

MCE's Known & Grown Program Updates

By Rae Miller and Nicki Morgan

Known & Grown has hit the ground running this year with new staff, programming and farmers! We have enrolled 13 new farmers into the program, with 5 more applications pending, at a total of 73 farms currently in the program.

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Updates on Hazardous Waste in St. Louis

By Christen Commuso, Community Outreach Specialist – St. Louis

There has been a whirlwind of activity since we recommitted to working on St. Louis' longstanding radioactive waste issue. For those unfamiliar with St. Louis' role in the Manhattan Project and nuclear weapons production, please visit our [website](#) for a brief history.

UPDATE: JANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

As you may recall, MCE broke the news of radioactive waste contamination on the property of Jana Elementary School in Hazelwood School District in the early spring of 2022. Since then the school has been closed, presumably for good. The Army Corps

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MCE in KC

E.D. Letter: Looking Ahead

By Jared Opsal, Executive Director

In our 2022 Annual Report and at our Annual Meeting, I spoke about the need for our coalition to continue expanding our presence across Missouri. While our coalition remains committed to our mission of fostering an informed and organized community that prioritizes environmental concerns and actions, we recognize that we need to ensure we have representation from throughout Missouri in our leadership, staff, members, and volunteers.

One of our primary goals in 2024 is to expand our presence across Missouri through our Regional Captain program. We now have over 20 Captains in the program covering 7 regions in the state, and we aim to establish a stronger foothold in areas where environmental advocacy is needed the most. By empowering local leaders as Regional Captains, we will facilitate grassroots efforts and amplify our collective voice for environmental action.

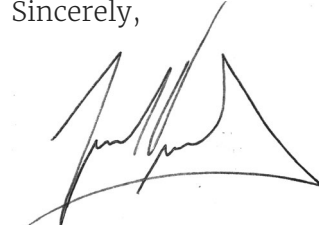
In addition, we will be working to increase our capacity to actively engage in city and county level environmental policy efforts in St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, and Columbia. Recognizing the significance of local governance, we plan to work closely with communities to enact environmentally conscious policies that protect Missouri's people and ecosystems. By addressing environmental hazards and ensuring accountability for polluters with an emphasis on communities that have experienced the most harm, we will create a safer and more sustainable future for all Missourians.

We have now had a staff member in Kansas City for one year, and we have experienced a major growth in people joining our cause from that area of the state. With this in mind, we will be focusing on adding a staff member in the Springfield area to engage with community members, identify local environmental issues we can assist with, and engage with local elected officials on solutions to the environmental problems in their community.

None of this would be possible without the incredible support we have received from our members, donors, sponsors, and volunteers. Your commitment to our cause has allowed us to address the pressing issues of climate change, hazardous waste, and other pollution. With your continued support, we can further advance our vital work and ensure a sustainable future for Missouri.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our mission.

Sincerely,



Jared Opsal
Executive Director



Legislative Advocacy This Year and Into 2024

By Melissa Vatterott, Policy Director

Even when the Missouri Legislature wraps up session and legislators go back to their districts, MCE's Policy Team is still hard at work to advance protections for Missouri's people and their environment through legislative action. And leading up to Congress's August Recess, and the subsequent federal appropriations and the federal 2023 Farm Bill this fall, we have been activating our members, hosting events with Congressmen and our partners, and meeting with Congressional staff about our federal priorities for Missouri's farms, families, and climate.

In furtherance of our priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill, which Congress is behind schedule in passing, we have met with staff from the offices of Congresswoman Wagner (MO-2), Congressman Luetkemeyer (MO-3), Congressman Alford (MO-4), Congressman Graves (MO-6), and Congressman Burlison (MO-7). We have also met with staff from Senator Schmitt's office with our partners at Cultivate KC and spoke about our priorities in front of Congressman Cleaver (MO-5) and Congressman Alford (MO-3) at a collaborative event with Cultivate KC, Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition, and the Kansas Rural Center. In short, we've been traveling across the state to make sure our Members of Congress hear from us and our members in their districts about the importance of climate resiliency on farms, policy reforms for equity, and sustainable local food systems. We thank our members across the state for making calls, joining in meetings, and sending emails to their Members of Congress to urge them to pass an equitable, sustainable, healthy 2023 Farm Bill. By winter 2024, we shall have a new Farm Bill. To learn more about our 2023 Farm Bill priorities, visit our [Farm Bill action page](#).

