

# State Priorities in the Meramec Region

## An Issues Report

For the Region's Legislative Delegation

Prepared by:

Meramec Regional Planning Commission

4 Industrial Drive • St. James, MO 65559

# MRPC

## 2018

Osage



Gasconade



Crawford

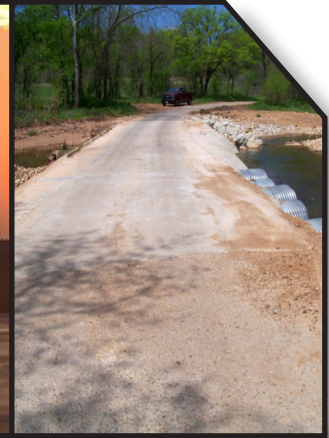
Maries



Pulaski



Phelps



Washington

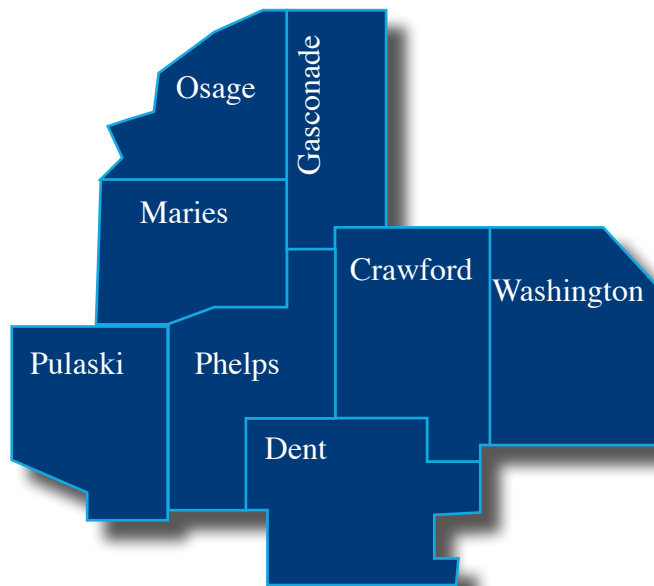


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# THE MERAMEC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION'S MISSION

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.



# 2018 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN THE MERAMEC REGION

As the 2018 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 provide an adequate funding mechanism those activities must be a priority to insure 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 and communities. Maintenance and upgrading of the highway system in the region is vital.
2. Support funding to improve Highway 63 to four lanes from Jefferson City to Cabool and four lanes for Highway 50 from Linn to I-44.
3. Allocate additional funding and make advocacy a priority to support public transportation in all counties of Missouri. With increased awareness of public transit, decision makers would have a greater understanding of the need, along with how that need is being met. With additional funding to support both capital and operational needs, Missouri's transit agencies have the knowledge and ability to meet this need.

### REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

1. Expand and improve access to affordable digital infrastructure (broadband internet, cellular and satellite access) across the region, especially in areas where it is currently deficient.
2. Recognize and support 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. Fort Leonard Wood is the 5th largest employer in the state.
3. Fully fund State Aid for 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. Support funding to Missouri's rural hospitals and clinics to meet the needs of their residents. This type of need should also be coordinated with public transit to ensure that residents can access these facilities.
2. Support the availability of health care and social services in Missouri's rural communities. Since the average age of farmers is nearing 60 and increasing, rural health care's importance is ever expanding. The US Census showed that during the last 30 years, the average age of the American farmer has grown from 50.5 years to 58.3 years.
3. Ensure better access to quality health care for the uninsured, underinsured and the underserved population in the region via mechanisms such as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and promoting satellite facilities/clinics from existing community health centers. MRPC supports efforts to make medical transportation to larger areas more available and encourages expanding broadband services to improve tele-medicine and services in rural areas.

