



GREENSFELDER PARK

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

FROM ROCK GARDENS TO LIMESTONE SHELVES,
A LACK OF MOUNTAINS HASN'T HELD 'EM BACK

Words and photographs by: Matt James, Mesa Cycles

The screams from the nearby roller coaster have fallen silent over Greensfelder County Park as the last of the autumn leaves drop onto the rolling hillsides. These hills, which stretch through the Henry Shaw Ozark corridor surrounding the Meramec River in Eastern Missouri, hold a fast expanding network of exceptional singletrack.

The park has formed part of the backbone of the St. Louis area mountain bike system for years. As the centerpiece trail network in the area, Greensfelder showcases the potential held in this river town, and the dedication and skill of the local trail-building coalition, the Gateway Off-Road Cyclists or GORC.

Rescued from the mining and lumber industries that had made the area their home since the late 19th century, Greensfelder was donated as a park in 1963. It became a haven for equestrians, the all-use trails consisting of fall line construction, prone to erosion under the weight of many hooves. Cyclists were limited to six miles of trail, which they watched slowly turn into trenches from a combination of poor design and abuse.

But in 2004, GORC fashioned a partnership with the St. Louis County Parks. “Up to that point, we had only been involved with St. Charles County trails. Our first re-route was on the west side of the park where we re-routed a half-mile of trail and proved ourselves,” says GORC President Bryan Adams.

After the initial work, GORC was given the green light to complete a full redesign of one of the park’s neglected trails, the Dogwood loop. Adams says the goal was to design to IMBA standards, transforming the primarily equestrian trails into multi-use ones. The Dogwood redesign took two years; then the group moved east through the park, improving trail flow and adding distance in a long-term plan to build an urban epic.

Maintaining the flavor of aggressive rock formations and technical descents, GORC has only helped defined the trails’ natural sculptures. Swooping, high-speed singletrack flows around fins of river valley hillsides, threading through immense rock gardens and over series of limestone shelves. Tight switchbacks have replaced the steep fall lines, and are supported by intricate rockwork that adds longevity. Despite the lack of mountains, Missouri trail riders receive nearly unending elevation change that delivers constant challenges and variety.

All of this is located 30 minutes from downtown St. Louis—an ideal destination for technically savvy riders.

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Greensfelder is home, in fact, to three distinct loops with 15 miles of trail. The redesigned Dogwood loop is 2.6 miles of screaming fast, banked singletrack flowing in and out of gullies on the west side of the park. It's a great way to get a taste of Greensfelder before committing to the longer, technical DeClue loop, which hosts some of the park's most challenging features, including numerous limestone rock faces and boulder-strewn hillsides.

Stringing the park together is the Eagle Valley double track. It's a breather from the more technical terrain but is undergoing a facelift of its own, gaining singletrack on either end.

Greensfelder is a work in progress—fully supported by St. Louis County Parks. **“We work hand in hand with the parks on designing and developing more trails in Greensfelder,”** says Adams. “We’ve worked with them to move trails off private lands and onto public lands, cementing our relationship and allowing them to develop a respect for our organization.”

This partnership is crucial to the trails’ long-term future. With the entire park now accessible to mountain bikers, GORC is free to develop their 10-year plan. “As we expand into other areas of the park, we can get away from re-routes and develop totally new sections of trail, which allows us to use better design techniques,” says Adams.

And riders of St. Louis can be confident that Greensfelder’s miles of fast-rolling, technical singletrack will stand the test of time. 🚲

For more info on riding in St. Louis contact Mesa Cycles.
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