



# Celebrate Life on the River at the 13th Annual Mississippi Earthtones Festival

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ALTON - The Mississippi Earthtones Festival, co-organized by Alton Main Street and the Sierra Club, is a celebration of our river through art, music, and conservation. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in September has been proclaimed as “Mississippi Earthtones Festival Day” in the City of Alton, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual event falls on September 21<sup>st</sup>, promising to attract thousands of people to Broadway. The street will be closed to traffic between Easton Street and Langdon Street from Noon until 10:00 p.m.

“At the MEF, we showcase our region’s environmental organizations, as well as local businesses that are working to help “green” residents’ lives,” said Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street. “We encourage the community to join us for this momentous occasion and spend the day exploring the wide variety of locally-owned businesses on Broadway.”

This year’s theme is “Time”, and local artists have been commissioned to build large installations that will enhance the festival through interactive art experiences. There will be an amazing scavenger hunt throughout the grounds in partnership with Alton Room Escape. The Riverbend Yarn Bombers are knitting & crocheting a colorful cozy for a full-sized canoe, and chalk artists will decorate the street with large colorful mandalas.

Dozens of local artisans and upcycles will offer their nature-inspired, hand-made, and environmentally-friendly wares. There will be a huge selection of local food & beverages on-site, and several agencies will be teaching consumers how to incorporate more sustainable practices into their daily lives.

Volunteers are needed at the festival grounds, and anyone who pitches in will receive a free festival t-shirt. Sign up on the Events page of [www.DowntownAlton.com](http://www.DowntownAlton.com).

Volunteers can also participate in the MEF River Clean Up, which will take place the following Saturday, Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>. Boats will ferry volunteers to clean up riverbanks and islands from 9 am-12 pm, and pre-registration is required to reserve your seat.

Volunteers can sign up in person at the festival or register online. Approximately 33 tons of trash have been removed from the Mississippi River during MEF clean-ups to date, with more than 20,000 volunteer hours contributed so far.

There will be several agencies on hand to teach consumers how to incorporate more sustainable practices into their daily lives, along with companies featuring Earth-friendly products and services. “This year’s event offers strong education components that are working towards a sustainable future,” says Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Co-Coordinator for Alton’s Sierra Club.

“The Sierra Club just celebrated its 127th Birthday in the United States, and Alton has had an active group, The Piasa Palisades Group, for 46 years! We are excited to share our history at the festival in a variety of ways...look for our footsteps through time in the festival grounds.”

A variety of fun and educational activities are planned for families from Noon until 6:00 p.m. Check out a daystar solar scope at The Nature Institute booth, and learn about the ecology of the river with the Illinois Natural History Survey’s Great Rivers Field Station. Kids can make a wind chime at the Sierra Club booth and learn about the goods that were traded by Native American populations who lived along the Mississippi River.

Native animal experts will be on-hand for questions and answers; learn about and visit with rehabilitated creatures at the Treehouse Wildlife Center booth.

The Alton Museum of History & Art will present on river history and folk art from our area, the Better Building Institute will teach about energy efficiency, zero-energy home building, and energy audits. The Midwest Renewable Energy Association will be sharing details on the “Grow Solar Metro East” group buy program that helps residents pool their buying power to secure significant discounts that make installing solar more affordable. Property owners can visit an informational booth regarding energy efficient retail product incentives offered by Ameren Illinois. At the 1 Mississippi booth you can sign a petition to utilize natural infrastructure for flood resistance. Heartlands Conservancy will be promoting their Conservation@Home program with an interactive activity about gardening with native plants. Learn about upcoming policy matters with the Illinois Environmental Council, and visit the National Great Rivers Research & Education Center booth to learn about big river research where kids will learn how macroinvertebrates are used by scientists as indicators of water quality.

Dozens of local artisans will offer their nature-inspired, hand-made, and environmentally-friendly wares. You’ll find wearable art such as tie dyes, knit and crocheted items, handmade pet accessories and upcycled jewelry. A variety of handmade all-natural soap and handcrafted body care products will be available and you’ll also find unique home décor, nature themed artwork and photography.

Other special features include a school bus that has been converted into a time machine that is solar powered by Excel Home Solar, take a relaxing ride down the street in a custom-built BarcaLounger Rickshaw with Ralph's Rickshaw Ride for Polio who will be there peddling festival-goers down Broadway to visit the current exhibit at Jacoby Arts Center and enjoy a kids activity at AltonWorks. Henna tattoos and face painting will be available, and there will also be chair massages and guided group meditation sessions offered throughout the day with the Tranquility Exchange.

