

Celebrate the Rivers

Paddling event highlights Missouri history, nature and water trails

Have you ever wanted to try canoeing or kayaking but didn't have the gear or the knowledge of where to boat? This summer Platte County Parks and Recreation will host a Canoe/Kayak event on June 27 with the Kansas City Paddler group and the Missouri Department of Conservation to help celebrate Great Outdoors Month. Mark your calendars for a program that will highlight waterways ideal for paddling. Boats and gear will be supplied so everyone can experience the joys of paddling first hand! Safety instruction and demonstration will be provided.

The Missouri River and Platte River are two notable historic and natural resources in Platte County. These rivers had significant roles in the historical development of modern day Platte County. Native American Indians depended on the rivers for transportation and food. In fact, the French name "Missouri" is interpreted to mean "People of the Dug Out Canoes" and William Clark, of Corp of Discovery fame, originally named the Platte River as "Petite River Platte". Historically, the County of Platte derived its name from its geographical relationship to the Platte River.

Many of Platte County's early pioneers arrived here by way of the "Mighty MO" and depended upon both rivers for their livelihoods. The rivers were "water highways" that transported people and goods during the westward expansion of the United States. Hubs of commerce sprung up along the banks of the Missouri River, including Kansas City, Riverside, Parkville, and Weston. The Platte River is dotted with the towns of Edgerton, Tracy and Platte City. The City of Farley was founded at the confluence of both of these great rivers. To this very day, the rivers help to define the geographic boundaries of Platte County and many of the incorporated townships.

Today, the flood plains along the corridors provide fertile crop land and some of the best hunting grounds in the region. Winter time provides excellent opportunities to view the natural wildlife along the rivers. One accessible location to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature is to visit Settlers' Crossing Park at the west end of Main Street in Platte City. It's not uncommon to witness airborne formations of snow and Canadian geese flocks. And American Bald Eagles proudly perch in large sycamore trees, keeping guard along the river bank. In the warmer months the rivers support boating and fishing activity.

The Platte County Park System Master Plan, updated in May 2009, includes the public's input about how the County can best provide park and recreation opportunities for citizens. The Missouri and Platte rivers were identified as valuable resources that should be more accessible to the public. To learn more about how these waterways have been incorporated into the plan, please see pages 35 to 37, and Maps #8, #9 and #10 in the Platte County Park System Master Plan at www.platteparks.com. Check out the Lewis and Clark water trail on the Missouri Department of Natural Resources website (<http://www.dnr.mo.gov/water-trail/>) or a current example of a water trail amenity.

As a precursor to the development of water trails in Platte County, don't miss the June 27 Platte County Parks canoe and kayak event. Regardless of your paddling expertise, first time paddler or experienced, make sure to keep checking www.platteparks.com for more information on this fun event!