## ENVIRONMENTAL:

1. Support regional solid waste management districts and continue to fund these organizations because of the services they provide and support efforts to reduce the red tape and redundant audits required by MDNR. MRPC opposes any changes at this time to the funding formula or state solid waste fund. At least two special interest groups are attempting to make changes through legislation. A group of engineers/consultants has stated that they are going to ask legislators to change the solid waste management law to allow for solid waste district funds to be spent to repair/maintain/closure of old abandoned landfills. The owners of these landfills profited from them and should be held responsible for any problems that occur. In some cases there are post closure funds in place, but the owners want those funds released to them and any costs for maintaining the landfills passed on to taxpayers. The purpose of the solid waste fund is to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills – not cover costs for landfill operators who no longer wish to take responsibility for their business obligations. In addition, there are efforts underway by the City of Branson to open up the funding formula in order to funnel more funds to that community. Currently the fund provides additional funds to those districts that have landfills. The City of Branson wants to eliminate that piece of the formula in order to get additional funds in its district that no longer has a landfill.
2. Continue to fund the maintenance of Missouri's beautiful parks and recreational areas and protection of spring-fed streams and rivers. Missouri has a wonderful network of pristine areas that need to be maintained into perpetuity.
3. Invest state dollars in loan and grant programs to improve water system and sewage and treatment facilities.

## EDUCATION:

1. Continue to fully fund the Foundation Formula for Public Education and stop cutting dollars for education in Missouri
2. Support the development and expansion of existing trade schools and trade programs that teach skills – not everyone has the money nor wants to go off to college.
3. 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. Workforce readiness can be improved by increasing the number of internships, work co-op programs and other initiatives, with a focus on soft skills and employability. This requires continued improvements to school facilities to enhance educational opportunities that fully prepare students for careers in the 21st century.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CITY/COUNTY):

1. Amend prevailing wage laws to eliminate requirements on public works projects of under \$250,000.
2. Provide relief to county governments from the unfunded mandates established by the legislature for the cost of salaries and pensions for prosecuting attorneys. Support elimination of statutes that tie full-time county prosecutor's salary to be the same as associate judges. Make full-time prosecutors salaries subject to legislative approval and county salary commission approval. Require county prosecutors retirement fund (PACARS) contributions to be paid by prosecutor's payroll deductions – the same as other county office holders and judges, rather than on the backs of taxpayers.
3. Support a statewide sales tax on Internet sales.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## • MRPC's Impact

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission had a strong year in 2016-17. For every administrative dollar MRPC spent in Fiscal Year 2016-17, it brought \$4.49 into the region for the benefit of its communities and residents. MRPC's 2016-17 expenditures were \$1.79 million, while the agency generated \$8.02 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 \$20.05 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 2016-17. 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 continued working with two communities on funding for transportation-related projects. Between the two, \$674,403 was granted to complete the projects.

## • 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 2016-17, \$2,376,777 in federal and state grant monies flowed through the planning and development department for community and economic development projects. In FY 2016-17, staff assisted member communities with the following funding opportunities:

- Delta Regional Authority's 2016 State's Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) for Washington County to complete ADA renovations at the courthouse and sheriff's department.

