

results  
snapshot

# 2006



year in review

# More Miles, More People, More Trash

## Missouri River Relief - Facing Forward

In our six years cleaning trash on the Missouri River, Missouri River Relief has developed deepening relationships with the people of this valley. In 2006, we expanded on those relationships and developed new ones, with clean-ups in three new communities, including our first completely out-of-Missouri clean-up in the Omaha, NE,/Council Bluffs, IA metro area.

As our reach has grown, we have become convinced that this is a crucial moment in the history of the Missouri River. From the beginning, our mission has been to nurture a culture of active, informed river stewards through hands-on clean-ups and education. We want to reconnect communities to this river we share. We are witnessing this reconnection right now.

Towns and cities such as Atchison, KS, Washington, MO, and Kansas City are enhancing their riverfronts, making the river accessible again. Recreation on the lower reaches continues to expand, especially with the new designation of the "Lewis & Clark Water Trail" by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Federal and state agencies are working together to enhance and study habitat.

There is a growing chorus of people who tell us, "How can I help on the Missouri River?" People are awakening to this shared resource. By putting people on the river to help clean her up, Missouri River Relief is putting the river back into the hearts of the people.

## On the river in 2006

This last year – 2006- has been a year of rapid growth for Missouri River Relief. We hosted five major clean-ups and three Missouri River Learning Festivals. With the sweat equity of 1035 volunteers, we removed 117.5 tons of trash from 70 miles of the Missouri River. We brought 1794 students and teachers to learn on the banks of the Big Muddy.

A Water Quality Cooperative Agreement grant from the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** allowed us to open a "West Coast" office in Kansas City, MO, staffed by longtime watershed advocate Vicki Richmond.

Our first clean-up in the Omaha/Council Bluffs area was a huge success, involving new states, agencies and organizations in our mission. We hosted a wonderful community clean-up in the old river town of Atchison, KS, involving a diverse group of community leaders, groups and businesses. We revisited old friends in St. Charles and Sugar Creek, MO., continuing to build relationships and clean up trash in those urban centers. We made new friends in the small river community of Bonnots Mill, MO., and know that we'll be back.

This summer and fall, our crew completed our long-time vision of undertaking a 754 mile on-the-river survey of trash on the Lower Missouri River – The Missouri River MegaScout. The product of this

journey is an ARC-GIS map of the river that we are using to educate about solid waste to communities and agencies on the river.

Infrastructure is crucial for hands-on trash removal. With the generosity of our **Memco Barge Lines**, our vehicle fleet has grown and been put to immediate work. We now have a 15 passenger van for shuttling volunteers, a 4X4 pickup truck for flexible travel and hauling, and a box van for portable storage. All vehicles are used to haul our fleet of three trash-hauling boats.

Our homegrown, grassroots Core Crew of dedicated volunteers continues to grow and mature. Old hands have been training new hands to take new responsibilities at our events. In 2006, we doubled our roster of trained boat drivers.

It takes a lot more than hands, however to "turn the props" on Missouri River Relief's clean-up fleet. Government agencies have lent their staff as boat drivers and educational presenters while providing grant money, equipment and supplies. Private businesses donate food, machinery facilities, services and finances to get the job done. Non-profits offer their hard work, knowledge and resources.

On the following pages, you'll see the progress we've made over the past 12 months thanks to our devoted volunteers, staff and you!



Missouri Stream Team #1875

## 2006 at a glance

community clean-ups hosted or participated in: **9**

volunteers who picked up trash from the Missouri River: **1,035 +**

students and teachers at educational events: **1,794**

miles of river cleaned: **70**

tons of trash removed: **117.5**

miles of Missouri River surveyed for trash: **754**

Hours of volunteer labor donated to clean up the Missouri River: **6,066 +**

## EVENT PARTICIPATION: 2006

EVENT	Community Volunteers	River Relief Core Crew	River Miles Cleaned	Tons of Trash	Media Coverage
Project Blue River Rescue		13			1 newspaper, 3 TV
St. Charles/Bridgeton (clean-up)	260	29	10	96	2 newspapers, 2 TV, 1 magazine
St. Charles/Bridgeton (ed event)	122	16			
Mouth of the Osage Clean-up	69	24	10	3.5	
James River Rescue		13			
St. Louis Green Team	400	12			
Missouri River MegaScout		13	(754 mapped)		6 TV, 6 newspapers, 2 documentaries, 3 radio
Atchison, KS, (clean-up)	165	21	12	2.75	1 TV, 2 newspapers
Atchison, KS, (ed event)	850	12			
Omaha, NE, Clean-up	167	26	15	3.9	3 TV, 2 newspapers, 1 documentary
Sugar Creek, MO, (clean-up)	295	32	13	9.25	2 newspapers
Sugar Creek, MO, (ed event)	810	17			
Huntsdale - Cooper's Landing Great Flying Carp Canoe Clean-up	45	24	10	2.1	1 newspaper

**TOTALS: 3,183 event participants; 252 Missouri River Relief Crew; 70 miles of river cleaned; 117 tons of trash removed, 17 newspapers, 14 TV, 1 magazine, 3 documentaries, 3 radio**



*Missouri River Relief core crew sorts and loads trash on barge after Omaha clean-up.*

## EVENT

St. Charles - Bridgeton Missouri River Clean-up & Learning Festival  
Lewis & Clark Landing, St. Charles, MO  
April 22-23

2006 was our fourth trip back to clean up the St. Charles area, and it was our largest trash haul yet. This year's clean-up, on April 23, was focused on a string of parks that will be part of the **Great Rivers Greenway** "River Ring" network of trails.

