

**St. Louis County
Meramec River Greenway Concept Plan**

St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation

St. Louis County Department of Planning

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George R. “Buzz” Westfall
County Executive

Genie Zakrzewski, Director of Parks and Recreation

Glenn A. Powers, Director of Planning

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James Hayes
Wayne Hilzinger
Patricia Ottoline
Arnold Crutchfield

Project Staff

Susan Polling, Department of Parks and Recreation
Ben Knox, Department of Parks and Recreation
Carolyn Nolan, Department of Planning
Andrew Gulotta, Department of Planning
Joanne Gladney, Department of Planning

Cover design: Gladys Lewis, Department of Parks and Recreation

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St. Louis County Meramec River Greenway Concept Plan: A St. Louis County General Plan Document

I. Purpose of This Document

The Meramec River Greenway has been a central concept of park and recreation planning in St. Louis County for nearly three decades. The Meramec Greenway concept has been endorsed in several planning documents over the years, and Master Plan documents relating to portions of the Meramec Greenway have been developed and adopted by the St. Louis County Council.

When the Metropolitan Park and Recreation District, now known as the Great Rivers Greenways, was created in 2000 with the approval of a one tenth of one cent sales tax to support parks and recreation development, new resources became available to implement the long-standing goal of the St. Louis County Parks Department, the Meramec River Recreation Association and cooperating municipalities and private groups.

This endorsement of the St. Louis County Meramec River Greenway is intended to officially incorporate into the County's General Plan the high priority goals of preservation and reclamation of the Meramec River for its aesthetic, environmental, educational, recreational and economic values and benefits to the St. Louis metropolitan area and St. Louis County in particular. This document aims to clarify the full extent of the vision for the Meramec Greenway and St. Louis County's commitment to that vision. Incorporation of the Meramec Greenway concept into St. Louis County's General Plan is intended as a recognition of the Meramec Greenway's significance in past and future land use, environmental and recreational planning and to effectuate implementation strategies that will facilitate the fulfillment of the Meramec Greenway Plan.

The endorsement document is not a new plan. Rather, it is a summary of a the history of a thirty-eight year old concept and twenty-eight years of planning by the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation in collaboration with the Meramec River Recreation Association and participating public, semi-public and private entities for the furtherance of the goals of the Meramec Greenway.

II. Background of the Meramec Greenway Concept

The scenic and recreational values of the Lower Meramec River valley were recognized in the early 1900's, when the Missouri Pacific and Frisco railroad lines provided St. Louisans with easy access to Meramec River beaches at Valley Park and Times Beach. The river valley became a popular destination for swimming, fishing, canoeing, hiking and weekending in the "clubhouse" or resort cottage communities along the river. The accessibility from St. Louis and the inexpensive recreational opportunities made the Meramec River in St. Louis County very popular in the 1920's and earlier.

Recreational facilities along the Meramec and the river itself suffered in subsequent years. The Great Depression of the 1930's and repeated flooding contributed to the deterioration of recreation facilities, while encroaching urbanization with the disposal of untreated sewage into the river degraded water quality. Sand and gravel extraction altered the natural flow of the river. Stretches of the riverbank suffered from erosion where trees had been removed for construction of cottages, and illegal dumping and the accumulated debris from flood-damaged properties added to the degradation of the river and its banks.

A. Major Studies Supporting the Meramec Greenway

Since 1965 – for almost four decades – a Meramec Greenway has been contemplated as a major recreational and scenic asset for St. Louis County and the St. Louis metropolitan region. The following is a summary of major planning studies that have promoted the concept of a Meramec River Greenway in St. Louis County and adjacent counties and major events in the effort to realize the goal of a continuous greenway along the Meramec River:

The Challenge of Growth: A Study of Major County and Regional Park Needs, St. Louis County Planning Commission, July 1965.

The Challenge of Growth was an urgent call for a major program of land acquisition for public recreational areas. Citing a tremendous increase in attendance at State and County parks in St. Louis County, the report proposed twenty-four major County park sites, including several that have since been acquired and developed as County parks: Queeny Park, Bee Tree Park, Cliff Cave Park and expansions of other County Parks. This document also proposed a Lower Meramec River Regional Park, extending the full length of the Meramec River in St. Louis County from its mouth to the western border of the County at Pacific. The proposed park would be planned as a unified 10,000-acre greenbelt.

A Proposal for a National Recreation Area on the Lower Meramec River, St. Louis County Department of Planning and Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Commission, August 1967.

The goal of reclaiming the natural beauty of the Meramec River and developing its enormous potential for providing recreational opportunities for the St. Louis community and even for a national constituency was embodied in a joint proposal by the St. Louis County Planning Commission and the Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Commission of August 1967. As enunciated in *A Proposal for a National Recreation Area on the Lower Meramec River*, “The area is generally well-suited for camping, nature hiking, trail-riding, scenic enjoyment, and such water-based activities as small craft boating, fishing, and swimming. The dearth of places to fulfill the demand for these activities, particularly on a free-flowing river, is becoming increasingly evident throughout the Midwest as a whole, as well as in the St. Louis metropolitan area.”

The Meramec Concept – A Progress Report, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, U.S. Department of the Interior and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, November 1975.

This report, authorized and funded by Congress and coordinated by the Department of Interior with active participation from the State of Missouri Department of Natural Resources, local governments and interested citizens, outlined a strategy for protection of the river corridor through acquisition, recreation easements and conservation easements. *The Meramec Concept* envisioned multiple ownership with management at the local level.

The formation of the Meramec River Recreation Association in 1975 was the direct result of the Department of Interior’s study, which called for a coordinating committee to guide the renaissance of the river

Lower Meramec River Management Study, St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, August 1, 1980.

This thorough and carefully researched study made the case for the preservation of the lower Meramec Valley as an environmental and cultural resource as well as an invaluable resource for addressing critical park land and recreation deficits in the metropolitan area. Opportunities for fishing, tent camping, bicycling, hiking, picnicking, canoeing and nature walking were found to be recreational priorities for the region.

The *Lower Meramec River Management Study* reviewed federal and state legislation that supported open space preservation and environmental protection and proposed the establishment of an Area of National Concern under federal legislation. The study also proposed new state legislation in the form of a Metropolitan River Protection Act to control development while protecting the natural integrity of the lower Meramec River. Local land acquisition options and regulatory mechanisms were also discussed.