- Delta Regional Authority 2016 SEDAP for Washington County IDA for redeveloping a city block to eliminate blight and facilitate the location for a new business.
- Walmart Foundation Statewide Giving Program for Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation (MCEC) to implement the Mo-Rides Meramec Voucher Program to assist persons needing transportation.
- Missouri Foundation for Health Community Convening Grants for Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) for the Pulaski County/Fort Leonard Wood Health Care Initiative.
- Missouri Department Natural Resources (MDNR) Heritage Properties Program for Gasconade County to repair or replace the leaking courthouse roof.
- MDNR Heritage Properties Program for Washington County to provide renovations to historic features of the courthouse including windows and portico.
- Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for the city of St. James for sidewalk ADA improvements on Hardy, Scioto and Bourbeuse streets between school campus and library.
- MoDOT TAP for the city of Potosi for ADA sidewalks and crosswalks on N. Missouri and crosswalks on Highway 8.
- MoDOT TAP for the city of Salem for ADA sidewalks connecting Salem R-80 school campus to the community center and city park.
- Missouri Department of Economic Development (MoDED) Neighborhood Assistance Program for Cuba Development Group for tax credits to raise funds to complete the Osage Trail Legacy Project monument.
- Federal Highway Administration Federal Lands Access Program for Crawford County to replace the Brickey Slab over the Huzzah Creek in Mark Twain National Forest.
- Federal Highway Administration Federal Lands Access Program for Dent County for paving a steep section of county road 6670 leading to access on the Current River.
- Coover Grant for MRPC to hold one “Taste of (County)” event, add two regional trails to the Naturally Meramec Website and increase collective marketing for Naturally Meramec.
- HUD Lead Hazard Reduction Program for MRPC to remove lead paint hazards in homes around the region.
- MoDED Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Community Facility for Dent County Fire Protection District to make significant upgrades to the fire station and parking lot.
- MoDED CDBG General Infrastructure for the city of Bourbon for reconstruction of E. Pine Street through the downtown business district.
- MoDED CDBG Community Facility program for Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop to upgrade the sheltered workshop for efficiency, safety and ADA function.
- Delta Regional Authority’s 2017 SEDAP for the city of Edgar Springs for replacing five lift stations on the sewer collection system.
- Delta Regional Authority’s 2017 SEDAP for the village of Caledonia for replacing sidewalks in the downtown along Highway 21 to assist the many business in the community.
- Reiman Foundation for MCEC to continue the Mobility Management Program.
- MoDED Neighborhood Assistance Program for Council for Healthy Dent County for tax credits to raise funds for new gymnasium at Salem Community Center @ the Armory.

- Delta Regional Authority 2017 SEDAP for MCEC to provide business development and training to members of Naturally Meramec over a two-year period.
- Delta Regional Authority 2017 SEDAP for MCEC for a workforce development program focused on ex-offenders in county jails and legal systems.
- Delta Regional Authority 2017 SEDAP for the Industrial Development Authority of Potosi to extend a sewer line at Highways 8 and U to facilitate development of commercial property.
- Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program for MRPC for home repairs to 20 owner-occupied homes throughout the region.
- Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program to Liberty Garden Apartments to renovate 20-unit senior apartment complex in Wright City.

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, 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 Company 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 1,287 jobs in the Meramec Region for an average investment of \$20,828 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 17 loans and created or retained nearly 172 jobs, an average cost of \$7,131 per job. The total amount loaned through the IRP is \$1,226,664.

## • 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. 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) is a seven-county area that includes Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties. ORSWMD 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 148 grants totaling \$2.68 million to support local and regional projects. These grants have targeted businesses, local governments, schools and non-profits. The 2017 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; recycling program for waste plastic at a local manufacturer; recycling equipment for the City of Hermann; expansion of recycling at the Phelps County Community Partnership; recycling education assemblies in schools; recycling program at the Dixon Area Caring Center; and recycling and education programs in the Dixon school district. 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 50 electronic waste collections since April 2003 along with 39 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 before that program was eliminated.

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 1,900 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 2017, more than 723 tons – or the equivalent of 72,306 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 completed a commodity flow study for the Highway 72 transportation corridor and is currently doing flow studies on highways 63, 19, and 21 as well as all of the pipelines in the region.

## • 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 2017, MRPC worked in partnership with Crawford, Gasconade, Osage and Washington 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. The Gasconade county plan has been approved by FEMA this year. In addition, MRPC is working with Dent County on their initial hazard mitigation plan. 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 FY2016-17, MRPC assisted, on average, 758 families by providing \$3,144,394 in rental assistance each year. PHA staff also performed 1,432 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, 19 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 84 families in the FSS program, 33 families have escrow accounts totalling \$74,722. In FY 2016-17, 11 clients successfully completed their FSS contracts and received their escrow accounts. They shared \$45,238.23.

## • 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, and Freeburg - 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.



