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Missouri Voted "Best Trails State in America"

APRIL 19TH 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

Missouri Voted

Submitted by

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Jefferson City, Missouri – Missouri has been named the “Best Trails State” by American Trails, a national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of the nation’s hiking, biking and riding trails. The award was announced today at the International Trails Symposium in Arizona. The national award is presented every two years to the state that has made tremendous contributions to promote and improve their trails system.

“Missouri has an outstanding system of trails that can accommodate a wide variety of activities ranging from a short walk to a hike through the wilderness,” said Gov. Jay Nixon. “This award is a great honor for our state, and I encourage all Missouri families to get out there and take advantage of this incredible resource found right here in the Show-Me State.

Missouri State Parks offers almost 1,000 miles of managed trails and the state claims more than 500 miles of National Recreation Trails designated by the U.S. Department of Interior. The state lives up to its reputation as “Gateway to the West” with significant trails including the Lewis and Clark, Trail of Tears, Santa Fe National Historic Trails passing through the state and the Pony Express, California, and Oregon National Historic Trails beginning on the western border. Missouri is also the home of the Katy Trail, the longest developed rail-trail in the nation.

“Missourians can walk, hike or bicycle on 230 incredibly diverse trails throughout the state park system,” said Sara Parker Pauley, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. “Spending time outdoors exploring our trail system not only provides us with a great adventure, it also provides us with an opportunity to improve our overall health and well-being.”

“The contributions of staff, volunteers, and support groups have made Missouri’s state park trails stand out as the best in the nation,” said Bill Bryan, director of Missouri State Parks, a division of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. “We are proud of these efforts and look forward to continuing work to build on our network so even more families can enjoy trails in our state,” added Bryan while accepting the award on behalf of Missouri State Parks.

The award also recognized Missouri State Parks for a project that began in 2008 to inventory and manage trails, which is being used in a statewide effort to consolidate and coordinate trail data. Missouri State Parks recently released Trails of Missouri State Parks, a publication that provides detailed information on 230 Missouri State Parks trails.

Earlier this year, Gov. Nixon announced that attendance at Missouri’s State Parks increased in 2012, another sign of Missouri’s economic recovery. More than 18 million guests visited Missouri’s State Parks in 2012, the fourth consecutive increase in attendance since Gov. Nixon took office, reversing a 10-year decline in parks attendance.

Increased attendance at Missouri State Parks is also an important factor in the state’s economic growth. An economic impact study for the Missouri state park system released in 2012 reported that the total annual expenditure of state parks visitors in 2011 was approximately \$778 million. The overall economic impact of these expenditures is estimated at \$1.02 billion in sales, \$307 million in payroll and related income, and \$123 million in federal, state, and local taxes. Also, visitors’ expenditures support 14,535 jobs in Missouri.

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