THE ALERT

Our Planet Our Power

Earth Day 2025

MCE
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
EFFECTIVE CITIZEN ACTION SINCE 1969

Volume 56/Issue 1

What's Inside:

The Shift to Electric: Thoughtful Progress at a Fast Pace

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Mission

To educate, organize, and advocate in defense of Missouri's people and their environment.

Vision

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.

Staff Announcement

Maxine Gill

Maxine holds a BA in Environmental Policy from Washington University in St. Louis, and is a recent graduate of the Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs. She has a variety of experience across multiple sectors within the environmental field, including policy advocacy, green business consulting, and clean energy research. At WashU she participated in the Environmental Law Clinic, conducting policy research to hold industrial food waste polluters accountable through regulatory action. She brings a passion for evidence-based, community-centered and justice-focused environmental policy.

She is a happy Midwest transplant originally from the Bay Area, California. In her spare time she enjoys spending time outdoors camping and hiking, playing guitar, reading, making art, teaching kids, and hanging out with her cat, Bucket!

Missouri Legislature

By Melissa Vatterott

During the 2025 legislative session, we have been working tirelessly to advance proactive policies for Missouri's people and their environment as well as fighting to stop bills led by corporate interests not concerned about water quality, air quality, soil health, and the health and safety of Missouri's communities. The most pressing issues this session have included:

Stronger protections for ground and surface water. Examples of bills include SB 569 filed by Sen. Steven Roberts to reinstate the public majority on the Clean Water Commission and SB 400 filed by Sen. Tracy McCreery to reinstate the authority of local governments to regulate agriculture in order to protect their residents' health.

Stronger protections around mining to prevent carcinogenic exposure to surrounding and downstream communities. We have been thrilled that Rep. Eric Woods filed HB 704 with MCE's drafted language.

Advancing innovative solutions to food insecurity with local farmers at the forefront. Gratitude to Rep. Emily Weber for championing our "food desert" bill in the House.

Fighting attempts to hold Missourians back from using the initiative petition process to advance their own policy ideas. Many legislators seem to be upset that Missourians are advancing policy reforms through the initiative petition process when the General Assembly does not do so themselves. This overreach by the General Assembly will make it harder for Missourians to use the initiative petition process, and MCE has been advocating the process stay as is.

Fighting several bills seeking to allow construction work in progress (CWIP). CWIP is a tool used by the nuclear energy industry to have their customers pay for the cost of nuclear plants before they are built and whether or not they are built and put into use.

Supporting more transparency and inter-agency communication around toxic waste contamination in North St. Louis County. We thank Rep. Doug Clemens and Rep. Donna Applebaum for their filling of HB 184 and HB 876, respectively.

You can find fact sheets on many of these bills or issues on MCE's 2025 Missouri Legislature Bill Tracker webpage. Please continue to engage with us during the rest of session and in the "off season" to educate your legislators on these topics and advocate for needed policy reforms. Stay up-to-date on our state legislative work by signing up for our "MO Leg" e-alerts.

MCE Policy and Strategy Director, Melissa Vatterott and MCE's lobbyist, Dawn Nicklas.

Advocacy Day

Here are recent photos from our Advocacy Day where we met with Dale Wright and other representatives from the Missouri legislature, as well as people impacted by crucial legislation.

Happenings and Calendar Listings



Annual Meeting & Awards Buncheon

Come join us to celebrate our past year's achievements and plan our course for the next year.

SqWire's
St. Louis
Saturday, September 20
10am-12:30pm



Chats for Change

Be part of the discussion. Come and voice your concerns and together let's forge a path forward to make things better. Join our chat groups at the following times and locations:

Cooper's Landing
Columbia
June 4
5:30-7:30pm

Modern Brewery
St. Louis
June 26
5:30-7:30pm

Mother's Brewing Co.
Springfield
July 9
5:30-7:30pm

Casual Animal Brewing Co.
Kansas City
July 23
5:30-7:30pm

Data Center Coming to KC Star

By Makenna Nickens

For almost 20 years, the iconic Kansas City Star Press Pavilion has been a facet of the city's Crossroad Arts District. It is a triangular wedge shaped building, reminiscent of a book that sits not fully closed, crafted almost entirely out of blue tinted glass and copper. It can be seen not only from above, but also below as drivers travel along Interstate 670 and are granted the opportunity to peek inside. The KC Star left the building behind in 2018 and in April of 2024, a vote was taken on whether or not to use the area for a new stadium for the Kansas City Royals Major League Baseball Team. Alongside concerns about parking and traffic infrastructure, small businesses being vacated, and tax increases, Kansas Citians also did not want to see the building go, and the ballot measure was rejected by the voters. Now, it has been confirmed that a company called Patmos is moving in with the goal to create a 100 MegaWatt Data Center centered on artificial intelligence (AI).

