

2023

WATERSHED

ANNUAL REPORT



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

PREFACE

The work of watershed protection is complex and multi-faceted but is simplified nicely with a Fishbone Diagram (see below). Our mission is the backbone. It is central to everything we do and directs all of our moves. The tail propels us. We are driven by our ethic, our passion, our desire to be stewards, and ultimately by love—love for creation/the earth and love for our work and community. The body of the fish is a dynamic mix of parts which work both independently and in synchrony. Each component is part of something bigger, much like our projects, programs, people, funders, volunteers, and educational endeavors. All of these components add up to something bigger than the sum of their parts. This plan is represented by the sections summarized in the bones of the diagram below. The head, the direction we are always swimming, is what we actualize as we work toward accomplishing our mission: **Clean water...for life!**



PASSION, STEWARDSHIP, LOVE, AND ETHIC POWERS OUR MISSION AND PURSUIT OF CLEAN WATER FOR LIFE

2023 Takeaways



Estimated 2,689 acres impacted by conservation efforts through WCC



2,718 Native plants distributed



5,072 students engaged in field trips at the Watershed Center



642 feet of Streambank Stabilization



36 Water quality samples from local springs



1,930 Native seed packets distributed



2,027 Participants at outreach activities



\$124,326 in landowner cost-share funding
\$567,024 in grant funding

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*Pictured: Watershed Staff
at the Watershed Summer Gala*

2023 STAFF

Mike Kromrey, *Executive Director*

Stacey Armstrong Smith, *Projects Manager*

Kelly Guenther, *Director of Business Operations*

Jeff Birchler, *Watershed Center Director*

Marra Holt, *Communications Coordinator*

Erica Cox, *Education Strategist*

Drue Lawrence, *AmeriCorps Member*

Johnathan Foster, *Watershed Center Site Steward*

Watershed Natives

Christy Wilder, *Watershed Natives Program Manager*

Katie McNally, *Watershed Natives Intern*

Kaitlin Meek *Watershed Natives Intern*

Watershed Conservation Corps (WCC)

Rodney Edwards, *WCC Program Director*

Jeremiah Cline, *WCC Federal Project Manager, Field Lead*

Grant Denbow, *WCC Conservation Specialist, Field Lead*

Brendan Brothers, *WCC Conservation Specialist*

Alex Love, *WCC Conservation Specialist*

Taylor Dye, *WCC Conservation Specialist*

Henry Wilbers, *WCC Conservation Specialist*

Veronica Jensen, *WCC Conservation Specialist*

Fellows Lake

Matt Taylor, *Fellows Lake Operations Director*

Vince Currao, *Fellows Lake Operations Manager*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Stelzer, *Chair*

Aaron Robison, *Vice Chair*

Bobbilynne Koepke, *Secretary*

Michael Finch

Jason Hainline

Angela Blevins

OUR SPONSORS

City Utilities of Springfield

Greene County

City of Springfield

OUR PARTNERS

Drury University

Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Greene County Soil and Water
Conservation District

Fantastic Caverns

James River Basin Partnership

MFA Incorporated

Missouri Master Naturalists, Springfield
Plateau

Missouri Department of Conservation

Missouri State University

National Park Service

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ozark Greenways

Ozarks Technical College

Project WET (Water Education for
Teachers)

Springfield-Greene County Fairgrounds

Springfield-Greene County Libraries

Springfield-Greene County Park Board

Springfield Public Schools

This report covers our fiscal year: January 1-December 31, 2023

DEAR FRIENDS,

I've been at Watershed since 2006, which is easy to remember, because that was the year our son Eli was born. I could never have forecast the journey we've had in the last 17 years at home or at work. Now, Eli is a fine young man eyeing high school graduation and situated with an exciting world before him. Watershed is a mature and mighty fine organization, well positioned for the future. Major transition looms in both the family and career parts of my life as well; we are preparing for launch. Change is coming, and if I'm being honest, it's a little scary! I am grateful for the many folks in my life that make the journey so rich and help in so many different ways, from Eli's wonderful teachers to our insightful board, staff, and steadfast supporters.

Here at Watershed, we plan to use our 40th anniversary as the launching pad. We have begun intensive planning, partnership building, and fundraising to increase the capacity of our educational efforts, projects, and programs that blend the two. To do so, there are physical needs like equipment and space, and mission needs like people power, partnerships, collaboration, and support. We are having some exciting and important conversations among our board, staff, and sponsors about the next big steps in our relay race for clean water.