One of the nastiest sites, located on the Bridgeton side of the river, was home to a mound of 88 huge truck tires and piles and piles of illegally dumped garbage. The **City of Bridgeton** is now developing the area as a boat-ramp, and they asked us for help in returning the site to its pristine state.

No problem.

With the help of a City of Bridgeton front-end loader and 56 site volunteers, we cleared over 82 tons of trash from the site. Crews spent all day scouring the banks for trash along the bank of Riverwoods Conservation Area, soon to be made accessible by a bike path through a partnership between the City of Bridgeton and the Great Rivers Greenway. 260 volunteers cleaned 10 miles of river that day. In all, 96 tons of trash was removed from one of the most urban stretches of the Missouri River in the state.

A fresh, grilled lunch was served to volunteers by the **Woodsmen of the World Lodge 912**.

### Missouri River Learning Festival—April 22

Scheduling conflicts led to a scaled back version of our Learning Festival in St. Charles. With 110 students and 12 presenters, the event took on an intimate, relaxed feel. Students all had the opportunity to experiment hands-on with turning muddy river water into drinking water at the **Missouri American Water** booth.

**Missouri DNR** educator Bryan Hopkins brought his collection of found artifacts and fossils, giving a window into the fascinating historic bounty of Missouri River sandbars. Missouri River Relief crews led the students in our Recycling Relay, Macro-invertebrate Mayhem and Circle of Life activities.



MRR's plate boat, "Saskia", hauls volunteers to trash sites.



Volunteers from UMSL's Central American Student Services get ready to get on the river.

## Results snapshot

### Volunteers: 260

Missouri River Relief Core Crew: 29

Total Trash Take: 96 tons

River Miles Cleaned: 10

Number of boats: 11 (5 Missouri Dept. of Conservation; 1 Army Corps of Engineers; 2 St. Charles Search & Rescue; 3 Missouri River Relief)

### Partial list of items recovered:

206 bags of trash, 181 tires, 1 car dashboard, 2 bicycles, 1 shattered blue "Bayliner" boat (apparently dropped from 370 bridge), 4 TVs, 5 refrigerators, 1 air conditioner, 2 gas cans, 4 sofas, 5 quarts of oil (2 full!), 4 microwaves, 5 paint cans, 1 Message in a bottle (from Memorial Day 2004, Brunswick, MO), one car battery, 1 "Craps, Hi-lo" mini-casino machine, 2 car hoods

### Organizations providing volunteers:

Boeing  
Ameristar Casinos  
Cub Scout Pack #983 (Wright City, Mo)  
Boy Scout Troop #25 (S. County St. Louis)  
Lindbergh High School  
Washington University APO  
Parkway NE Middle School Nature Nuts  
University of Missouri, St. Louis,  
CASS (Central American Student Services)

### Sponsors and Partners:

Ameren UE  
Boeing Employees Community Fund  
City of Bridgeton  
City of St. Charles  
Great Rivers Greenway  
Lewis and Clark Boathouse  
Woodsmen of the World Lodge 912

## EVENT

Mouth of the Osage Clean-up  
Bonnots Mill, MO  
May 6, 2006

The Osage River empties into the Missouri River about 14 river miles downstream of downtown Jefferson City. Just upstream of the river's mouth, two small river communities line the banks: Bonnots Mill and Osage City. In the summer, the population of this area jumps as river lovers descend on the gentle Osage with boats, jet-skis and a thirst for a good time.

Our first river clean-up in the area, on May 6, 2006, was headquartered at the Bonnots Mill ramp on the Osage. We set up camp just across the river by **Soda Popp's Gas Barge**, one of two places in Missouri where gas is accessible for Missouri River boaters. Mr. Popp maintains a picture-perfect riverside park amongst the cottonwoods and pecans, the ideal spot to spend a weekend cleaning up the river.

A tough crew of locals and River Relief diehards showed up for the clean-up. Our plate boat hauled a crew, including our partners Friends of Big Muddy, with lunches out onto the Missouri, where they spent all day cleaning out a drift pile full of tires, appliances and bags and bags of plastic junk.

We put some of our more experienced trash-getters on pulling a sunken boat out of the water. They constructed a chain hoist, dragging the boat up on log skids onto the riverbank. They then rolled it over, dumped out the water and slid it down into our plate boat. Later that night in town, we got shouts of respect from the locals who couldn't believe someone had "finally gotten that boat out of there!"

With just 69 volunteers, we pulled 3.5 tons of trash from the two rivers, a perfect small community event. And we immediately started getting requests to come back in 2007.