What is a data center?

Data centers are facilities built for the purpose of handling and directing high volumes of data and data traffic. In order to do so, these facilities are equipped with millions of dollars worth of equipment that powers, stores, processes, and transfers data. As functions that require massive levels of power and data- such as cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence- have become increasingly popular over the last several years, the need for facilities that can handle these requirements has increased as well. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the number of data centers has increased from 500,000 in 2012, to 8 million in 2024. There are currently at least 22 data centers in the Kansas City area already, according to Data Center Map, and there are more on the way. Some of the more well known names with data centers here in Kansas city include Google and Meta.

Data centers elsewhere: Silicon Prairie

Why are there so many data centers here? When we think of tech, we tend to think of Silicon Valley- an area in the Bay Area of California where a conglomerate of technology based companies are located. Now, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Colorado, North and South Dakota, and other midwestern states are being scouted as locations for what is being referred to as the "Silicon Prairie". The "Silicon Prairie" is tech migration to midwestern states that has been occurring over the last decade and continues to increase. The reasons tech industries are moving this direction are plenty. In the midwest, there is a highly favorable entrepre-

neurial environment, many world class institutions developing fresh talent in the tech space, low costs of living, and other incentives such as sales tax exemptions, like the one Missouri offers, on the millions of dollars of equipment that is purchased and used in the data centers.

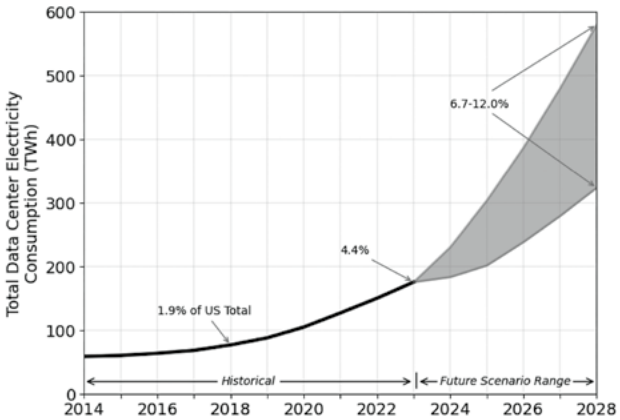
Environmental Impacts

As more and more platforms and businesses use AI technology, it is important for us to be aware of the environmental impacts that come with it. One example being that AI uses enormous amounts of energy. These data centers are open 24/7 to meet the demands of users across the globe. According to the International Energy Agency, one request through an AI assistant consumes 10 times more energy than one Google search. Energy can be produced through renewable or non-renewable means. Renewable energy, for example, includes solar energy or wind turbines. Non-renewable energy sources are often fossil fuels, coal, or nuclear power. According to the Piedmont Environmental Council, one data center facility can use between 60-90 MW of power during high demand times. This is equivalent to the power usage of more than 15,000 households. The demand to keep up with that level of power usage could push us significantly further away from a renewable or "clean" energy future. The amount of carbon emissions, i.e. greenhouse gases, from this energy expenditure would also be gigantic. By next year, data center emissions could account for 4% of all carbon emissions globally, according to the International Energy Agency.

Another environmental impact is that when these data centers are running, which is all of the time, water is needed to cool the hardware off. In an article from MIT News, it is stated that for every kilowatt (kw) hour of energy a data center consumes, it requires two liters of water for cooling. The Piedmont Environmental Council also states that a data center can also consume 3-5 million gallons of water a day for that same purpose. That is more than the water usage for a small city for an entire year. The data centers also take up a significant portion of land. For example, the KC Star Pavilion is 2 city blocks in size. And, it will join another 23 data centers in our city. That is a lot of area to be used, and those areas will bear the impact of pollution from the facilities.

Rare Earth minerals are another negative environmental impact of data centers. Materials such as cobalt, gold, silver, copper, and more are necessary to the continued production of materials that are needed for data center equipment. The environmental and health impacts of mining are expansive and very serious. A statement from an article by the Yale School of Environment also notes that many electronics are not properly recycled which can further pollute soil and water.

AI has come at us quickly, but it will be important to stay informed and engaged to protect ourselves and our environment as these industries move into our neighborhoods and to understand that they come at a cost.



Possible solutions. What can we do?

