

Conservation Stands Firm in the Capitol



Conservation Day at the Capitol attendees browse the booths that filled the 3rd floor rotunda. Credit: Emma Kessinger.

The 2015 Missouri General Assembly Legislative Session presented a multitude of challenges. Numerous bills were introduced that would have drastically altered the course of conservation in this state forever. The Conservation Federation of Missouri accepted the challenge and went to work on behalf of all Missourians who cherish our state's incredible wildlife and natural resources.

To counter this onslaught of negative legislation, CFM developed and implemented a strategic plan that included grassroots organizing, hiring lobbyists, developing a Legislative Action Center and engaging the media.

Conservation Day at

the Capitol was an event the CFM hosted in the rotunda to bring legislators together with representatives of nearly 30 conservation organizations, hundreds of citizens and



many members of the media. The event showcased an untied front, while highlighting the diverse conservation interests of Missouri citizens.

CFM retained the services of

Schreimann, Rackers, Francka and Blunt L.L.C. This reputable lobbying firm came highly recommended and did not disappoint. Andy Blunt and Mark Schwartz were very dedicated to our efforts of stopping detrimental legislation from becoming law. Their established relationships with legislators on both sides of the aisle opened doors for CFM, so we could present

information and explain why these bills were bad for Missouri.

Many media members took it upon themselves to write articles and broadcast news about the legislative attacks on conservation. CFM rallied 17 media members together for a media camp in January, where each attendee was briefed on what was happening. We continued to work with individual media members throughout the session to be sure legislative news was reaching the public.

CFM created a free online Legislative Action Center to provide citizens a platform where they could engage in the legislative process. The Legislative Action Center provides information about bills, informs users of who their legislators are and allows them to communicate with those legislators with the click of a button.

"Relationship building is, and will continue to be, the key to future successful legislative sessions. Through our office we were able to bring the message to over forty elected officials including House and Senate Leadership, those with perceived anti-conservation goals, and those in the inner-city that rarely, if ever, learn about the unique programs offered by CFM and the Department," said Mark Schwartz of SRFB.

Relationship building is time consuming and mundane, but we are doing a good job of it. This past session put CFM to the test, and on track to be more effective than ever at the Capitol. With the help of SRFB, we will continue to foster these relationships, and create new ones, as the elected officials term limit out.

I am pleased to say none of the legislation that would have negatively affected conservation was passed into law. This is quite an accomplishment considering how many bills were written and heard in committee throughout the session.

See you down the trail...

Brandon Butler
Executive Director,
CFM