

# Trout

# Talk



*Bennett Spring 1973*



*Bennett Spring 2005*

**MARCH 2020**

**A group of friends has visited  
Bennett Spring since 1973**





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# Trout Traditions



A group of friends has been fishing at Bennett Spring State Park since 1973

**CHRIS RODEN • FOR TROUT TALK**

A group of four friends started a tradition in 1973.

Gerald Newman, Bob Manuel, Ron Rude and Tom Paul began camping at Bennett Spring State Park a day or two before the March 1 buzzer sounded and kicked off a new season of trout fishing in Bennett.

Manuel admitted how much fun the annual fishing trip was to the foursome.

"It was a pretty big deal for us. We always made it. Gerald would probably not hardly sleep for a couple of nights before we left he'd get so excited about it," Manuel said.

The tradition had some friendly competition involved according to Jeremy Newman, Gerald's son.

"Back in 1980, the four of them had started this plaque. Basically, every year, whoever got the largest lunker out of the four of them would get to put his name on the plaque and keep it until the next opening," Newman said.

Manuel said with the exception of four or five years a different person took home the plaque each of the 40 years at Bennett Spring.

The fun did not end for Manuel until Gerald Newman died in 2013 at age 65 after 40 years of fishing fun and camp camaraderie.

"We just kind of lost interest in it then because it just wasn't the same, so our boys just kind of took up the tradition," Manuel said.

Jeremy Newman and Manuel's two sons, Matt and Mark, decided to keep the tradition alive after his dad's death.

"We wanted to keep the tradition up in memory of my and dad and my

friends' dad even though they're alive they really enjoy seeing we're doing it. As matter of fact, a few of them, I think, almost cried when they found out what we were doing," Newman said.

The second generation's participation began in their teens.

"Growing up, we always felt like we wanted to get out there and do the opening thing with our dads, but that was more of a dad time. When we were able to drive, we went down and tried it out a couple of years before we went off to college," Newman said.

Of course, Opening Day weather is often a challenge.

"We stayed in tents and just froze to death, but it was still a great time. We camped away from our dads to give them their time because we knew how important it was," Newman said.

The lunker trophy tradition also continued ... sort of.

"My mom had actually bought us a plaque at one point for my friends and I to use, and we haven't done anything with it yet because we always have one guy, Mark Manuel, that catches the biggest lunker. We're not going the spend any time to put anything on it for him," Newman chuckled.

Manuel remembered one incident in particular from his friends' time in the park.

When it was still possible to camp by the stream above the whistle bridge, he said the conservation agents swarmed their camp, convinced that they were in possession of too many trout.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 11**



Submitted photos  
**Top, in 1973 some friends began** a yearly tradition of camping and fishing in Bennett Spring State Park. Bob Manuel and Matt Manuel sit in front of Gerald Newman, Ron Rude, Jeremy Newman, Adam Miller and Tom Paul. Bottom, Tom Paul, Bob Manuel, Ron Rude and Newman drink a cup of Gerald's Newman homemade wine in his remembrance before pouring a cup into the river.



# Sunny forecast could mean a big Opening Day

**CHRIS RODEN  
FOR TROUT TALK**

Hatchery Manager Ben Havens predicted a big Opening Day during a pre-season meeting.

Havens spoke to a crowd of about 55 interested anglers and business owners at the park's informational meeting at the Bennett House on Feb. 22 and said the long range weather forecast for March 1 was sunny with temperature in the 50s.

"If we have a sunny 50 degree day, we'll have a wonderful opening day," Havens said.

That this opening day falls on a Sunday should also increase the numbers.

"Sunday openers for the trout park are historically just a knockout day. We got our biggest ever opener in the state on March 1, 1992 when we had

4,092," Havens said.

He said the water was around two inches higher than normal, which would not affect fishing.

"The fishing will be just as good as it was last year, and maybe a little bit better," Havens said.

Havens was the first speaker at the meeting designed to inform the attendees of changes in the park over the off-season and how the park fared in 2019.

Some 136,374 tags were sold during the 2019 season, which is comparable to tags sold for the last five years, according to Havens.

Regulation changes include a 10 fish possession limit throughout Missouri's trout parks.

"You can still only keep your four fish per day," Havens said.



Trout Talk photo/Chris Roden

**Mike Perry, assistant hatchery manager, listens** as Hatchery Manager Ben Havens tells the crowd what to expect in the 2020 season at Bennett Spring State Park.

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Once 10 have been accumulated, fishing stops until they are eaten or given away.

A fee increase to \$4 per adult and \$3 for kids.

Meramec Spring Park will charge \$5 per tag and allow five fish per day as part of a pilot program.