Due to the rapid acceleration and use of this technology, there has not been a substantial amount of research done on the long term implications of these facilities nor the use of AI, cloud computing, or cryptocurrency in general. However, what we can already see is worrisome. As a state, and more specifically a city, that has been pinpointed as a hub for data centers, Kansas Citians need to be vigilant. On a macro-level of engagement we need to be sure that our legislators are crafting and enforcing a plan to make sure that AI companies are transparent about their carbon footprint and following environmental protection recommendations. We need to speak with these companies and ask that they use recycled water and renewable energy where possible, and even further, to contribute to creating renewable energy sources in our metro area. As individuals, we have to limit our use of AI technologies where we can. Rather than using an AI assistant to craft a well-worded sentence, ask someone to proofread for you. Use a search engine to ask a question and comb through the results yourself. Artificial Intelligence and other advanced technologies have come at us quickly, but it will be important to stay informed and engaged to protect ourselves and our environment as these industries move into our neighborhoods and to understand that they come at a cost.

Rethinking Mining, Batteries, Renewables, and Transportation

By Jared Opsal

Missouri is at a crossroads. As we move into 2025, the state has an opportunity to lead in sustainable energy and transportation while ensuring that mining operations support—not harm—our communities. With smart investments and policies, our communities can receive economic growth while also ensuring strong environmental protections, creating a healthier, more efficient Missouri for future generations.

We need to rethink our reliance on individual transportation if we are to achieve a healthier planet and more equitable access to economic opportunities. Our expeditious transition to a zero-carbon future cannot be done in a way that places people at harm from unsafe mining operations and battery recycling and production facilities. Furthermore, we need a new system of transportation that mirrors what we see in many other countries of the world, robust inter and intra city public transportation options.

Reducing Car Dependency

The Issue: A Car-Dependent State with Rising Costs

Missouri's transportation system is heavily car-dependent, which comes at a price for people and the environment. Our cities are designed around car ownership, making it difficult to get around without one. These issues contribute to:

- More traffic congestion
- Increased road construction costs

- Higher household expenses
- Increased pollution

The cost of car ownership—now averaging over $12,000 a year—is rising, as are traffic congestion and pollution. As some Missouri cities struggle to maintain clean air quality for their residents, the need for clean transportation solutions is clear.

The Solution: Smart Investments in Public Transit and Infrastructure

Investing in electric buses, light rail expansion, and bike-friendly streets can reduce emissions and provide Missourians with cost-effective alternatives to car ownership. Some local examples include:

Kansas City's Bus Program—The city's Zero-Fare Transit Initiative has increased bus ridership and reduced traffic congestion. Expanding this program to include electric buses could further lower emissions.

Proposed Expansion of Amtrak Services—MODOT plans to expand Amtrak passenger rail services across the state and in connection with other interstate train routes, as proposed by the Federal Railroad Administration. This would offer a greener travel alternative.

What Missourians Can Do: Advocate for transit funding by **contacting state and federal representatives and senators** and supporting local initiatives that expand public transportation options.

Public Transit Running on Clean Energy

The Issue: Public Transit Still Runs on Fossil Fuels

While Missouri's major cities have bus systems, most still run on diesel fuel, contributing to air pollution and health risks.

The Solution: Investing in Electric City Transit

Cities across the U.S. are switching to zero-emission buses, and Missouri should follow suit.

St. Louis Metro's Electric Bus Transition – St. Louis is transitioning to electric buses, with the first batch already on the road. This move reduces diesel pollution, improving air quality.

Columbia's Pilot Program – Columbia, MO, has started investing in electric buses as part of its Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP), adopted in 2017.

What Missourians Can Do: Urge MoDOT to **prioritize electric bus investments** in upcoming budgets and support **ballot measures** for transit funding .

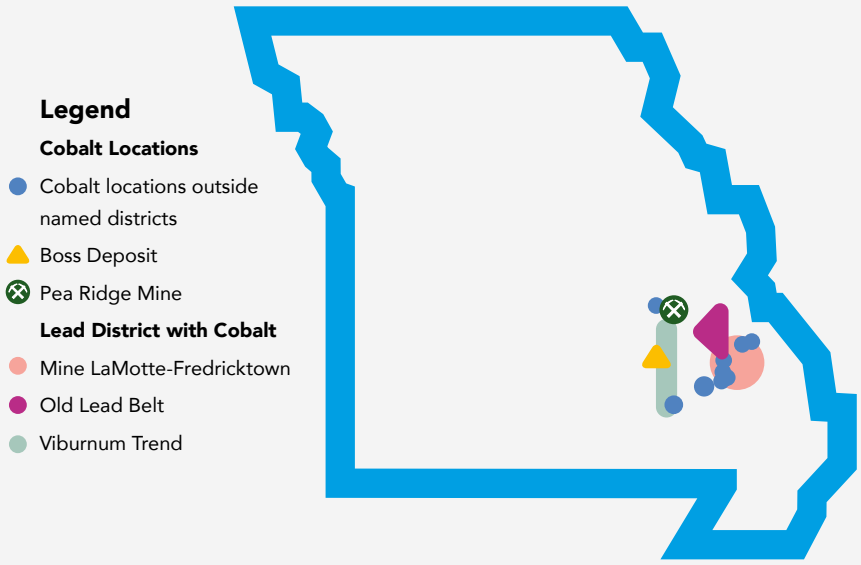
Thoughtful Mining and Battery Production