**The event was funded by a grant from the Mid Missouri Solid Waste Management District.**

### Results snapshot

Volunteers: 69

Missouri River Relief Core Crew: 24

River Miles Cleaned (on Osage and Missouri): 10

Tons of Trash: 3.5

Number of Boats: 6 (3 Missouri Dept. of Conservation;  
3 Missouri River Relief)

#### Partial list of trash:

118 large trash bags, 49 tires, 2 refrigerators, 22 large chunks of dock Styrofoam, 1 sunken boat, 2 messages-in-bottles, 1 rear end of a Big Wheel toy, 1 ATV axle with one tire attached, 1 bowling ball, 2 red buoys, 5 plastic barrels, 1 50-gallon drum with unknown contents, 1 toilet, 1 water heater, 1 blow-up raft (deflated), 1 boat chair, 1 plastic pirate sword, 3 coolers, 1 boat trailer jack

*Anatomy of a trash "get" from top to bottom: Submerged boat is hoisted to land by chain bound to tree; Crew drains water, turns over boat; Boat is loaded onto plate boat, hauled to ramp; Bobcat smashes boat into pieces to discard in dumpster.*



# PROJECT

## MegaScout Trash Survey

Ponca State Park, NE, to the Confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers

July 16-30; Oct. 8-10; Oct. 22-24; Nov. 25-26

As Missouri River Relief cleans up an ever larger reach of the Missouri River, we've obviously noticed that certain areas are trashier than others, and that trash tends to collect in certain spots. We've always had the dream of mapping those concentrations of trash to better plan our attack on cleaning them up. Starting in July, 2006, we put that dream into motion.

Called the MegaScout, this project involved two boats traveling 754 miles of the Missouri River, from Ponca State Park, NE, to the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi just north of St. Louis. Scanning the banks with binoculars and checking out the banks by foot, our crew of "trash scientists" gave each river mile a 0-5 rating, from "clean" to "extreme". Major accumulations, dumpsites and large objects were photographed and given a GPS waypoint.

Thanks to a software donation from **ESRI** and the work of our intern **Daniel Belshe**, we have put all of this data into an ARC-GIS map of the river, creating an interactive database that is the most comprehensive look at trash ever on the Missouri River. We've already used these maps in planning clean-up strategies, communicating our mission to partners and sponsors and educating on solid waste issues on the river.

Our goal is to make the data web-accessible. We will continue to update the database through more on-the-river scouting and through connections with local river watchers. We envision the resource becoming the heart of a network of communities dedicated to cleaning up our Big Muddy.

### Life on the River

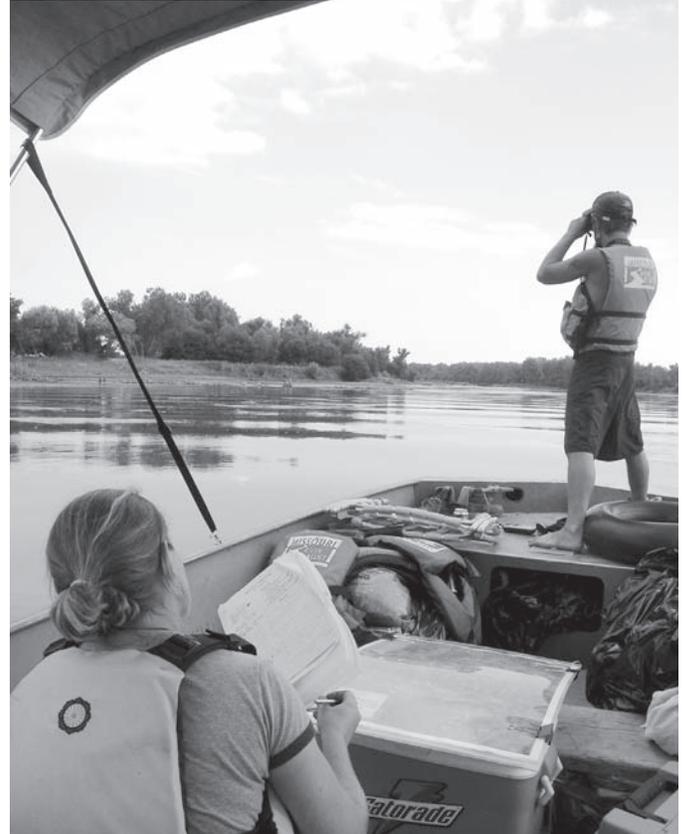
While mapping trash on every mile of the channelized Lower Missouri River, our crews got a priceless window into life on the river. Stunning sunsets above a sandbar campfire, repeated close encounters with flying silver carp and views of migrating waterfowl and songbirds kept us enraptured by the beauty of this resource. We met amazing people on the river, from river rats and fishermen to families and scientists.

The MegaScout crew kept a weblog of thoughts and memories from the trip, including a 103 species bird list from the first week. Join our virtual flotilla at our blogsite: [www.rrmegascout.blogspot.com](http://www.rrmegascout.blogspot.com), reliving our time on the river and leaving your comments.

