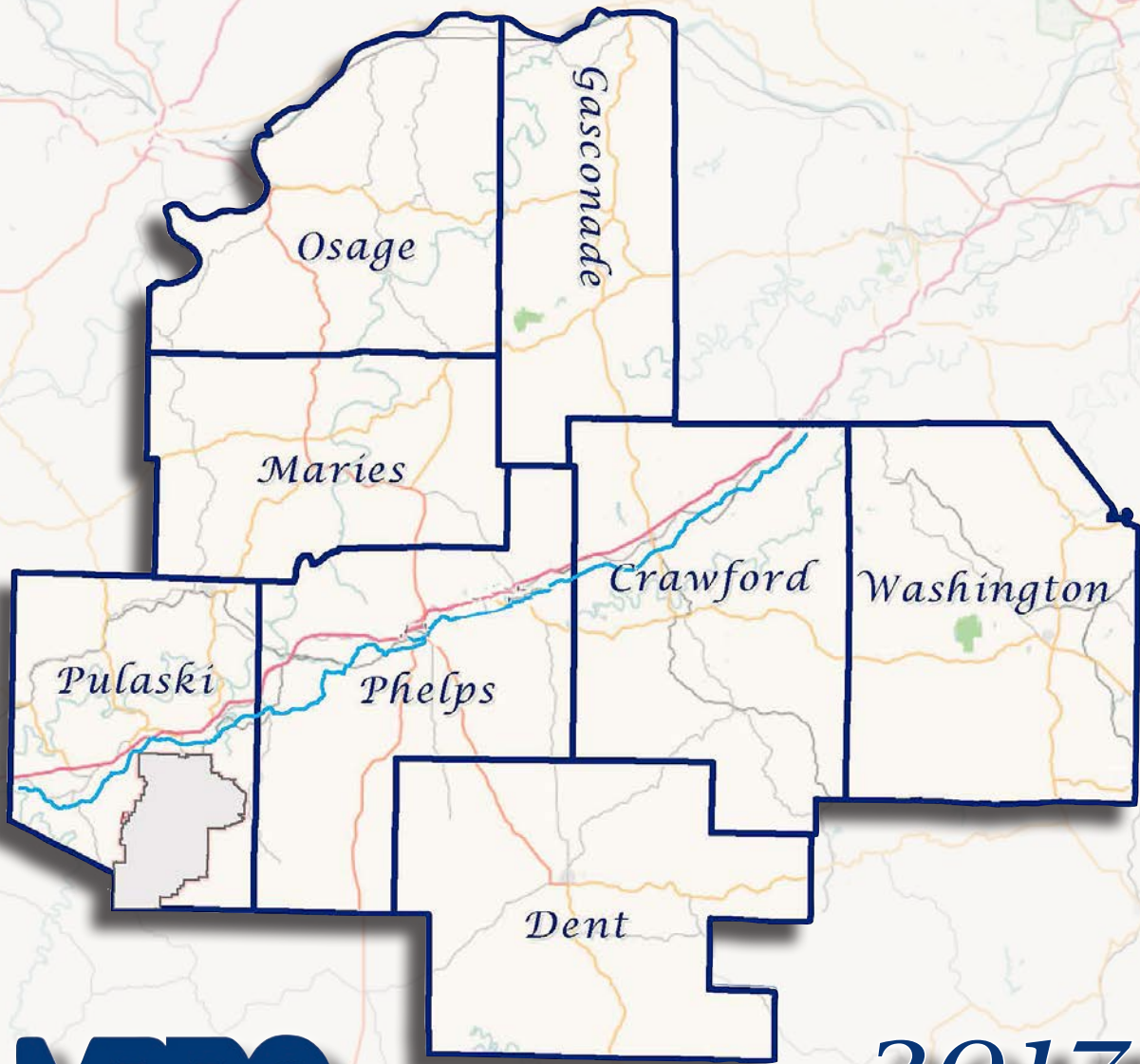


State Priorities in the Meramec Region

An Issues Report

For the Region's Legislative Delegation

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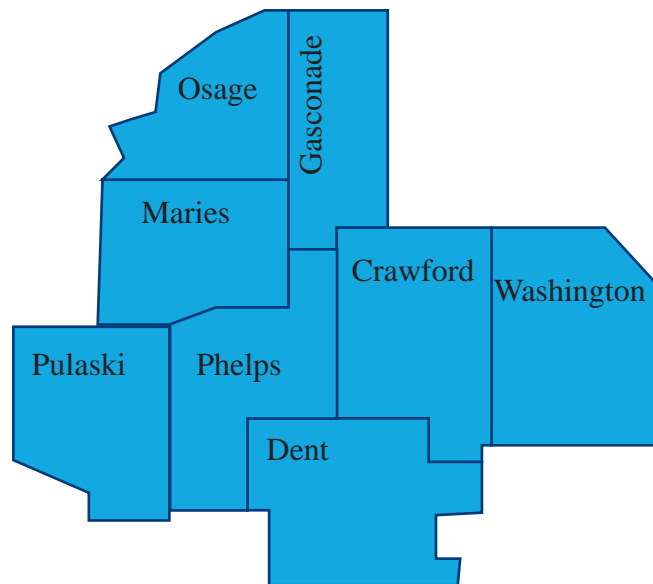
MRPC