The Issue: Mining's Environmental and Community Risks

Missouri has a long mining history, including silica and limestone mining, where unregulated operations have caused soil and water contamination that has put people in danger. Missouri also has lithium, cobalt, and rare-earth elements that are valuable for producing batteries but can cause hazardous consequences for surrounding communities.

Cobalt Locations in Missouri

Map showing locations of cobalt production and occurances in Missouri



We need to rethink our reliance on individual transportation if we are to achieve a healthier planet and more equitable access to economic opportunities.

The Solution: Mining with Stronger Oversight

Missouri can attract environmentally responsible mining companies while enforcing strict safety regulations. The state must require mining companies to use techniques that ensure workers and the community are protected.

What Missourians Can Do: Push for state laws that require **sustainable mining practices** and support companies that **recycle batteries instead of mining new materials.**

Expanding Renewable Energy in Missouri

The Problem: Missouri Still Relies Heavily on Coal

In 2023, coal fueled 59% of Missouri's electricity net generation, and seven of the state's 10 largest power plants are coal-fired, ranking among the highest in the U.S. In 2023, about 24 million tons of coal were burned for electricity generation in Missouri, the second-most in any state, only behind Texas. Our state also uses a whopping eight times more energy than it currently produces.

The Solution: Invest in Wind, Solar, and Battery Storage

Missouri can expand its renewable energy sources and become less dependent on coal. States like Iowa get 60% of their energy from wind, and Missouri can do the same with investment.

One great example of a city in Missouri taking action to diversify its energy sources is Kansas City's Solar Initiative, which helped the city expand solar panel installation incentives across the city.

What Missourians Can Do: Support pro-renewable policies and consider **solar panel installation programs** for homes and businesses.

A Call to Action for a Greener Missouri

Missouri is uniquely positioned to become a leader in sustainable energy, eco-conscious mining practices, and cleaner public transportation while protecting its communities from harmful environmental impacts.

By taking action in one or more of these areas, Missourians can create a cleaner environment and healthier communities for future generations.

The Underbelly of Green Growth: Life Cycle Impact of Batteries

By Maxine Gill

We are at an exciting moment in the development of green technology. Sales of electric and hybrid vehicles accounted for a record-breaking 20% of new car sales in 2024, and as of January 2025 there are 590 electric vehicle models available worldwide. In the U.S., we are generating more wind and solar energy than ever before, accounting for approximately 18% of U.S. electricity production and surpassing both nuclear and coal. **This clean energy growth is expected to explode**– according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, wind and solar power is projected to grow 75% from 2023 to 2025.

What else is exploding?

The facilities where batteries for these technologies are recycled. Last October, a battery recycling plant owned by Critical Mineral Recovery caught fire and erupted in Madison County, Missouri. Similarly, large battery storage facilities broke into flames in September of last year in San Diego, CA, and in January of this year in Monterey County, CA. These explosions and fires require evacuations of the surrounding area, and in the case of Fredericktown, the discharge of PFAS-containing fire fighting foam, contaminating the water system with this potent carcinogen.

There are significant hazards to navigate in the life cycle of batteries

The entire process can be hazardous, from mining and processing rare earth minerals to the manufacture and recycling of the finished product. While ramping up battery production is necessary to facilitate the transition from internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles to EV's and create reliable wind and solar power, we must pause and consider its impact.

Madison County, MO houses the largest deposit of Cobalt in North America

Cobalt is a critical mineral used in lithium ion batteries. In addition to hosting the CRM battery recycling facility, the cobalt industry has applied for permits indicating their intention to set up a vertically integrated mining, processing, and manufacturing facility just outside of Fredericktown at the Madison Mine site. This area already faces significant lead contamination as a legacy of lead mining at the same site beginning in the early 1700s. This mining operation will compound that exposure, exposing nearby residents to a plethora of contaminants, includ-

Critical Mineral Recovery explosion and fire near Fredericktown, MO from 2024.

ing additional lead and other harmful heavy metals. MCE representatives have been attending biweekly community meetings in Fredericktown in the aftermath of the CMR explosion to understand residents' key concerns and help them strategize to protect their health and safety in the face of the unregulated mining industry.