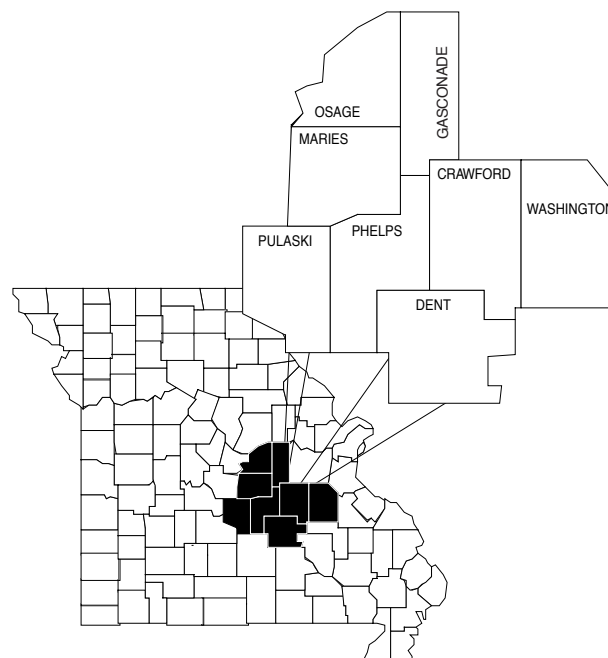
# MERAMEC REGION FACTS

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 2016, the eight-county Meramec Region was home to 200,826 people, reflecting a decrease of 428 people from the 2010 decennial census.

Individual 2016 estimates county populations range from a low of 8,987 in Maries County to 53,302 in Pulaski County. Pulaski County saw a decrease of .3 percent in the 2012-16 American Community Survey (ACS) from the 2011-15 ACS. However, all counties in the region, except for Pulaski, showed a decrease in population as reported in the 2012-16 ACS compared to the 2010 census data. From 2012 through 2016, the state of Missouri is estimated to have grown by only .2



percent.

The largest city in the region continues to be Rolla, the county seat of Phelps County. It has 19,904 people by 2016 estimates, up from 19,559 in 2010. The smallest city is Morrison in Gasconade County with 91 residents.

The region's population in 2016 showed slightly more males than females, just as it did in 2010. The region's median age in 2016 was 39.5 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.

## Demographics 2016

Population.....	200,826
Male.....	52.5%
Female.....	47.5%
White .....	89.7%
Black.....	4.8%
Asian.....	.1.3%
American Indian.....	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific.....	0.2%
Some Other Race.....	0.9%
Two or More Races .....	2.4%

Source: 2012 - 16 ACS 5 Year Estimate

## 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 2016 Census information, was \$42,836. The state median income

was \$49,593 while the U.S. median income was \$55,322.

The region's median income is 86.4 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 2016 ACS data.

The region's poverty rate also runs higher than the state and nation's. Meramec residents living in poverty in 2016 numbered 34,944, which represents 17.4 percent of the population. Some 15.3 percent of all Missouri residents live in poverty while 15.1 percent of all U.S. residents were living in poverty in 2016. Dent County had the highest poverty rate in the region with 22.4 percent. The lowest was Osage County with 6.9 percent.

## Median Household Incomes

Meramec Region .....	\$42,836
Missouri .....	\$49,593
U.S.....	\$55,322
Region as % of State.....	86.4%
Region as % of Nation.....	77.4%

Source: 2016 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

## Family Income

Families in the region .....	47,334
Under \$10,000.....	5.6%
\$10,000-14,999 .....	3.6%
\$15,000-24,999 .....	9.8%
\$25,000-34,999 .....	10.9%
\$35,000 & over .....	70.1%

Source: 2016 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

## Persons in Poverty

Meramec Region .....	17.4%
Missouri .....	15.3%
U.S.....	15.1%

Source: 2016 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

## Population by Age

Under 5.....	6.1%
0-17 .....	22.5%
18 & Over .....	77.5%
65+ .....	14.6%
Median Age.....	39.6 years

Source: 2016 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 2016 unemployment rate for the region was 3.7 percent, slightly lower than the state average at 4.1 percent, but down from the 4.4 percent in 2015. The U.S. average for 2016 was 3.4 percent. The unemployment rate for 2017 has not yet been finalized.