2017

THE MERAMEC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION'S MISSION

The mission of MRPC is to enhance the quality of life for residents of the Meramec Region. In pursuit of this mission, MRPC will bring about results in these areas:

- *Cleaner, healthier and safer communities,*
- *Greater socio-economic and cultural wealth through community and economic development, and*
- *A stronger, unified voice in the legislative process.*



The Meramec Regional Planning Commission is a voluntary council of local governments serving the Meramec area. The MRPC area includes the eight counties of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington and their respective cities. Those cities are Bourbon, Cuba, Leasburg, Steelville, Sullivan, West Sullivan, Salem, Bland, Gasconade, Hermann, Morrison, Owensville, Rosebud, Belle, Vienna, Argyle, Chamois, Freeburg, Linn, Meta, Westphalia, Doolittle, Edgar Springs, Newburg, Rolla, St. James, Crocker, Dixon, Richland, St. Robert, Waynesville, Caledonia, Irondale, Mineral Point and Potosi.

2017 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN THE MERAMEC REGION

As the 2017 legislative session begins, the board of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission would like to share with you concerns that are of interest to our organization as a whole and to our individual cities and counties. Each item is listed below with a brief explanation, in order of priority, as ranked by the MRPC board.

MRPC'S TOP STATE PRIORITIES

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION:

1. Maintain and improve transportation infrastructure and finding adequate means to fund those activities must be a priority to ensure the future economic growth and prosperity of Missouri. Making strategic investments in the region's transportation infrastructure (highways, rail, water-based transport and air travel) supports the growth of key industries. The state legislature must address the problem of inadequate funding for transportation. Priorities include improving Highway 63 to four lanes from Jefferson City to Cabool and four lanes for Highway 50 from Linn to I-44.
2. Increase funding and advocacy for public transit in Missouri, including both increasing awareness of what is available and what is needed and providing additional funding to support public transportation throughout Missouri, including rural areas.
3. Continue to fund the Missouri Moves Cost Share Program, but revise program to not be weighted toward wealthier communities and extend funding so recipients have two years to complete projects.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

1. Provide state funding for infrastructure projects (natural gas, water and waste-water projects) within all counties of Missouri, but especially in Missouri's rural areas. As well as, expanding and improving access to affordable digital infrastructure (broadband internet, cellular and satellite access) across the region, especially in areas where it is currently deficient.
2. Encourage the state of Missouri to consider Fort Leonard Wood as one of the state's prime industries and actively work to protect, maintain and expand the mission of the base and jobs located there.
3. Support the continued state funding of regional planning commissions to carry out activities that promote regional economic development and to serve as match dollars for federal funding opportunities.

HEALTH CARE/SOCIAL SERVICE:

1. Provide funding to Missouri's rural hospitals and clinics to meet the needs of their residents. As the average age of farmers is nearing 60 and increasing, rural health care's importance is ever expanding. Attention must be provided to meeting the need for health care and social services in Missouri's rural communities. This type of need should also be coordinated with public transit to ensure that residents can access these facilities.
2. Support the adoption of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.
3. Develop an incentive/funding program to provide residency slots at rural hospitals.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

1. Oppose any changes that would divert funds from the solid waste management districts - including using district funds to repair/maintain/close old landfills. The legislature should support the efforts of the solid waste districts - local governments addressing solid waste issues at the local and regional level - making big differences with relatively small funding allocations from the State Solid Waste Fund.
2. Re-establish tire recycling services similar to the one provided by Missouri Vocational Enterprises and develop and support new markets within the state that will use the estimated six million scrap tires generated in the state each year.
3. Invest state dollars in loan and grant programs to improve water and sewage systems and treatment facilities.

EDUCATION:

1. Fully fund the Foundation Formula for Public Education and stop cutting dollars for education in Missouri.
2. Support a Missouri that will attract, retain and develop a workforce with the education and skills to succeed in a 21st century economy. This includes the concept of lifelong learning (pre-school through postsecondary education) and building partnerships between schools and the business and industry sector to ensure a ready workforce for the future, which requires continued improvements to school facilities to enhance educational opportunities that fully prepare students for careers in the 21st century.
3. Support the need to develop opportunities to teach the skilled trades – not everyone has the money nor wants to go off to a traditional college or university.
4. Improve the workforce readiness of the regions K-12 students and adult population by increasing the number of internships, work co-op programs, and other initiatives, with a focus on soft skills and employability.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CITY/COUNTY):