On the state level, we've been busy talking to legislators about the overarching biggest threat to Missouri's people and their environment: improper waste management. From mining, to industrial animal waste to toxic radioactive waste, the Missouri Legislature has the ability and responsibility to pass statewide legislation that protects all Missourians from the harms of these wastes, not just those who live closest to the waste location. Much of this waste can travel downstream, downwind, through groundwater, seep into people's homes, contaminate our parks, and more. We have policy recommendations for each of these waste issues and are working tirelessly with many partners to ensure legislators understand these issues before the beginning of the 2024 Missouri Legislative Session. Please join us in making phone calls to your state legislators throughout the fall and winter asking them to advance protections from irresponsible waste management and contamination in our air, streams, groundwater, homes, schools, and parks. You can learn more by visiting our website and reading our pages on mining, concentrated animal feeding operations, and hazardous waste.

MCE's Known & Grown Program Updates

By Rae Miller and Nicki Morgan *continued*

REFRIGERATED DELIVERY ASSISTANCE

Known & Grown launched a new transportation assistance program for farmers within 200 miles of St Louis. We facilitate pick up, refrigerated transport, and delivery of farm products directly from farms to buyers in the St Louis region.

The purpose of this service is to assist farmers in getting their products to buyers in the STL market. Priority will be given to historically underserved farmers (BIPOC, LGBTQ+, Limited Resource, Beginning, Veteran, and Woman-owned) and buyers that serve low-access communities/neighborhoods. For those with priority status, this service is free.

We are working closely with a group of locally-owned and operated businesses that prioritize sourcing from local farmers: City Greens Market, Local Harvest Grocery, Fair Shares CCSA, North Sarah Food Hub, Find Your Farmer, A Red Circle, Eat Here St. Louis and Be Well Cafe.

MICROGRANTS

Known & Grown offered what we hope is year one of many microgrants for farmers. This first year we awarded up to \$1000 to 8 historically underserved farmers in north St Louis for projects that develop or improve environmental stewardship practices on their farm. Environmental stewardship includes practices that protect and preserve the quality of our soil, air, and water, promote biodiversity, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The goal of these grants is to improve our food system by supporting sustainable farming practices that provide healthy, nutrient-dense food to the local, north St Louis community. We received a generous match from ACRES that funded 4 of the 8 awards given.

Our Farm Specialist, Chris Wimmer, is working with each microgrant recipient to help with technical assistance and installation, as needed. This year's projects addressed water management, alternative energy use, perennial tree establishment, expansion of growing capacity, and wildlife habitat establishment.





VOLUNTEER DAY AT KLONDIKE BISON AND BEE THIS NOVEMBER

On Known & Grown's only bison farm, MCE and volunteers assisted farmer Peggy Ladd with cleaning fence lines of weeds, brush, and old barbed wire. We were also able to see the bison including the newest addition to the herd, a baby bison born earlier this year! Clearing fencing is an important task for farmers that practice regenerative agriculture. This technique is used as an alternative to spraying chemicals on the fence lines to kill weeds. With your assistance, Klondike Bison and Bee Farm will be preserving Missouri's water quality and allowing biodiversity to thrive on their land with the absence of toxic chemicals.



Updates on Hazardous Waste in St. Louis

By Christen Commuso, Community Outreach Specialist – St. Louis **continued**

of Engineers — tasked under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) to cleanup Manhattan Project/Atomic Energy Commission waste across the nation — has begun removing the contaminated soil from the property. So far, 301 truckloads equating to 2,510 cubic yards have been removed and taken to an out-of-state licensed facility. According to a spokesperson with the Corps, they estimate a total of 6,800 cubic yards (~900 truckloads) will be removed from the property. The contamination at Jana Elementary prompted Senator Josh [Hawley](#) and Congresswoman Cori [Bush](#) to introduce the bicameral, bipartisan Justice for Jana Elementary Act. The Act was passed in the Senate but awaits a committee assignment in the House.

