Save The Date

Our 2017 Great Rivers Habitat Alliance and Ducks Unlimited Partnership event will be held on Thursday, October 19, at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center on N. Warson in Creve Coeur. Please mark the date to join us for this once-a-decade release of the updated “Hager” Duck Club Maps. This year will feature the first-ever map of Pike and Lincoln County duck clubs, along with the sixth printing of the time-honored St. Charles County map. This will surely be a night you and your friends will not want to miss!
Great Rivers Habitat Alliance Partners

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance is a 501(c)3 public charity and donations to GRHA are tax deductible as allowed by law.

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE AT: WWW.GRHA.ORG

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Good News About the New Madrid Levee

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance has been strongly opposing the New Madrid Levee Project for many years. We are excited to report to you that one of the last acts of the Obama administration was to make this wasteful boondoggle even less likely to ever happen.

The New Madrid Levee was a proposed part of the St. John’s Bayou-New Madrid Floodway Project. Located in Missouri’s bootheel, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) proposed building a 1,500-foot levee. At New Madrid, the levee would cut off access to the last remaining naturally functioning floodplains in the region. Approximately 70,000 acres of floodplain would be lost and about 53,000 acres of wetlands would be drained. The purpose of the new levee? To facilitate development of the New Madrid Floodway for the financial benefit of a few influential farm families.

Due to the massive environmental impacts of the project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a referral to the Council of Environmental Quality, asking the Obama administration to step in and evaluate the project. The outcome was an 11-page letter of resolution signed by the Department of Interior (which oversees the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the President’s Council on Environmental Quality.

In the resolution, the agencies agree that the only way to mitigate for the environmental impacts of the project would be to provide free and open access to another comparable section of floodplain nearby. The Corps acknowledged that, at this point, there are no other landholders willing to provide this mitigation – an area that would fit Manhattan Island almost five times.

Can the new administration just overturn the decision? They can try. But, the resolution builds on well-established science about the environmental impacts of the project. If the Trump administration tries to do an about-face on the facts, they will have to explain it in court, and one judge has already ruled against the levee project. Rest assured, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance will be there to oppose any attempts to change this decision. The New Madrid Levee would have negative impacts for our state and our rivers in every way.

While the fight might not be over yet, this is a major victory for the Mississippi River and for Missourians.

(Portions of this article were taken, with full permission, from American Rivers.)
Duck Club Maps
If you have a duck club in St. Charles, Lincoln, or Pike counties in Missouri, or Calhoun County in Illinois, we would like to make you aware that we are heading the revision efforts to release the famous “Hager” map this year. There will be two maps: the traditional map of St. Charles, southern Lincoln, and eastern Calhoun counties, and a new map of Pike, Lincoln, and western Calhoun counties. You should have received a call or e-mail by now from Tim Sheehan, our point volunteer for this effort. If your club has not yet submitted your boundary changes, updated membership roster, and one or two club pins, please contact our office immediately to make certain you are included in the 2017 maps. The maps will be released at our annual gala with Ducks Unlimited on Oct. 19. Please reserve a table for your club now to attend this once-a-decade event (see our President’s Column for more about this exciting event!).

Legislative Update: House Bill 1042
During the 2017 Missouri legislative session, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance has worked with Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Delta Waterfowl, the Missouri Conservation Federation, American Rivers, and other groups on behalf of greater floodplain protections in Missouri. The result of our collaboration was House Bill 1042, introduced by Missouri Rep. John McCarty of Jefferson County.

This bill would grant local governments in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Class Missouri counties the authority to enact stricter floodplain development rules than the current federal and state guidelines. We are continuing to fight for this legislation; however, the bill took a beating in committee as numerous opponents to this very modest proposal came out to fight it, including levee districts, port authorities, farmers, and more. We believe that local governments can better determine floodplain rules to the benefit of their communities than the state and federal governments. We pledge that we will continue our efforts for better floodplain development policy in Missouri, regardless of how long it may take.

Give STL Day
The annual Give STL Day philanthropic webathon is May 11. Please consider supporting Great Rivers Habitat Alliance online that day by going to givestlday.org and donating to our mission. If you cannot participate on May 11, you can support our work anytime by contributing at our website: grha.org. Everything we do, we do because generous donors like all of you allow us to fight for floodplain preservation through your support.