1. Address the disparity of county prosecutor salary and pension by either making the county prosecutor a state funded position **OR** by bringing county prosecutors' salary and pension contributions under the authority of the county salary commission. County governments **MUST** have relief from the unfunded mandates approved by the legislature regarding full-time county prosecutor salaries and prosecutor retirement contributions. Currently, all other county office holder salaries fall under the purview of the salary commission of each county, while full-time prosecutor salaries by statute, are set by Washington D.C. bureaucrats, and have risen over \$40,000 in just the last eight years, to a current salary of over \$136,000 per year. Also, county office holders, except for prosecutors, are required by statute, to contribute 6 percent of their pay through payroll deduction to the County Employees Retirement Fund (CERF). County prosecutors, however, by statute, have a special retirement fund, The Missouri Prosecuting Attorneys and Circuit Attorneys Retirement System (PACARS), in which they contribute zero dollars, and the county taxpayers, again by statute, pay 100 percent of the monthly contribution. Compounding the problem, 2014 legislation provides for massive increases in contributions by county taxpayers if PACARS investment ratios fall short of expectations. This new legislation, just this year, has raised the mandatory county taxpayer contribution from \$7,752 per year, to \$11,628 per year. And can increase another 50 percent or even 100 percent again every year, depending on the PACARS Annual Actuarial Report.
2. Amend the prevailing wage laws to eliminate requirements on public works projects of under \$250,000.
3. Allow counties the same ability to amend their budgets to adjust to changing economic conditions during the year when revenues fall short or expenses exceed expectations. This would be the same ability enjoyed by the state, cities and schools. All other political entities can amend their budgets except counties, which cannot amend their budget except if revenues increase.

GENERAL:

1. Support legislation to make Missouri's driver's license a valid form of identification to comply with federal requirements.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

• MRPC's Impact

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission had a strong year in 2015-16. For every administrative dollar MRPC spent in Fiscal Year 2015-16, it brought \$4.47 into the region for the benefit of its communities and residents. MRPC's 2015-16 expenditures were \$1.73 million, while the agency generated \$7.70 million in pass-through dollars. Pass-through dollars are those funds that go through MRPC directly into the region as grants to cities and counties, loans to businesses and housing assistance to landlords and tenants. The impact doesn't end there. Using a conservative multiplier of 2.5, MRPC had an economic impact valued at \$19.26 million in the Meramec Region.

• Transportation

The partnership between Missouri regional planning commissions and the Missouri Department of Transportation continues to grow. Federal transportation legislation calls for increased local input into the state's planning programs and specifically mentions the regional development organizations as one of the means to involve local officials. The Framework for Transportation Planning and decision-making continues to be an important tool for increasing local input into transportation planning. This planning framework outlines the process for decision making and how local input, facilitated by regional planning organizations, affects transportation priorities.

MRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee held six meetings in 2015-16. The group continued to stress the importance of the region's top two transportation priorities—Highways 63 and 50 and provided input to MoDOT for the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). The TAC also continued to make traffic counters available to perform traffic studies. MRPC staff prepared and distributed press releases and made social media posts related to transportation issues. Through MoDOT, MRPC staff also worked with the Coalition for Roadway Safety to reduce the number of fatalities in the region through awareness efforts. Staff worked with one county and two communities and submitted four regional applications for transportation-related projects. Some \$706,060 was granted for projects in the region.

• Community and Economic Development

MRPC is a designated Economic Development District (EDD), and through its planning grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, continues to work with its counties and cities to improve the infrastructure and economy of the region. With EDA planning funds, staff prepared funding applications for community and economic development projects. During FY 2015-16, \$2,289,379 in federal and state grant monies flowed through the planning and development department for community and economic development projects. In FY 2015-16, staff assisted member communities with the following funding opportunities:

- The Economic Development Administration Power Grant for Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to conduct an impact analysis of the power plant closure and feasibility study and strategic plan for economic development.
- Missouri Department of Public Safety State Homeland Security Grant program for the Crocker Police Department to replace four mobile radios with ones that are MOSWIN compliant.
- Delta Regional Authority's 2015 States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) for Phelps County to upgrade CR 7210 to divert business traffic off a dangerous stretch of CR 7240.
- Missouri Department of Public Safety Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) for the Belle Police Department to replace a patrol vehicle.
- Delta Regional Authority's 2015 SEDAP for the City of St. James to extend Wilson Drive to facilitate expansion of Cohen Architectural Woodworking.
- Missouri Department of Public Safety LLEBG for the Bourbon Police Department to purchase MOSWIN compliant portable radios.
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources Heritage Property Grant for Washington County to continue with Phase II of courthouse tower renovations.
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources Heritage Property Grant for Gasconade County to repair and refinish 2nd floor hardwoods at courthouse.
- Missouri Department of Public Safety 2016-2017 STOP Violence Against Women Act for Pulaski County Prosecutor's Office to retain an Assistant Prosecutor focused on crimes against women.
- The Economic Development Administration Economic Development Support for Planning Organizations program to MRPC for planning assistance funds for CY2016.
- Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) 5310 program for MRPC to implement a ride voucher program to increase ridership for elderly, disabled and low income persons.
- MoDOT 5310 program for MRPC to continue the Mobility Management system through years 3-4.
- Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MoDDC) Investments for MRPC to continue the Mobility Management System and implement a new ride voucher program
- FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant for Belle Rural/Volunteer Fire to purchase a new pumper to replace 34-year-old pumper no longer working.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) General Infrastructure fund to the City of Potosi for the replacement of Mill Street Bridge over Breton Creek.
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources Scrap Tire Program to the city of Crocker for the purchase of six picnic tables made from recycled tires for the new pavillion at Crocker City Park.
- U.S. Administration for Community Living Transit Planning 4 All for MRPC to allow the Meramec Mobility Manager and Advisory Group to focus efforts on including individuals with disabilities and elderly persons in transit planning.
- CDBG Community Facility program for city of Steelville to make ADA modifications to the new city hall and police department location.
- US Department of Treasury CDFI program for Riverways Federal Credit Union to expand a first-time homebuyer program.
- Missouri Department of Economic Development Neighborhood Assistance program for St. James Caring Center to provide tax credits to raise donations to build a new senior center and food pantry.