What would that look like? We envision actualizing the master plan at Fellows Lake, including the physical land stewardship efforts and providing education for all resource users. We want to increase our project capacity, getting more conservation on the ground to match the pace of the environmental challenges we face. We want to solve our space needs in such a way that benefits our mission and partnerships. We want to provide our programs the support they need to thrive.

Clean water for the next generation(s) motivates us every day. Young people and organizations often approach the race towards the mission as a sprint. More experienced folks and organizations tend to characterize the effort as a marathon; but our elders will tell you this: it's a relay race.

All of us will eventually move on, and preparing for a good hand-off is one of the greatest services we can provide to the mission. Said more eloquently, "These trees which she plants, and under whose shade she shall never sit, she loves them for themselves, and for the sake of her children and her children's children, who are to sit beneath the shadow of their spreading boughs." (attributed to Hyacinthe Loyson)

Oh...and let's all remember to HAVE SOME FUN along the way!

Kind Regards,



Credit to Gary Gibson for the photo and skillful landing net assistance

Education and Outreach

Education and outreach are at the core of our mission. To protect our resources, citizens must understand where our water comes from, what factors affect our resources, and what actions can protect them. We strive to connect a



Christy connects healthy lands and water at Watershed Center field trip

range of learners, from “kindergarteners through engineers,” with the information they need to help our water remain clean and plentiful. In addition, connecting the next generation with nature, in a fun, hands-on, and safe environment is paramount in building a foundation for the next generation of water stewards in our community.

Field Trips to the Watershed Center

While field trip participation has yet to return to pre-COVID numbers, we have a significant increase in field trip participation as schools return to routine operating procedures. We also realize that it is about more than just the numbers. We strive to continue increasing the quality of our programs. To help meet the growing demand, we added highly qualified staff, refining and improving our programs. Continued collaborations also increase the potential to reach wider audiences more effectively.

As we reflect on 2023, we would like to celebrate the successes and look at the opportunities ahead that will allow us to continue growing our programs in quantity and quality. Our preferred method of connecting with the public is through visits to the Watershed Center. At Valley Water Mill Park,

guests can easily explore the connection between healthy land and water. Interpretive signage allows for self-guided tours that entertain and educate. Early experiences with nature are critical in creating future advocates. For many students, field trips are their first chance to wade in an Ozarks stream or catch a crayfish. Unfortunately for some, it is even their first experience hiking a trail through the woods. These first impressions have a lasting impact on students that will stay with them for a lifetime.



Studying aquatic life at the StreamSide Learning Station

WATERSHED CENTER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

This spring, Springfield Middle School students were able to participate in the collaborative **Greener Greenspaces program**. Students in 7th grade can participate in this innovative, collaborative effort. This unit combines place, problem, and project-based learning strategies, providing real-world experiences to students. Teams of students get \$1000 budgets to make improvements to green spaces around their campuses. Throughout the program, students visited the Watershed Center twice and investigated best management practices, local threats to our water supply, and the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems. Our partners, **Fantastic Caverns**, led students on off-site field trips to Fantastic Caverns as they explored the role solid waste disposal and karst topography play in protecting our groundwater quality. The **City of Springfield Environmental Services** provided in-class outreach activities, emphasizing the role of solid waste disposal on water quality. Students applied this knowledge in their designs for campus improvements. They presented their designs to a review committee where winning designs were selected. The school district then provided funding and support to assist the students in installing the winning designs on each campus.



Outreach

Not everyone finds their way to the Watershed Center (yet!). More and more community events reappeared on the calendar this year. While we would prefer to have everyone visit the Watershed Center, these events allow us to connect with a broader audience. Not only is it a fun way to engage with the public, but they leave better informed about our organization and the critical role each individual plays in protecting our water quality.

Fish printing at Celebrate Springfield



In October, Watershed participated in Celebrate Springfield at the Art Museum and Homeschool Outdoor Fair held at the Botanical

Center, where hundreds of folks made it out to visit various booths and programs. Not all outreach programs happen in a classroom or a community center. Sometimes, we meet at other more convenient locations. It helps tell the story when the source of the water you are referring to is in their backyard. It also introduces students to opportunities they might not normally be exposed to. One of our favorite outreach activities is meeting the WOLF students at Bob and Barbara Kipfers' place on Bull Creek to taste Bull Creek tea. This is the perfect culminating activity for the students' ecology unit.

