

Lower Meramec Parksite

Numerous clubhouse communities dotted the area prior to becoming a park. These weekend retreats fell into hard times after a series of floods in the 1980's and early 1990's. Federal funds were used to purchase the damaged homes and the lands were turned over to the Parks Department. The bulk of the parksite was purchased with Land & Water Conservation Funds in 1979.

The park is a mixture of bottomland woodlands and open fields. The woods are highly diverse some of the best remaining woodlands in the Lower Meramec Valley. Burr Oak, Swamp White Oak, Pin Oak and Pecan attest to the rich diversity of the park. These large trees have bellowed tree trunks and water marks typical of trees that experience standing water. The understory is not very well developed due to the standing water. A small spring and wetland swamp occurs along Tall Timbers Trail. This unique natural community has great tree diversity and supports a host of wildlife from salamanders to woodducks. It is worth the visit.

The open fields were used to raise agriculture crops and vegetables prior to becoming parkland. Today these fields have been planted with native grasses to retain the openness of the site.

The entire park is in the floodplain and subject to flooding. This area can remain inundated for weeks at a time if the Mississippi River is high. Lower Meramec Parksite consists of 273 acres.

Meramec Greenway Trail-Lower Meramec Section

2 miles Flat Paved Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

This two mile asphalt bike and hike trail parallels the Meramec River. A trailhead is located at both ends of the trail one at Krumm Road (just off of I-55 and Meramec Bottom Road) and the other off of Meramec Bottom Road at Holzer Road. Neither trailhead has drinking water or modern facilities.

The Meramec Greenway Trail passes through some of the old clubhouse communities. The structures were removed after purchase. The open areas of the old clubhouses are now part of the young woodland that has developed on site. Trees are quick to move into the one time lawns. The trail also touches some of the open areas that are planted with prairie grasses and wildflowers. The trail is flat and easy to hike or bike. Most of the trail is shaded by the towering oaks that occur throughout the trail. In the future the trail will continue both upstream and downstream as new sections are added to the Meramec Greenway Trail system. The trail does flood during times of high water. Suitable for cross country skiing.

Tall Timbers Trail

1.2 miles Flat Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

This trail is a natural base trail and is 1.2 miles in length. The trail is open to bikes and hikers. Many of the low lying areas retain water after a moderate precipitous event or after flood waters have receded. Because of the flatness of the land the trail can hold water or saturated conditions for some time.

The trail skirts the wetland swamp that is re-charged year round by spring water. Huge mature swamp whites, burr, ash and other species tower above the trail. Some of the trees top 80 feet in height. The trees show water marks attesting to the continuous water

depth. The trees also exhibit a wider base typical again of trees growing in a flood prone area. The herbaceous ground layer is not very well developed in these woodlands due to the standing water or saturated soil conditions that persist through portions of the growing season. An open field has been planted to native prairie grasses and wildflowers. The trail passes through one of the largest and diverse woodlands remaining along the Lower Meramec.

The extended flooding over the past couple of years has reduced the vigor of the prairie species. Native sedges able to tolerate a greater flooding frequency are replacing the native prairie grasses. The trail is accessed off of the Meramec Greenway Trail near the Holzer Trailhead. Suitable for cross country skiing.