

Missouri and Mississippi River Confluence Area

The area around the Confluence of the Great Rivers (the Missouri, the Mississippi and the Illinois) includes a 200 square mile system of open space, parks, interpretative centers, heritage sites and recreational trails.

In the past decade more than **\$150 million** of private, state and federal money has been invested in the transformation of the river corridor highlighting the natural beauty and resources of the area through setting aside **13,000 acres** of new public open space and over 100 miles of trails along the rivers and the construction of various interpretive centers and museums.

Specifically, the recently opened conservation areas and museums and visitors centers built in the last ten years include:

- the 4,300-acre **Columbia Bottom Conservation Area** and visitors center;
- the 1,100 acre **Jones-Confluence Point State Park**
- the **Hartford Tower** overlooking the confluence itself;
- the **Lewis and Clark State Historic Site** and visitors center;
- the **National Great Rivers Museum** at Melvin Price Lock and Dam;
- the LEED certified **National Great Rivers Research and Education Center**;
- the soon to be completed **Audubon Center** at the 3,700 acre Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

All of these projects are focused on bringing **sustainable, eco-friendly tourism** to the area. Several hundred thousand visitors are estimated to visit the area every year. Each one of these seven projects provided construction jobs as well as ongoing employment.

In late October, the LEED certified **National Great Rivers Research and Education Center** will be dedicated. This one of a kind center will

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-Ken Burns, Film Maker

be devoted to the research of all aspects of the ecology and management of large rivers including aquatic and floodplain habitats and the communities that depend on river-floodplain ecosystems.

In addition, the confluence of the rivers has been designated by the National Audubon Society as a national **Important Bird Area**. It is considered one of the most significant migratory flyways on earth with more than 60% of North America’s birds species, 300 different species in all, pass through this narrow area every spring and fall. It is recognized as a focus area by Ducks Unlimited because of migratory waterfowl. At times the migrating bird populations are so dense they can be viewed on weather radar. The confluence is the top destination in the area for birdwatchers from around the world to enjoy bald eagles, herons, egrets, and trumpeter swans.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that 71 million people engaged in wildlife watching in 2006 and more than \$122 billion was spent on wildlife recreation including fishing, hunting and photography. Birding expenditures alone resulted in more than \$11 billion in tax revenues, created 671,000 jobs and \$28 billion in employment income.

Award winning documentarian Ken Burns who has produced several films set in the Confluence area – *The West, Lewis & Clark and Mark Twain* – understands the national significance of this unique area and stated in a September letter to the Missouri Gaming Commission and other concerned parties ...





Save the Confluence Coalition

Audubon Missouri ● BOTT Radio Network ● Chatham Bible Church ● The Confluence Partnership ● Conservation Federation of Missouri – with 66 Affiliate Clubs ● Glasgow Village Improvement Association ● Grace Baptist Church ● League of Women Voters St. Louis ● Mississippi Valley Duck Hunters Association ● Missouri Clergy Against Gambling Expansion ● Missouri Coalition for the Environment ● National Audubon Society ● Old Jamestown Association ● Riverview Drive Improvement Association ● St. Louis Audubon Society ● St. Louis Christian Chinese Community Service Center ● St. Louis Metro Baptist Association – 70 Churches in St. Louis County ● St. Peter’s Lutheran Church ● Sierra Club: Eastern Missouri ● Spanish Lake Community Association ● Webster Groves Nature Study Society ● West Side Missionary Baptist Church ●

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“But the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi has a value that transcends history. It is a sanctuary for wildlife. And it is a place of beauty, a sanctuary for the soul, where we can refresh our spirits and reconnect with the natural world. Places of such significance deserve to be cherished and preserved, as Theodore Roosevelt taught us, ‘for our children and our children’s children, with their majestic beauty all unmarred.’”