Recreation Spaces Community Places, 1982-2000, St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation and St. Louis County Department of Planning, 1982.

A survey of 3000 households, four public forums, three workshops with parks and recreation professionals from St. Louis County municipalities and discussions with several senior citizens’ groups provided broad citizen input for this study of park and recreation needs. The document provides guidelines for park acquisition and facility development. Favorite recreational activities that were identified included swimming and

picnicking, and recreational needs that were not sufficiently served included fishing, swimming, trail systems and protection of resources.

Recommendations included continued acquisition of park lands along the Meramec River, trail development (especially linking existing parks) and development of access for fishing along the Meramec. The Meramec River Recreation Association and the Ozark Trail Council were among organizations recommended for participation in the implementation of the plan.

Lower Meramec River Greenway Study: Water Quality Management, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, 1984.

After an earlier study recommended the construction of a sewer treatment plant at the confluence of the Meramec and Mississippi Rivers to eliminate 130 point sources of pollution in the Lower Meramec River (since implemented), this study sought to address the problem of nonpoint pollutants – those that come from farm fields or other broad surface sources. This report, assessing the relative effectiveness of the greenway as a nonpoint source control measure, found that keeping the riverbank under vegetative cover reduces siltation from land erosion and other runoff pollutants. Greenways also protect human health and safety from potential flood damage by keeping development off the riverbanks. Based on analysis of geophysical types and land use and their effect on water quality, the report recommended a minimum greenway width of 300 feet. In addition, development in the 100-year flood plain should be regulated to protect water quality, preserve open space, and reduce flood damage.

Strategic Plan Summary document, St. Louis County Department of Planning, 1994, reiterated a concern for “establishment of preservation programs for green space corridors along the Mississippi, Missouri, and Meramec Rivers.”

The Henry Shaw Ozark Corridor, American Society of Landscape Architects – St. Louis Chapter for the Meramec River Recreation Association, Summer 1995.

This study, endorsed by the St. Louis County Council by resolutions 4150 in 1998 and 4437 in 2002, deals with the Interstate 44 highway corridor, which runs roughly parallel to the Meramec River and crosses it in two places. The I-44 corridor involves several tracts of land that border or are close to the Meramec River. The study recommends preservation of open space to protect unique landforms, plants, fish and wildlife, development of active and passive recreational facilities, attention to architectural aesthetics and landscaping, and development planning to balance land uses.

Lower Meramec Linear Park Master Plan, Hall & Halsey Associates, Inc. for the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, July 1996.

The *Lower Meramec Linear Park Master Plan*, adopted by the St. Louis County Council on January 30, 1997, is a master plan for trails, river access, recreation and camping facilities and wetland study areas in the flood plain area on the St. Louis County side of the eight-mile stretch of the Meramec River in unincorporated St. Louis County from Lemay Ferry Road (Highway 61/67) northward to the St. Louis County Robert Winter Park site. Surveys and public meetings were used to identify specific needs of area residents for additional recreational facilities. The plan identifies four river access

sites, private ball fields, a driving range and other recreational facilities that are consistent with the greenway concept and identifies locations for the primary walking/biking trail, secondary hiking trails and equestrian trails.

Blueprint for the Future: Sixth District Community Area Study, St. Louis County Department of Planning, July 2000.

The Lower Meramec Linear Park Plan was specifically endorsed by this document, which was developed with the guidance of a citizens' advisory committee and with input through public forums and was adopted by the County Council by Ordinance 20,123 on September 21, 2000, as part of St. Louis County's General Plan. It recommended that "All development...that abuts the Lower Meramec River Linear Park should adhere to the requirements of the Lower Meramec Linear Park Master Plan."

Strategic Plan of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, Leon Younger and PROS, 2000.

This ten-year plan, adopted by the St. Louis County Council by Ordinance 20,042 on July 20, 2000, includes as key action strategies acquiring additional parkland and greenways to meet the growing demand in the County and linking parks and facilities through a series of walking and biking trails. This plan listed the Meramec Greenway as the number one priority for acquisitions and trail development in St. Louis County.

Plans of Partner Jurisdictions

City of Arnold, Arnold Meramec Greenway Study, Bucher, Willis & Ratliff, 1999.

City of Sunset Hills Parks and Recreation Plan, Bucher, Willis & Ratliff, 2000.

City of Fenton Park and Recreation Plan, SWT, 2002.

City of Wildwood Parks and Recreation Plan, The Coleman Group, 2002.

City of Eureka, Eureka Parks/Amenities Analysis and Improvements Plan, SWT, 2003.

City of Valley Park, Valley Park Meramec Greenway Plan, MRRA, 2003.

B. Chronology of Events Supporting and Demonstrating Public Support for the Meramec Greenway

1967 – The St. Louis County Department of Planning and the Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Commission proposed a National Recreation Area on the Lower Meramec River.

1974 – The Open Space Foundation for the St. Louis region raised \$750,000 in private donations to purchase 1100 acres near Castlewood with matching monies from a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. The property opened in 1979 as Castlewood State Park.

1975 – State Designation of the Meramec River Recreation Area:

On September 8, 1975, Missouri Governor Christopher Bond formally designated the lower 108 miles of the Meramec River as the Meramec River Recreation Area. This designation was the result of a study authorized and funded by Congress the previous year. The Department of Interior coordinated the effort, with active participation from the State of Missouri Department of Natural Resources, local governments and interested citizens. At the time of the designation a report entitled “The Meramec Concept – A Progress Report” (November 1975) was issued; it outlined a strategy for protection of the river corridor through acquisition, recreation easements and conservation easements. The “Meramec Concept” envisioned multiple ownership with management at the local level.

1975 – The formation of the Meramec River Recreation Association in 1975 was the direct result of the Department of Interior’s study, which called for a coordinating committee to guide the renaissance of the river, parts of which, the study said, had been “severely abused and misused.” The coordinating committee consisted of the State of Missouri, three counties and initially nine cities with jurisdictions along the river. Citizens representing various interests and aspects of the private sector were included. For the past 28 years, the Meramec River Recreation Association, with the active involvement of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, has been the lead agency for planning of the Meramec Greenway and identification of properties for acquisition.

1977 – Bond Issue - \$1 million for land acquisition along the Lower Meramec River. Among projects funded by this bond issue were an approximately 450-acre addition to West Tyson Park, the purchase of the 250+ acre Lower Meramec Park, and acquisition of parcels that had been left surrounded by Buder Park.