Jana Elementary is just one of hundreds of sites across north St. Louis county and city to be remediated under the program. At this time, the Corps estimates it will be another 15 years before they can complete the cleanup of all St. Louis sites. By the time they are finished, the radioactive waste will have been in our communities for nearly 100 years.

THE RECA PROGRAM

In July, after an elaborate multi-organization news [report](#) from Missouri Independent, Associated Press, and MuckRock showed the government knew as early as 1949 that the radioactive contamination was seeping into nearby Coldwater Creek, yet did nothing to stop it or warn the public, Senator Josh Hawley working with Senator Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico introduced a bipartisan [amendment](#) to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to add civilians from zip codes around the St. Louis and St. Charles region into the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). The amendment would also extend and expand coverage for previously excluded uranium

workers and downwinders in several western states, the Navajo Nation, and Guam.

In collaboration with the Union of Concerned Scientists, a group of community organizations, including MCE's Community Outreach Specialist, Christen Commuso, residents, and state representatives from Missouri traveled to Washington DC in September to advocate for the full adoption of the RECA amendment. Because the amendment was added in the senate after the house already approved their version of the NDAA, the amendment's future will be decided by a specially-assigned conference committee made up of members from both chambers. We should know its fate later this fall.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP

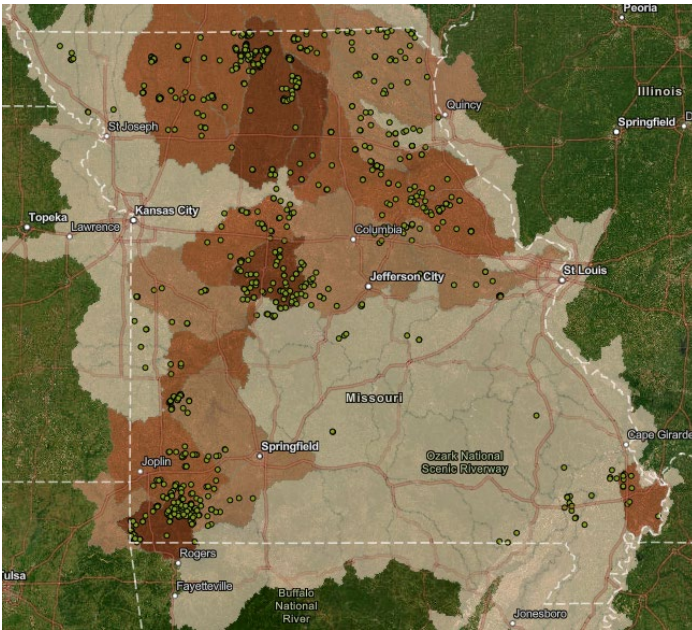
We are also excited to announce a new partnership with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network to help increase access to healthcare, spread awareness of the effects on residents' health from exposure to the radioactive weapons waste, and share information about the SSM Health/IFM Community Medicine Community Connections Health Clinic funded by the Bridgeton Landfill Settlement Fund. The clinic is currently available at no cost to individuals living in zip codes 63042, 63043, 63044, 63045, and 63074. Please be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities to canvas neighborhoods with this important information.

Please also remember to sign up for MCE's Hazardous Waste emails and follow our work with community partners on our [STL Toxic Waste Alliance Facebook page](#).



Missouri Wasteshed Story Map: How Much Untreated Animal Waste is in Your Watershed?

by Melissa Vatterott, Policy Director



As mentioned in the previous article, waste is one of the biggest threats to the health and safety of Missouri's people and their environment. Many individual Missourians and organizations across the state are concerned about the amount of untreated animal waste generated in each watershed of Missouri. We came together to outline the reason for this concern and then visualized in an interactive map – called a Story Map – exactly how much waste Class I concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) generate in each watershed. Our major findings are below:

- Fifty percent of the watersheds in Missouri have more untreated CAFO waste generated there than the amount of waste generated by the human population (and human waste is treated!).
- Some watersheds in Missouri have more CAFO waste generated than some of the largest cities in the country including Houston, San Antonio, San Jose, and Sacramento! All of this waste is untreated and often is overapplied on fields, leading it to runoff into nearby surface waterbodies or leach through the soil into groundwater. Gross!