### Synergy on the river

When our MegaScout trash mapping flotilla arrived upriver of Omaha/Council Bluffs in July, we had no idea of the media welcome we would receive in the city. Three TV stations and the Omaha World Herald all ran stories on our journey.

This proved to be a huge benefit as our fall clean-up approached. We already had name recognition and credibility as a serious clean-up organization, and it was easier to spread the word about our event. We find that the more we use these connections that the river provides, the more synergy we can create for our mission of reconnecting communities to the river through hands-on clean-ups and education.



above: Missouri River Relief volunteers Anthony Pettit and Amy Salveter scan the banks for trash, recording data each mile.

middle: The MegaScout crew celebrates as they enter the Mississippi River, the end of the 754 mile journey.

bottom: GIS intern Daniel Belshe "tags" a hot water heater with the river mile and date. The GPS waypoint and photo are logged into the trash database.

## EVENTS

Missouri River Learning Festival–Atchison Community and Missouri River Clean-up  
Lewis and Clark Landing, Riverfront Park, Atchison, KS.

September 8-9, 2006

One of the first towns settled in Kansas, historic Atchison is nestled amongst the river hills near Independence Creek where Lewis and Clark spent their Fourth of July back in 1804. The town claims to be the “most haunted town in Kansas”, but we found nothing but warm embraces and helpful hands from the folks that live there.

### Missouri River Learning Festival

On the morning of Friday, September 8, 850 area students gathered in the newly renovated Riverfront Park to learn about water quality, solid waste issues and the Missouri River. The event was a collaboration between Missouri River Relief, **Atchison USD 409, Benedictine College**, and a handful of local businesses and community groups. Students represented Atchison Middle School, Atchison Catholic Elementary School, Atchison Elementary School and Trinity Lutheran School.

Biologists from **Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks** cruised along the shore in their research boat, demonstrating fish sampling techniques.

Students from Benedictine College and Atchison High School offered educational booths while busses shuttled students to tour Benedictine Bottoms, a nearby conservation area demonstrating the cutting-edge in bottomland restoration. The students enjoyed an inspiring speech from hometown hero Joe Osborne. Joe is a crewmember of **Living Lands & Waters**, the famous “barge crew” that inspired Missouri River Relief and cleans up the Mississippi River and beyond.

### Atchison Community and Missouri River Clean-up

Our first clean-up in Atchison, on Saturday, September 9, was dampened by rain in the morning, but we still put 98 volunteers out in boats to clean-up 12 miles of Atchison Bend. Students and faculty from Benedictine College joined the action, as well as AJCF Youth. We found two refrigerators that we had “tagged” in July on our MegaScout journey and hauled 2 tons of scrap metal to shore, including about 400 brake pads discarded from the railroad above.

One of the most important benefits of our clean-ups is bringing people to the Missouri River who have never been on it before. As the clean-up drew to a close, we took **Atchison USD Superintendent Corbin Witt** for his first boat ride on the Big Muddy. As he waved to his family at his house on a bluff above, we knew we had found a new advocate for the Missouri River.

## Results snapshot

Volunteers: 165  
Volunteers on boats: 98  
River Relief Core Crew: 21  
River Miles: 12 miles (417-429)  
Tons of Trash: 2 3/4 tons  
Estimated Scrap Metal: 4,000 pounds  
Number of Boats: 8 (2 MDC; 2 USFWS; 1 LL&W; 3 MRR)

### Partial list of trash:

79 large trash bags, 11 tires, 2 metal barrels, 1 hydraulic pump, 2 refrigerators (“tagged” on MegaScout trash survey), approx. 400 railroad brake pads, 6 railroad air hoses, 2 window AC units, 1 rubber bat, 1 car battery, 1 HVAC compressor, 1 steering column, 2 bundles of wire, 2 metal culverts

## Sponsors

The 2006 Atchison Missouri River Clean-up was a true community effort. Many local sponsors donated time, money and services to make the event a success. We give our deepest thanks to the following local sponsors...

- Atchison Beautification Council
- Atchison Hospital • Atchison Casting
- Atchison Chamber of Commerce
- Atchison Heritage Conference Center
- Atchison Tourism Council • Atchison USD 409
- Bank of Atchison • Berger Company
- Blish-Mize • City of Atchison • Dr. John Dolenz, DDS
- Dr. Stephanie Van Dyne, DDS • ED Council
- Excel Linen • Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks • Kansas Gas Service • Living Lands and Waters
- Golden Star • Madden Oil • MGP Ingredients
- Missouri Department of Conservation
- Mount St. Scholastica • Pizza Hut • Poor Richards
- Quick Stop • Reece & Nichols Premier Realty
- Rotary International • Stresscrete • Subway
- Sunrise Homes • Tate Plumbing and Construction
- The Exchange National Bank
- Unit Rail/Magid Glove & Safety Co. • Wal-mart
- WOW • Yacht Club

*Students gather on the river bank to watch biologists sample carp from the river.*



## EVENT

Omaha, NE./Council Bluffs, IA, Missouri River Clean-up  
Lewis and Clark Landing, Riverfront Park, Omaha, NE.  
September 23, 2006

The Missouri River meanders in a series of wide bends through the Omaha/Council Bluffs area, with 15 miles of river within city boundaries. Our September 23 clean-up, headquartered at Lewis and Clark Landing in the recently renovated Omaha Riverfront Park, was our first in the area.

