

## **Making Ripples**

### **Grand Opening of the Kessler Mountain Regional Park**

by Amanda Bancroft

Sometimes a single project can make ripples across various topics like human health, the environment, and the economy simultaneously. They are few and far between, but certainly admirable and to be emulated whenever possible. One of these projects is saving Mt. Kessler in Fayetteville, which has brought together a small country's worth of organizations, companies, and private landowners to create a beautiful park, nature reserve, educational center, and more.

The Grand Opening of the Kessler Mountain Regional Park, located at 2600 W. Judge Cummings Road, was held Saturday August 20<sup>th</sup> for a sizable crowd that braved the drizzle to attend. The new park is a sports complex with many types of athletic fields linked to wooded mountain trails for biking and hiking in the reserve. There are several phases of construction which are not yet complete, so anticipate seeing a "work in progress" if you decide to visit this gorgeous park surrounded by mountains typical of our Ozark terrain.

The area was once a landfill and neglected farm full of invasive plant species, making it perhaps a more ideal location to host large sporting events than, say, a sensitive habitat. The now-capped landfill used to be a place where people went to dump trash, according to Mark Kinion, city council member. Now, people will go there to get exercise on the paved and soft-surface trails, play sports, fuel the tourism economy, and learn about environmental topics like botany and the importance of stream restoration (to name a few).

Yes, many separate organizations, families, and funding sources have made the preservation and enjoyment of Mt. Kessler possible through many different projects throughout at least fifteen years of planning and implementation, and all should be commended for such hard work. But to the streams, the tree roots, and the wildlife, it's all one mountain interconnected within one in the same project. Future generations will experience a unified Mt. Kessler in a multiplicity of ways thanks to the groundwork laid and history made this month.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: [www.RipplesBlog.org](http://www.RipplesBlog.org).