Havens said the new brochures with up-to-date regulations are colored green and available at several locations including the Park Store.

Havens also took the opportunity to promote the free fishing opportunities that target groups with hopes of encouraging them to adopt trout fishing as a lifelong hobby.

Veterans Free Fishing Day will be held April 18 with Kids Free Fishing Day following on May 2. Free fishing Weekend is slated for June 6 and 7. Women's Free Fishing Day is the last event and is scheduled for September 26.

Havens reminded the attendees about the Mayfly Project that promotes tying flies that are donated to foster kids who use them while they are being taught to fly fish.

Natural Resource Manager Gabe DuMond discussed some changes in the park, including some bad news for patrons of the pool.

"This is planned to be the last season for the pool. The swimming pool we have here at Bennett is 56 years old ... The average life span of a concrete pool, the shell, is about a 25 year life span, so we have squeezed about every bit of life out of it that we can," DuMond said.

He said last year the time spent repairing it rivaled the time that it was ready for use.

The pool draws water from the same well system as the rest of the park. DuMond said it put a strain on the drinking water supply.

He said he was taking suggestions on what to do with the space once the pool is removed.

The aquarium in the Nature Center was removed, creating a presentation space with a projector and a screen. He plans to add more lighting as well.

DuMond and his staff has removed several trees that might have endangered public safety, especially some ash trees.

Cabin renovation, two cabins per off-season, has continued with two more being ready for renting by opening day.

Air conditioning units in the cabins are also being replaced.

DuMond said the hood vent system in the Dining Lodge had been improved with new exhaust motors on the roof and new ductwork inside.

"Hopefully, when you guys go in for your breakfast or your lunch, you won't get smoked out this year. We apologize for the inconvenience last year," DuMond said.

Floods last year and this year have affected the park.

Havens reported two floods, one on January 10 with a three foot rise and another six days later with the same influx of water to the park had been a challenge.

Havens said the warm water floods of the summer were worse by changing the water temperature of water in the hatchery and killing fish or changing growth rates.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9**



Trout Talk photo/Chris Roden

**Ben Havens outlines** what to expect in the park during the 2020 season. He said he appreciated all the help he and his staff receive from volunteers in the area.

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# Bennett Spring State Park Rules and Hours

## FISHING REGULATIONS

The spring branch is stocked daily during the regular fishing season, which is March 1 through Oct. 31. Daily permits are required to fish on the spring branch and zones are set aside for different kinds of lures. Permits are available at the park store. For more information, call (417) 532-4307.

**ZONE 1:** From the hatchery dam upstream to the end of the area. Only flies are permitted.

**ZONE 2:** From the hatchery dam to the whistle bridge. Only flies and

artificial lures are permitted.

**ZONE 3:** From the whistle bridge to the Niangua River. Only soft plastic bait (unscented), natural and scented bait are permitted. All flies and artificial lures are prohibited, even if natural bait or scent has been added.

Zone areas are marked in the park and maps are also available in the Park Store.

## Trout Fishing Hours

**March:** 6:30 a.m./7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m./7 p.m.

**April:** 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
**May:** 6:30 a.m. to 8:15 p.m.  
**June and July:** 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
**August:** 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
**September:** 7:30 a.m. to 7:15 p.m.  
**October:** 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