When it comes to embracing their connection to the Missouri River, these twin river cities are ahead of the curve. Large marinas and riverfront parks line the banks, and a growing network of trails, including a planned pedestrian bridge linking the two cities, is spreading through the valley. A perfect place to bring our on-the-river clean-up experience.

One of the main organizations behind this renovation, **Back to the River, Inc.**, proved to be the perfect partners, helping River Relief “West Coast” coordinator Vicki Richmond make connections across the metro area and providing crucial financial support.

The clean-up involved partnerships with a whole new slate of agencies, along with some familiar friends. The **National Park Service** brought boats, expertise and connections that made us feel right at home. Omaha Parks allowed the use of their dock-slip marina, a perfect launching points for shuttle boats. Our mouths dropped open when we saw the 10-foot wide plate boats that **Nebraska Game and Parks** biologists drove up with. **Iowa DNR** and **USACE** both brought professional boat drivers to shuttle volunteers.

The lack of a boat ramp in downtown Omaha was never a problem, because the **Army Corps of Engineers** brought our trash-loading facility to us. One of their barges was moored directly across the river, loaded with dumpsters and plenty of space to stack our trash. Our trash sorters kept busy on the barge all afternoon, entertained by the sound of dance music drifting across the river from the annual Greek Festival. On the Monday after the clean-up, Corps crews pushed the barge upriver and helped us unload the trash.

**Boy Scout Troop 494** served a hot lunch for the volunteers. After lunch, they piled in a National Park Service boat to join the clean-up themselves. As their boat returned to shore later, the Scouts all let loose a loud cheer. A new batch of river rats was born!

## Results snapshot

Total Volunteers: 167 (+ Beanie the river dog)

River Relief Core Crew: 26

River Miles: 15 (611-621, both banks, + 621-626 right bank)

Total Tons of Trash: 3.9 tons

Number of Boats: 14 (6 Nebraska Games and Parks; 2 National Park Service; 1 Iowa DNR; 1 Living Lands & Waters; 3 Missouri River Relief; 1 Army Corps of Engineers)

### Partial list of trash:

280 large trash bags, 3 plumbing pipes, 3 refrigerators, 5 air conditioner units, 30 tires, 3 chain link fences, 5 houses worth of carpet, wooden picnic table, typewriter and case, BBQ grill lid, car door, pick-up truck bed liner, 2 mattresses, 2 propane tanks, 11 metal chairs, antique baby doll, wake board, Christmas tree

## Omaha and Council Bluffs Sponsors

US Environmental Protection Agency

Back to the River, Inc.

Bass Pro Shops

MidAmerican Energy

Anheuser-Busch

City of Omaha

City of Council Bluffs

Douglas County, NE

Ameristar Casino – Council Bluffs

Harrah's Casino – Council Bluffs

National Park Service

Wal-Mart

Papio – Missouri River Natural Resources District

Rotella's Italian Bakery

US Army Corps of Engineers

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Iowa Department of Natural Resources – REAP

Program

Adam Malmquist

Country Inn & Suites, Omaha Airport



## EVENT

Missouri River Clean-up in Sugar Creek, MO.  
La Benite Park, Sugar Creek, MO  
October 7

Our October 7, 2006, clean-up at **La Benite Park** in Sugar Creek, Mo., marked our fourth clean-up effort in the Kansas City area. During that time, we have developed a vast network of friends and allies. Our Kansas City events are always more than a clean-up. They are the meeting of a growing tribe of river advocates from across the state.

Encompassing 13 miles of river, this clean-up was our first time to focus on the stretch downstream of the Blue River, the tributary that drains the largest portion of the Kansas City, Mo., metro area. The Missouri River navigation season ended early this year. River levels had been dropping for a week, exposing some large trash items and making others more difficult to get to.

We targeted several large dumpsites, but most of the clean-up involved removing the large amounts of floating debris that is found strewn across sandbars and piled up on wing dikes below any metropolitan area. Land-based crews cleaned the La Benite Park, including its beautiful new riverside trail.

The flotilla of boats shuttling volunteers and hauling trash was one of our largest and most diverse ever. Living Lands and Waters, the industrial-strength clean-up crew of the eastern U.S., brought four plate boats able to haul 14 volunteers each. Local engineering firm Burns & McDonnell supplied a boat for the first time, and Jackson County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the EPA and Missouri Department of Conservation were all represented. MDC debuted their new 16 passenger education tour boat, hauling several loads of volunteers downstream to a major trash site.

The day ended with a beautiful sunset and harvest moonrise as our tired crew and local friends gathered around a campfire in beautiful La Benite Park.