- MFA Foundation for the city of Bourbon to purchase a new playground set for the city park.
- Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program for MRPC to provide repairs on 20 owner-occupied homes in the region
- BNSF Railway Foundation Community Grants for the city of Bourbon to help purchase new playground equipment at the city park.
- Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program for Haven Manor of New Haven to renovate 36 senior apartments.
- CDBG Water and Waste-water program for the city of Bland to upgrade the water system including supply, treatment, storage and distribution.

Staff continued to disseminate funding information to member communities through grant alerts, workshops and seminars. Additionally, staff continued to improve methods of resource research by placing more emphasis on searches via the Internet and expanded their knowledge on new funding opportunities. MRPC, working in cooperation with the Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation, continued efforts to assist communities in meeting the need for affordable housing for low-to-moderate income families. Staff continued to work with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee. This group provides oversight and input into the region's overall economic development strategy.

• Business Loan Programs

MRPC assists in developing the region's local economies by partnering to promote and assist the growth and development of businesses through innovative financing. Working in partnership with the Meramec Regional Development Corp., MRPC continues to manage a U.S. Small Business Administration Certified Development Corporation providing SBA 504 loan programs. Additionally, MRPC operates the region's revolving loan fund (RLF), which was created with an EDA grant and local matching funds. This fund was recapitalized in 2010 with \$375,000 of additional funding. In 2006-07, USDA provided a \$500,000 loan to MRPC to establish a new intermediary re-lending program, which was loaned out in 18 months. MRPC applied for, and received, an additional \$175,000 in IRP funding in 2010. MRPC was also awarded \$125,000 from the Missouri Department of Economic Development Microenterprise Grant fund.

These loan programs are important to rural Missouri as they provide much needed gap financing. Many rural banks are unwilling to make higher-risk commercial loans, however, the subordinated financing available through the SBA 504, the IRP and RLF reduce the banks' exposure. All loans are made in partnership with local private financial institutions. Eligibility for financing in these programs is dependent on creating and/or retaining jobs in the region, as well as financial stability and use of proceeds. The Meramec Region has used the SBA 504 program since 1991, the RLF since 1985 and the IRP since 2006, to assist in financing business start-ups and expansions.

Since 1991, SBA 504 loans have created or retained 1,270 jobs in the Meramec Region for an average investment of \$20,394 per job. SBA's requirement is one job for every \$65,000 invested. Using the RLF program, which was established in 1985, the local development board has created or retained 946 jobs at a cost of \$4,210 per job. EDA's requirement is one job for every \$20,000 invested. The initial \$400,000 grant, plus 25 percent matching funds provided by member communities, has fully revolved.

Some 70 loans worth \$3,983,195 have been made through the RLF over the life of the program. Under the IRP program, which was established in 2006, staff has made 16 loans and created or retained nearly 186 jobs, an average cost of \$6,516 per job. The total amount loaned through the IRP is \$1,212,034.

• Homeownership and Housing Renovation

One of the major barriers to economic development in Missouri is the availability of affordable housing, and Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation and MRPC have an established history of working together to provide homeownership opportunities to the region's low-income families.

In recent years, MCEC and MRPC have committed to helping low-income homeowners maintain their homes through a renovation program. Currently, a program delivered through regional planning commissions and the Missouri Association of Councils of Government (MACOG) for home improvements allows homeowners to receive financing (grants and loans funded by the Department of Natural Resources) to replace or repair on-site wastewater treatment systems.

Because MRPC employs a housing inspector with lead, mold and asbestos certification, MRPC also offers inspection services as well as code enforcement services for a fee to local governments and the private sector.

• Solid Waste Management

Ozark Rivers Solid Waste Management District (ORSWMD), a seven-county area that includes seven of the region's counties, contracts with MRPC to provide solid waste management programs across the Ozark Rivers region and manage day-to-day district operations.

Originally seven landfills served this area. These have all closed, and the region now has three transfer stations and two landfills. Solid waste management is now more crucial than ever for rural areas. The state of Missouri has targeted a 40 percent reduction of waste being landfilled, and the district has played a role in that effort. Efforts have been achieved through emphasis on education, expanding recycling opportunities, providing technical assistance and providing grant monies for local needs.