## Unemployment

Employed .....	75,909
Unemployed .....	2,888
Total Labor Force.....	78,797
Region's unemployment rate.....	3.7%
State's unemployment rate.....	4.1%
U.S. unemployment rate.....	3.4%

\*All data compiled with November 2017 estimates.  
Source: Missouri Department of Economic Development, MRPC

## Housing

The Meramec Region has 87,654 total housing units with 71,216 occupied, according to the 2016 ACS five-year estimates. The average population per unit in the region is 2.6 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 71,393 in 2015 and 71,216 in 2016.

Of the 71,216 occupied units, 47,477 are

owner occupied while 23,739 are renter occupied, according to the 2016 ACS five year estimates. In 2016, the median value of a home in the region was \$104,812, compared to a state average of \$141,200. The average monthly rent for a home in the region in 2016 was \$609 while the state average was \$746.

The majority of the housing stock — 78.1 percent — was built in 1960 or later, as indicated by the 2016 ACS five year estimates.

## Education Levels

Some 84 percent of the region's population aged 25 and older have at least a high school diploma, according to the 2016 ACS five year estimates. This percentage is 4.8 percent less than

## Education Levels

2016 percent of adults 25 years and older with at least a high school diploma.

Meramec Region .....	84%
Missouri .....	88.4%
U.S.....	86.7%

Source: 2016 ACS 5 year estimates and MRPC Analysis

the state and 2.9 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 by 2.4 percent.

The region's most educated county in 2016 was Osage, with 90.3 percent of adults with high school diplomas or higher education level.

## Housing at a Glance

Number of housing units in region.	87,654
Number occupied .....	71,216
Number owner occupied.....	47,477
Number renter occupied .....	23,739
Vacant units .....	16,438
Persons per unit in region (2010).....	2.56
Persons per unit in state (2010).....	2.44
Median value in region .....	\$104,812
Median value in state.....	\$141,200
Median monthly rent in region .....	\$609
Median monthly rent in state .....	\$746
Housing units in region	
built before 1939.....	8,231
Housing units in region	
built 1940-59.....	10,992
Housing units in region	
built 1960-1979.....	21,152
Housing units in region	
built 1980-99.....	27,225
Housing units in region	
built 2000 and after.....	20,054

Source: 2016 ACS 5 year, MRPC analysis

## Regional Industrial Employment

Employed persons 16 and over.....	76,036
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, & mining .....	1,973
Construction .....	5,553
Manufacturing.....	10,529
Transportation/warehousing & utilities .....	2,954
Wholesale trade.....	1,164
Retail trade .....	9,867
Information.....	1,094
Finance, insurance, real estate & rental/leasing .....	2,715
Professional, scientific, mgmt., admin. & waste mgmt. ser. ....	3,893
Educational, health & social ser.....	19,435
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food ser. ....	6,872
Other services .....	3,561
Public Administration .....	6,426

Source: 2012-16 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 19,435 employees, which makes up 26 percent of employment in the region, according to 2016 ACS Five Year Estimates.

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

The 2017 Missouri Directory of Manufacturers listed 469 manufacturing firms in the region, compared to 467 in 2016.

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 Quaker Window Products with 900 plus employees. It is located in Maries and Osage counties.

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**

## **CRAWFORD COUNTY**

Leo Sanders, presiding commissioner  
Cody Leathers, representing the mayor of Cuba  
Vacant, representing for-profit sector  
Kathy Byrd, chairperson of Leasburg  
Dennis Watz, mayor of Sullivan  
Sharon Hubbard, representing mayor of Steelville  
Danny Skaggs, mayor of Bourbon

## **DENT COUNTY**

Ray Walden, representing the mayor of Salem  
Darrell Skiles, presiding commissioner  
Gary Brown, representing for-profit