## Sugar Creek Clean-up Sponsors

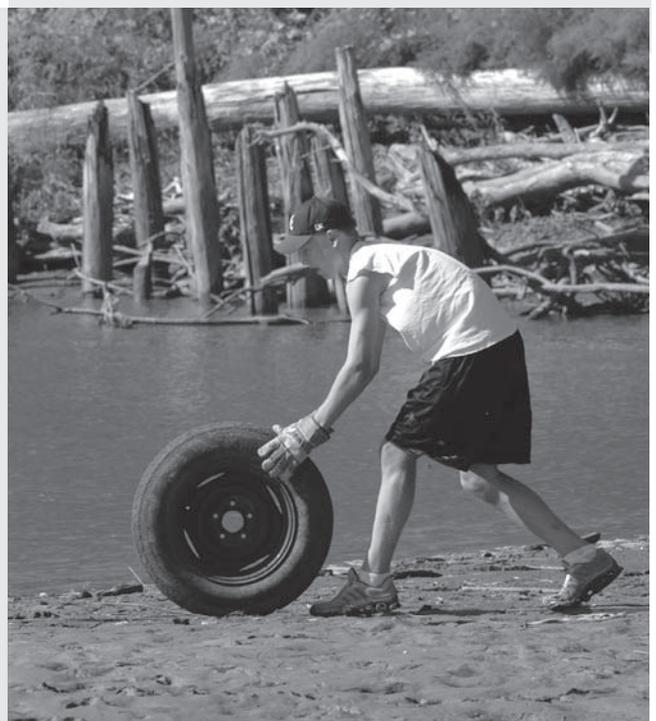
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
American Compressed Steel  
Anheuser-Busch  
Bass Pro Shop  
Bayer Crop Science  
Black & Veatch  
City of Sugar Creek  
Harrah's  
Kansas City Power & Light  
MARC 2000  
Memco Barge Lines  
BP Amoco  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Jackson County  
Burns & McDonnell  
KCMO Water Services  
Little Blue River Watershed Coalition  
Platte Land Trust  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Wyandotte County Conservation District  
Cosentino's Price Chopper  
North Central Neighborhood Assoc.

## Results snapshot

Total Volunteers: 295 (164 on river)  
River Relief Core Crew: 32  
Living Lands & Waters Crew: 5  
River Miles: 13 (345-358, both banks)  
Tons of Landfill Trash: 6.5 tons  
Tons of Scrap Metal: 2.75 tons  
Number of Boats: 19 (5 MDC; 1 Jackson County; 3 USFWS; 4 LL&W; 3 MRR; 2 EPA; 1 Burns & McDonnell)

Organizations providing volunteers: Coca-Cola, Friends of Big Muddy, UMKC, Shawnee Mission NW, Chamber of Commerce Centurions, Burns & McDonnell, Webelos Den 3, Pack 201, Alligator Cove Stream Team #1876

Partial List of Trash:  
139 large trash bags, 3 refrigerators, 2 chest freezers, 1 bullet-ridden dryer, 2 propane tanks, 1 ski, 1 bathtub (tagged on MegaScout), 1 coconut, 2 coolers, dumbbell weight, ornamental iron railroad wheel, truck bedliner, 1/2 paddle boat, 1 kitchen-worth of vinyl flooring, 2 BBQ grills...



## EVENT

Missouri River Watershed Festival  
La Benite Park, Sugar Creek, MO  
October 6

To make a real, long lasting change in the way people view the river, we know that you need to start with young students. And you need to get them involved in hands-on activities.

This year's Missouri River Watershed Festival brought 31 presenters to La Benite Park, on the banks of the Missouri River, to engage 779 Kansas City area students in hands-on learning. Each student received a passport with questions they answered by visiting booths around the park.

**Missouri Department of Conservation** biologists gave kids a chance to touch fish and invertebrates and to learn about Missouri River mammals. **The Friends of Big Muddy** and the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** showed off snakes and turtles. Local groups like **Hillsdale Water Quality** and **Jackson County Soil and Water District** showed kids the link between soil, watersheds and the animals and people that share them. Professional and non-profit experts shared knowledge on erosion, groundwater, river history and more.

Field trips are an important part of these festivals, letting students experience aspects of ecology and water systems they may never have seen before. Some students took a nature walk on the La Benite riverside trail with the **Sierra Club**. Others hopped on a bus for a tour of the nearby **Independence Water Plant** and the **Courtney Ridge Landfill**. **Living Lands and Waters** crewmember Kristin Ellis gave students a chance to play a permanent role in the future of La Benite Park by helping them plant hardwood trees throughout the park.

Missouri River Relief crews joined in, teaching about what we learned about trash on the Missouri River on our MegaScout project. Our Recycling Relay gave kids a chance to burn off some steam and think about how recycling opportunities could be improved in their community.