Wind-powered music will fill the air from two stages throughout the day. The entertainment line-up on the Main Stage will feature Rock from Spiller Nelson from Noon-2:00, a drum circle with Raw Earth from 2:00-2:30 p.m., Big George Jr. & the NGK Band performing Blues and 60s & 70s dance tunes from 2:30-4:30 p.m., Non-stop Reggae from 4:45-6:45 p.m., and from 7:00-10:00 p.m. headliner Sean Canan's Voodoo Players will play a variety of songs originally performed at Woodstock 50 years ago this summer.

At 4:30 on the Main Stage, three local champions for the environment will be presented with the Confluence Conservation Leadership Award: April Gray, founder of the non-profit organization Trinity’s Way whose volunteers focus on cleaning up our

environment among other endeavors, Toni Oplt Chairwoman of the Metro East Green Alliance who authors a local healthy food blog called “Green Gal of the Midwest”, and Libby Reuter - a painter and found-object sculptor, whose Watershed Cairns project educates the public on water issues through beautiful glass art installations. Awarded each year since 2007, The Mississippi Earthtones Festival Committee recognizes local residents who have made significant contributions in environmental conservation in the Riverbend region. The 2019 recipients have worked tirelessly to advocate, educate and inspire action in areas of environmental education, sustainability, and land conservation.

The Jacoby Arts Center Stage will feature Raw Earth playing Urban Tribal Fusion, percussion and World Jazz from Noon - 1:00 p.m., from 1:30-2:00 p.m. you can meet Ed the Pelican with the Treehouse Wildlife Center, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. guests will enjoy Artists in the Spotlight Dance Performances from four different dance troupes, Grass & Stone will perform Indie Folk Rock from 3:30-4:30 p.m. and at 4:45 a Recycled Fashion Show will be presented featuring garments made from materials that would have otherwise ended up in the landfill or recycling facility.

Come hungry because there will be a great selection of local food & beverages on site. The Old Bakery Beer Company will be serving smoked chicken tacos and impossible meat tacos as well as organic craft beer and beer slushies. The Brown Bag Bistro will offer chili and chili-dogs, ham & cheese sliders and a beer trailer, and Gentelin's on Broadway will offer Santa Fe Wraps and Jerry Berry Lemonade: organic vodka, lemonade, strawberries, and blueberries. Big Boys Q and Southern Soul Food will offer pulled pork, burnt ends, brats and hot dogs, plus two great sides that are vegetarian-friendly: red beans & rice and collard greens. Melvey's Place will have a beer booth, and Team Honduras will offer walking tacos and caramel apples. Festival-goers can also pick up a variety of great snacks, including mini donut bowls and gourmet popcorn from Poputopia, Bubba Grump Smoked Pretzels, and eight varieties of pork rinds and lemon shake-ups from B&C Concessions.

Broadway businesses are preparing to roll out the red carpet for the crowd, and a number of shops will have displays and merchandise on the sidewalk along with open houses indoors. There is ample parking for festival attendees in the Farmers' & Artisans' Market parking lot, located at 501 Landmarks Blvd.; guests can simply walk across the pedestrian bridge directly to the event.

This festival is held annually as part of the State of Illinois' “It's Our River Day” initiative to celebrate Illinois watersheds through education, recreation and conservation. Alton's free community river celebration would not be possible without the generosity of its sponsors. Alton Main Street and the Sierra Club express their sincere appreciation to the following local businesses and organizations for supporting the event: the City of Alton, Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, Simmons Hanly Conroy, Midwest

Members Credit Union, Mathis, Marifian & Richter, Argosy Casino Alton, TheBANK of Edwardsville>Busey Bank, Alton Materials, Village of Godfrey, Madison County Planning & Development, The Nature Institute, Lewis & Clark Community College Sustainability Department, The Old Bakery Beer Company, Renewal by Andersen, Illinois Natural History Survey, AltonWorks, Illinois American Water, Jacoby Arts Center, Excel Home Solar Illinois, Day & Night Solar, Heartlands Conservancy, Ameren Illinois, The Telegraph, Riverbender.com, WBGZ Radio, and AdVantage News.

To register for any of these activities, check out the festival map, read the festival's "Green Guidelines" or sign up to volunteer please visit [www.DowntownAlton.com](http://www.DowntownAlton.com). To stay up-to-date on announcements, please visit: [www.facebook.com/EarthtonesFestival](http://www.facebook.com/EarthtonesFestival).