## **GASCONADE COUNTY**

Larry Miskel, presiding commissioner  
Mark Wallace, representing the mayor of Hermann  
Shannon Grus, mayor of Rosebud  
Sam Birk, mayor of Morrison  
Ron Kraettli, representing for-profit sector  
Matt Dittman, representing the mayor of Bland  
John Kamler, mayor of Owensville  
Debbie Green, mayor of Gasconade

## **MARIES COUNTY**

T.C. James, mayor of Vienna  
Darrell Schulte, representing for-profit sector  
Ray Schwartze, presiding commissioner  
Steve Vogt, mayor of Belle

## **OSAGE COUNTY**

Mark Boyer, representing for-profit sector  
Christopher Bursnall, mayor of Meta  
Tammy Massman, mayor of Westphalia  
Dave Dudenhoeffer, presiding commissioner  
Darryl Haller, chairman of Freeburg  
Dwight Massey, mayor of Linn  
Chris Brundick, chairman of Argyle  
Debbie Huff, mayor of Chamois

## **PHELPS COUNTY**

Kevin Melton, representing the mayor of Edgar Springs

Jeff Medows, representing for-profit sector  
John Petersen, representing the mayor of Rolla  
James Poucher, mayor of Newburg  
Paul Smith, mayor of Doolittle  
Randy Verkamp, presiding commissioner  
Jim White, mayor of St. James

## **PULASKI COUNTY**

Vacant, representing for-profit sector  
Shawn Wethington, mayor of Dixon  
Eldon Haun, mayor of Richland  
George Lauritson, mayor of St. Robert  
Luge Hardman, mayor of Waynesville  
Glen Smith, mayor of Crocker  
Gene Newkirk, presiding commissioner

## **WASHINGTON COUNTY**

T.R. Dudley, mayor of Potosi  
John W. Taylor, chairman of Mineral Point  
Doris Keim, mayor of Irondale  
Debby Bust, representing for-profit sector  
John Robinson III, chairman of Caledonia  
Marvin Wright, presiding commissioner

## **AT-LARGE MEMBERS**

Kraig Bone, representing emergency management  
Don Brackhahn, representing seniors  
Earl Brown, representing the disabled  
John Casey, representing transportation  
Dr. Don Claycomb, representing higher education  
Shane Anselm, representing labor  
Jan Haviland, representing industry  
Mary Heywood, representing the unemployed  
Janey Radford, representing lending institutions  
Marcus Maggard, representing tourism  
Robert Parsons, representing farming  
Vacant, representing small business  
Jason Schenefield, representing healthcare  
Janet Walker, representing minorities

# 2018 MRPC LEADERSHIP

## Board & Staff

Chairman: .....Ray Schwartze, Presiding Commissioner of Maries County  
Vice Chairman: .....Marvin Wright, Presiding Commissioner of Washington County  
Treasurer: .....Steve Vogt, Mayor of Belle  
Secretary: .....Larry Miskel, Presiding Commissioner of Gasconade County  
Executive Director: .....Bonnie J. Prigge  
Assistant Director: .....Tammy Snodgrass  
Fiscal Officer: .....Linda Loughridge  
Environmental Programs Manager: .....Tammy Snodgrass  
Planning & Development Manager: .....Kelly Sink-Blair  
Housing Programs Manager: .....Linda Hollandsworth

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## 2017 Associate Members:

### PLATINUM MEMBERS

C.M. Archer Group, P.C.  
Legends Bank  
MO-Sci Corporation  
Phelps County Bank  
Pulaski Co. Sewer District #1

### GOLD MEMBERS

Town & Country Bank - Salem  
Kingsford Manufacturing Company

### SILVER MEMBERS

Argyle Catering  
First Community National Bank  
Gascosage Electric Cooperative  
Investment Reality  
Kenagy Law Office  
Maries County Bank  
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  
Steeleville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Sullivan Area Chamber of Commerce  
Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce  
Waynesville-St. Robert Chamber of Commerce  
St. James 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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[Facebook.com/meramecregion](https://www.facebook.com/meramecregion)