The impact of the battery industry is far from isolated to one area of the state: in North St. Louis City, Israeli Chemicals Limited (ICL) intends to construct a large scale lithium iron phosphate (LFP) manufacturing facility– the first of its kind in the country. The proposed facility is sited in a predominantly Black census tract marked as highly disadvantaged according to census data due to (among other factors) exposure to legacy pollution, high rates of chronic health conditions including asthma, and low average incomes. Community members have approached MCE staff expressing frustration at the placement of yet another environmental hazard in North City despite these risk factors. Residents point to a hypocrisy in the tax incentives provided to ICL to attract this facility to St. Louis City while local residents continue to experience structural disinvestment, with the city failing to meet their basic needs.

Because this technology is so new we lack information about the impact of these facilities let alone state protections, yet this industry is rapidly scaling up. Federal regulations fall short of adequately protecting Missourians from these hazards, and Missouri lacks comprehensive statewide mining regulations. That is why at MCE, we are looking towards a more comprehensive strategy to create regulatory oversight on the whole lifecycle process of batteries.

For the second successive legislative session, Representative Eric Woods has introduced legislation we wrote proposing a permitting process for mining in the state, and mandating certain basic community protections such as setbacks from residential areas and other public spaces. Madison and St. Francois County residents have accompanied us to the Capitol to advocate for this proposed language filed as HB 704. To truly move this bill, however, we need added constituent pressure to convince legislators that the status quo will not suffice in the face of a rapidly expanding battery industry.

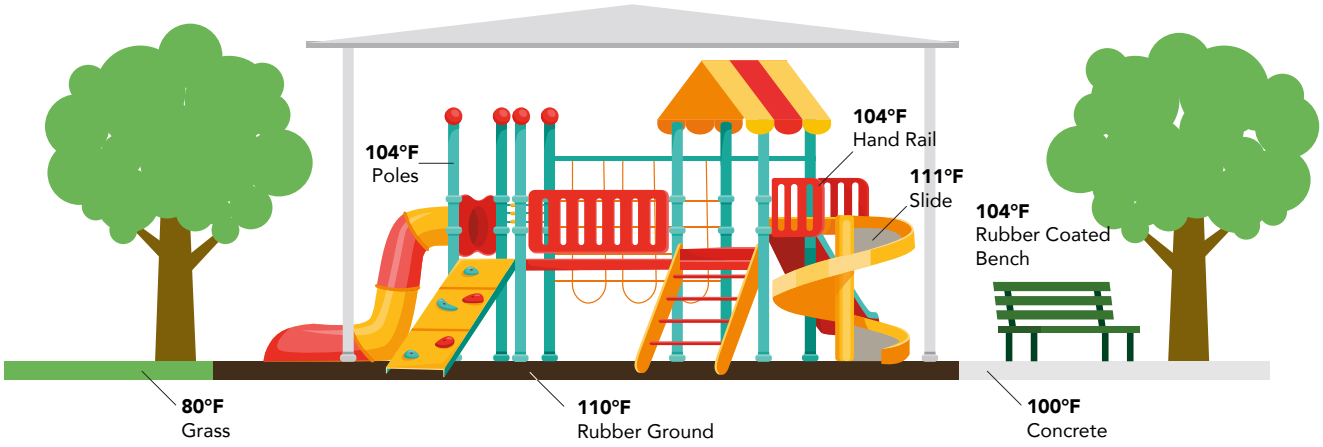
To meet the energy needs of a growing population sustainably we need green growth

This growth includes the expansion of renewables and electric vehicles. However, we need to proceed wisely in this transition to avoid emulating the mistakes of past industrial expansion and minimize harm to environmental and public health.

Learn more about our stance on rare earth element mining and recycling facilities on our website and stay engaged with your elected officials to demand both a thoughtful and fast transition to a zero-carbon future that protects Missouri's people and their environment: bit.ly/414meP2

Full Sun Playground

Shaded Playground



Common temperature changes on 95-100°F day

Extreme Urban Heat Updates

By Elyse Schaeffer

It's confirmed: Summer of 2024 was the hottest summer in recorded history, second only to 2023. While we enjoy the coming of spring, we must also prepare for the increasingly dangerous temperatures in store. MCE is doing so by creating a policy plan that will aim to help protect city of St. Louis residents from the worst effects of extreme heat and mitigate the causes of rising temperatures.