Since 2007, Ozark Rivers has awarded 136 grants totaling \$2.49 million to support local and regional projects. These grants have targeted businesses, local governments, schools and non-profits. The 2016 grant cycle provided funding for: litter and illegal dumping cleanup programs in Maries and Phelps counties; permanent household hazardous collection sites in the cities of Rolla and St. Robert; University of Missouri Extension Services for compost education; recycling education assemblies in schools; recycling program at the Dixon Area Caring Center; a joint recycling promotion program in Waynesville and St. Robert; recycling equipment for the city of St. James; and recycling and education programs in Dixon and Waynesville school districts. The Meramec Regional Planning Commission's grants provide for special waste collections (appliances, electronics, tires), illegal dump cleanup program, educational programs for schools and community outreach and assistance. Each of these projects is consistent with the district's plan and goals.

Recycling and disposal services for household hazardous waste (HHW) have been extremely effective. For years, the district provided one-day paint and one-day full-scale household hazardous waste (HHW) collections, and in 2008, the district established two satellite collection facilities that accept HHW throughout the year. Between 2009 and 2015, HHW collections totaled 48.3 tons at the two sites. Annual collections averaged 6.9 tons. The district also provides presentations on HHW.

Special collections are routinely held for residential electronics, appliances and tires. The district has organized 46 electronic waste collections since April 2003 along with 35 collections for appliances and 27 collections for tires since 2005. The district has also assisted with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Scrap Tire program by helping coordinate amnesty tire collections in four counties.

The district continues to facilitate its annual student poster and trash art contests. This project has annually engaged an average of 800 students from 15 schools in themed activities promoting recycling. Staff exhibits winning entries at various venues such as Missouri University of Science and Technology's Earth Day event to educate the community and promote the district's programs. The district coordinates and funds student field trips to recycling and solid waste facilities. Since 2009, the district has provided 1,800 students with first-hand experience and education for reducing and recycling solid waste. These field trips often serve as precursors to initiating school-based recycling programs.

Several years ago, a region-wide survey was completed for illegal dumps in the region. As a follow-up to that survey, MRPC secured funds from USDA Rural Development to implement a dump cleanup program. This project takes a watershed approach by educating the public on how illegal dumping can endanger water resources. Since 2004, more than 143 dump sites have been cleaned up. In doing so, an estimated 915 tons of trash has been removed and properly disposed; and 19,406 tires have been collected for recycling. The district has recruited 1,650 volunteers to assist with these cleanups. The district also assists member counties with the disposal of illegally dumped tires picked up by county road crews. Between 1996 and 2016, more than 648 tons – or the equivalent of 64,932 passenger tires - were picked up along county roads in the district and recycled. Through the efforts of many people and implementation of these vital programs, the ORSWMD continues to provide valuable services that improve the quality of life for area residents.

• Hazardous Materials Planning

MRPC also works under contract with the Meramec Regional Emergency Planning Committee (MREPC), which is responsible for maintaining and updating the region's (excluding Pulaski County) hazardous materials response plan and Community Right-to-Know records. The MREPC also applies for training grants and coordinates educational opportunities for emergency responders and local elected officials in the region. In addition to applying for local emergency responder trainings, MREPC also conducted one tabletop training exercise and completed a commodity flow study for the Highway 72 transportation corridor.

• Homeland Security Program

In 2006, MRPC entered into a contract with the State Emergency Management Agency to provide planning and administrative support to the Region I Homeland Security Oversight Committee (HSOC). This local committee of volunteers is tasked with determining needs and recommending homeland security grant fund awards in the six-county region, which includes Crawford, Dent, Maries, Phelps, Pulaski and Laclede counties, and serving as a conduit between local emergency responders, local governments, schools and the state-level Homeland Security Advisory Committee. The state program is now operated through the Department of Public Safety-Office of Homeland Security.

When the relationship between MRPC and HSOC began in FY2005, the first grant awarded

to the project was \$506,593. Since then, grant funds consistently decreased to as low as \$49,354 in FY2012, before it increased to \$106,494 in FY2014, but decreased again in FY2015 and FY2016 when it awarded MRPC with a \$90,497.47 grant each year. As fiscal agent and regional administrator, MRPC has fiscal responsibility for all grant funds and is responsible for all procurement and payment of vendors and coordinating quarterly and special meetings of the local HSOC.

From that grant program, MRPC was awarded funds to continue to develop a regional interoperability communications plan; establish advisory committees, volunteers and shelters; assist in establishing a network of shelters in the region and train and establish CERT teams in each of the six counties.

Staff also worked with the State Emergency Management Agency on a functional exercise for Region I in 2012 and 2013 and performed the NIMSCAST roll up for all six counties in Region I from 2008 to 2012. In 2013-16, staff and HSOC members completed work on a regional Threats and Hazards Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA), provided credentials for first responders and began working closely with SEMA to provide local workshops for Missouri's Faith-Based Organizations Active in Disasters Initiative.

• **Hazard Mitigation Planning**

In 2016, MRPC worked in partnership with Pulaski, Phelps and Gasconade counties to update those county Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP), using grant funds through the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and county funds. The purpose of this plan is to help jurisdictions become less vulnerable to natural hazards such as tornadoes, flooding and winter storms. To be eligible for hazard mitigation grants, counties must maintain an up-to-date plan, which means updating every five years. To date, the Pulaski and Phelps county plans have been approved by FEMA. The Gasconade County plan is currently being reviewed by FEMA. MRPC completed initial plans and updates for seven of its eight counties between 2011 and 2016.