◀ *Clarissa at Bull Creek with WOLF students*

Jordan Creek Tours

We continue to offer a unique educational experience with our Jordan Creek tours, where we lead members of our community through the big box culvert that forms the artificial cave running beneath downtown Springfield. In an educational experience like nothing else, we can see the many complex relationships between homelessness, folklore, urban design, local history, and water quality. While many participants come along for the thrill of exploring these concrete catacombs, most leave with a stronger sense of the big picture. As we walk, we point out the wide-open storm drains, familiar from the street but new and surprising from our vantage point in the creek, clearly demonstrating that stormwater is directly related to our streams and rivers. Daylighting Jordan Creek has long been a topic during our tours, and it is exciting to think about how our tours will evolve as the City of Springfield begins to implement Phase One of the Jordan Creek Daylighting Plan.

Please call (417) 866-1127 or email jeff@watershedcommittee.org for more information or to book a tour.

New Faces



Clarissa leads Jordan Creek Tour



Plans for Jordan Creek

In 2023, we welcomed three new team members. As the previous coordinator for the Missouri Project WET, **Erica Cox** is a long-time water warrior. Erica continues to teach chemistry at Bolivar High School while working at the Watershed two days per week. Field trip participants benefit from her wealth of experience and knowledge.

Drue Lawrence was our **AmeriCorps** service member during the summer and elected to extend her service period for an entire year. Drue recently graduated from Drury University, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Biology. Drue was also an intern at Wonders of Wildlife and Dickerson Park Zoo. Drue's primary focus will be increasing our capacity to utilize volunteers and improve our educational programs.

Johnathan Foster was brought on as our Site Steward. As Site Steward, Johnathan fills many roles. Johnathan maintains the trails, facilitates habitat restoration, and works with educational programs. His diverse background also allows him to spend time with the Conservation Corps, assisting with restoration efforts.

Colleges

Local universities and colleges provide many benefits to our community, infusing this Midwestern town with energy and vigor in a way that only young, excited, and expanding minds can.

Our local students often improve the trails that we enjoy at the Watershed Center, teach the kids that come through on field trips, and reduce the presence of invasive species. They help us spread the message of water conservation. It is always a pleasure to work with these students in the classroom and in the field, and we are happy to continue hosting them as they use the Watershed Center as a classroom to learn about streams, forests, and sustainable design.

Drury University continues to use the Watershed Center as a classroom for ecology classes. For the past few years, we have had the chance to work with the incoming freshman students on a service project, usually involving Jordan Creek, which runs near the Drury campus. Some of these students go on to join the Think Green Team at Drury. This group is already self-sufficient with service projects and cleanups, needing only bags and trash pick-up support from Watershed.

Missouri State University has the Citizenship and Service-Learning Program in which students can earn extra course credit for participating in a local organization's work for 40 hours over the course of a semester. These students helped us in a variety of ways from providing Spanish translations of our educational materials, creating educational posters on plankton, to a variety of on-site habitat projects. In addition to providing many volunteers, students in the Science and Education departments stay busy here while learning about native plants, macroinvertebrates, and how to teach the Discover Nature Schools Curriculum.

Ozark Technical College (OTC) has become increasingly involved with the Watershed Center. Individual student volunteers and campus organizations have assisted with a variety of clean-ups and projects. Many classes have conducted field trips to the Watershed Center and participated in Jordan Creek underground tours. We continue to increase our collaboration with the Environmental Science classes.

