Missouri River Relief

2025 Annual Report

A Letter from the Board President

There are organizations that talk about the communities they serve, and there are organizations that are made of them. Missouri River Relief has always been the second kind. What you will find in these pages is the work of thousands of volunteers, partners, and supporters who showed up in 2025 because they understand the river's power and are fighting to protect it. I am proud to stand alongside every one of them.

I'm honored by the privilege of serving on the Board of Directors. The work we get to support is tangible, the mission is clear, and the community that has grown around it humbles me. This year I watched 4th graders discover the river for the first time on a Missouri River Days field trip, a Crew Member camp at the confluence of the Osage and Missouri Rivers before a cleanup, and a paddler cross the finish line after paddling 340 miles.

The stories from this past year are a reminder of what becomes possible when people are connected to something larger than themselves. I am deeply grateful to everyone who made 2025 what it was, and I cannot wait to see what comes next.

Cathy Gunther
Board President

"I watched 4th graders discover the river for the first time on a Missouri River Days field trip, a Crew Member camp at the confluence of the Osage and Missouri Rivers before a cleanup, and a paddler cross the finish line after paddling 340 miles."

Meet the Staff

1 **Kevin Tosie** — Operations Director
2 **Harry Katz** — Communications Director
3 **Steve Schnarr** — Race Director
4 **Katy Miller** — Bookkeeper
5 **Becca Ray** — Grant Manager
6 **Kristen Schulte** — Education Director
7 **Petie Holder** — Development Director
8 **Jami Wade** — Executive Director
9 **Dave Combs** — Fleet Manager
10 **Lara Cox** — Education Coordinator
11 **Alyssa Thomas** — Stewardship Coordinator

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The Rocket Group

The River Changes Us

Across cleanup sites, boat ramps, and river miles, people came together to experience the river in ways that changed them and, in turn, changed our organization.

This year brought meaningful growth. New school districts joined our programs. New staff members expanded our capacity. A new passenger boat opened opportunities for more people to experience the river. We also introduced a refreshed organizational brand that gave clearer language to reflect who we are and how we show up: grounded, welcoming, and deeply connected to the river.

But the most important changes were not internal. Volunteers returned with friends. Students explored the river for the first time. Families built traditions. Paddlers found challenge and community. People who arrived as participants left with a stronger connection to the Missouri River and a clearer sense of their role within it.

That is what we mean when we say The River Changes Us.

Not in one moment, but through thousands of experiences that build relationships with each other and with the river itself.

Our Mission

Missouri River Relief's mission is to safely 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.

2025 Milestones

Winter

Hired Development Director & Grant Manager

Spring

Launch of the new MRR & MR340 Branding

Missouri River Days Pilot with Jefferson City School District

Summer

Celebrated the 20th Annual MR340

Fall

First Jefferson City School District Missouri River Days

New passenger boat acquired

Hired Communications Director

2025 By The Numbers

7,457
People engaged with the river

162
River miles cleaned

4,318
Students experienced the river firsthand

42,102
Pounds of trash removed from the river

742
Paddlers on the Missouri River

1,535
Volunteers

EDUCATION

Learning Along The River

For many students, the Missouri River is something they pass over but rarely embrace with curiosity.

At Missouri River Relief, learning starts by changing that relationship.

Through field trips, camps, boat rides, and hands-on exploration, students experience the river directly. They ask questions, make observations, and discover connections that stay with them long after the day ends.

In 2025, new partnerships, expanded access, and new opportunities brought more students and families to the river.

The Salli Webb

A New Way Onto the River

In 2025, Missouri River Relief welcomed the Salli Webb to the fleet, creating new opportunities for students, volunteers, and families to experience the Missouri River.

Named in honor of Salli O'Donnell, MR340 veteran, and Ragan Webb, CPS Elementary Science Coordinator, the name reflects two different ways people come to the river: through adventure and education.