- These calculations only account for waste generated Class I CAFOs; we have likely hundreds of Class II CAFOs but we don't know where they are because DNR doesn't regulate them!
- While much of the waste likely does stay in the watershed, much of Class I CAFO waste is "exported" from the CAFO to another parcel of land – sometimes down the street, sometimes counties away. DNR doesn't know where the waste goes because it currently does not regulate the third party transporters of CAFO waste!

The Missouri Legislature needs to provide greater transparency about where this waste is and where it can go. As such as, we are urging our members and supporters to call their Missouri legislators and ask them to protect our waterways and drinking water sources (both surface and ground) with these policy reforms:

- Registration of all Class II CAFOs
- Registration of third party recipients of CAFO waste and where the waste is applied.
- Groundwater monitoring at all CAFOs
- Greater setbacks from homes, schools, waterways, and natural areas – both for the location of where CAFOs can be located and the fields on which CAFO waste is applied.

Please take time to also explore the Wasteshed Story Map for yourself to learn how much CAFO waste you might be exposed to at your home or your favorite recreation spot in the state. Learn more on our [website](#).

Food Processing Waste Comes to the Fore

By Jaelithe Virgin-Downey, Policy Coordinator

The past months has seen significant community outcry with regards to how waste from food processing plants, particularly meat processing facilities, is handled in Missouri. Examples include the activities of companies like Denali Water Solutions as well as Missouri Prime Beef Packers on the Pomme de Terre River. Both of these examples have gained significant attention from local communities as well as news coverage, though they are certainly not the only instances of public concern over food processing waste. Missouri Coalition for the Environment is working to improve how Missouri regulates this waste through research and advocacy.

The waste generated from food processing facilities includes contaminants like E. Coli and oil/grease. It is stored in large lagoons, in some cases millions of gallons in volume, before being transported to agricultural land where it is applied as fertilizer. If the waste is improperly applied, it has the potential to become “run-off”, entering into lands and waters surrounding the field. Each step of this process raises concerns over water pollution and odor.

Multiple counties in Southwest Missouri, including Barry, Newton, and McDonald, have been impacted by the activities of a company named Denali Water Solutions. Denali accepts waste from dozens of businesses, combines it together in lagoons, and sends it out to be applied to land. Those living nearby Denali’s lagoons and land application sites have reported terrible odors impacting their quality of life. There have been instances of improper land application in addition to an overflowing lagoon. Denali is currently attempting to operate a lagoon in Randolph County, where residents have brought legal proceedings to halt the business’s northward expansion into their community.

Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE) has been investigating how companies like Denali are regulated in Missouri. Documents obtained via Sunshine Requests show that Denali has been operating in Missouri with limited oversight. The company’s lagoons are exempt from construction permits and minimum design standards. Additionally, until the summer of this year, Denali has also been exempted from operating permits. As a result of this investigation, MCE has worked to spread awareness, support the submission of public comments, and engage government officials on potential solutions.

Public outcry has not been limited to Denali’s operations. This summer, the Department of Natural Resource’s published a review of a proposed discharge of 350,000 gallons per day of wastewater into the Pomme de Terre River. Hundreds of public comments were submitted in response to the proposal. MCE teamed up with Great Rivers Environmental Law Center to write a comment, which was joined by the Missouri Chapter of the Sierra Club. The comment raises concerns over Missouri Prime Beef Packer’s history of noncompliance with EPA and Missouri regulations as well as their proposed treatment system, which has reportedly only been used at one other facility. Among other issues, it emphasizes the fact that in a document submitted to the EPA, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources already identified the Pomme de Terre as violating water quality standards for E. Coli, one of the contaminants in the discharge.

It is vital that Missouri’s government moves to address the concerns of its residents regarding the handling of waste generated from food processing facilities. MCE will continue to work towards regulations that will protect Missouri’s people, water, and air from pollution. We hope that you join us in advocating for solutions– stay tuned to our email list and social media for opportunities to take action!

Read MCE’s formal comment on the Missouri Prime Beef Packer/ Pomme de Terre issue [on our blog](#).