1978 – Citizens of eastern Missouri in August 1978 voted 2 to 1 against a proposal for the first of five high dams proposed for the Meramec River and two of its tributaries, the Big River and the Bourbeuse River.

1982 – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Buy-Outs – Approximately \$3 million was used for buy-outs along the Meramec River under Section 1362 of the National Flood Insurance Act, which provided funds to purchase flood-damaged structures from willing sellers and convey the land to local governments for use as open space parkland. The initial request for FEMA funding was a joint request by the cities of Fenton and Arnold and St. Louis County. This buy-out was the beginning of the Fenton Meramec Greenway, which includes a trail and other facilities.

1983 - Times Beach Buy-Out

After the flood of 1982 and the discovery of dioxin in the Times Beach area, Super Fund monies were used for the buy-out of over 2,000 residents. Subsequently an incinerator was built there for the disposal of contaminated soils from Times Beach and other sites. After the clean-up was completed in the mid-1990's and the incinerator removed, a Missouri state park, the Route 66 State Park, was developed on the site. A riverfront trail on the site will be connected with other segments of the Ozark Trail in the Meramec Greenway.

1986 - \$1 million bond issue for land acquisition and development along the Lower Meramec River. Funded projects included the addition of the 262-acre Packwood Park, additions to Simpson and Unger Parks and the development of Simpson Park.

1993 – Flood of 1993 displaced over 1000 homes, and 450 businesses were temporarily or permanently displaced. – Additional funds became available through FEMA to acquire these properties.

1993 – Flood Buy-Out Funds - Approximately \$30 million in FEMA funds were allocated to projects throughout the St. Louis region. A significant portion of these funds were dedicated to Meramec flood plain acquisitions.

1996 – The St. Louis 2004 organization was formed and began its community engagement process, which identified the creation of a bi-state system of linear parks and trails revolving around area rivers as a priority to improve the quality of life in the St. Louis region. St. Louis 2004 coordinated the effort to pass Proposition C to provide park funding and create an agency to coordinate regional park development and linkages.

2000 – Creation of the Metropolitan Park and Recreation District (now Great Rivers Greenway)

The Metropolitan Parks and Recreation District, which changed its name to the Great Rivers Greenway in 2003, was established in November 2000 by the successful passage of the Clean Water, Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative ("Proposition C") in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County, Missouri. Great Rivers Greenway is funded by a one-tenth of one-cent sales tax, which generates approximately \$20 million annually for park and open space improvements. State legislation, passed in April 1999, made the local district and funding possible. Great Rivers Greenway's mission is to develop an interconnected system of greenways, parks and open space.

2001 – Endorsement of Meramec River Master Plan concept by Great Rivers Greenway

St. Louis County, on behalf of the Meramec River Recreation Association presented Great Rivers Greenway with the Meramec River Master Plan as its highest priority for funding of land acquisitions and development projects along the Meramec River. In 2002, the Great Rivers Greenway board of directors conceptually endorsed the project and committed \$6 million for land acquisition in 2003 as part of its 2003 Capital Budget.

III. Goals/Purposes To Be Achieved by the Meramec Greenway

Philosophy/Mission:

The goal of the Meramec Greenway project is to protect the Meramec River and its watershed from River Mile 108 near Sullivan to its confluence with the Mississippi near St. Louis with a view toward preservation of said stream and its surrounding area in its natural state with careful development and utilization of its recreational, aesthetic, educational and economic potential for the benefit of the public.

The establishment of the Meramec Greenway promotes the public health, safety and general welfare through the protection of scenic values, the improvement of water quality, the prevention of loss of life and property from flood damage, the protection of natural stream channels and flood plains and the provision of recreational, educational and cultural facilities.

Goal: Protection of the Environment

Natural communities and scenic values

A primary goal of the Meramec Greenway is to protect the scenic quality of the river valley and the natural communities found there. The coolness and clarity of the spring-fed river combined with high bluffs, wide gravel bars and frequent caverns make the Meramec a uniquely Ozark stream. Beautiful and environmentally significant areas in the Meramec River Valley include scenic bluffs and hillsides and a variety of unique and fragile natural biological communities including wetlands, flood plain forests, glades and meadows.

Studies of the Meramec Valley have found 109 species of fish and 61 species of birds directly using the river habitat. Twenty-four rare and endangered species inhabit the Meramec River Valley.¹ Larvae and algae that form the base of the aquatic food chain are threatened by pollutants in the river. Conservation of unique natural areas, wildlife habitats and environmentally sensitive areas is a key goal of the Meramec Greenway.

Water quality

Clean water is essential to maintaining the natural beauty of the river with its unique flora and fauna and making the water attractive for recreation. The goal of assuring that the river is fishable and swimmable and supportive of native wildlife is central to the greenway concept.

Protection of water quality in the river involves maintaining stream bank vegetation that filters rainwater runoff before it reaches the river and helps stabilize water temperatures by shading the stream, preserving the natural configuration of the river

¹ *Lower Meramec River Management Study*, p. 122.

channel by controlling dredging and docking facilities, and controlling the intensity of urban development near the stream channel.

A greenway plan that limits development and protects the vegetative buffer minimizes non-point pollutants and provides natural filtering of the water before it reaches the river. Greenway development restrictions are important in minimizing pollution and sedimentation and are needed to protect groundwater as well as surface waters in the Meramec watershed.

Flood damage prevention

Preservation of natural open space in the Meramec flood plain is needed to provide a natural reservoir for flood waters. Prevention of the inappropriate use of flood plain serves to prevent loss of lives and property from flooding.

Goal: Reclamation of the Natural State of the River

For more than half of the twentieth century, the lower Meramec River suffered from a variety of abuses of urbanization, recreational use, industrialization and agricultural encroachment. Unregulated sand and gravel extraction degraded and channelized the river with no required restoration. Inadequate zoning regulations permitted floodplain urbanization. The riparian forest corridor along the riverbanks was destroyed by the profusion of riverbank cottages and land clearance for agriculture. Makeshift bank stabilization efforts degraded the river with such debris as concrete slabs, tires, refrigerators, asphalt slabs and car bodies. Both point and non-point pollutants discharged into the Meramec and its tributaries as a result of inadequate or totally lacking sewage treatment facilities.