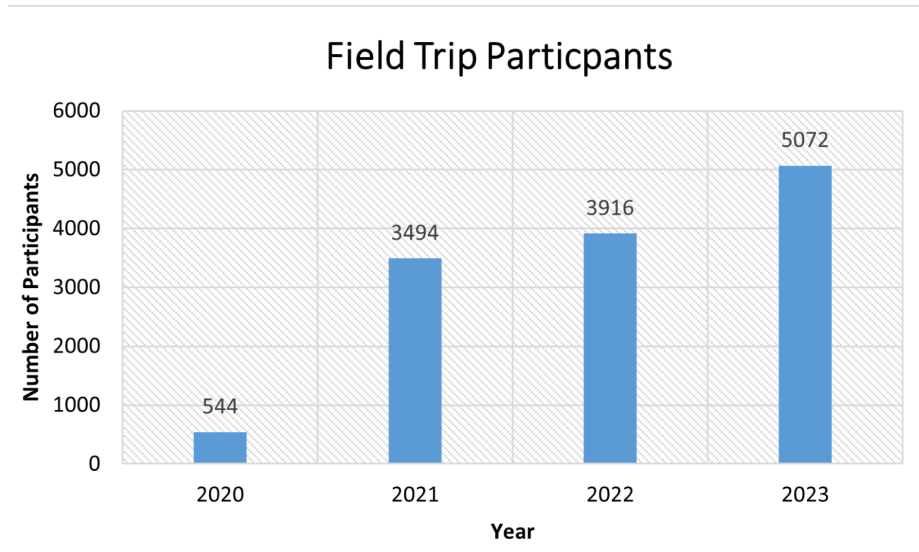
Volunteering

We continue refining our Volunteer Program to make the experience more rewarding. Volunteers can assist us in a variety of ways. Many volunteers help with aquatic and terrestrial habitat improvements throughout the park as part of our restoration efforts. There are also many options to help us with our educational and growing Watershed Native programs. Whether you want to volunteer as an individual or bring a group out, please check out how you can get involved by visiting: watershedcommittee.org/get_involved/



Makers Mark Distillery Diplomats volunteer at Watershed Center

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH: A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS



Activities	2020	2021	2022	2023
Field Trip Participants at Watershed Center	544	3494	3063	5072
Watershed Center Field Trips	21	64	68	70
Booths at Community Events	1	4	10	10
Jordan Creek Tours	9	22	25	20
Outreach Activities Participants	525	2728	3164	2027



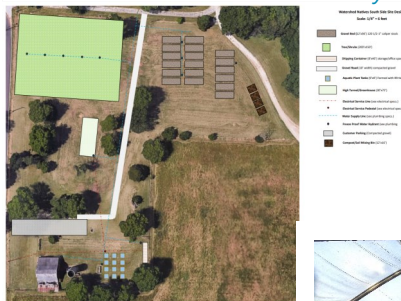
Programs



WATERSHED natives

Watershed Natives continued growing to meet the needs of Springfield’s community in 2023. We expanded with the development of a new Watershed Natives Nursery, installation of gravel tree beds, deployment of floating wetlands, and more seed collection than ever before. We obtained a lease with the **City of Springfield** to establish a larger nursery near the city’s yard waste recycling center. This space became a blank canvas where we brainstormed ways to serve the greater Springfield community. We developed plans for demonstration gardens and aquatic infrastructure and installed mulch and gravel bed systems for homing native trees. The new gravel beds are one of our favorite projects!

Plans for new Natives nursery



Angi planting seedlings at the April Board Meeting

These mimic a river gravel bar, producing healthy trees with robust roots. The entire Watershed staff and board



became passionate about the endeavor. Everyone got involved, planting seedlings



Rodney showing off gravel tree roots

and discovering which species are most successful. Our first tree sale at the site was held in October!

Grants

Our progress is thanks to the support of tremendous partners. In April, we completed our grant project with the **Rotary Club of Springfield Southeast**. They funded potting benches, display shelves, irrigation, and a storage shed for our nursery at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds.



Natives greenhouse

In honor of this milestone, we hosted the Rotary’s April meeting, where members toured the greenhouse and heard testimonies from the high school students who benefit from the improvements to their hands-on classroom.

WATERSHED NATIVES

In November, the **HDR Foundation** awarded us a grant to acquire a greenhouse for our new Watershed Natives Nursery. Installing a heated greenhouse will improve our system for starting tree seedlings and growing aquatics.

Collaboration

Our ongoing partnership with the **Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)** has created substantial opportunities. In 2023, we grew 3,400 wildflowers, 1,000 aquatic plants, 820 trees in gravel beds, and 975 potted trees through our Cooperative Agreement. In October, we hosted MDC’s Community and Private Lands Branch, showing them around the Watershed Natives Nursery. Biologists from across the state learned about our program, and experienced the fruits of the collaboration during their visit.

Over the summer, our interns worked alongside MDC biologists to plant and deploy floating wetlands at Bois D’Arc and Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery. After installation, they continued monitoring the wetlands, adding a cage system to keep the wildlife from consuming the roots. We installed another round of aquatics at Valley Water Mill in August in an effort to manage excess nutrients. Staff grew Lizards Tail, Pickerelweed, Soft-Stem Bulrush, and Thalia.