More than a new boat, the Salli Webb expands our capacity and creates space for more people to build lasting connections with the river.

10 Years on the River

Job Point YouthBuild Partnership

For 10 years, Missouri River Relief has partnered with Job Point YouthBuild to connect students with hands-on experiences along the Missouri River. In 2025, nearly 60 students from across Missouri spent a day at Cooper's Landing learning through cleanup work, fishing, art, and exploration on the river.

"I could have been at home playing video games. I'm here, trying a new experience, trying to see a new place, and helping my community."

- Job Point Participant

For many students, it was their first time on the Missouri River.

From Pilot to Partnership

Jefferson City Public Schools
Missouri River Days

What began as a single pilot day became the beginning of something larger.

In spring 2025, Missouri River Relief brought Missouri River Days to Jefferson City for the first time, welcoming students from Thorpe Gordon STEM Academy onto the river through boat rides, exploration, art, and hands-on learning. Designed as a way to introduce new communities to the program, the day invited students to experience the Missouri River not as something distant, but as a place to ask questions, make discoveries, and build connection.

The response made something clear: communities want more opportunities to experience the river firsthand.

By fall, the pilot grew into partnership, expanding to welcome the entire Jefferson City School District fourth grade class, establishing a new foundation for future Missouri River Days programming beyond Columbia.

Programs like Missouri River Days are built on a simple idea: when students meet the river face-to-face, curiosity becomes understanding, and understanding becomes connection.

Education In Action

59	4,318	189	11,091
Education Events	Students	Teachers	Hours on the River

STEWARDSHIP

Caring for a Shared River

For more than two decades, Missouri River Relief has connected people to the river through cleanup efforts large and small. Large-scale cleanups remain at the heart of that work and continue to bring communities together around a shared purpose.

But stewardship is not measured only by the biggest days on the calendar. In 2025, we saw more people creating their own opportunities to care for the river, building stewardship into their communities and finding meaningful ways to make a difference.

Because when people feel connected to the river, caring for it becomes part of everyday life.

Growing a Cleanup Culture

It started informally, the way many good ideas do. The stewardship team began organizing smaller, off-schedule cleanups. We called the effort the Local Cleanup Action Team (LCAT). What began as a way to connect volunteers with additional opportunities to care for the river quickly gained momentum.

Alongside LCAT, our Trash Mob program continued to grow, empowering individuals and groups to organize their own cleanups wherever they saw a need. Across the season, these programs contributed about 300 volunteer hours to the care for nearly 100 miles of waterways.

While both efforts are still evolving, they reflect a growing culture of stewardship - one that makes it easier for people to care for the places they value most.

Partners in The Work

Some of our most consistent stewardship work happens quietly, alongside partners who continue showing up for the river year after year.

In 2025, Missouri River Relief partnered with Spire at Klondike Park, Evergy at Cooley Lake Conservation Area, and welcomed WaterOne to the river for their first cleanup at LaBenite Park. Evergy's cleanup also brought a special volunteer crew to the riverbank: staff members of the Kansas City Chiefs.

These partnerships supported cleanup efforts across the watershed while helping connect employees and volunteers directly to the river that supports their communities.

Care in Action

162
River Miles Cleaned

21
Tons of Trash Removed

239
Tires

804
Volunteers

Sugar Creek

LaBenite Park - Independence, MO

April 12th, 2025

224	Volunteers
10	River Miles
21	Tires
1	Troll Doll
8,560	Pounds of Trash

Omaha/Council Bluffs

Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park - Council Bluffs, IA

May 17th, 2025

120	Volunteers
8	River Miles
13	Tires
1	Piano
5,420	Pounds of Trash

Osage & Missouri River

Bonnots Mill Access - Bonnots Mill, MO

October 25th, 2025

162	Volunteers
12	River Miles
100	Tires
1	Tonka Truck
7,700	Pounds of Trash

On the River

Large-Scale Cleanups

Large-scale cleanups remain at the heart of Missouri River Relief's stewardship work, bringing hundreds of volunteers directly onto the river each year.