In the fall, we held six community meetings at six locations across the city and one virtual meeting in March. We prioritized neighborhoods where a larger percent of the population is more likely to suffer from heat illness based on age, heart or lung conditions, and income. During each 75 minute session, we asked open-endedly what each participant's biggest concerns are during dangerously hot conditions. Then everyone participated in a live, online survey where all were asked to rank various concerns at the personal, neighborhood, and city-wide levels.

What we heard

The primary concern attendees expressed was rising utility costs. Despite $3.4 billion in payouts to shareholders and their top executive earning over $9 million, Ameren was in the top seven utilities in the nation for customer disconnections last year. Meanwhile, our community is deeply worried about

how we will cool our homes when St. Louis begins to experience 125 degree days. Additionally, the third most-voiced concern was grid reliability. Higher temperatures increases the demand for air conditioning, which puts more strain on electricity infrastructure. In Ameren's service territory, 44% of our electricity was coal-powered and 29% was powered by methane gas in 2023. These sources release more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, in turn causing the temperatures to continue to rise. Increased access to solar power was the most suggested solution to both of these problems.

Participants were also expressed that there simply isn't enough information available about the issue of heat. Desire exists for more or better communication about cooling centers, tree care, access to public water (such as splash pads, pools, and water fountains), utility assistance programs, health messaging during heat events, and how to effectively run the type of air conditioning available. Beyond information, St. Louisans want more infrastructure to combat the heat. Suggested changes included more cooling centers, better maintenance of trees, more frequent public transportation, and bus shelters that provide relief from the heat.

Building infrastructure was another focus of these sessions. St. Louis City's housing stock is old. The median age of houses in the city is over 100 years old. Though beautiful and historic, this also means that expensive updates must be made to many buildings in order to make them as energy efficient as newer buildings. Though possible, retrofitting buildings with white roofs, green roofs, and/or HVAC units requires a significant financial investment for homeowners. Renters may not have influence over whether such changes are even considered.

Finally, our conversations were deeply people-oriented. Attendees understood that certain members of our community face a higher risk of heat illness. This includes people who: are 65 years old, are under 5 years old, have chronic heart or lung conditions, use certain prescription and/or recreational drugs, and/or are low income (and thus have more limited access to housing, air conditioning, and/or personal vehicles). Black St. Louisans are over-represented amongst many of these groups, and so the racial justice component of the issue of extreme heat also entered several of our conversations.

Heat advisory board

In addition to one time engagements, MCE has also established an ongoing, paid Heat Advisory Board composed of community members who have been personally affected by heat illness or have lived experiences that make them more likely to experience the adverse effects of heat. During the first meeting of this group, Board members provided feedback to the same questions asked in the public input sessions and reviewed the results of those sessions.

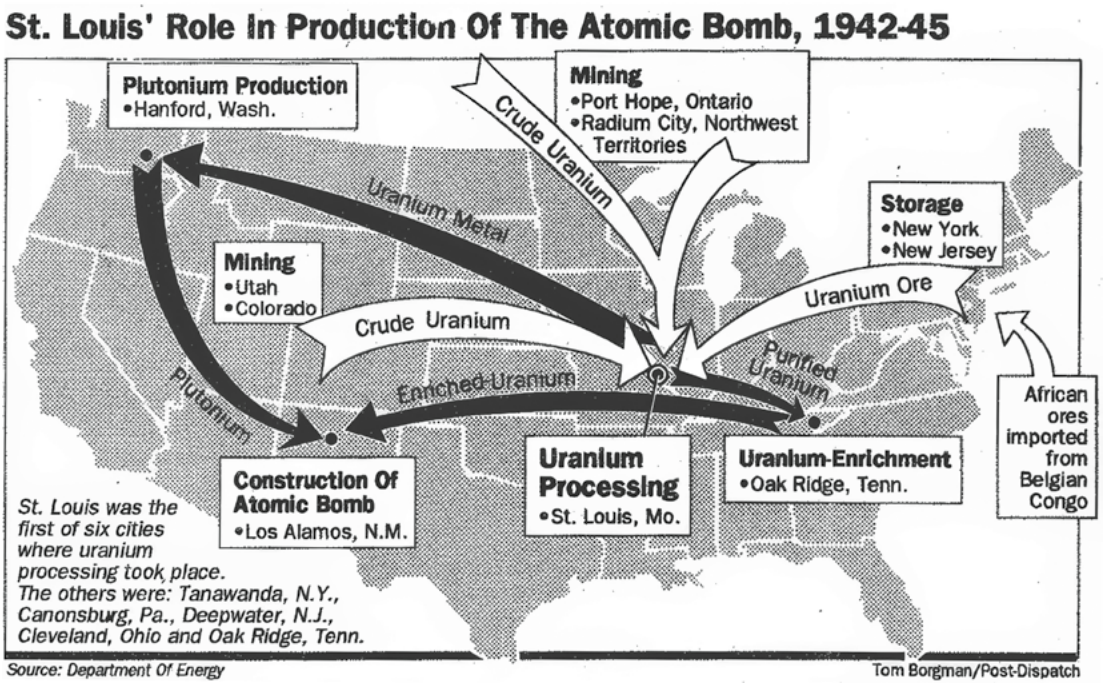
The Heat Advisory Board will meet three more times between now and January 2026. In our next meeting, the group will review a draft of the Extreme Heat Plan. Subsequent meetings will focus on advocacy strategy to influence our elected officials to implement the solutions presented by the plan.