Rotary meeting at Natives greenhouse

Environmental pathway students at **Hillcrest High School** cultivated thousands of plants, potted many trees, and helped us prepare for plant sales. In the spring, Seniors presented their management plans to a panel of MDC professionals for feedback. In the fall, students toured various pollinator gardens, bioswales, and rain gardens in Springfield.



Hillcrest students working at Fairgrounds nursery

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of plants sold/distributed	1,974	1,462	2,499	2,718
Community events, programs and plant sales	2	19	34	20
WN Workshop/classes hosted	0	1	2	0
Educational programs conducted	2	49	72	80
Students participating in educational programs	40	1,763	2,785	2,549
Plant Sale Revenue	\$7,568	\$7,847	\$15,065	\$14,425

WATERSHED NATIVES

Internships

We held our first two internships with Watershed Natives this year! The internships allow young conservationists to gain real-world experience, obtain new skills, and network with our partners. Katie McAnally began volunteering with us in 2022, dedicating over 80 service hours to the program and in February, she accepted our full-season internship from March to November. Katlin Meek attained our eight-week internship from June to July. Both of them study Environmental and Evolutionary Biology at Missouri State University.

Looking Ahead

The Watershed Natives program focused on development in 2023. Our team was devoted to plant production, seed collection, and building new beds for the nursery expansion. The Natives interns did a stellar job developing their skills and gaining field experience, and we are eager to offer more positions next season. We look forward to continuing expansion and hosting more sales at the new Watershed Natives Nursery. We are grateful for the new and continuing partnership as the program continues to build deep roots in our community, and we can't wait to see what 2024 brings!



Aquatics before planting at Natives nursery



Interns planting floating wetlands

THANK YOU TO OUR NATIVES PARTNERS!



Hatch



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
of the
OZARKS



SPRINGFIELD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Serving nature and you®



Academy of Science,
Technology, Engineering,
and Math

Rotary
Club of Springfield Southeast



OZARK EMPIRE
FAIR FOUNDATION



DARR FAMILY
FOUNDATION



October Monthly Meeting on Fellows dock

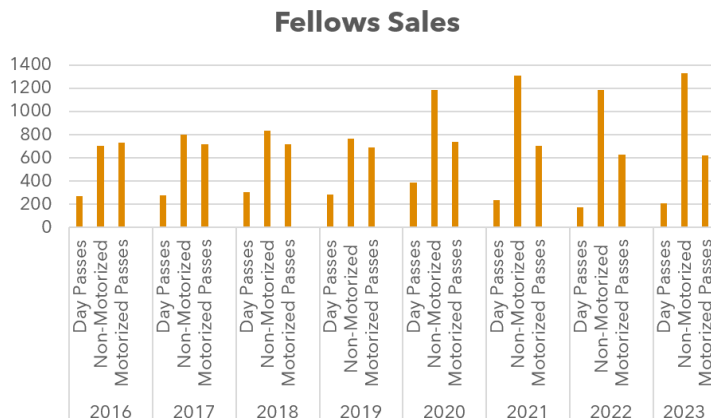


The Lake Crew concluded our third season of managing environmental, educational, and recreational activities at Fellows, and it was quite an action-packed year! We helped over ten thousand visitors make new memories at Fellows Lake while learning about the importance of clean water and protecting this precious resource. Here are a few highlights of the past season and a quick look ahead to what to expect in 2024 and beyond.

By the Numbers

Thank you to everyone who came out to fish, paddle, sail, hike, bike, and run in 2023! Our crew is beyond grateful for all the good people who joined us at the lake. We averaged twenty-one visitors a day. As you can see from the chart below, Fellows Lake Recreation Area continues to grow in popularity as word gets around about this incredible resource.

The lake's primary purpose is to provide clean municipal drinking water to Springfield, and we work hard with our partners at **City Utilities** and the **Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)** to maintain that resource. Serving so many visitors over an eight-month season gives the Dock Crew and The Watershed staff ample opportunity to support our mission of Clean Water for Life!



We are fortunate to have the lake as a resource for educating the community on the importance of clean water. It is a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate stewardship of the lake and surrounding area. As we look ahead, we are imagining ways to enhance education and outreach efforts at Fellows Lake so that even more citizens can become involved in protecting this precious resource.

On the Water

The dog days of summer did not deter our anglers one bit. In what may be remembered as one of the hottest summers yet, thousands of intrepid anglers fished the shores of Fellows and went out on the water in our rental fleet. As summer gave way to a brilliant fall, water temperatures dropped, and the fishing action increased.