Significant clean-up of the Meramec River has occurred in the past three decades. Since 1968 Operation Clean Stream, a project of the Open Space Council involving thousands of citizen volunteers, has removed hundreds of tons of debris from the river and its banks in its annual cleanup effort: everything from appliances and automobile parts to all other litter left by careless users.

The completion of four Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District plants in the 1980's to replace smaller inadequate sewage treatment facilities has greatly improved the condition of the river and the quality of the water. Construction is underway on a new generation of regional treatment plants to further improve water quality.

By 2004 all active sand and gravel mining in the river channel will be eliminated. The new generation of extraction methodology involves off-river dredging with required site restoration.

Flood plain urbanization is better controlled now with improved zoning regulations plus the passage of the National Flood Insurance Act. Perhaps the greatest impact on the Meramec River has been the removal of hundreds of riverfront cottages, resulting in the healing of the riparian corridor, reduced erosion, reduced sewage,

improved water quality and enhancement of the river vista. Zoning regulations are also helping to control storm-water surges into the river through requirements for detention and retention systems.

The net result of these reclamation efforts has been a remarkable renaissance of the Meramec River. Slowly the river is healing from the impact of in-channel dredging, recreating its natural meanders with alternating deep pools and shallow riffles. Better water quality has permitted the return of the plant and invertebrate biota that forms the basis of the river's food chain. Hence, wildlife abounds and a good quality sport fishery has returned. Visually, the Meramec continues to improve, beckoning a new generation of residents to discover a natural resource so loved by their grandparents.

Goal: Interconnectivity of Natural, Recreational and Cultural Sites

The Meramec Greenway will serve as an open-space connector linking parks, natural reserves, cultural features and historic sites with each other and with populated areas. It will interconnect publicly owned lands with a trail, thus expanding recreational opportunities for hikers and bicyclists. Linkages among parks and cultural sites will enhance the accessibility and utilization of these recreational amenities.

A major goal of the greenway is to provide a route for the St. Louis County portion of the Ozark Trail. This is a long-distance trail conceived in 1977 to traverse the Ozarks following the most scenic and varied route possible from the St. Louis metropolitan area southwestward through the Ozarks of southern Missouri to the Arkansas border, where it will join the Ozarks Highland Trail in Arkansas. The Ozark Trail in St. Louis County will anchor a network of other trails, some existing and some to be developed. These will connect into the St. Louis County trail network that eventually will link to all parts of the region, including the Missouri River and Mississippi River Greenways.

Because of the high public popularity of trails, current emphasis is being placed on developing the Ozark Trail along the fifty miles of Meramec Greenway in St. Louis County. This would link the many public lands now located along the river, including state parks and conservation areas, St. Louis County parks and parks from several municipal governments.

Goal: Expanded Recreational Opportunities and Facilities

The Meramec Greenway was conceived as a major recreational resource within the St. Louis metropolitan area to serve the recreation needs of St. Louis County's population of one million people as well as the remainder of the 2.5 million population metropolitan area. The goal of providing active and passive recreational opportunities

involves the expansion of existing public parks and the addition of new ones in the Lower Meramec River Valley.

The Greenway will promote and protect the recreation uses of the river and provide public access and boater access, hiking, bicycling, camping and nature study opportunities as well as linking the recreational facilities and historic sites in the parks linked by the trail.

The Meramec Greenway is designed to assure that existing and future park and open space areas are properly developed to form an integrated recreation complex that will enhance the personal health of St. Louis County citizens through fresh air, exercise, and nature appreciation.

Goal: Natural Resources and Environmental Stewardship Education

The goal of natural resources education is closely linked to the goal of environmental protection. Interpretation of the outstanding and varied natural resources of the river valley encompasses water quality, soil and water conservation, fish and wildlife conservation, geological studies and the study of archeological features.

The river itself provides opportunities for studies and education about its rich fauna, the geology of the river valley, drinking water and sewer treatment. The wide variety of terrestrial natural communities in the flood plain and the uplands bordering the valley include various forest types, marshes, swamps, bluffs and caves. The Meramec River Valley provides unique opportunities for comparative studies of diverse ecosystems.

Several land managing agencies are restoring natural communities that had all but disappeared. The Shaw Nature Reserve in Franklin County is restoring forty acres of glades, and St. Louis County has established a twenty-five acre prairie at West Tyson County Park.

Focal points for resource education in the Meramec Greenway include the Missouri Department of Conservation's Powder Valley Nature Center in Kirkwood and the Shaw Nature Reserve (formerly Shaw Arboretum) and the Meramec State Park Nature Center in Franklin County. A new education center in St. Louis County is being built by the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District (MSD) near the mouth of the Meramec River at the expanded MSD facility. The long-range goal is to establish a third educational facility in St. Louis County at approximately river mile 26.

The easy access to the Meramec Greenway by scientists, teachers, students and residents of the St. Louis metropolitan area makes the greenway an invaluable resource for environmental education.

Goal: Enhancement of Quality of Life and Regional Economic Competitiveness

A main goal of the new Great Rivers Greenway organization, the newest partner in the Meramec River Greenway, is to improve the quality of life for residents of the St. Louis region and by doing so to attract economic development and redevelopment. An interconnected system of greenways, parks and open spaces strengthens local economies and is a catalyst for economic development in new and established communities alike. Great Rivers Greenway endorses and supports the Meramec River Greenway because its development furthers that organization's goal of creating a well-planned, interconnected greenway, park and open space system that fosters regional economic development, improves community resources, preserves natural assets and helps neighborhoods flourish.

Numerous studies around the country have shown that carefully planned parks, trails and greenways vastly increase the property values of adjacent properties. Property values in the vicinity of the Greenway will increase as the Meramec River continues to evolve from the overused and degraded stream that it once was to a scenic asset providing multiple recreational opportunities. As decaying "clubhouse" structures and other buildings that have suffered from repeated flooding are acquired and removed, as the river gradually reverts to a more natural state and as visitors are attracted to the area for recreation, nearby communities will experience economic stimulus and enhanced tax base.

IV. Geographic Extent: Definition of the Meramec Greenway

The Meramec River Recreation Association has defined the Meramec Greenway for its planning purposes as extending the length of the Meramec River from its mouth (Mile 0) where it enters the Mississippi at the southern tip of St. Louis County to Mile 108 at Sullivan in Franklin County. While the full length of the Meramec River is 220 miles with a drainage basin of 3,980 square miles, it is the lower half of the river that is in greatest need of protection and of most direct recreational value to the St. Louis metropolitan area.