What comes next

When a draft of the plan is complete, we will hold six more community feedback sessions. In those meetings, we will present a draft of the plan and ask attendees whether the policies proposed address the needs of St. Louis city residents. Stay tuned for details on when, where, and how to attend those sessions.

You are an essential part of making this plan a success. The Board of Alderman will want to know that the policy changes we are suggesting are desired by city residents. We will call on you to make your voices heard!

Contact Elyse Schaeffer to become engaged in our work to address extreme urban heat at eschaeffer@moenvironment.org



Radiation Updates

By Christen Commuso

Brief History

The St. Louis and St. Charles region played a pivotal role during World War II and the subsequent Cold War by purifying the uranium needed to develop the world's first atomic weapons. This process generated millions of tons of hazardous radioactive waste, which is now scattered in hotspots throughout the community, contaminating groundwater and the soils of residential yards, schools, parks, private businesses, and a nearby landfill. Residents living near these sites are suffering from rare cancers, autoimmune diseases, and birth defects.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) leads the remedial actions at the St. Louis Downtown Site and the North County Sites, including hundreds of vicinity properties along 14 miles of Coldwater Creek. The efforts at the West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton are led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) where they are still in the design phase of the remedy. All together the cleanup is expected to take approximately another fifteen years. Even then, some waste will remain in the community and require perpetual monitoring.

For a more detailed history and timeline, please visit our website under the Remediated Waste tab.

Christen Commuso speaking at a recent public meeting

Legislative Updates: US Congress

Missouri's Senior Senator Josh Hawley has reintroduced the bipartisan-supported Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act, S.243. Co-sponsors of the bill include senators from New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho. This marks the third time the reauthorization bill has been introduced. It successfully passed out of the Senate twice last year—first as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and again as a stand-alone bill in March 2024. However, both of those bills failed to advance in the House.

In Missouri, the bill aims to compensate victims or the family members of deceased victims who developed specific cancers related to radiation exposure from the United States' nuclear weapons program, provided they lived in an affected area for a consecutive two years. Additionally, the program would facilitate free medical screenings and outreach within the affected communities.

MCE has partnered with community organizations to join a national coalition advocating for the reauthorization and expansion of the program. Together, we will continue to fight for justice for all Americans and Tribal Nations harmed by our country's national security interests.

Missouri General Assembly

We are actively advocating for the passage of three bills related to hazardous or radioactive waste in the state of Missouri.

HB 876 (Sponsor: Rep. Applebaum): Modifies property disclosure and right-of-entry requirements regarding radioactive or hazardous materials to include tenants and offers lease termination protections. Tenants deserve to be informed of radioactive contamination to protect their health and safety.

HB 184 (Sponsor: Rep. Clemens): Requires a notice of intent to excavate to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to check whether the excavation is in a site contaminated with hazardous waste. The DNR needs to be added to the Underground Facility Safety and Damage Prevention Act no-

tification center call list to help prevent disturbance of contaminated soil or groundwater.

HB 516 (Sponsor: Rep. Matthiesen): Modifies criteria of hazardous waste investigations and increases the hazardous waste fund appropriations. Due to widespread radioactive waste contamination, the DNR needs adequate funding to test properties beyond the federally recognized sites.

Please remember to sign up for our e-alerts to track bills and receive calls to action.