The local MDC team continued working to keep Fellows Lake clean and safe. In addition to their water and wildlife monitoring work, we are incredibly thankful to MDC for the educational opportunities they provided Fellows' anglers during the season! With their collaboration, we hosted two muskie clinics and a crappie clinic for our fishing community this year.

Vince with his muskie catch



FELLOWS HIGHLIGHTS

The **Springfield Sailing Club** wrapped up the 2023 Regatta Season with a third and final regatta on September 30th. Excitement for sailing and club membership continued to grow at a breakneck pace. Instructors stayed busy all summer into early fall as more and more folks discovered the joy of sailing at Fellows Lake. Stay tuned for information on changes to our sailing programs at Fellows as we adapt to the growing popularity of sailing in Southwest Missouri. We are grateful that the Club community helped promote and protect the clean waters of Fellows.



Thank you to **The Hatch Foundation** and **Eric Peterson** for contributing to this vision of accessibility, and inspiring even more folks to love all that Fellows Lake can offer.

Speaking of accessibility, we were honored to host two special events that enabled many water enthusiasts

Day at the Lake volunteers



with disabilities to get out on the water. **Missouri State University's Master of Occupational Therapy Program** and **empower:abilities** held day-long events that created special memories for hundreds of members of our community who live with a disability. Thank you to these groups and their dedicated volunteers for providing two of our season's most moving and impactful days.

On the Trails

The land surrounding Fellows Lake features over 29 miles of hiking, biking, and running trails. Thousands of Springfield residents enjoy recreation here, and **Ozark Greenways** continued outstanding stewardship of the trail system. We love when folks come off the trail and stop at the shop for ice cream or Powerade, exclaiming, "This place is amazing!" The special events at Fellows do not stop at the water's edge, either. This season, we hosted an NCAA National Qualifying Triathlon, a statewide National Interscholastic Cycling Association race, the Concrete Man Triathlon, and many other events that highlighted the beauty and accessibility of our trails. Thank you to the volunteers that make these special events possible.

NCAA Triathlon



We appreciate all you do to showcase Fellows Lake recreation!



Paddlers enjoy Fellows Lake



Our paddle craft rentals were through the roof all season, and Stand-Up Paddleboards were all the rage this summer. We were thrilled to see all the different paddlers enjoying the beautiful lake and learning about what a fantastic resource it is. A significant development this year was the expansion of our dock! We added over 300 square feet of accessible dock for launching canoes, kayaks, and small sailboats. It features a kayak self-launcher that enables paddlers with mobility challenges to load and launch their boats easier.



New EZ Dock

On the Horizon

Progress marches on, helping us all realize the full vision of what is possible at Fellows Lake. This fall and winter, City Utilities installed a new entrance road, new signs and completed a full restoration of our ramp's courtesy dock. These improvements provide a safer and more enjoyable experience for all our guests.

We are making strides alongside our community partners to actualize the master plan for Fellows Lake. To see what the future may hold for Miller Park at Fellows Lake, view the Master Plan here:

www.cityutilities.net/community/parks-lakes/



Concept for new playground at Miller Park at Fellows Lake

Vince at Illumine Collect's gear swap



Thank you for another action-packed, enjoyable season. We also want to thank the volunteers who aided us through the season. Our Day of Caring volunteers helped tend to our site by weeding and picking up trash. At Day at the Lake, dockside volunteers supported people living with disabilities, and many, many folks served at our regattas, galas, and bike races.

We couldn't do it without you, and we appreciate your generosity. While we will take a break from renting boats and running the lake store from November through February, the gates to the lake are open seven days a week all year long (weather permitting), and we will be back up and running at full speed again come March 1st!

THANK YOU FELLOWS LAKE PARTNERS!



WATERSHED CONSERVATION CORPS

Federal Crew

Our Federal crew continued working under a cooperative agreement with the **National Park Service** (NPS) this year. The four-person team worked at various national parks and monuments in the heartland district, managing invasive plant species. We added the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial to our site list, totaling eight stewardship sites with NPS. The addition of this park allowed us to experience new types of habitat and management techniques. Our crew helped the National Park Service burn over 1,000 acres at three national parks this season, also treating an estimated 900 acres of invasive species at area monuments

Prescribed fire at Hot Springs National Park



Watershed Conservation Corp (WCC) employs young people in hands-on watershed improvement. The program provides a unique blend of work experience, training, and field education for crew members, most of whom intend to pursue careers in natural resource management. WCC provides a cost-effective, value-added option for carrying out successful water-related projects. An evident demand for these services makes the program largely self-funding while simultaneously supplying the region with a trained labor force for green infrastructure and water quality related projects.