• **HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program**

In 1976, MRPC began operating the HUD Section 8 Housing Program. The program provides very-low income families with greater access to decent, safe and modest housing in the six original counties. (Osage County is served through the Boone County housing agency. Pulaski County is served by Missouri Ozarks Community Action, Inc.) Through the Housing Choice Voucher program in FY2015-16, MRPC assisted, on average, 739 families by providing \$3,013,114 in rental assistance each year. PHA staff also performed 1,383 tenant inspections.

• **HUD Section 8 Homeownership**

In 2006, the Phelps County PHA, which is administered by MRPC, began the Section 8 Homeownership Program. The homeownership program allows first-time homeowners to use their voucher subsidy to meet their monthly mortgage payment and other homeownership expenses. Clients have purchased homes in Maries, Phelps, Washington and Crawford counties. Laclede, Franklin and Pulaski counties allow the Phelps County PHA to administer the program in their counties. To date, 17 homes have been purchased by clients through the Section 8 Homeownership program.

• Family Self-Sufficiency

The HUD Family Self-Sufficiency program, administered by MRPC, empowers participants to become free of welfare assistance. Once a participant signs up, a housing/FSS coordinator aids that participant in assessing current and future needs, then assists in the development of an action plan. This plan will enable the family to reach the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency. Participants are contacted frequently to ensure they progress toward their goals. Employment and enrollment in vocational training or post-secondary education, which leads to higher paying professional positions, is encouraged for participants.

The FSS program also offers an incentive program that establishes an escrow account in the participant's name. As a participant pays more of his or her rent, HUD makes a contribution equal to the increase in the portion of the rent paid by the participant. This savings account has the potential to grow into thousands of dollars. Upon successful completion of the contract, this money is paid to the participant. Of the 78 families in the FSS program, 24 families have escrow accounts totalling \$76,265. In FY 2015-16, nine clients successfully completed their FSS contracts and received their escrow accounts. The five shared \$50,653.67.

• Services to Local Governments

Ordinance Codification: For well over two decades, MRPC has provided ordinance codification services to cities - including Rolla, Potosi, Vienna, Newburg, Cuba, Bland, Freeburg and Iberia - for a fee. Staff prepare an electronic version of all ordinances, indexes and tracks their history and updates them on a schedule selected by the city. MRPC also makes the ordinances available online for the ease of residents, contractors and developers.

Floodplain Management: MRPC serves as the floodplain coordinator for two counties and one city. Staff handles public awareness and outreach and processes floodplain permit requests in Phelps and Maries counties and the City of Meta.

Inspection Services: MRPC offers lead, mold and asbestos inspection services to its member governments and private industry. MRPC also assists the city of Bland with code enforcement issues, under contract.

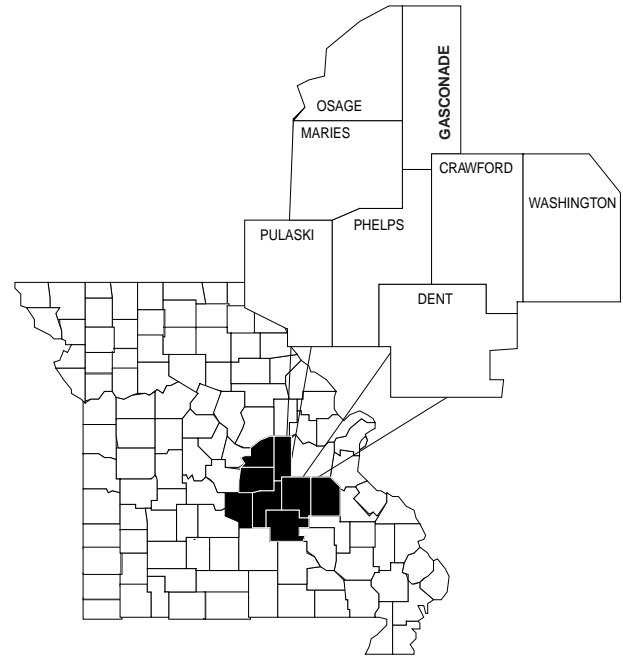
MERAMEC REGION FACTS

The Meramec Region is an eight-county area located in the southeast-central portion of Missouri. The area covers over 5,131 square miles and includes 36 municipalities. The region is marked with gently rolling hills, deep valleys and plateaus. Numerous rivers and streams transverse the region, creating a natural draw for outdoor enthusiasts. Many of the small towns are industrial havens, yet the small farmer is still prevalent. Many wineries dot the countryside, making it a popular draw for tourists.

General Demographics

In 2015, the eight-county Meramec Region was home to 201,555 people, reflecting an increase of 301 people from the 2010 decennial census.

Individual 2015 estimates county populations range from a low of 9,057 in Maries County to 53,443 in Pulaski County. Between 2011 to 2015, Pulaski County's population increased by nearly 5.6 percent. All other individual counties previously experienced high growth rates reflected in the 2010 Census. From 2011 through 2015, the state of Missouri is estimated to have grown by 1.5 percent.