In April, 224 volunteers gathered at LaBenite Park in Sugar Creek and removed more than 8,500 pounds of trash from 10 miles of river. In May, cleanup efforts continued in Omaha and Council Bluffs, where 120 volunteers cleared 5,400 pounds of debris from an 8-mile stretch of the Missouri River.

The season closed in October near Bonnots Mill at the confluence of the Osage and Missouri Rivers, where 162 volunteers removed 7,700 pounds of trash and more than 100 tires from 12 miles of riverbank.

Across all three events, more than 500 volunteers gave their time to care for the Big Muddy.

RECREATION

Adventure on the Big Muddy

Connection to the Missouri River does not always begin through cleanup work or a field trip. Sometimes it begins with a fishing rod, a paddle, or a stretch of river between two checkpoints.

In 2025, Missouri River Relief continued creating opportunities for people to experience the river through recreation, from community fishing programs and paddling events to the 20th Annual MR340.

16th Annual Race to the Dome

More than 200 paddlers hopped on the Missouri River for the 16th Annual Race to the Dome, navigating headwinds and the meandering current of the river to the finish line in Jefferson City.

For some racers, the goal was intense competition. For others, it was simply time spent on the river. But whether paddlers launched from Hartsburg or Providence, first-time racers and returning veterans shared the same experience of meeting the Missouri River on its own terms.

By the time boats landed at the Finish Line beach, each paddler carried away something familiar to the river community: determination, respect for the water, and a deeper connection to the river itself.

Catfishing Gear Library

Free Gear, Open Invitation

2025 marked the first full year of programming through our Catfishing Gear Library, creating new opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience the Missouri River. Throughout the season, participants checked out free fishing gear, joined catfishing lessons, and found their own reasons to keep coming back to the river.

Across the year, 546 people went catfishing through lessons, gear checkouts, camps, and special programs. For many participants, it was their first time fishing on the Missouri River. Others returned with friends and family after discovering a new connection to the water.

What began as a way to remove barriers to fishing became something larger: a program rooted in access, confidence-building, and time spent together along the riverbank.

20TH MR340

In 2006, Scott Mansker and his small team of Rivermiles enthusiasts invited a test group of 20 paddlers in 15 boats to push off from the banks of the Kaw River and paddle across the state of Missouri.

It was a visionary concept. Could the Missouri River be a world-class race venue running right through our backyards? How long should it take? How could this be pulled off?

Over the next 20 years, Scott and Kate Mansker built a community around this race. A community of passionate paddlers sharing river and racing knowledge grew into a world-class event, bringing over 5,000 racers paddling over 2 million miles on the Missouri River.

Missouri River Relief joined the team in 2008, becoming a crucial part of the safety system and helping foster the rapid growth of the race. This wild adventure dovetails with our mission of connecting people in deep and meaningful ways to the Missouri River.

In 2021, we acquired the race and continues to work with the Rivermiles crew and a host of other partners and sponsors, such as Missouri American Water and River City Outdoors, to draw attention to and love for the Missouri River. We're so proud of the MR340 community.

Crew Highlight

Missouri River Relief's Crew is made up of highly skilled volunteers who serve in specialized roles across our programs. While they are not paid staff, Crew Members complete training, build extensive river experience, and contribute countless hours supporting cleanups, education programs, river trips, and races. They are the backbone of Missouri River Relief, helping make our mission possible year after year.

