at home, creating our offices and classrooms in our living rooms and bedrooms. But our need to engage with the world, to be in nature and work safely with others burned stronger than ever.

One Crew member, **Doris Guillory** had a film made about her efforts called “Caring is Contagious”. She was unable to do personal massages in the beginning of the pandemic and decided to get her kayak out on a local lake and use her new free time to pick up every piece of trash from the lake. Truly inspiring!

We put together an online tip sheet for doing your own neighborhood or stream cleanup. We called them “Trash Mobs” and asked our community to get out and pick up trash in their neighborhoods and share their stories, photos and results with us. Over the course of the year, **105 groups** reported their “Trash Mobs” to us. More than **200 volunteers** removed an estimated **15 tons** of junk from **72 miles** of their local rivers and streams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By The Numbers</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> MRR Cleanups</td>
<td>volunteers, students, teachers, paddlers, attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>105</strong> Trash Mobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>665</strong> Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>31</strong> Tons of Trash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>669</strong> Tires</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>112</strong> Miles Cleaned</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong> Paddling Events</td>
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<td><strong>825</strong> Paddlers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3,581</strong> Video Engagements</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4,081</strong> Total Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![](image1.png)

![Sarah Peper](image2.png)

![River Road Cleanup](image3.png)

![Sabrina Davenport & Family](image4.png)

![Amy Meier](image5.png)
Missouri River Cleanups

As 2020 moved in, it became clear that the safest activities people could do in this pandemic were outdoors. As an organization that treasures our volunteers and communities, we were not going to take any chances. We turned our river cleanups from one-day programs with hundreds of volunteers into three-day programs with much smaller groups. And they were so effective! Check out these results...

Hartsburg Crew Cleanup (June)

The trial run of a new river cleanup model working with smaller groups. Based out of the Hartsburg Access we worked predominately with our volunteer “Crew”. During the day we filled boat loads with trash! In the evenings, friends gathered for sunset, distanced across the riverbank. For many, it was their first time being with friends in several months.

39 Volunteers • 4.2 Tons

St. Charles Cleanup (September)

Missouri River Relief’s first community cleanup with volunteer groups since the pandemic started. Rather than 200 volunteers working all at once in one day, we spread the community cleanup over three days to work with smaller groups. There were some massive dump sites knocked out and so much floodborne trash. An awesome effort!

53 Volunteers • 5 Tons

Cooper’s Landing Cleanup (October)

Being able to do a cleanup on our home stretch of river brings us so much joy. Through wind, rain, and cold, 99 dedicated volunteers and Crew cleaned up along a 14-mile stretch of river near Cooper’s Landing over the course of 3 days. We worked with a bunch of local groups, including students, families and nonprofits. MDC employees brought boats to expand our capacity.

99 Volunteers • 5.5 Tons
Missouri River Relief is excited and proud to have acquired the Missouri American Water MR340 Race at the end of 2020!

Billed as the “world’s longest nonstop paddling race”, the MR340 brings canoeists, kayakers and SUP paddlers from around the world to run a nonstop 340-mile race course from Kansas City, KS to St. Charles, MO on the Missouri River.

MRR has been involved in this race since 2008 as part of the safety boat team. By acquiring the race, we are transforming it into a fundraiser for our work on the Missouri River. Our mission has always been totally aligned with the race’s mission: build a community of Missouri River lovers through direct experiences.

The quality of people that tackle this race, the volunteers that run it and the friends and families that support the racers are just top-notch. And we love sharing the river with this amazing community of people. Everyone is creating lifelong memories right on the continent’s longest river together.

Scott Mansker and Rivermiles will continue running the race as a contractor for Missouri River Relief and will be involved in all aspects of the race. But we are working together to stabilize the future of the race and support MRR’s mission.
A Decade of Wild & Scenic Films

Ten years of inspiring activism through film

Our last huge event before the pandemic changed everything was our 10th year hosting the Wild & Scenic Film Festival at the Blue Note in Columbia. Few of us knew that this would be the last big indoor gathering most of us would participate in for the rest of the year. We created treasured memories with 444 of our community members.

Missouri River Relief is a part of the Wild & Scenic’s On Tour program along with 250 environmental nonprofits, schools, museums and businesses across the country. We have the honor of choosing from a diverse lineup of outdoor adventure & environmental films from around the globe to share the inspiration with our hometown.

This friend and fundraiser for Missouri River Relief always warms our hearts during the cold winter months, jump-starting the organization for another season on the river.

Our Tireless Crew

Thanks to these volunteers who go the extra mile

One of the unique features of Missouri River Relief is our volunteer Crew. These are folks that are the first to arrive at any event and the last to leave. The Crew helps staff events, running registration, driving boats, preparing food, conducting safety meetings, scouting for trash and providing educational presentations.