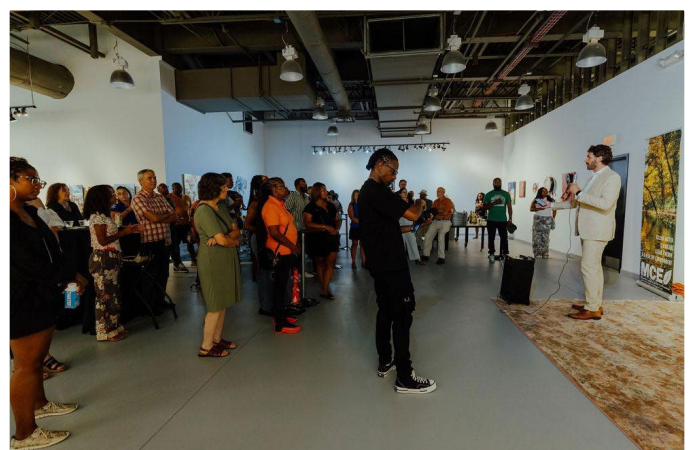
Americans Who Tell the Truth

By Jared Opsal, Executive Director

This past August MCE hosted a traveling art exhibition titled “Americans Who Tell the Truth” in order to promote environmental ideals to a new audience and gain new followers and supporters from the arts community. The exhibition featured 11 portraits of environmental change makers from throughout the U.S. including the unveiling of a new portrait for the series of Debbie Njai, founder of Black People Who Hike and Vice President of MCE. The exhibition was supported in part by The Staenberg Group, Dr. Bryan Meyers, Seed-Sprout-Spoon Catering, and the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis.

The stories of the change makers featured in the exhibition helped illustrate that there is no need to wait for a superhero to protect people and their environment, environmental advocacy starts with regular people using their voices to demand a change. Anyone can make a difference!

The exhibition garnered just over 300 attendees throughout August, and 70% of them had no previous connection to MCE. We are excited to engage these new folks in environmental causes in the months and years to come!



Welcome to Our New Board Members

MCE is ecstatic to welcome two new board members to help us continue working towards our vision of having the people of Missouri, regardless of race, income, or geography, live in and demand a clean, safe, and protected environment, now and for generations to come.

ROGER STILL AND MICHAEL VESTWEBER



Roger hails from Columbia, MO and he has over 30 years of experience in conservation and sustainable agriculture.



Michael resides in Lee's Summit, MO and has decades of experience in solid waste management including recycling and practices to reduce methane emissions from landfills.

Welcome aboard!

MCE in KC

By Makenna Nickens, Community Outreach Specialist – Kansas City

On the Western side of the state, Missouri Coalition for the Environment has been making progress on several initiatives. As we work to make stronger connections with other organizations with similar goals, we have taken the step of creating a space where these connections can more easily be formed at our KC Eco-Org Networking Events. In September, we hosted our second installment of this event with great success. MCE is also working to take action toward targeting illegal dumping and litter, which is a pervasive issue in the area. Our current actions include meeting with the city, the Mid-America Regional Council, and other groups also taking steps to target this issue and using those conversations to inform the action plan that we are working on which will outline ways to target illegal dumping at a systemic level.

We are in the midst of finalizing the adoption of both a section of street on Truman Road and a park on the east side of the city, Ashland Square Park, to host regular trash and litter pick-ups. These pick-ups will begin as soon as late October and volunteers will be needed. Keep an eye out for more information coming soon! The City of Kansas City also has their own environmental initiatives laid out in the updated Climate Action Plan, released in 2021. These initiatives are meant to help the city reach a net-zero carbon level by the year 2050, however they can only be accomplished with adequate and persistent work and funding. As the city budget ebbs and flows each year, we hope to be a resource to inform and advocate for funding to be distributed toward achieving these environmental goals when the budget is reevaluated in the next fiscal year.

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Thank you to everyone
who joined us at our
recent Chats for Change!
We're looking forward
to many more impactful
conversations with our
community members
and elected officials.

SAVE THE DATE

Honeysuckle Removal
Saturday, November 25
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Hillsdale, MO

**Wild and Scenic
Film Festival**
February 4 – 1:00 pm
Columbia, MO



6 - 8:30 pm - MCE Office

Join us in celebrating a successful 2023!

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