Great Rivers Habitat Alliance Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary

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As part of our 20th anniversary year, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance is instituting our first comprehensive fundraising campaign to expand our mission and reach. Please visit our website, www.grha.org, to learn more about our plans for the campaign. The pledge form for participating in the campaign is in this newsletter, and we hope that you will consider being a part of growing GRHA's impact.

Huge Victory for Conservation in Maryland Heights!

On Jan. 3, 2020, the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Commission of Maryland Heights (which was primarily made up of representatives of St. Louis County Government) rejected the city's proposed $151 million tax subsidy to facilitate the development and destruction of thousands of acres of greenspace along Hwy. 141 and Page Ave. in Maryland Heights. This was a major win for conservation in the St. Louis region. Great Rivers Habitat Alliance led the effort to defeat this destructive proposal, which intended to redirect existing creeks, add new internal levees, and pump enormous amounts of water during future floods back into the Missouri River. Needless to say, Maryland Heights officials were completely unconcerned about who they put in danger by moving the water elsewhere. Unfortunately, Maryland Heights has now announced that they are suing St. Louis County over this decision. GRHA is not a party to the suit, but we will be following it very closely and will keep you updated as it progresses through the legal system. Like so many other municipalities in our region, Maryland Heights city officials look at irreplaceable floodplain and wetlands and see nothing but asphalt, concrete, and dollar signs.

Save The Date for the 2020 Great Rivers/ Ducks Unlimited Partnership Event

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance's seventh annual partnership event with Ducks Unlimited will be held on Sat., Sept. 26, 2020. We will be returning to Logan University in Chesterfield, Mo., where we held our 2018 partnership event. Please save the date and plan on joining us to support both organizations. This year, we also will be celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Great Rivers Habitat Alliance. More information on the event will be available shortly.
Great Rivers Habitat Alliance
Preserving the Confluence Floodplain Since 2000

GREAT RIVERS HABITAT ALLIANCE
PRESERVING THE CONFLUENCE FLOODPLAIN SINCE 2000
COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN PLEDGE FORM

Donor Information
Name: _____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code: ____________________________________________________________
Telephone/E-mail: ________________________________________________________________

Gift and/or Pledge Information:
I/we agree to contribute a tax-deductible gift, either as a single donation or as part of a multi-year pledge, in the sum of: $ ____________

Initial Payment enclosed: $ ____________ Balance to be paid over period of _______ year(s) (max. 5 years)
Future Payments on my /our pledge will be made annually / quarterly (circle one) beginning on: 
_______/_______/________

Gift type (choose one)  □ Check  □ Securities  □ Credit card  □ Other ________________________________

You may also donate online at www.grha.org.

Credit card type ________ Exp. Date ____________ CVC Code ____________
Credit card number: ________________________________________________________________

Donor Recognition:
• The organization may publicly announce my/our gift:  □ Yes  □ No (I/we wish to remain anonymous)
• This gesture of support is being made:  □ In honor of  □ In memory of

Acknowledgement Information:
☐ Please list my/our name(s) among GRHA donors as follows:

Signature(s) _________________________________________________________________ Date _____________

Any necessary amendment or modification of the pledge agreement shall be made in writing.

Please make checks, corporate matches, or other gifts payable to: Great Rivers Habitat Alliance.
PO Box 50014 • St. Louis, MO 63105

GRHA is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.
President’s Column
By Chris Hyams

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance 20th Anniversary Comprehensive Campaign

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance (GRHA) is excited this year to be celebrating our 20th anniversary of working to protect the Confluence floodplain. To inaugurate our 20th anniversary, GRHA is instituting our first comprehensive fundraising campaign to expand the scope and mission of our efforts. We are happy to announce that we have already received more than $300,000 in pledges as part of the campaign (as we go to print), and we hope that you will help us grow our mission by supporting the campaign. (Please visit www.grha.org for more information about the campaign.)

We began 2020 with a great victory in Maryland Heights when the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Commission rejected the city’s proposed $151 million plan for tax subsidies to destroy the floodplain. Other important news is that St. Louis County is now considering a bill to institute tougher floodplain regulations for much of the county. GRHA has strongly supported this policy and is doing all that we can to educate officials as to why and how this will benefit our region. We are also working with St. Louis City officials to have the same, much-needed change made there.

This is a critical time for Missourians who were hurt by flooding around our state.

As our region continues to address the devastation caused by the 2019 flooding, it is imperative that our leaders do not repeat the mistakes of the past. Calls to address the flood disaster by massive spending on new levees will make future floods worse, not better, and continued floodplain development proposals are going in the wrong direction.

How You Can Help

If you want to preserve the habitat and beauty of great rivers such as the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois, and maintain the heritage and culture of rural America, we hope you will make a commitment to help us grow our mission by supporting our campaign today.

Every dollar that you pledge will go directly toward supporting our comprehensive campaign. Please review the attached pledge form and consider making a tax-deductible commitment for the next three years. We would be pleased to talk with you if you have any questions regarding the campaign and our work. Please do not hesitate to call our Executive Director, David Stokes, at (314) 918-1007, or e-mail him at dstokes@grha.org.

Thank you for your continued support!

Missouri Flood Recovery Commission

Missing Key Viewpoints

The interim report from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources’ Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group (FRAWG), submitted to Missouri Gov. Mike Parson on Dec. 31, 2019, does not have protections for Missourians from future floods, perpetuates centuries of environmental harm caused by floodplain damage and levee construction, and fails to account for future weather patterns caused by climate change. Several efforts were made to ensure the FRAWG represented a broad variety of river interests, including conservation, environmental, and recreation interests. Unfortunately, Gov. Parson declined to appoint representatives from these important stakeholders. As such, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance (GRHA) joined a coalition, led by the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, that included Missouri Sierra Club, Missouri River Bird Observatory, and more, and submitted an alternate report to the commission with important recommendations that FRAWG had overlooked or ignored.

The coalition’s main messages include:

1. Focus on resilience, flood risk reduction, and innovation rather than a one-track reliance on outdated modes of “flood control;”
2. Use floodplains for their purpose of flood risk reduction, flood water conveyance, and environmental benefits, as well as valuable tools for multiple economic, recreational, and environmental uses;
3. Acknowledge how extreme weather and climate change have contributed to recent historic flooding events; and
4. Improve public outreach and participation in this process.

The coalition was grateful for the opportunity to submit these vital recommendations to Gov. Parson. We have been very concerned that there was no representative of conservation or environmental viewpoints appointed to the FRAWG and that our prior comments and recommendations were not reflected in the FRAWG’s interim report. We hope that FRAWG’s ultimate recommendations are more than the same, tired, expensive, and failed plans to build our way out of flood problems. GRHA and our partner groups will stay involved in this process through its conclusion.

St. Louis County Considers Floodplain Regulations

The St. Louis County Council is currently considering (as this newsletter goes to print) Council Bill 14, which would reduce the allowable water-height increase for floodplain developments from 1 foot to 1 inch. The legislation is exactly the type of protection our floodplains need. It follows up on a similar ordinance adopted in Jefferson County in 2019 and relates to changes adopted in St. Charles County several years ago. While it would only apply to the unincorporated portions of St. Louis County (as do the rules in St. Charles and Jefferson counties), it would still be a major step forward. Great Rivers Habitat Alliance is committed to educating officials and residents about why this bill and these changes are so important for St. Louis.

The St. Louis County Council held a committee meeting on the bill on Feb. 18, and GRHA and our allies were well represented at the meeting. The legislation was introduced by Councilman Ernie Trakas (South St. Louis County), and has been co-sponsored by all of the other members of the county council, which is a good sign for passage.
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