

## **Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park**

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING**

Saturday September 30, 2023 2PM

#### **Dr. Edmund A Babler Memorial Park Mission Statement**

- **Preserve the parks mesic old growth forest**
- **Preserve the parks historic CCC/WPA resources**
- **Provide recreational opportunities consistent with the parks character**

#### Meeting Agenda:

Christopher Ferree, Park Superintendent

- Introduction of staff
- Introduction to the Site and State of Missouri Park, Soils, and Water Sales Tax

#### Brief description of the park/site history

- Overview of Babler State Park, History and significance (see below)

#### Completed and/or ongoing projects

- Campground operations-Diseased tree removal, facility maintenance (Richard Love, Assistant Park Superintendent)
- Visitor Center Operations and Shelter Rentals (Andrea Grant Park Site Specialist)
- Interpretation Programs and Highlights (Dustin Hillis Senior Park Interpreter)
- Managed Deer Hunt (2023 dates Friday Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>-Sunday Nov 5<sup>th</sup>)
- Outdoor Education Center-partnership with Rockwood Schools. Highlights and infrastructure projects.

#### Completed and/or ongoing projects

- Budgeted Equipment Replacement
- HVAC Upgrades at the Outdoor Education Center Cabins
- Renovation of Paved Trail, Campground Upgrade, municipal water service, Lodge Renovation.
- Moving of Equestrian Parking lot to old pool area.

#### Questions from the Public and Discussion



Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park, is an on-going commemoration of a well-known St. Louis family. The Missouri state park system was barely 20 years old in 1934, when Jacob and Henry Babler presented the state with 88 acres in loving memory of their brother, Edmund, a prominent St. Louis surgeon. An additional 800 acres quickly followed.

Jacob Babler, an early crusader on behalf of a state park system for Missouri, was determined that the park dedicated to his own brother would grow and attract people for generations. He campaigned for the use of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers to develop the park, and was an almost daily visitor while two companies of 200 men cut roads through the hilly countryside, and built scenic viewpoints, trails and covered shelters. The buildings and bridges, including a massive stone gateway, were made from stones quarried from the area. Twenty-two CCC structures at Babler State Park are now included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Jacob Babler commissioned the life-size bronze statue, and was unveiled during the dedication ceremony in 1938. The ceremony, featuring U. S. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes as principal speaker, drew more than 3,000 people.

Today, Jacob Babler's dream has evolved into a state park that provides a valuable green-space oasis amid an exploding suburban St. Louis landscape. Hiking, nature study and wildlife viewing are popular activities. Hiking and equestrian trails wind their way through the park's narrow coves, deep sheltered valleys and towering forests. Numerous picnic sites provide outdoor dining opportunities while enjoying the peace and tranquility of the park.

A beautiful feature of the park is its maturing old-growth forests. Century-old white oak, northern red oak, sugar maple and walnut tower over an understory of flowering dogwood, redbud and pawpaw. Equally lush in this rich upland forest is a ground cover of golden seal, May apple, ginseng, tick trefoil and fern, all of which provide rich habitat for wildlife including many species of birds.

The Babler Southwoods Hollow Natural Area, near the campground, features a mature, undisturbed forest on loess soils. It features towering oaks and sugar maples that have remained undisturbed since pre-settlement times.

Though no lakes are present in the park, Bonhomme Creek and Wild Horse Creek form the park's west boundary with numerous small tributaries and springs throughout the interior.

The park offers other types of recreation as well with campground consisting of basic and electric sites. Modern restrooms and showers make an overnight stay at Babler enjoyable. The Campground also holds a Special Use Area that can be reserved by organized groups.

The River Hills Visitor Center features a stone exterior that harmonizes with the historic CCC architecture in the park. The center houses exhibits interpreting the park's plant and animal life. A walk-through diorama explores the intricate relationships among the flora and fauna that make up the old-growth forest ecosystem. Naturalist staff at the center offer a variety of interpretive programs.

The Jacob L. Babler Outdoor Education Center is a barrier-free resident camp for those with special needs. It provides a full-service, outdoor education environment for organized groups whose members may have particular physical, emotional or dietary requirements. This camp is run in partnership with Parkway-Rockwood Community Ed (Local School Districts). They are the day to day operators of the camp.