



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

**District 8 – Capitol Building, Room 319 Jefferson City, MO 65101**

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## **Conserving Our Land and Water... and Your Tax Dollars**

This week, we are continuing with our series discussing several of the state's departments and how they affect the daily lives of millions of Missourians. One department we can all be very proud of is the Missouri Department of Conservation. Among the 50 states, our conservation department ranks among the very top. The primary reason for this is an unusual funding mechanism that voters put in place three decades ago when they passed an amendment to the Missouri Constitution giving the department a dedicated sales tax of 1/8 of one cent of every dollar of tax collected. Along with permit fees, federal funds, and even timber sales, the agency enjoys a \$141 million budget that it uses to bring you wonderful hunting, fishing, hiking, and other enjoyable outdoor experiences.

Every year, thousands of hunters and anglers are able to experience the thrill of world-class hunts and great fishing in some of the finest lakes and streams in the world. Our top-notch hunting and fishing opportunities attract people from across the nation who end up pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into the state's economy. For those who choose to pursue their game with cameras instead of guns or rod & reel, or those who just want to get out in the great outdoors, there are 804 state-owned wildlife conservation areas making up a whopping 785,000 acres in Missouri — truly room to get away from it all.

While the department is providing places to enjoy Missouri's outdoors, the agency is also preserving our natural resources and educating the next generation who will be responsible for taking care of them by providing nature centers, such as Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center in Eastern Jackson County. They also prepare curriculum materials and in-school presentations to enhance learning and ensure that Missouri children understand the importance of being good stewards of their natural inheritance.

We too often take for granted Missouri's tremendous geographical diversity. We are abundantly blessed with a variety of parks and conservation areas that feature our beautiful forests, lakes, and streams. If you are looking for an escape from the daily grind, maybe it's time to take a short trip to one of the hundreds of natural jewels that dot Missouri's landscape.

On an unrelated note, I wanted to pass along some news that came to my attention this week concerning the solving of a horrendous crime. In 1997, an innocent six-year-old girl was kidnapped in the St. Louis area by a man who sexually assaulted her. Thankfully, she survived this barbaric encounter, but the perpetrator vanished and the police had no suspect. That all

changed this week when a man who was serving a sentence for possessing child pornography was charged with the crime. This crime was solved thanks to a new Missouri law I had the honor of sponsoring in 2005 that requires all felons to submit a DNA sample to authorities. The sample given matched DNA collected at the time of the crime and now this predator will finally face justice.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.mo.gov](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.