NFIP Up For Renewal
The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is up for renewal this year by the U.S. Congress. NFIP is a vital program, but it needs reform. Currently, it relies too heavily on subsidies from general taxpayers and is deeply in debt. New developments in the floodplain are less expensive if general taxpayers are paying for part of the insurance. GRHA supports limiting that incentive through changes to make actual users solely fund NFIP. Furthermore, GRHA supports changes to NFIP that would allow non-structural floodplain protections, such as local development limits and tighter codes, to be subject to additional, favorable rate adjustments. To see the full testimony that GRHA has provided to Congress on NFIP, please visit our website at www.grha.org.

Great Rivers Maintains Active Schedule of Public Meetings
Great Rivers Habitat Alliance has continued to be a frequent voice for floodplain protections at public meetings around St. Louis. To date in 2017, our executive director, David Stokes, has addressed the Maryland Heights Planning Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Missouri House of Representatives, and the St. Charles County Floodplain Vision Board. Stokes also has held numerous small meetings with individuals and groups to inform them about the dangers of the Port of Lincoln project. (See the commentary in this newsletter on Port of Lincoln that ran in March in the Lincoln County Journal.) Finally, in late April, David will address the Earth Day crowd in Alton, Ill., regarding the devastating Port of Lincoln proposal across the river.

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President’s Column
This year the theme is “Help Us Spread Our Wings,” to recognize the growth of our influence within the Confluence. Along with the two maps, we have hosted David Mosby to create a custom-made, cherry wood gun cabinet with club pins inlaid into the wood. Both “Maps #1” and the cabinet will be available for auction at that evening. If you, your club, or your business purchase a full table of 10 for $3,000, we will include a framed map with your purchase. The auction at the annual partnership event again will include a variety of fantastic destination hunts, including an Alaskan fishing trip, a Montana antelope hunt, and much more. The Danforth Center in Creve Coeur is a beautiful spot to host our annual gala, but seating is limited to 30 tables. If you and other members of your hunt club wish to be a part of this very special evening, please contact our office to confirm a reservation as soon as possible.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support of Great Rivers Habitat Alliance.

Great Rivers Welcomes New Board Members
Great Rivers Habitat Alliance is delighted to announce several new board members to our team: John Davis, Ryan McCarty, Mark Merlotti, Henry Schwetey, and Tim Sheehan have all joined our board of directors. We cannot thank them — and all our board members — enough for their efforts on behalf of floodplains, wetlands, and habitat conservation.

Help Us Spread Our Wings!

The year 2017 will be very special in the Missouri conservation and hunting community. As many of you know, every 10 years, the famous “Hagar” duck club map is updated and released, and 2017 marks that year. Along with the sixth printing of the celebrated St. Charles map, we are introducing the first Pike and Lincoln county maps for clubs further north. We hope you will be able to join Ducks Unlimited and Great Rivers Habitat Alliance at our annual dinner on Oct. 19, where these maps will be released.

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Due to the massive environmental impacts of the project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a referral to the Council of Environmental Quality, asking the Obama administration to step in and evaluate the project. The outcome was an 11-page letter of resolution signed by the Department of the Interior (which oversees the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the President’s Council on Environmental Quality.

In the resolution, the agencies agree that the levee project would have negative impacts for our state and our rivers in every way. All Alliance will be there to oppose any attempts to move forward with the levee project. Rest assured, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance has been strongly opposing the New Madrid Levee Project for many years. We are excited to report to you that one of the last acts of the Obama administration was to make this wasteful project.

While the fight might not be over yet, this is a major victory for the Mississippi River and for Missourians. Due to the massive environmental impacts of the project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledged that, at this point, there are no other landholders willing to provide mitigation – an area that would fit Manhattan Island almost five times.

Environmental impacts of the project include the destruction of the 70,000-plus acres of floodplain for the New Madrid Floodway for the financial benefit of a few influential farm families. The Corps estimated that the purchase of rights to the levee, the purchase of easements for mitigation, and the purchase of rights to a comparably sized levee – would cost tax payers over $200 million. With all that money spent, the new levee would have negative impacts for our state and our rivers in every way.

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