The largest city in the region continues to be Rolla, the county seat of Phelps County. It has 19,910 people by 2015 estimates, up from 19,559 in 2010. The smallest city is Morrison in Gasconade County with 91 residents.

The region's population in 2015 showed slightly more males than females, just as it did in 2010. The region's median age in 2015 was 39.4 years, which is slightly older than the median age in the state and nation.

The region is predominantly white with a 10.3 percent minority population. This is up from 9.2 percent in 2010. Pulaski County is the region's most racially diverse county. It is home to the Department of Defense's Fort Leonard Wood.

Income, Poverty and Unemployment

Incomes in the Meramec Region continue to be lower than the state or nation. The region's median income, based on 2015 Census information, was \$41,706. The state median income

Demographics 2015

Population.....	201,555
Male.....	52.5%
Female.....	47.5%
White	89.7%
Black.....	4.2%
Asian.....	.1.6%
American Indian.....	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific.....	0.2%
Some Other Race.....	0.9%
Two or More Races	2.7%

Source: 2011 - 15 ACS 5 Year Estimate

was \$48,173 while the U.S. median income was \$53,889.

The region's median income is 86.6 percent of the state's rate and only 77.4 percent of the nation's rate.

The majority of families in Missouri and families in the nation make \$35,000 or more a year, as well as the majority of the families in the Meramec Region, according to 2015 Census data.

The region's poverty rate also runs higher than the state and nation's. Meramec residents living in poverty in 2015 numbered 32,859, which represents 17.8 percent of the population. Some 15.6 percent of all Missouri residents live in poverty while 15.5 percent of all U.S. residents were living in poverty in 2015. Dent County had the highest poverty rate in the region with 23.8 percent. The lowest was Osage County with 8.4 percent.

Median Household Incomes

Meramec Region	\$41,706
Missouri	\$48,173
U.S.....	\$53,889
Region as % of State.....	86.6%
Region as % of Nation.....	77.4%

Source: 2015 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Family Income

Families in the region	47,509
Under \$10,000.....	5.9%
\$10,000-14,999	3.7%
\$15,000-24,999	9.9%
\$25,000-34,999	11.6%
\$35,000 & over	68.9%

Source: 2015 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Persons in Poverty

Meramec Region	17.8%
Missouri	15.6%
U.S.....	15.5%

Source: 2015 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Population by Age

Under 5.....	6.3%
0-17	22.8%
18 & Over	77.2%
65+	14.2%
Median Age.....	39.4 years

Source: 2015 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

The region, for several decades, has been plagued with high unemployment rates. Washington and Dent counties experienced mine closings while other counties lost shoe and textile manufacturers. The 2015 unemployment rate for the region was 4.4 percent, slightly higher than the state average at 4.1 percent, but down from the 6.6 percent in 2014. The U.S. average for 2015 was 4.7 percent. The unemployment rate for 2016 has not yet been finalized.

Unemployment

Employed	78,412
Unemployed	3,629
Total Labor Force.....	82,041
Region's unemployment rate.....	4.4%
State's unemployment rate.....	4.1%
U.S. unemployment rate.....	4.7%

*All data compiled with October 2016 estimates.
Source: Missouri Department of Economic Development, MRPC

Housing

The Meramec Region has 87,496 total housing units with 71,393 occupied, according to the 2015 ACS five year estimates. The average population per unit in the region is 2.56 people, which is slightly higher than the state average of 2.44 people.

The number of occupied housing units in the region appears to still be on the decline, as there were 72,073 in 2013 and 71,393 in 2015.

Of the 71,393 occupied units, 47,389 are owner occupied while 24,004 are renter occupied,

according to the 2015 ACS five year estimates. In 2015, the median value of a home in the region was \$111,775, compared to a state average of \$138,400. The average monthly rent for a home in the region in 2015 was \$608 while the state average was \$746.

Over half of the housing stock in the region—78.8 percent—was built in 1960 or after. Around 52.5 percent of the homes were built in 1980 or after, indicated by the 2015 ACS five year estimates.

Education Levels

Some 83.7 percent of the region’s population aged 25 and older have at least a high school diploma, according to the 2015 ACS five year estimates. This percentage is 4.7 percent less than

Education Levels

2014 percent of adults 25 years and older with at least a high school diploma.

Meramec Region	83.7%
Missouri	88.4%
U.S.....	86.7%

Source: 2015 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

the state and 3 percent less than the U.S. When compared to the 2010 percentage of 81.6 percent, the region improved in the percentage of adults 25 years and older who had at least a high school diploma.

The region’s most educated county in 2015 was Pulaski, with 89.8 percent of adults with high school diplomas or higher education level.