The portion of the Meramec River that borders St. Louis County or is entirely within St. Louis County extends from the mouth of the river to Mile 50. Within St. Louis County, seven municipalities border the Meramec River: Sunset Hills, Fenton, Kirkwood, Valley Park, Wildwood, Eureka and Pacific. Approximately forty miles of the Meramec River borders unincorporated area of St. Louis County on one or both sides.

Lands along the Meramec River that comprise the Greenway include the valley itself, uplands related to the river, and public lands developed with active and passive recreational uses related to the trail system, the unique environmental resources and historic and educational facilities. More specifically, the Greenway includes:

- River valley lands within the 100-year floodplain,
- Bluffs and hillsides adjacent to the valley within the sight line of the river for protection of scenic views,
- Uplands adjacent to the valley that have historical or archeological significance,
- Uplands adjacent to the valley that deserve natural resource protection, such as glades or unique forest communities, and
- Publicly owned park and conservation lands that are geographically connected to the river valley and developed with related recreational, educational and cultural facilities.

Most of the properties within the Greenway described above shall remain in private ownership. Land uses on private properties will be governed by local zoning ordinances; however, it is recommended that zoning and land use decisions be guided by the goals of the Meramec Greenway. Private land uses directly compatible with the Greenway such as golf courses, swimming pools, and athletic associations shall be encouraged.

Priorities for property acquisition will include property within 300 feet of the river, which are needed for protection of the river bank as well as for development of the main trail, and properties needed for development of planned public facilities including the trail, public parks, campgrounds, and river access points.

V. The Meramec Greenway Master Plan

The Meramec River Recreation Association (MRRA) Coordinating Committee has primary responsibility for master planning of the Meramec Greenway. That organization includes the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Franklin County, Jefferson County, St. Louis County, the Cities of Arnold, Eureka, Fenton, Kirkwood, Pacific, Sunset Hills, Valley Park and Wildwood, citizen representatives from the participating counties, at large citizen representatives, the Missouri Arboretum, and the Tyson Research Center.

The St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation has been directly involved in master planning for the St. Louis County portion of the Meramec Greenway. Master planning is ongoing and is modified as necessary based on the progress of property acquisition efforts and other changing circumstances. Key elements of the master plan for the Meramec Greenway in St. Louis County include:

- Ozark Trail – The backbone trail intended to parallel the river through the entire Greenway. Forty-two miles of this main trail are planned for St. Louis

County including portions in municipalities, and twelve miles of trail have been completed.

- Feeder trails – Trails from the Ozark Trail leading out of the Greenway along tributaries or uplands into city trail networks, residential areas, other major greenways or other regional trail networks.
- Loop trails – Trails that loop away from and then back to the Ozark Trail. These often have such special purposes as nature study, equestrian use, or mountain biking.
- River access – Points of easy public access to the river for fishing, exploring, and limited boat access (for canoes and kayaks) are planned for approximately every mile from River Mile 0 to Mile 30 and every two miles farther upstream.
- Boater access – Access points that are the same as river access points except that they feature concrete boat ramps. Boater access points are planned to be located at ten-mile intervals.
- Trail/floater campgrounds – Special primitive campgrounds for users of the Ozark Trail and river floaters only would be located at eight to ten mile intervals in proximity to the trail and the river.
- Natural Resource Education Centers – Five natural resource education centers are planned for the 108-mile Greenway on the Lower Meramec. Two are in Franklin County: the Shaw Nature Reserve at River Mile 56 and Meramec State Park at River Mile 108. In St. Louis County there is an education center at Powder Valley (Mile 19) and an education center to be constructed by the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District on its property at Mile 1. The long-range plan calls for an additional education center at approximately Mile 26.

VI. Public Support

The Meramec River Recreation Association's plan for the trail through the lower Meramec River valley in St. Louis County has been endorsed by several **regional planning and conservation and open space groups**. These include:

East-West Gateway Coordinating Council

Henry Shaw Ozark Corridor

Great Rivers Greenway

Open Space Council

Ozark Trail Council, the group of landowners, land managers and trail users that originated the concept.

Local municipalities have been active partners in the planning and development of the Meramec Greenway. Several have completed portions of the Ozark Trail and are connecting it with municipal parks and trail networks. These include, in order of sequence from the mouth of the Meramec River:

City of Arnold (Jefferson County) – Arnold hired Bucher, Willis & Ratliff to prepare the Arnold Meramec Greenway Study (1999), which the City endorsed. The lower eight miles of the Ozark Trail is on Arnold’s side of the river and is planned to be connected with the City’s trail network.

City of Sunset Hills - Bucher, Willis & Ratliff also prepared the City of Sunset Hills Parks and Recreation Plan (2000), which has been incorporated into the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Sunset Hills quickly implemented its new plan with acquisition of the Minnie Ha Ha Beach property and is currently negotiating for several additional tracts.

City of Fenton – The City of Fenton Park and Recreation Plan (SWT, 2002) incorporated plans for a city trail network anchored by the Ozark Trail, which will briefly leave the river and wander through the City’s Olde Towne area. The trail also makes a loop around the perimeter of Fenton City Park, an active recreation facility with several types of athletic fields. Portions of the trail in Fenton have been completed.

City of Kirkwood – Kirkwood has acquired ninety percent of its frontage on the Meramec River as Greentree and Emmenegger Parks. The Missouri Conservation Department’s Powder Valley Nature Center is located in the Kirkwood Meramec Greenway.

City of Valley Park – In 2003 the City of Valley Park endorsed the Valley Park Meramec Greenway Master Plan and immediately began implementation.

City of Wildwood - The City of Wildwood Parks and Recreation Plan, prepared by the Coleman Group (2002), did not address the Meramec Greenway in detail. Wildwood is now an active member of the Meramec River Recreation Association. The City has acquired a park site in the Greenway at Glencoe and is planning to construct the City’s first trail in the Greenway.

City of Eureka – The City of Eureka, Eureka Parks/Amenities Analysis and Improvements Plan (SWT, 2003) endorses the Meramec Greenway concept. Portions of the Ozark Trail would border the City of Eureka on the north, east and south. A trail has been built beneath Interstate 44 connecting the Route 66 State Park with Eureka’s Kirchner Park, and future plans call for a trail to continue into the heart of that City.