Watershed staff backpack the Buffalo wilderness

and parks. To wrap up the federal season, Watershed's Director, Mike Kromrey, and Communications Coordinator, Marra Holt, joined in on a backpacking trip in the Lower Wilderness of the Buffalo National River to survey for the invasive Tree

Chinquapin stump sprout spotted along Buffalo



of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) for the National Park Service. This effort helped determine the severity of infestation in the area, assisting in the planning future projects.

WCC continued collaboration with the **United States Forest Service** in the Ava and Willow Springs ranger districts under federal funding from the Great America Outdoor Act.

We conducted trail restoration and user surveys throughout the Mark Twain National

Paddy Creek
➤



Forest, for example, Paddy Creek and Hercules Glades recreational areas. These efforts improve damaged or heavily used sections of trails to better quality for trail users and wildlife. WCC also continued our partnership with **The Nature Conservancy**. We traveled to Dunn Ranch Prairie, near Hatfield, Missouri, to treat roughly 110 acres of native prairie. In this project, we worked to maintain the grassland habitat for native species such as bison, greater prairie chicken, and bobwhite quail.

Local Conservation

In addition to the WCC Federal team, WCC continued ecological work in the Greater Springfield area. Invasive species management remained a top priority throughout the year, but the crew was also able to take part in various other conservation practices, such as native plantings and controlled burns. Efforts continued with the **Missouri Department of Conservation** to repair and establish riparian corridors in the Upper James River and Little Sac River watersheds via cooperative agreements. Several woody shrubs and trees were installed and maintained throughout the year across multiple sites. Invasive species management continued within the riparian habitats along Jordan, Wilson, Fassnight, and South creeks for the **City of Springfield**. Land stewardship continued at **Bass Pro Shops Base Camp**. Most of our efforts involved annual invasive vegetation management across the entire property.

Dunn Ranch
➤



We treated American lotus in ponds, and numerous invasive broadleaf and grass species within the established warm-season grass stands. In 2022, WCC was contracted by **Conco Quarries** to provide ecological stewardship of four of their sites around Springfield. In 2023, WCC installed a large, formal landscaping bed in front of the scale house at the Willard location. All plants in the bed are those native to Missouri. We also continued management and maintenance at an existing native vegetation conversion site at Conco's Galloway location.



➤ Bare soil



Planting
➤



One year of growth at Conco
➤

WATERSHED CONSERVATION CORPS PARTNERS & PROJECTS

WCC completed the first phase of a riparian enhancement project along the upper stretches of Jordan Creek. The project site is at the Coca-Cola of the Ozarks facility along North Packer Road in Springfield. A mass planting of diverse native shrub, forb, and grass species container stock followed several rounds of invasive species control. We were able to source all of the container stock for the project from the Watershed Natives program. In addition, supplemental seeding will take place in early 2024 to accompany the container planting.



WCC spreads jute at Coca-Cola

The Corps is currently managing multiple locations

where native vegetation conversions will take place. Those project sites include **Canopy Development, Coca-Cola of the Ozarks, City Utilities JTEC facility, Springfield Catholic High School**, and an approximately one-acre site near the **Fellows Lake Storefront**. Most locations were in the site-prep phase during 2023, which involved multiple herbicide treatments with the first goal of terminating the existing vegetation.

Springfield Catholic



The next phase is to seed a diverse mix of Missouri natives at all of our local sites this winter.

The crew also got to lend a hand from time to time at the new Watershed Natives Nursery site located on the South side of Springfield near Battlefield. WCC helped transplant bare root trees into containers, construct seeding areas for growing aquatic plants, and install mulch beds for maintaining container-stock woodies.

Mulch tree beds at Watershed Natives nursery



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!



MONTHLY MEETINGS

Watershed's monthly meetings are a long-standing tradition where we gather with the community and stakeholders on the first Friday of each month to discuss important water-related topics. This practice began forty years ago with the inception of the Watershed Committee, providing a space for pertinent discussion, announcements, and powerful networking opportunities. Now, the tradition remains strong, with around 400 participants in attendance in 2023, despite the 7:30 a.m. meeting time. We are thankful to all our participants and presenters. Our topics for 2023 were:

January: Cancelled in observance of New Years Day

February: Plans for Lake Springfield, Jason Clark, Project Engineer, Crawford, Murphy & Tilly Inc.