Housing at a Glance

Number of housing units in region.	87,496
Number occupied	71,393
Number owner occupied.....	47,389
Number renter occupied	24,004
Vacant units	16,103
Persons per unit in region (2010).....	2.56
Persons per unit in state (2010).....	2.44
Median value in region	\$111,775
Median value in state.....	\$138,400
Median monthly rent in region	\$608
Median monthly rent in state	\$746
Housing units in region	
built before 1939.....	8,401
Housing units in region	
built 1940-59.....	11,268
Housing units in region	
built 1960-1979.....	23,016
Housing units in region	
built 1980-99.....	26,582
Housing units in region	
built 2000 and after.....	19,382

Source: 2015 ACS 5 year, MRPC analysis

Regional Industrial Employment

Employed persons 16 and over.....	75,999
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, & mining	2,169
Construction	5,534
Manufacturing.....	10,125
Transportation/warehousing & utilities	3,162
Wholesale trade.....	1,130
Retail trade	9,445
Information.....	800
Finance, insurance, real estate & rental/leasing	2,854
Professional, scientific, mgmt., admin. & waste mgmt. ser.	4024
Educational, health & social ser.....	19,109
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food ser.	7,177
Other services	3,547
Public Administration	6,923

Source: 2011-15 ACS 5 Year Estimates and MRPC analysis

The Economy

Over the years, the region has diversified its economy—after taking hard hits in the mining and textile industries 25 to 30 years ago. In the region, services was the largest employment sector with over 19,000 employees, followed by manufacturing and retail trade.

Health care, education and social assistance is the highest employment industry in the region with 19,109 employees, which makes up 25 percent of employment in the region, according to 2015 ACS Five Year Estimates.

The number of manufacturing firms in the region has continued to increase.

The 2016 Missouri Directory of Manufacturers listed 467 manufacturing firms in the region, compared to 454 in 2015.

The major public employer in the region is Fort Leonard Wood with more than 12,000 daytime jobs followed by the Missouri University of Science and Technology with 2,000 full-time and part-time employees and Phelps County Regional Medical Center with more than 1,700 employees. The region's top major private employer is the Walmart Distribution Center with 663 employees. It is located in Phelps County.

While the number of jobs in the region increases, many residents still travel outside their home county to work outside the region.

Transportation

Three federal highways pass through the region: Interstate 44, U.S. 63 and U.S. 50. Interstate 44 bisects the region in a northeast to southwest direction and serves as the major highway between St. Louis and Springfield with Rolla as the half way point.

U.S. 63 connects Vienna and Rolla with Jefferson City, and U.S. 50 runs east and west

through Gasconade and Osage counties. Most highways in the region are state highways, and most are narrow, winding and curvy.

Several Meramec communities have airports. The Waynesville-St. Robert Regional Airport at Forney Field in Pulaski County is located on the Fort Leonard Wood military base and is accessible to the public. Flights from Cape Air bring passengers to and from St. Louis three to four times each day. The airport is the only one in the region featuring an air traffic control tower.

The Rolla National Airport, located at Vichy and operated by the city of Rolla, and the Sullivan Airport, operated by the city of Sullivan, are defined as B-2 airports and are used primarily by airplanes with approach speeds up to 120 knots and wingspans up to 79 feet. Other airports in the region—Washington County, Salem, Cuba, Owensville, Hermann and State Technical College of Missouri at Linn—are classified as B-1s, which means they serve airplanes with approach speeds up to 120 knots and wingspans up to 49 feet.

Three railways serve the region. Burlington Northern operates the most miles of track in the region. That rail line follows the general route of I-44 through Crawford, Phelps and Pulaski counties.

Rail service in the region is not as prevalent as it once was. Several miles of the former Rock Island rail have been neglected since the early 1990s. In 2015, Ameren Missouri railbanked the line and put it under the management of Missouri State Parks for use as a trail. The development of a walking and biking trail is currently underway.

Amtrak also crosses the Meramec Region and stops at its very northeast point at Hermann.

Navigable water transportation is provided at three locations in the region, all on the Missouri River. Those sites are Hermann, Gasconade and Chamois.

MERAMEC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION'S BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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John Casey, representing transportation
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Vacant, representing labor
Jan Haviland, representing industry
Mary Heywood, representing the unemployed
Marla Stevenson, representing banking
Marcus Maggard, representing tourism
Robert Parsons, representing farming
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Jason Schenefield, representing healthcare
Janet Walker, representing minorities

2017 MRPC LEADERSHIP

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Planning & Development Manager:Kelly Sink-Blair
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Kingsford Manufacturing
Legends Bank
MO-Sci Corporation
Phelps County Bank
Pulaski Co. Sewer District #1

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Town & Country Bank - Salem

SILVER MEMBERS

Argyle Catering
Southeast Mo. Transportation Service, Inc.
Ameren Union Electric
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First State Community Bank
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Mid-America Bank & Trust
State Technical College of Missouri
Unico Bank
Sellers-Sexton, Inc.
Central Federal Savings & Loans

EXCHANGE MEMBERS

Hermann Area Chamber of Commerce
Steelville Area Chamber of Commerce
Sullivan Area Chamber of Commerce
Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce
Waynesville-St.Robert Chamber of Commerce
Washington County/Potosi Chamber of Commerce
Owensville Area Chamber of Commerce
Salem Area Chamber of Commerce



State Priorities in the Meramec Region



*A voluntary council of local governments serving the
Meramec Region*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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