

Kayaks For Conservation

Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation Grant Helps Law Enforcement

It's important to have the right equipment for the job, and for Barry County Conservation Agent Travis McLain's law enforcement and education work, he knew that kayaks would work better than canoes or motorboats. He just needed the money to buy them.

"In southwest Missouri," said McLain, "we have many floatable streams like the Elk and Niangua Rivers, whose levels fluctuate throughout the year—and with a kayak, you need only six inches of water to float."

Also, kayaks are more versatile than canoes because they require only one person, are easily maneuverable and may be paddled upstream or down, eliminating the need for shuttling vehicles, which saves time and money. In addition, McLain's kayaks have a weight capacity of 350 pounds but weigh only 65 pounds, making them ideal for search and rescue or to transport heavy gear in an emergency.

"I requested funding for the kayaks several times through normal budgeting procedures," said McLain, "but the extra money just wasn't there." So, he applied for a Conservation Partnership Grant from the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, which approved his proposal and provided \$2,320 for two kayaks. "The funding we got from the



SCOTT BURGER PHOTOS

Conservation Agent Travis McLain, in orange shirt, used kayaks funded by the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation at last fall's National Wild Turkey Federation's JAKES event—an outdoor education and outdoor skills event for children at Shawnee Trail Conservation Area.

foundation was wonderful," said McLain. "I could go out and buy what I knew was perfect for the job."

Since McLain purchased the two sit-on-top style kayaks last fall, he and other conservation agents have used them to patrol trap lines along streams and for waterfowl law enforcement. This was mere practice for the heavy use they will get this spring while agents patrol during fishing season. And, this summer, the kayaks will be used during a "Hooked on

Fishing, Not on Drugs" program for school children, offered in conjunction with the Cassville Police Department. As part of the course, students will be taken on two day-floats and fishing trips on Big Sugar Creek in McDonald County. Local conservation agents also will provide presentations on fishing regulations and techniques and participate in floats.

"Being in a kayak with the students in canoes will be advantageous," said McLain.

"Being able to move around quickly in the kayaks will help us keep the float safe for up to 30 middle-school students with limited canoeing experience!" Students will also learn or observe how to fish from both a canoe and a kayak.

The grant for the kayaks was one of 58 projects funded by the foundation in 2008. In all, the foundation provided more than \$1.2 million for conservation in 2008, ranging from \$400 to support a women's upland bird hunting clinic to \$280,000 to acquire



Children learned about water safety and got to try out the kayaks for themselves on Pin Oak Lake.

“Being able to move around quickly in the kayaks will help us keep the float safe for up to 30 middle-school students with limited canoeing experience!”
 —Travis McLain, Conservation Agent

and protect land in the LaBarque Creek Watershed in Jefferson County.

“We were very pleased to fund the purchase of the kayaks,” said Rick Thom, executive director of the foundation. “Supporting Conservation Agent McLain’s proposal is an example of why the foundation was created—to provide a funding stream to fill budget gaps for really worthwhile, creative projects that conserve our wildlife resources and help more Missourians enjoy them.”

The Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation is a nonprofit, charitable organization created in 1997. It is separate from the Missouri Department of Conservation but supports that agency’s mission of protecting the

state’s fish, forestry and wildlife resources for all Missourians. In a little more than a decade, the foundation has provided more than \$7 million in funding for conservation projects statewide. It receives funding from Conservation Heritage license plate sales, payments to the Stream Stewardship Trust Fund, private foundation and government grants, and private donations. Donors may earmark their gifts for specific conservation programs that are most important to them. For more information, visit www.mochf.org or call 1-800-227-1488.

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