VII. Implementation

Public/Private Partnership

Meramec River Greenway planning and implementation have long been and will continue to be broad cooperative efforts involving the State of Missouri, three counties, several municipalities, and several private institutions and private entities as well as citizen representatives. The creation of the Great Rivers Greenway in 2001 adds a publicly funded special district with a mission to develop greenways and park linkages throughout St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County. That entity is an important resource for helping to plan and fund acquisition and development of recreational lands and facilities in the St. Louis County portion of the Meramec Greenway and also in other river corridors and linear park locations in the St. Louis area.

Meramec River Recreation Association:

Roles: Planning, coordination, monitoring and advocacy to promote the recovery and protection of the river resources.

The Meramec River Recreation Association (MRRA), with the broad representation described above, will remain the lead agency for Meramec River master planning. Detailed planning of facilities within the member counties and cities will be done by the participating jurisdictions in the context of the Meramec Greenway concept as endorsed by the Meramec River Recreation Association. In pursuing its goals of recovery and protection of river resources, the Meramec River Recreation Association is involved with the sand and gravel extraction industries, wastewater treatment, zoning issues and stormwater issues.

Great Rivers Greenway (GRG)

Roles: Planning, coordination and funding of property acquisition

The publicly funded Great Rivers Greenway was formed pursuant to voter approval in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County. Its mission, consistent with the goal identified by the St. Louis 2004 community engagement process, is to create a bi-state system of linear parks and trails revolving around area rivers. A similar organization in Illinois, the Metro-East Park and Recreation District, has responsibility for the Illinois side of the metropolitan region.

Great Rivers Greenway's mandate is to coordinate its activities through local governments within its jurisdictions and to spend no more than 15 percent of its funding on operations. Its substantial financial resources are available for land acquisition to fulfill its mission. Within its first year of operation, the board of Great Rivers Greenway endorsed three greenway projects in St. Louis County: the Meramec River Greenway, the River Des Peres Greenway, and the (Missouri and Mississippi Rivers) Confluence Greenway.

Great Rivers Greenway's initial highest priority for the Meramec Greenway is acquisition of properties identified in the Meramec Greenway Master Plan. These property acquisitions would result in the linking of existing public lands as described in Section III above.

Great Rivers Greenway would fully fund land acquisition costs and would retain ownership of lands purchased, entering into long-term lease agreements with managing Greenway public entities. Great Rivers Greenway may also fund a percentage of project development costs.

St. Louis County

Roles: Detailed master planning and land use regulation. Where applicable, property acquisition, construction, ownership and management.

Counties play a critical role in assessing the value of the Meramec Greenway to welfare of their citizens and the environment and economy of their jurisdictions. Through the counties' partnership with the Meramec River Recreation Association, the Meramec Greenway Master Plan should be developed to reflect the values and goals of the individual counties and should be incorporated into the County General Plans.

1. Master planning for Greenway facilities in unincorporated St. Louis County is substantially complete and has been endorsed by the Meramec River Recreation Association. Refinements will continue as properties are acquired. The Meramec Greenway Concept Map in this report depicts the major planned facilities for the Meramec Greenway including the Ozark Trail, river access points and other key facilities.
2. Construction by St. Louis County would include construction of portions of the Ozark Trail in unincorporated St. Louis County and capital renovation of some existing portions as well as construction of river access points, boat ramps, campgrounds, feeder trails and other facilities on County-owned property. Funding will be from the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation budget, state and private grants, and funds from Great Rivers Greenway.
3. Ownership of significant Meramec Greenway properties. Numerous St. Louis County Park properties are integral parts of the Meramec Greenway as planned for St. Louis County. The Meramec Greenway Master Plan identifies and prioritizes those properties necessary for acquisition to accomplish the above-mentioned goals. Great Rivers Greenway and St. Louis County will acquire properties identified in the Meramec Greenway Master Plan.
4. Management of properties owned by St. Louis County and management of properties owned by Great Rivers Greenway under long-term (25-year renewable) leases.

5. Property acquisition – Properties identified for acquisition in the Meramec Greenway shall be classified in the Master Plan as to their importance. Most will be identified a Priority 2 – Desired, and these will be acquired by Great Rivers Greenway only if the owners are interested in selling. Gifts or donations of properties may go to Great Rivers Greenway or any of the participating governments.

For a limited number of properties identified in the Master Plan as Priority 1 – Critical, St. Louis County or other member governments may participate in the acquisition process. Critical acquisitions may include properties adjacent to existing St. Louis County parks, properties needed for trail connections, and properties within 300 feet of the Meramec River, which are critical for protection of the river and river banks. The reasons for such acquisitions will be clearly stated in the Master Plan documentation.

Where funding for priority acquisitions for the Meramec Greenway is provided by Great Rivers Greenway, with or without the participation of the County, those properties will be owned by Great River Greenways and leased to St. Louis County for operation.

6. Land use regulation
 - a. Limitation of development in the Meramec Greenway can be achieved through St. Louis County’s zoning and subdivision ordinances. Under St. Louis County’s zoning ordinance, much of the Meramec Greenway property has flood plain overlay zoning, which limits development to recreational, agricultural and limited utility uses that can withstand inundation without significant danger to lives or property.
 - b. Review by the Department of Parks and Recreation of all development other than single-family detached housing within 600 feet of an established or authorized public park or reservation is currently required by St. Louis County Zoning Ordinance, Section 1003.166.
 - c. Recommendation: In order to assure that development in and near the Meramec Greenway does not conflict with the goals of the Greenway, it is recommended that the required review by the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation should be expanded by ordinance amendment to apply to all development within 600 feet of the Meramec River Greenway as displayed on the “Meramec Greenway 2003” map of this report.

Jefferson County and Franklin County

Roles: Detailed master planning and land use regulation. Where applicable, property acquisition, construction, ownership and management.

These two counties have the same roles as St. Louis County in planning and land use regulation for the Meramec Greenway, and they have been fully participating

members of the Meramec River Recreation Association. However, because they do not participate in Great Rivers Greenway, resources for implementation by these two counties will be obtained through county or local governments, private funding and grant sources.

Municipalities: Sunset Hills, Kirkwood, Fenton, Valley Park, Wildwood, Eureka and Pacific in St. Louis County and Arnold in Jefferson County

Roles: Detailed master planning, construction, ownership, management, property acquisition, land use regulation within their jurisdictions.