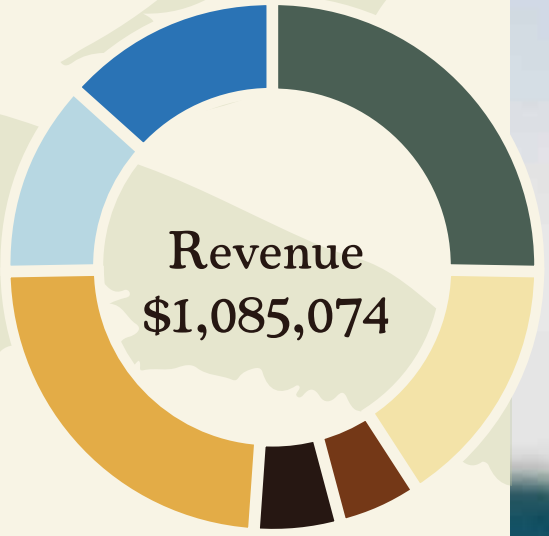
Melanie Knocke

Some volunteers show up for an event. Others become part of the foundation that makes the work possible. Over the years, Melanie Knocke has grown into one of our most dedicated Crew Members, contributing her time and talents across cleanups, education programs, river events, and race operations. Her willingness to take on new challenges, support fellow volunteers, and step into leadership roles has made a lasting impact on the organization. Melanie's journey reflects the spirit of the crew itself: showing up, pitching in, and helping others connect with the river.

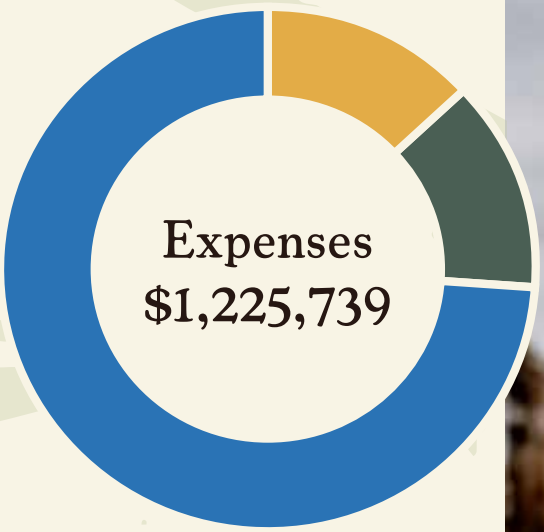
Scott Mansker

The strongest communities are built by people willing to share their passion with others. For decades, Scott Mansker has done exactly that. Through the creation of the MR340, service on our Board of Directors, and support of cleanup and education programs, Scott has helped strengthen both our organization and the broader river community. His leadership and dedication have inspired thousands of people to experience the Missouri River in new ways. Through decades of service, Scott has helped build a stronger river community and created opportunities for others to find their own place within it.

Financial Overview



Individual	24%
Foundation	22%
Program	18%
Corporate	14%
Government	11%
Nonprofit	5%
In Kind	5%



Programs	74%
Fundraising	13%
Administrative	13%

MADE POSSIBLE BY

Our Generous Donors

Our work is made possible by the individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations who invest in the Missouri River and the communities that depend on it. Their support sustains our cleanup efforts, education programs and recreation events throughout the year.

Sponsor of the Year

Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District

We are proud to recognize the Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District as our 2025 Sponsor of the Year.

Since supporting some of our earliest cleanup efforts in 2006, the Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District has helped expand and sustain our stewardship and education programs in deliberate and meaningful ways. Most recently, their support helped make our newest passenger boat, the Salli Webb, possible.

Over nearly two decades of partnership, they have contributed more than $250,000 to support our mission and expand opportunities for people to experience the river firsthand.

$50,000 +

Rio Vista Foundation

Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District
Region H

Anonymous Donor

$20,000 - $49,999

Missouri American Water

National Park Foundation

Veterans United Foundation

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Heart of Missouri United Way
Reddit Community Fund
Ruthie Moccia
Schlafly - The St. Louis Brewery
The Nature Conservancy - Missouri
Tom and Nikki Lemley
Union Pacific Foundation

$2,000 - $4,999

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$500 - $1,999

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Sunset at RM 334.2 near Missouri City