## PARK HOURS

Park Grounds: Sunrise to one hour past sunset, daily

## DINING LODGE HOURS

7 a.m. to one hour after the whistle during trout season

## NATURE CENTER HOURS

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## PARK OFFICE HOURS

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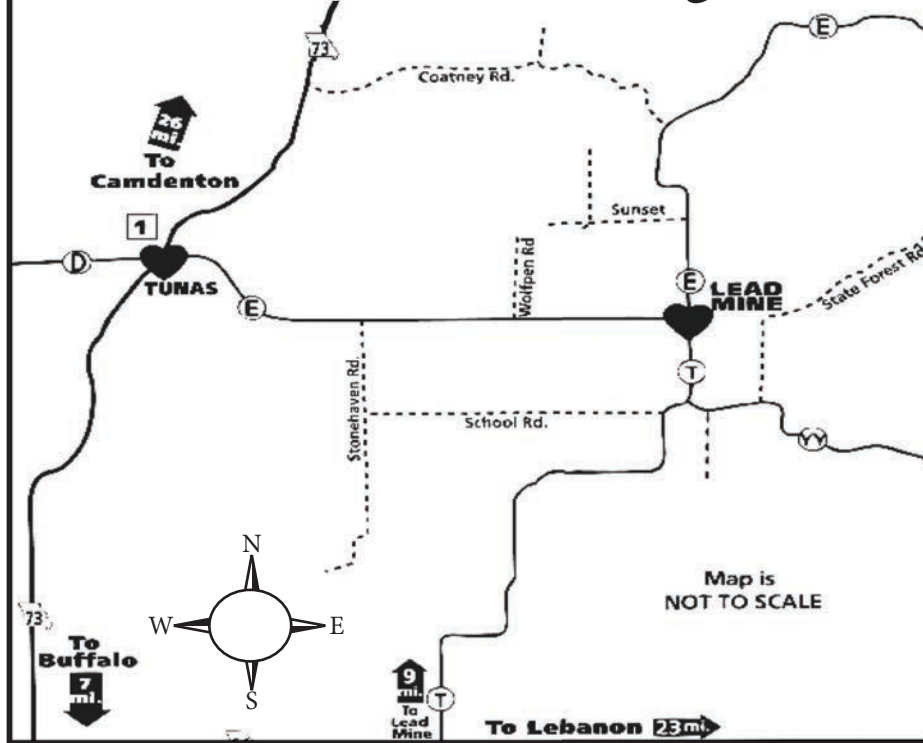
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# Season \_\_\_\_\_ from page 5

"Over the last year, it definitely affected the growth of fish," Havens said.

He said he hoped to receive some rotating screens and some intake upgrades to improve conditions in the hatchery depending on how the backlog of work through the state's parks is resolved.

Havens said the number of hatchery tours last year was well into the hundreds.

Tours of the hatchery also kept Havens' staff busy.

"We probably reached close to 7,000 people with the hatchery tours alone between the school groups and the other groups that come to visit our facilities," Havens said.

Havens said he and his staff work with several local civics groups including the Lion's Club which hosts Lucky Duck Race in the park as their biggest

fundraiser of the year to purchase eyeglasses and other vision-related items.

Havens thanked the many volunteers that help for special events in the park. Several were present for the meeting.

The park's stocking commitments will not change in 2020.

Havens said the hatchery will continue to stock 304,000 fish, which is 2.25 fish for each of the 135,000 anglers expected to visit the park, 7,500 trout into the Niangua outside the park and about 32,000 for the Kansas City urban winter fishing program.

Havens considered the meeting a productive one.

"It's always good to get these folks out and hear what's on their mind. Everybody's got cabin fever and they're ready to get out in the stream and get the trout season started," Havens said.



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## BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA





# Trout Traditions

from page 3

However, since they did a lot of catch and release in search of a plaque-winning lunger, their coolers had no contraband trout.

"It was funny that they swarmed in us like bees, but there was nothing there to swarm. We had some good times down there," Manuel said.

Newman credits Jeremy McMenemy, who is not a son of the original group, with being dedicated to trout fishing and helping to organize the get together.

Newman said he hopes McMenemy's son Lucas joins his sons in a third generation of the Opening Day tradition.

In the meantime, he and his friends

keep a 40+ year tradition going. And Newman hopes to beat his dad's record lunger catch.

"I don't think it's possible. I think the biggest he caught was 8.9 pounds," Newman said.

Manuel is pleased the tradition did not die with his generation.

"That just made our day when we found out they wanted to carry on the tradition. They're a good bunch of boys, I'll tell you that," Manuel said.

A second tradition started in 2012. Newman and his two youngest sons, Ethan, 10, Landen, 9, began making a second trip in October.

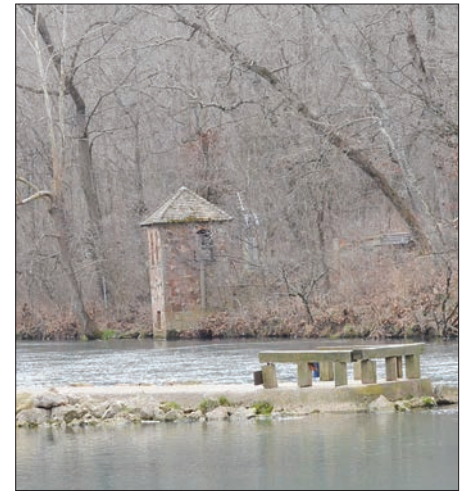
Consequently, if their enthusiasm for fishing continues, the Opening Day tradition may see a third generation.

Although Gerald Newman died in 2013, he is remembered by more than his family.

"I'll run into people down at Bennett over opening that knew my dad. One guy from Clinton, every time he sees us, he just breaks down crying," Newman said.

As with most traditions, this one is about making and reinforcing memories. And Opening Day at Bennett Spring State Park is a part of these families' traditions.

"A good chunk of our memories were down there at Bennett," Newman said.



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