### Litter-free Lunch

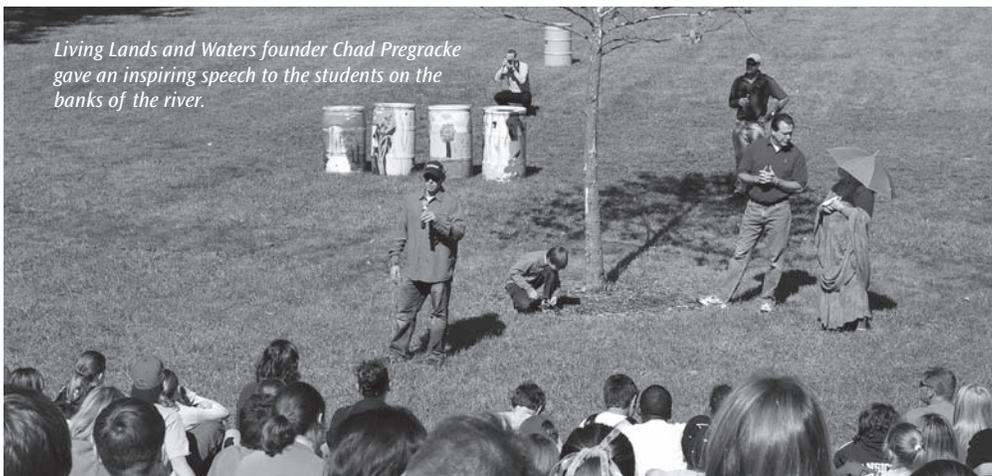
No one comes away from a Missouri River Relief clean-up or education event unchanged. Over and over, people tell us how picking up trash along the river changes them. One consistent theme is the individual who wants to reduce the trash they create. After a hard day of picking up someone else's trash, it is a rare person who can toss away a cup or can without first thinking about it.

We have found that the time is ripe to practice what we preach, and we go to great lengths to minimize the impact our events have on the waste we generate.

Beginning with our Atchison, KS, Missouri River Learning Festival, we have devised litter-free events that show students and adults alike that there are alternatives to disposables.

Lunch is served on a Frisbee, often put to use after lunch by those with energy to burn. We provide cloth napkins and plastic re-useable cups. Plastic and aluminum recycling is available for the odd water bottle or pop can.

Participants respect that our events are litter and waste-free and environmentally friendly.



*Living Lands and Waters founder Chad Pregracke gave an inspiring speech to the students on the banks of the river.*

## Missouri River Watershed Festival Committee

### *It's Smarter to Partner*

Part of the secret to Missouri River Relief's success is empowering local communities to take part in event planning. The Missouri River Watershed Festival, held this year at La Benite Park in Sugar Creek, MO, is a prime example of how this works.

Our first education events were organized in-house, using statewide relationships with agencies, river-related businesses, schools and non-profits to bring together a unique riverside educational experience.

In the Kansas City area, there was so much local interest in the Missouri River Learning Festival concept, and so many local groups wanting to be involved, that the event took on its own identity: the Missouri River Watershed Festival.

"It's smarter to partner," said Vicki Richmond, MRR's Kansas City coordinator and a member of the first Missouri River Watershed Festival committee. "It plays to everyone's strengths."

At this year's La Benite event, the

Festival was planned and coordinated by a group of seven organizations: **Missouri River Relief**, the **Little Blue River Watershed Coalition**, the **City of Sugar Creek**, **Platte Land Trust**, **Wyandotte County Conservation District**, **Missouri Department of Conservation** and the **City of Kansas City, MO**.

It's a new model of cooperation that we hope will create sustainable, locally generated Missouri River education events located on the banks of the river itself.

## EVENT

Great Flying Carp Canoe Clean-up with the River Ladies Auxiliary  
Huntsdale to Cooper's Landing  
October 21

During the peak of fall color, Missouri River Relief helped in a truly unique clean-up experience. Called the "Great Flying Carp Canoe Clean-up", the event involved a collaboration between River Relief and a local group of longtime friends called **River Ladies Auxiliary**.

It was our sixth annual clean-up down in the southern Boone County area. Although cleaning up the Missouri River is a never-ending process, we have done an excellent job of ridding this area of some of the largest trash deposits. It seemed an ideal time for a new approach.

We put in a group of canoeists at the private **Katfish Katy's** ramp in Huntsdale. The flotilla paddled downstream, pulling in at locations all along to route to get out and pick up trash. They used their canoes to shuttle trash to locations where our trash boats could pick it up.

Despite a cold rain that started just after lunch (provided by our "food angels" in the charming river town of Lupus), the group of 45 volunteers pulled 2.1 tons of trash off the river, including 27 tires and a washing machine. One pair of paddlers pulled a navigation buoy over a mile to a spot where it could be picked up.

Crews sorted the trash in the rain into scrap metal, recyclable plastic and aluminum. Soggy, wet and exhausted, the volunteers were treated to a garage concert at **Cooper's Landing Marina** by **Naked Dave and the Blue Cats** and free massages courtesy of **Greenway Massage Team**.

The clean-up was funded by a benefit held by the River Ladies Auxiliary and Missouri River Relief in May 2006. Called "**River Fest**", it was a perfect river community building event including a silent art auction, a day full of music, a canoe/kayak race, sunset boat cruises and a dance contest.