Cities are directly involved in planning, acquisition, and development related to the Meramec Greenway within their political jurisdictions, although actual ownership and management could include county and state level governments. Cities, as partners with MRRA, participate in the preparation of the Meramec Greenway Master Plan and should seek to incorporate it into their respective city plans. Cities would, like counties, seek ordinances and zoning regulations to support the Greenway and also actively operate public Greenway lands.

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Role: Environmental regulation and management of Department-owned lands.

Missouri Department of Conservation

Roles: Fish and game management, code enforcement, forestry and resource education and management of Department-owned.

These two departments of Missouri state government have mandated state constitutional obligations, which they perform in the Meramec Greenway as well as elsewhere in the state. Hence, the Department of Natural Resources is involved in the regulation of wastewater treatment, water quality, air quality, solid wastes disposal, and hazardous wastes within the Greenway. The Department of Conservation is responsible for fish and game management, code enforcement, forestry and resource education.

These departments would also determine, via the Greenway Master Plan, their involvement with direct land management. The Department of Natural Resources currently operates four state parks in the Meramec Greenway, and the Department of Conservation manages eleven conservation areas.

Private Institutions and Private Property Owners

Roles: Education, environmental preservation, operation of recreational facilities.

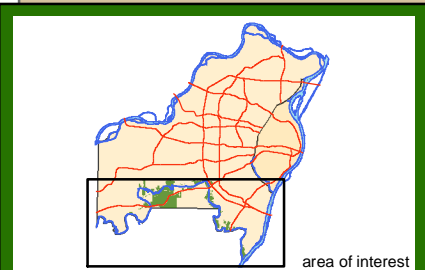
Private, nonprofit institutions are major partners in the Meramec Greenway. In Franklin County, the Shaw Nature Reserve, owned and operated by the Missouri Botanical Garden, is a major educational site where the general public, school groups and teachers can visit and study natural and managed ecosystems.

VIII. Conclusion

Decades of effort by public and private entities have brought the Meramec River corridor a long way toward recovery of the scenic beauty and restoration of the clear water and natural communities that originally attracted crowds of people to the river's banks. The approval by voters of the sales tax to create Great Rivers Greenway provides new resources to further implement the vision of a greenway of parks, trails and open spaces that will be an environmental, recreational and cultural asset for the whole region.

This concept plan is both a progress report and a master plan summary. The "Meramec Greenway 2003" map shows the major parks and other significant public and private lands that are the foundation of the Meramec Greenway in St. Louis County along with portions of the Ozark Trail that have already been completed in St. Louis County. The "Meramec Greenway Concept Plan" map summarizes the Master Plan as developed to date, showing the proposed route of the Ozark Trail and planned river access points.

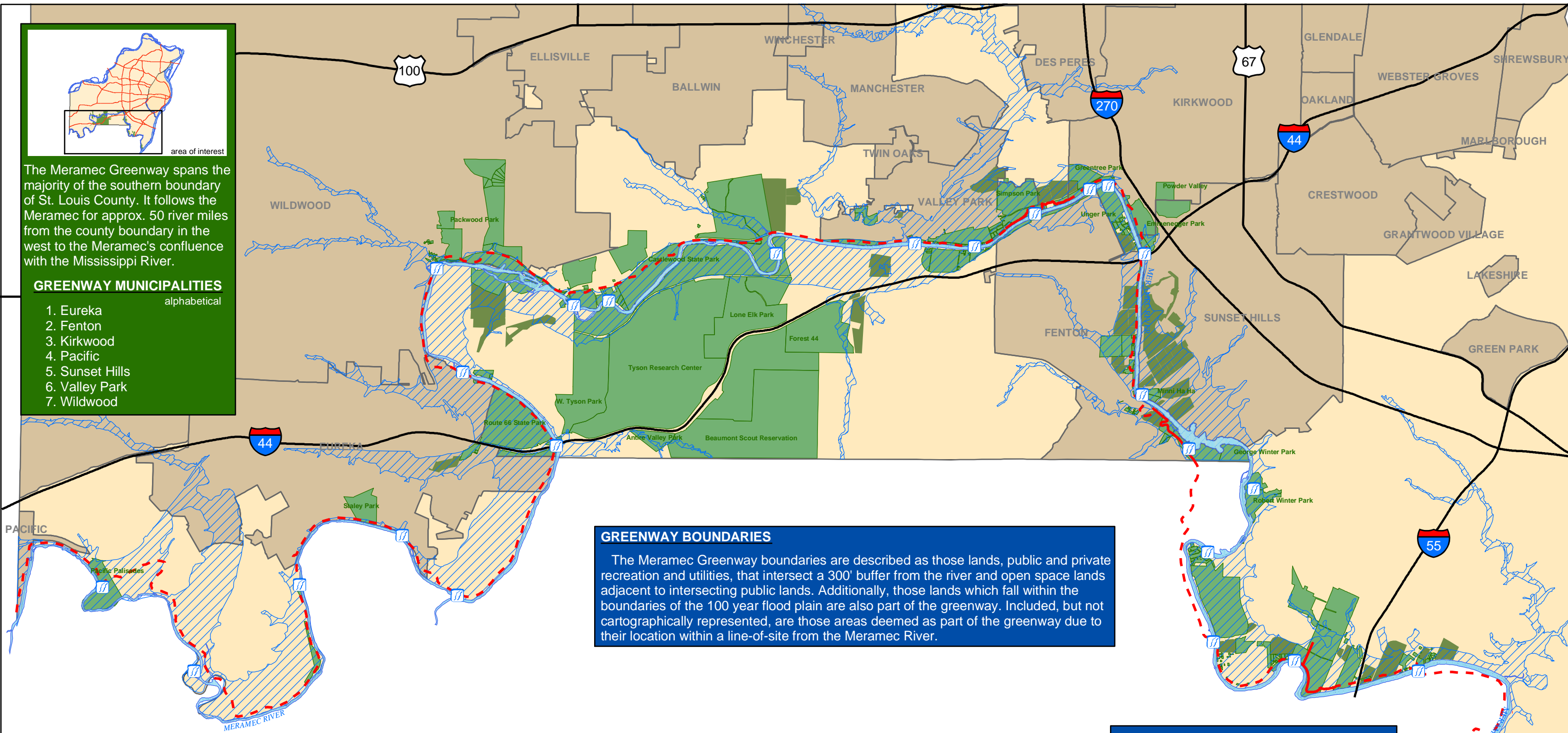
St. Louis County's leadership and participation in the broad coalition working to implement the Meramec Greenway has been key to the achievements to date and will be vital to the future development of the unique resource that is the Meramec Greenway.



