

A woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue Missouri State Parks jacket, stands on a metal railing overlooking a dam. The dam has water cascading over it. In the background, there are trees with brown leaves. A large green trout is superimposed over the word 'Trout' in the title. The title 'Trout Talk' is written in a large, stylized font. The word 'Trout' is in green with a white outline, and 'Talk' is in black with a white outline.

Trout Talk

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**Katie Holmer makes sure
the parks run smoothly
Page 3**

By Chris Roden

May 2023

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Katie Holmer's job is different every day

By Chris Roden

Katy Holmer loves the unpredictability of her job for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources that brings her to Bennett Spring State Park.

"There is no typical day. That's what's so great about state parks in some ways is that you have something different every day," Holmer said.

Since she began her new position last July, she has been on the road a lot, visiting the parks and historic sites in her area, the southwest region.

"I'm the Ozark regional deputy director. I go to all the parks. I just help get them information they need and get information from them to Jefferson City," Holmer said.

Holmer travels from park to park in her region and helps with prescribed burns and special events like opening day of trout season at Bennett Spring State Park.

As a deputy director, she attends a lot of meetings regarding construction projects in her state parks.

"I just attend meetings to make sure everything is running smoothly and everyone has what they need to get their job done," Holmer said.

She is from Springfield and attended Missouri State University for its wildlife conservation management degree.

Graduate school took her to the University of Wisconsin in Madison where



Contributed photo/Alan LaBoube

Holmer gives visitors some information on the flora at Deutschheim State Historic Site in Hermann, Mo. One of the duties of her pre-deputy director job was to give guided tours of the grounds.

she lived for 10 years before returning for a job in the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in Jefferson City,

working in the air pollution control program for about three years, which is the regulatory side of the DNR.

Then, she moved on to the soil and water conservation program, working

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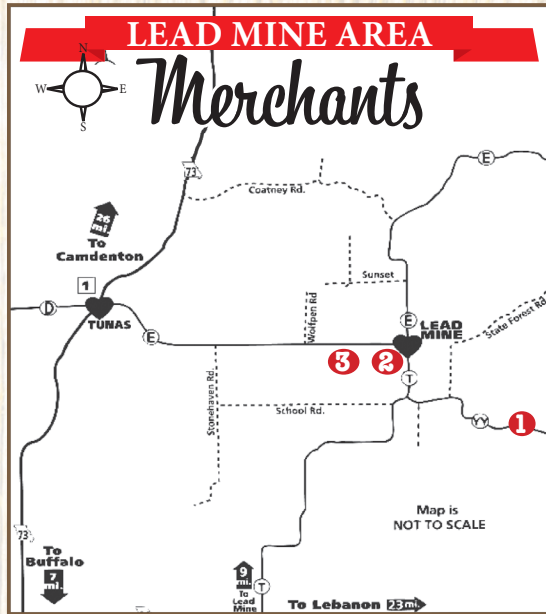
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HOLMER

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Submitted photo/Katy Holmer

An interfering bison bull makes Holmer's job of leading the bison to the corral a tricky operation.



LCR Photo/Chris Roden

Katy Holmer gets to see a lot of the best sites in southwest Missouri thanks to her job as the Ozark regional deputy director of the Missouri Department of Resources. Holmer is very familiar with what Bennett Spring State Park has to offer since she visits it most.

over three years before transferring to Prairie State Park where the buffalo actually roam.

She put her graduate thesis in historic preservation to use at Deutschheim State Historic Site in Hermann just before the beginning of Covid-19.

"I loved that. I got to use my historic background," Holmer said.

Now, working out of the Southwest Regional Office of the DNR, her park responsibilities include Bennett Spring State Park, Prairie State Park west of Lamar near Mindenmines and Stockton State Park near Dadeville.

"I travel to Bennett probably the most out of all my parks just because it has a lot going on," Holmer said.

She also covers five historic sites of the Ozark region: the Battle of Carthage, the Battle of Island Mound near Butler, Osage Village near Nevada, the Harry S Truman Birthplace at Lamar and the Nathan and Olive Boone Homestead near Ash Grove.

And although she has a Springfield office, she sees more highways and open skies than walls in a regular week.

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Submitted Photo/Cyndi Cogbill

A bison that roams Prairie State Park sees the inside of cattle squeeze shoot as park employees attach a new collar.

HOLMER

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"I'm really only there a day and a half a week. I'm on the road a lot. I did learn you have to pack a lunch with you," Holmer said.

And her favorite part of the job is outside the office.

"When I go to special events, meeting with kids or families that have come for generations, that's my favorite part of the job," Holmer said.

Her least favorite part of the job is her human resources role. Overall, it is a pleasant mix of activities with some challenges thrown in.

"It's fun days and more stressful days," Holmer said.

On March 14, she was slated to help with a regular part of her job that could be fun or stressful, a prescribed burn at the Nathan and Olive Boone Historic Site's 400 acres of glades, prairie and woodlands. She and her co-workers are trained in the safety aspects of a burn.

Beforehand, she makes contact with the local fire departments and the

DNR's Springfield office.

"We work closely with the National Weather Service office out of Springfield, and they do these things called spot weather forecasts ... It's very helpful for us," Holmer said.

Plus, she said the burn bosses she works with in this area are very experienced.

