

MICHAEL J. HOOD

Mike Hood has dedicated his career, spanning 30 years, to parks and recreation. After earning his Master of Science in Recreation and Park Administration from the University of Missouri, he served as the Director of Parks and Recreation in Union, later joining the Missouri Department of Natural Resources for eight years. For the last two decades, he served the City of Columbia with distinction, initially as Superintendent of Planning and Development and later as Director. Under his leadership, Columbia earned the prestigious NRPA Gold Medal. Mike's significant contributions to MPRA and numerous accolades from colleagues in the field underscore his lasting impact on local and state-level parks and recreation initiatives.

Mike played a pivotal role as co-author of the Missouri State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) from 1980 to 1985, shaping the planning and management of the state's outdoor recreation resources. This plan helped Missouri secure Land and Water Conservation Funds and established a crucial tool for agencies to address long-term park and trail developments. His hands-on approach made a lasting impact on recreation opportunities for all residents in Missouri.

His commitment to the University of Missouri (MU) was evident through his efforts to create internships, summer jobs, and volunteer options for students while also serving as a speaker in various courses. Even after retirement, he continued to contribute to MU as the Chair of the School of Natural Resources Advisory Council. During the 1980s and 1990s, Mike was instrumental in saving the Recreation and Park Administration program from being cut at MU. Under his leadership, the successful implementation and renewal of the ¼-cent Park Sales Tax in Columbia illustrated his effectiveness, with voter approval rising from 53% in 2005 to 64% in 2010.

The MPRA Legislative and Critical Issues Committee has historically addressed vital concerns, including the Hancock Amendments, the development of Katy Trail State Park, and threats to Missouri Department of Conservation funding. Mike served on the committee for nearly 30 years, chaired it for over a decade, and was critical in shaping legislative strategy with his thoughtful insights. His efforts helped secure the passage of the Park and Stormwater Sales Tax, a significant milestone for municipal parks in Missouri, through strategic relationship building. Mike also served as President of MPRA from 1995 to 1996.

Mike was instrumental in planning and developing Cosmo Park, one of four prominent city parks in Missouri. The park features various athletic complexes, a significant skateboard facility, and a unique playground that draws visitors statewide. Under his leadership, Columbia hosted the Show-Me State Games, a prestigious amateur sporting event. This gathering continues to attract thousands of athletes and generates a remarkable annual economic impact of over \$10 million.

Mike played a key role in the development of the 8.9-mile MKT Trail, connecting downtown Columbia to the KATY Trail State Park. This trail conversion was one of the first of its kind in the U.S. and served as a model for other cities, helping Missouri earn the title of "Best Trail State" in 2013. Likewise, Mike facilitated the purchase of the 320-acre Gans Creek Recreation Area, which led to the development of the Gans Creek Cross Country Course, now a premier site for MSHSAA State Championships and upcoming NCAA events. Additionally, he acquired 129 acres for Strawn Park, where the world-renowned Harmony Bends Disc Golf Course was built. This course has gained international attention and is scheduled for the 2025 PDGA Amateur Disc Golf World Championships. Mike's initiatives have left a lasting impact on the state's recreational landscape.

Congratulations Mike Hood, the 2025 Missouri Recreation and Parks Hall of Fame Inductee!