*Volunteers paddled ten miles of the Missouri River, scouring sandbars and wing dikes for trash.*



*Hard work, good times and learning new skills are all draws to our volunteer crew.*

## The Missouri River's Clean-up Crew

One of the keys to Missouri River Relief's momentum is the growth of our Core Crew of volunteers. This homegrown, grassroots crew of over 30 dedicated river lovers of all ages puts in countless hours all year long to keep our clean-up machine in top shape. From motorcycle mechanics and chefs to ecologists and government officials, they all love to work hard and enjoy the river.

This amazing crew plays a role in all aspects of our work. At events, they drive boats, conduct safety trainings, plan on-the-river strategies for clean-ups, cook meals for volunteers, haul and sort trash, present educational games and booths and keep our events running smoothly.

Between events, they attend planning meetings, help with publications and web content, keep equipment in working order and organized and lend a hand whenever needed.

### Passing the Stick

Cross training is the key to our crew's strength. To deepen our base of boat drivers, our Quartermaster and Board Chairman John Brady teamed up with John Breyfogle to hold on-the-river boat training workshops in Kansas City and Cooper's Landing near Columbia.

Breyfogle wrote and published a "Missouri River Relief Boater's Manual" with tips on navigation, boating laws and reading the river. **During the training, we added 10 new drivers to our list, more than doubling our qualified crew.**

### Visioning the Future

This December, the staff, board and volunteer crew of River Relief met for an all-day visioning retreat in the river town of Lupus.

Volunteers and staff alike contributed and collaborated on a five year vision for the organization. Work continues on honing these ideas for an exciting future.

## EVENT

“Away Teams”

Blue River Rescue, Kansas City, MO - April 1, 2006 • James River Rescue, Springfield, MO - June 10, 2006

Mississippi River Green Team Clean-up, St. Louis, MO - July 8, 2006

### Taking our show on the road...

Since getting our first 18-foot Tracker boat from **Bass Pro Shops** in 2002, Missouri River Relief has prided itself on being an equipment-based, action-oriented organization. As our fleet has grown—along with our assortment of life jackets, tools and other accoutrements—we have our desire to use our boats and equipment to the maximum.

In 2004, we started taking our boats and gear on “road trips” to help Chad Pregracke’s **Living Lands & Waters** organization with their X-Stream Clean-up on the Mississippi River and their clean-up with the Audubon Society on Plum Island near Starved Rock State Park on the Illinois River.

Those trips started a tradition of Missouri River Relief “away teams” in which we take our equipment, boats and crews on the road to help other organizations with clean-ups on “their” rivers. They do all the organizing and we do the fun part—getting out on the river and cleaning up.

These away teams help to build strong connections with other like-minded groups and we expand our horizons with new ideas, techniques and contacts. It’s just a good deal!

In 2006, we had three “away teams” with two using a flotilla of canoes and one using our three motorized work-boats.



### April 1, 2006

#### Blue River Rescue—Kansas City, Mo

We took 13 core crew members and joined 900 other volunteers to help clean-up the Blue River that drains most of the Kansas City urban area. This long-running clean-up (sponsored by the **Friends of Lakeside Nature Center**) removed its 4,000,000th pound of trash in '06. Once again, we camped on a wooded hill at **Swope Park** and felt like we were a hundred miles from the nearest city.

### June 10, 2006

#### James River Rescue—Springfield, Mo

We took 13 core crew members and joined 160 volunteers to help clean-up the James River that drains most of urban Springfield, Mo. This was the 13th year that the **Ozark Mountain Paddlers** and the **James River Basin Partnership** organized the clean-up. Our River Relief crew cleaned the section just below the dam that impounds Lake Springfield. We camped in a city park in Ozark, Mo., and enjoyed a river festival hosted by the James River Basin Partnership and Bass Pro with good food and live music.

### July 8, 2006

#### Mississippi River clean-up—St. Louis, Mo

We took 12 core crew members and joined 400 volunteers to help clean-up along the Mississippi River in the St. Louis area. This “Green Team” event was sponsored by Anheuser-Busch along with Living Lands & Waters. Chad Pregracke asked us to bring our motorized fleet to join about 20 aluminum plate boats at the landing below the Gateway Arch—these large commercial boats made quite a sight lined up along the riverfront. This flotilla took 200 volunteers in one wave to designated sites on both sides of the river. The rest of the volunteers cleaned up the Gateway Park grounds and the **Trailnet** bicycle trail in downtown St. Louis.

Our core volunteers used our big-event expertise to embark the people safely and efficiently on the river, and we used all of our nearly 200 life jackets.

*Left: Missouri River Relief mechanic “Racin” Dave Stevens loads tires into volunteer Tim Nigh’s canoe at the Blue River Rescue.*

*Below: MRR crews handle ramp logistics at the July 06 Living Lands and Waters clean-up at the Gateway Arch in St. Louis.*



## SPONSORS

A special thanks to these folks that show their dedication to the river through their support of Missouri River Relief

### **DONATIONS & GRANTS**

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US Environmental Protection Agency  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
Back to the River (Council Bluffs)

#### **\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Ameristar Casinos  
Bass Pro Shops  
BP Amoco  
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Kansas City Water Services

#### **\$2,000 to \$4,999**

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