In her free time, Holmer is a hiker, a canoeist and a bicyclist on the Ozark Greenways or Katy Trail as well as a reader of mysteries and non-fiction on nature and science subjects.

Although she is not an angler herself, she gets a lot of enjoyment from fishing in her job as the Ozark regional deputy director for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

"I enjoy all the people, and I enjoy watching people catch fish. My favorite thing always when I work at a trout park is seeing a kid catch a fish especially for the first time. That's what makes it fun," Holmer said.

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Big plans underway for Bennett Spring Park

By Steve Smith

Missouri Department of Conservation is making a big investment in the Bennett Spring State Park hatchery, according to officials.

Speaking at a public meeting at the Bennett Room near Bennett Spring State Park in March, Hatchery Manager Ben Havens said it was their first public meeting since 2020 because of COVID.

“We had a great opening day this year, one of our best in recent history, probably due to the great weather we had, it was great to see everybody out,” he said.

Havens said they would like to see a 20 percent increase in trout production as a result of the renovations.

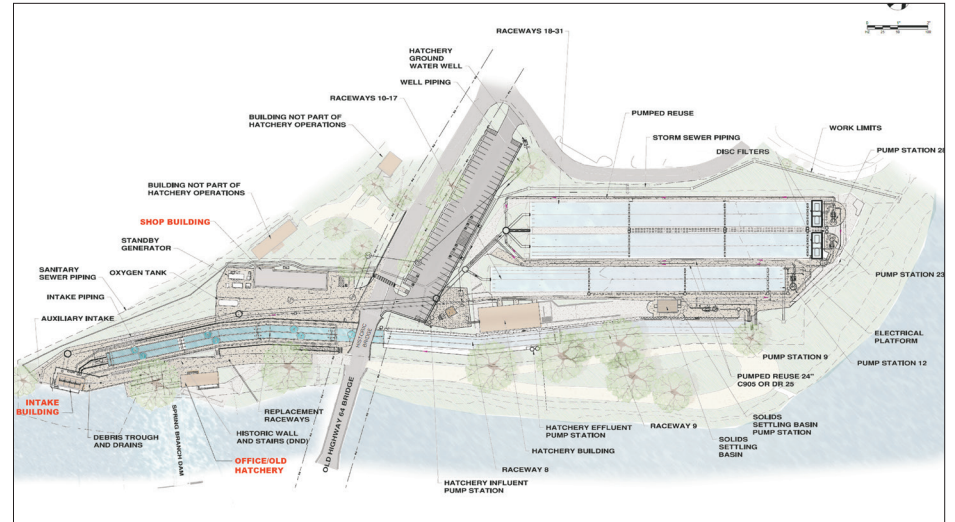
Project Manager Bill Scheperle said MDC has advertised for bids, with action on accepting a bid expected at the Conservation Commission meeting in May. The construction period is expect-

ed to last two years. He said the park will remain open during this time but with public access limited at construction areas. Temporary road closures should be expected along with some construction noise and traffic.

Work will include renovating the hatchery office building, constructing a new shop building and new bulk feed storage building. Improvements will be made to the existing hatchery building.

He said the work will increase the fish rearing capacity, improve the fish waste handling system, allow Americans With Disabilities Act accessibility and improve public safety and flood protection.

When the construction phase begins, the hatchery will not be operating. Existing fish will be moved to MDC hatcheries at Shepherd of the Hills, Montauk and Roaring River during this period.



Though the hatchery will be closed during the construction phase of the renovation project, anglers will not see any changes to existing seasons. Fish transported from other MDC hatcheries

will be stocked daily during the regular season at Bennett Spring. He said the winter catch-and-release season will not be impacted.

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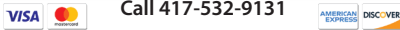
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Trout Talk

BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA



PARK

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LCR Photo/Beth Durreman

Fishing will still be able to be enjoyed throughout the park while construction is taking place.

“The hatchery crew is very committed to producing a quality fishing experience for all who visit Bennett Spring and we truly appreciate the support from the public as we work through these improvements to further Bennett Spring as a premier trout fishing destination,” Havens said.

Up to one million trout are raised from egg to fingerling at Bennett Spring Hatchery annually and the hatchery stocks 350,000 12 ½-inch in the stream each season. Some of the fish raised at the hatchery are stocked elsewhere in the state.

Havens also reminded people attending the meeting that MDC is asking Bennett Spring anglers to provide input on topics related to fishing at the trout park. People can enter their comments online through May 15 by going to <https://mdc.mo.gov/bennett-spring> and clicking on the Bennett Angler Survey link on the right side of the page.

MDC wants to gather anglers’ opinions about the regulations and procedures regarding fishing gear, methods, and management zones at Bennett Spring. The responses the public provide will allow MDC to better understand the views of those who fish at this popular site.

Approximately 140,000 people fish for trout at Bennett Spring each year. Trout fishing at Bennett Spring has a history dating back to the early 1900s. Currently, MDC manages trout fishing and the hatchery at Bennett Spring State Park. The state park facilities are managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.



LCR Photo/Beth Durreman

The Bennett Spring hatchery building will receive a major upgrade as part of improvements at the park.



LCR Photo/Beth Durreman

Some raceways at Bennett Spring State Park will be reconstructed as part of a renovation project.



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