The Meramec Greenway spans the majority of the southern boundary of St. Louis County. It follows the Meramec for approx. 50 river miles from the county boundary in the west to the Meramec's confluence with the Mississippi River.

GREENWAY MUNICIPALITIES
alphabetical

1. Eureka
2. Fenton
3. Kirkwood
4. Pacific
5. Sunset Hills
6. Valley Park
7. Wildwood



GREENWAY BOUNDARIES

The Meramec Greenway boundaries are described as those lands, public and private recreation and utilities, that intersect a 300' buffer from the river and open space lands adjacent to intersecting public lands. Additionally, those lands which fall within the boundaries of the 100 year flood plain are also part of the greenway. Included, but not cartographically represented, are those areas deemed as part of the greenway due to their location within a line-of-site from the Meramec River.

NOTE

The area depicted on this map contains generalizations inherent in any cartographic representation. Consequently, final ground-truth boundaries of greenway or potential greenway lands may differ from those represented here. An intent to acquire and/or definite greenway status is not implicit in lands depicted in this map.

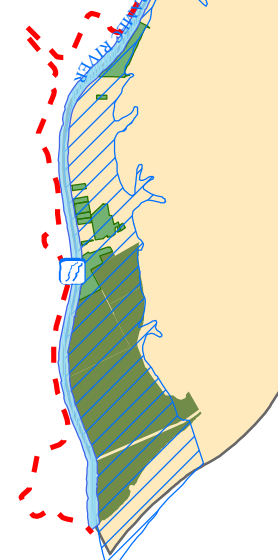
2003 Meramec Greenway

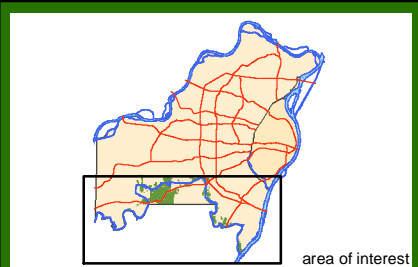
saint louis county, missouri



1:87,000
state plane: missouri east; nad '83
st. louis county departments of planning, parks & revenue;
federal emergency management agency
october 2003

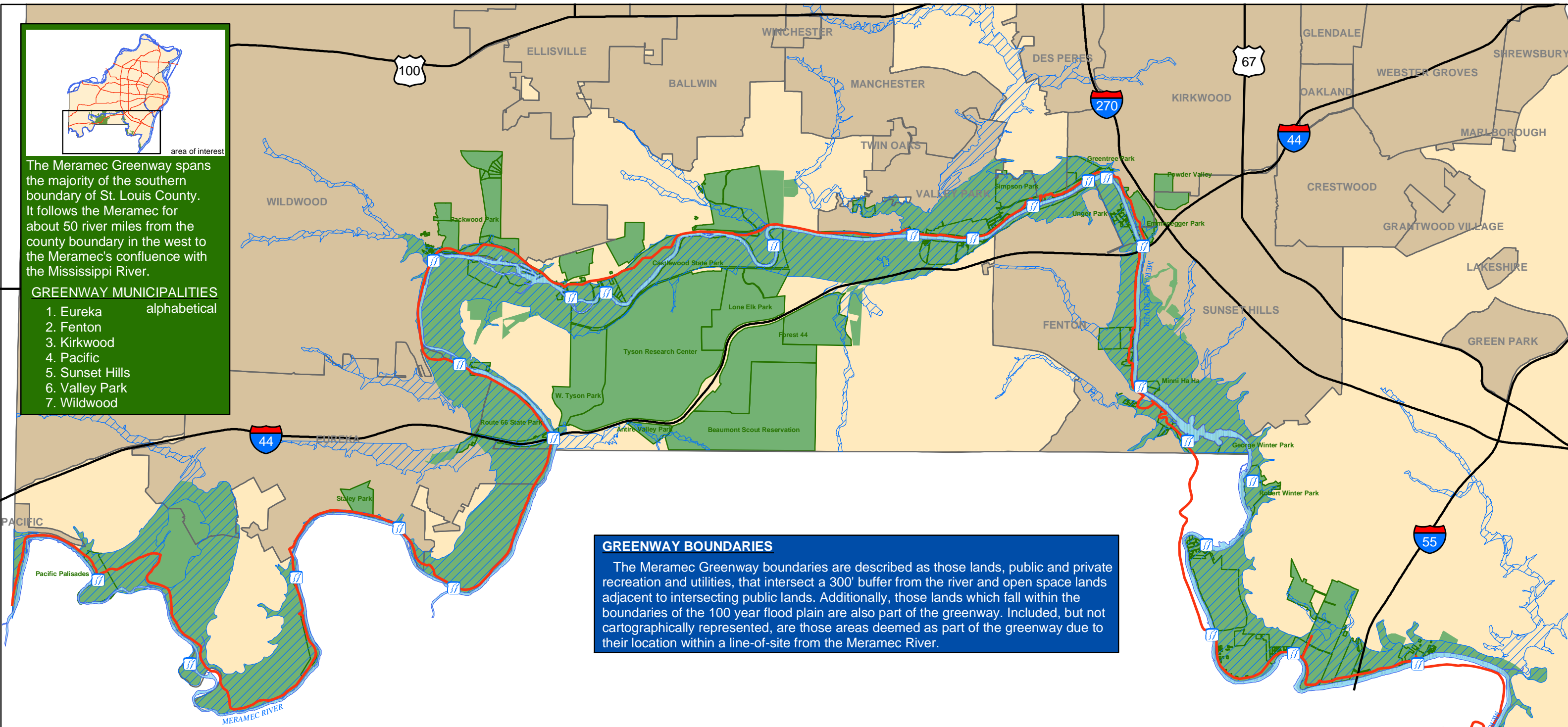
- Greenway Public Lands
- Greenway Private Recreation Lands & Utilities
- Proposed Trail
- Existing Trail
- Major Roads
- Meramec River
- Incorporated Area
- 100 Year Flood Plain
- River Access Points





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concept plan Meramec Greenway

saint louis county, missouri



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 state plane: missouri east; nad '83
 st. louis county departments of planning, parks & revenue;
 federal emergency management agency
 october 2003

- Meramec Greenway
- 100 Year Flood Plain
- River Access Points
- Ozark Trail
- Meramec River
- Incorporated Area

