

Originating Committee: Public and Private Lands

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Intended Recipients: The Missouri Department of Natural Resources: Director, Director of Missouri State Parks, and Director of the Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Program; Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, The Missouri Farm Bureau, Governor of Missouri, Members of the 103rd Missouri General Assembly

Support the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

WHEREAS, Missouri State Parks and the Soil and Water Conservation Program under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are funded from the one-tenth-of-one-percent Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax (PSWST); and

WHEREAS, the PSWST was first approved in 1984, and has been renewed four times, including the most recent vote in 2016 when votes in favor were approximately 80 percent statewide and were a majority in every county in Missouri; and

WHEREAS, for forty years this funding has proven to be vital to the protection of Missouri's soils, water resources, and the 93 Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites; and

WHEREAS, this sales tax renewal must be voted upon every ten years and no later than 2026; and

WHEREAS, half of this one-tenth-of-one-percent sales tax provides 75 percent of the operational funding for Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites; and

WHEREAS, this funding provides substantial resources for operation and improvement of state park programs and continues to allow Missouri State Parks to remain free and open to all visitors; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the state park system is to preserve and interpret the state's most outstanding natural landscapes and cultural landmarks, and to provide outstanding recreational opportunities compatible with those resources; and

WHEREAS, Missouri State Parks protects critical habitats, including rivers such as the Eleven Point, Meramec, and Current; glades and bald knobs like Shepherd of the Hills State Park; and caves such as Onondaga and Ozark Caverns; and

WHEREAS, Missouri State Parks on multiple occasions has been ranked as one of the top four in the nation through the National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal awards that recognize excellence in long-range planning, resource management and innovative approaches to delivering superb park and recreation services with fiscally sound business practices; and

WHEREAS, the park system is a boon to tourism and the economy that attracted more than 22,000,000 visitors in 2021 and offers more than 2,000 structures, 3,500 campsites, 194 cabins, almost 2,000 picnic sites, and more than 1,000 miles of trail as well as the longest developed rails-to-trail project in the nation: Katy Trail State Park; and

WHEREAS, the continued renewal of this funding source is vital to Missouri State Parks maintaining this high recognition level as well as the personnel, resources, and structures; and

WHEREAS, half of this one-tenth-of-one-percent sales tax has contributed to a 46 percent reduction in soil erosion equating to over 148 million tons of topsoil saved; and

WHEREAS, the soil and water conservation program is available through all 114 soil and water district boards within each of the 114 counties that comprise the State of Missouri; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission provides financial incentives and technical assistance to agricultural landowners with the goal of saving soil and protecting Missouri's water resources, and receives and allocates appropriated PSWST funds for the use or benefit of the districts, including a soil and water conservation cost-share program; and

WHEREAS, Missouri farmers have voluntarily implemented more than 255,000 structural and management conservation practices for cropland, hayland, pastureland, and woodlands supported by more than \$772 million from the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax between 1984 and 2019; and

WHEREAS, this funding source provides Missouri's farmers, ranchers, and landowners the voluntary opportunity to apply for funding to assist them with alternative water sources for livestock, a variety of assistance programs pertaining to wells and safe drinking water, assistance in erosion control, management of livestock waste, and animal control and grazing systems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled at Lake Ozark, Missouri, this 2nd day of March, 2024, supports the renewal and passage of the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax and recommends the Governor of Missouri call for full support from all Missourians for the renewal and passage of the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax, thus providing the appropriate funding for continuing efforts by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the Farm Bureau, and Missouri legislators to maintain, enhance, protect, and leave a legacy for future generations as they continue to protect and care for Missouri's natural resources, state parks and historic sites, and soil and water conservation efforts.

Searchable Keywords: sales tax, parks, soils, water, habitat, Missouri, State Parks, Historic Sites, renewal, funding, protection, conservation, DNR, Department of Natural Resources, agriculture, farms, tourism, economy, rivers, caves, glades

Expires: March 2, 2029