Our new COVID-safe structure for river cleanups required a LOT more time and effort as one-day events stretched into three or more days. Our Crew took time off work and from their families to provide the backbone to make it happen. These are not your average volunteers. Learn more and get involved at riverrelief.org/about/meet-the-crew/
Financials

Revenue: $460,071

- Program Fees $26,099
- Individual $137,376
- Corporate $60,622
- Non-Profit $18,477

Meet The Board

Officers

NIC ROGERS, President
Stewardship Specialist,
Ozark Regional Land Trust

LYNNE HOOPER, Vice President
Urban Hydrologist,
Boone County Resource Management

MICHAEL SALANSKI, Treasurer
Director of Operations,
Convergence Financial

KORY KAUFMAN, Secretary
Retired Science Teacher, Rock Bridge High School,
Columbia Public Schools

Meet The Board

Members

BILL FESSLER
Resource Management
Kansas City Parks & Recreation

JED FRIEDRICHSEN
Retired Digital Learning Innovator

CATHY GUNThER, PHD
Biology Instructor
University of Missouri

DANA KEE
Social Worker
Ellis Fischel Cancer Center

DREW LEMBERGER
Owner; Mt. Nebo Inn B&B & Missouri Boatworks;
retired VP Les Bourgeois Vineyards

TOM LEMLEY
Attorney
Bridgepoint Law Firm, LLC

TERRY MERRITT
Vice President
Midwest Water Operations

DIANA PAPOUlias, PHD
Retired Fisheries Biologist - US Geological Survey;
Ascension Mission Leader of Exxpedition

Nic Rogers

Board President
Nic Rogers has volunteered for the last six years as a crew member, helping at river events from St. Louis to St. Joe; he has excelled at jobs like “ramp boss” and “dispatch”, giving a helping hand to each and every volunteer who boards a boat. On top of that, he is a smooth board facilitator.

Thank you for your service, Nic!

KENT ROBISON
Branch Manager Plumb Supply/DKB; Race Director of Osage Spring 12

MICHAEL CRIST
Executive Director,
Managing member of Tatanka Resources

HEIDI SHARP
Loan Officer, Veteran’s United

Programs $183,505

- Administrative $68,908
- Fundraising $78,024
- Programs 48%
- Fleet 14%
- Corporate 20%
- Foundation 13%
- Government 6%
- Individual 30%
- Non-Profit 15%

Expenses: $382,827
# 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

- Rio Vista Foundation
- Hulston Family Foundation
- U.S. Small Business Administration

## $20,000 - $50,000

- SBA
- The Robert J. Trulaske, Jr. Family Foundation

## $10,000 +

### Anonymous
- John P. & Maida S. Hulston Family Fund

### William G. Little
- Community Foundation of Central Missouri

### $5,000 +

- Missouri Humanities Council
- Steve Schnarr
- St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Mgmt.
- UST Gear

- Living Lands & Waters
- Mid-Mo. Solid Waste
- Missouri Dept. of Natural Resources

## $2,000 +

- Boone Electric Community Trust
- Bryan & Linda Johnson
- Columbia Public Schools
- Corvin Family Fund
- Dan & Connie Burkhardt
- Dave & Fran Stous
- Frances R. Dewing Foundation
- Jan & Clayton Schnarr

## $1,000 +

- Jeff Soltis
- Kristyle Marketing
- Missouri Birthing Society
- National Park Service - L&C
- Odell Brewing Company
- Shawnee Mission School District
- St. James Winery
- Stream Teams United
- Target
- Terry Woodruff

## $500 +

- Alpine Shop
- Artlandish Gallery
- Bank of Washington
- Barney & Eileen Combs
- Bernie Arnold
- Bill Jackson
- Brian Waldrop
- Bruce & Marvis Templer
- Budget Dumpster
- Cathy Gunther
- Central Bank of Boone County
- Clark Fox Family Foundation
- Columbia Art League
- Columbia Storage
- Columbia Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Cooper’s Landing
- Dan Strieker
- Delta Systems
- Diana Papoulas & Dave Galat
- Diggit Graphics
- Drew Lemberger
- Elke Boyd
- Evergy
- Fechtel Beverages
- Francis & Case Baum
- Gateway Dredging & Construction
- GovWatch
- Greenway Network
- In honor of Bill Rotts
- In honor of John Kneepkens
- In honor of Lisa Swafford
- In honor of William F. McGeehan, DDS
- Jan Weaver & Jim Carrel
- John Brady
- Johnston Paint & Decorating
- Julie Busch
- Kathy & Randy Hayden
- Kory & Robyn Kaufman
- Lara Landrum
- Laura Sweets
- Loving Hands Massage
- MaryBeth and Scott Litofsky
- Matthew Britt
- McPeethers & Rickard Family Fund
- Melissa & Blair Murphy
- Michael & Elizabeth Basler
- Michael McGeehan
- Myra Galloway
- Nic Rogers
- Norm Miller & Kris Walker
- Northrop Grumman
- Nuance Communications
- Ozark Land Trust
- Patty Farrar & Too Tall Dave Elsberry
- Peter Dyke
- Pita Pit
- Pixel Jam Digital
- Racin’ Dave Stevens
- Rebecca DeGraaf
- Republic Services
- Richard & Denice Mendenhall
- Richard King
- Riverland Sanctuary
- Rob & Anne Jacobson
- Rob Nix
- Robin & Connie Kalthoff
- Ruthie Moccia
- Sandy Neal & Terry Merritt
- Scott & Kate Mansker
- St. Louis Aquarium Found.
- Stephen & Linda Jackson
- The Blue Note
- Thomas Elpel
- Tom & Donna Bell
- Tom Lemley
- Van Matre Law Firm
- Van Trust Real Estate
- Veterans United
- Walmart #172
Get Involved

Volunteer
• At a Cleanup
• As an Educator
• On the Board

Participate
• In a River Race
• At a Speaker Series
• At a Summer Camp

Create
• River Art
• Tasty Food
• A Community

Donate
• Cash
• Time
• Talent

MRR “Trash Mob” on Hinkson Creek in Columbia

www.riverrelief.org