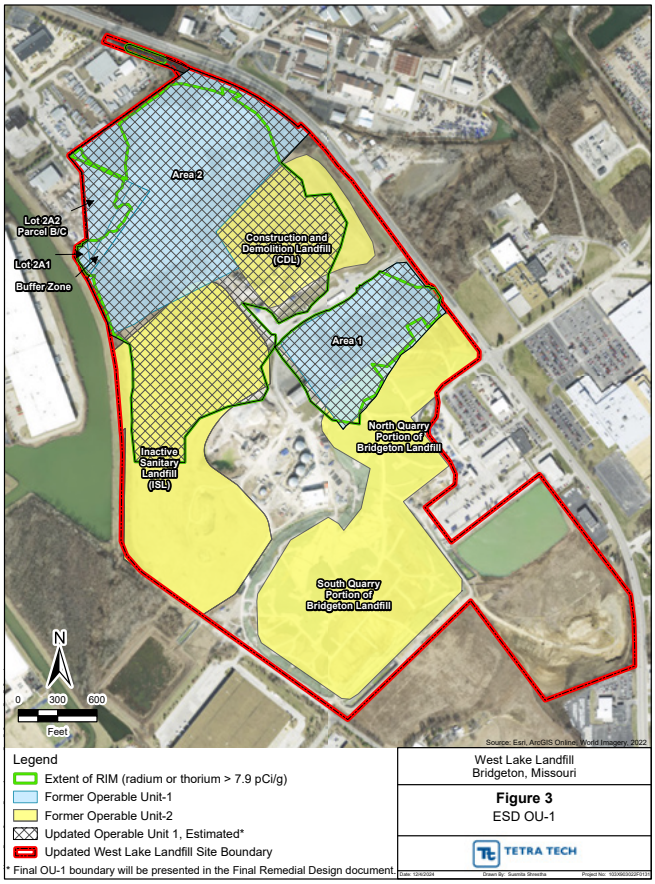
Site Updates: St. Louis Downtown Site

Since 1997, the USACE has removed 345,390 cubic yards or approximately 4,161 railcars of radioactive waste from the processing facility and surrounding properties. So far there have been 53 properties/areas released for beneficial use. Remedial activities continue.

North County Sites

The USACE has recently completed remediation efforts along the banks of Coldwater Creek beneath the McDonnell Boulevard bridge, enabling St. Louis County to safely replace the deteriorating infrastructure. Currently, USACE is working to remove radioactive waste located beneath McDonnell Boulevard itself. This waste contains some of the most radioactive material still found in the community, with samples showing nearly 20,000 picocuries per gram of soil. For comparison, the natural background radiation in the area averages just 1.49 picocuries per gram. In total, USACE will remove 58,311 cubic yards of contaminated material from under the bridge and roadway. Later this spring, USACE plans to begin remedial activities at multiple sites south of St. Denis Street located in the floodplain of Coldwater Creek.

MCE was invited to provide comments on the North County Sites' upcoming Five-Year Review of the Record of Decision (ROD) aka cleanup plan. In 2024, we collaborated with the Washington University Environmental Law Clinic to coauthor a 29-page letter to USACE detailing our concerns with the ROD and suggestions for improvement.



West Lake Landfill

In January, the EPA released an Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) for the West Lake Landfill Site. ESDs are issued when non-fundamental adjustments to a Record of Decision (ROD) or Record of Decision Amendment (RODA) are needed. In this case, sampling revealed the presence of radioactive material in areas that were previously deemed clean, necessitating changes to the boundaries established in the 2018 RODA. Additional adjustments for efficiency are also being made.

OU-1 = radioactive areas
OU-2 = nonradioactive areas

Adjustments include:

- An expansion of OU-1 boundaries and a decrease in the extent of OU-2.
- An increase in the estimated cost to clean up OU-1.
- A decrease in the estimated cost to clean up OU-2.
- Permission to use a lower slope on top of the landfill, due to the age of the waste.
- A change to allow flexibility for direct loading of excavated Radiologically Impacted Material (RIM) into closed containers to speed up the shipment of material from the site.
- Changing to pre-excavation confirmation sampling to minimize delays during excavation.
- Eliminating the requirement for an on-site lab. Samples will be analyzed by a certified commercial lab off-site instead.

Completing the ESD is an essential step toward finalizing the design phase of the cleanup plan. Unfortunately, the EPA cannot provide a timeframe for when remediation will begin.

While the community appreciates the expanded testing, the results are incredibly frustrating for residents who have been advocating for additional testing for over a decade. Their requests were consistently met with false promises and reassurances by the EPA, who claimed to know where all the waste was located within the landfill complex. Clearly, the recent findings contradict this assertion, causing the community to feel justified in their long-standing concerns and worried about what else may have been overlooked. This validation is not what anyone ever wanted, but it does leave many in the community to say, "We told you so."

Missouri Coalition for the Environment

Staff List

Christen Commuso: Policy Specialist

Maxine Gill: Policy Coordinator

Carmen Harris: Development Director

Jim Karpowicz: Community Outreach Specialist, Mid Missouri

Makenna Nickens: Community Outreach Specialist, Kansas City

Jared Opsal: Executive Director

Elyse Schaeffer: Policy Coordinator

Melissa Vatterott: Policy and Strategy Director

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