March: Using Non-Traditional Community Outreach to Understand Springfieldian's Relationship to Water, Saki Urushidani, Engineer, City of Springfield Environmental Services

April: Making a Splash in Ozarks' Water with the USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Programs, James McCarty, Environmental Quality Manager, Beaver Watershed District

May: Karst Education, Denise Vaughn, Science Writer and Journalist, Ozarks Resource Center

June: Improving Stormwater Quality with Native Plants, Eric Fuselier, GrowNative!

July: Cancelled in observance of Independence Day

August: Guardrails on Animal Waste in Our Springs, Rivers, and Lakes, Dan Chiles, Rockspan Farm

September: Harmonizing Business, Nature, and Community, Phil Graves, CEO, Wild Idea Buffalo

October: Chautauqua-style discussion at Fellows Lake Dock

November: Controlled Burns for Healthy Lands, Ryan Gauger, Fire and Stewardship Manager, The Nature Conservancy–Missouri

December: Sustainable Practices and Transformational Changes, Dr. Tammy Jahnke, Dean of College of Natural and Applied Sciences, Missouri State University

2023 PRESS

- February 6 – 105.1 The Bull, Fellows "Hiking Fellows Lake"
- April 20 – Ozarks Public Television, "Sense of Community–Watershed Committee of the Ozarks"
- September 7 – KY3 the Place, "Empower: Abilities Day at the Lake"
- September 21 – Community Foundation of the Ozarks, "10 Nonprofits complete CFO Endowment Match Challenge"
- October 12 – Springfield News Leader, "What's Planned for Lake Springfield? Here's What to Know About the City's Latest Plans"



Ryan Gauger, Fire Stewardship Manager with The Nature Conservancy presents at November Monthly Meeting

Projects & Management

Source water protection, watershed management plans, stormwater best management practices (BMPs), and policy recommendations are the water protection techniques important to all members of our community.

WATERSHED UTILIZES UPPER LITTLE SAC WATERSHED 319 GRANT

In October 2021, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks received a \$400,000 grant for restoration and improvements to the Little Sac River watershed. The funding has been provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The project focuses on reducing bacteria in the Upper Little Sac River watershed while also helping to decrease soil erosion and lower nutrient levels in the watershed. This is being accomplished by using practices proven to be effective in reducing pollution from stormwater runoff. Community partners provide a



Landowner workshop at the onsite demonstration site

contribution of \$266,667 over the life of the project, which helps make this project possible, bringing the total cost of the project to \$666,667. The project is expected to be completed in the summer of 2025.

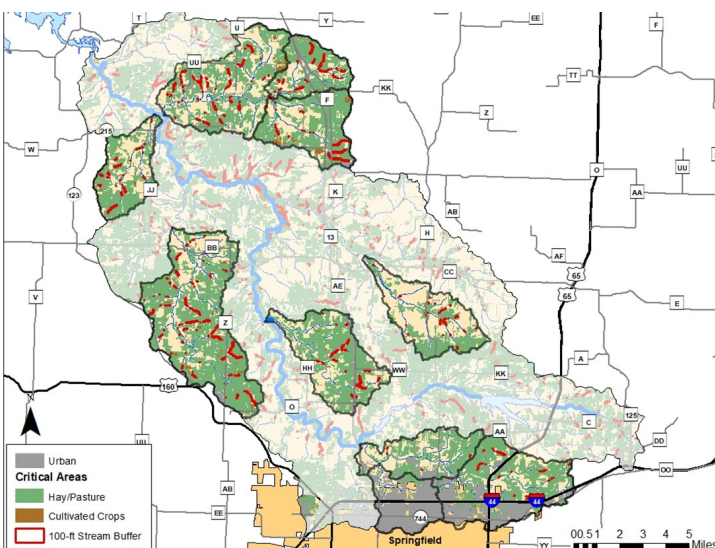
It was a busy year for grant projects. A 642-foot stream restoration project was installed in August, which stabilized a highly eroding section of streambank.



The grant also launched a septic pump-out rebate program for homeowners in the watershed to receive a one-time \$60 reimbursement. The response has been great! Nonpoint source educational events were held

Tier one sub-watersheds for implementation of the Upper Little Sac

throughout the year, including a landowner workshop at the onsite wastewater demonstration site, and educational presentations for high school students and a women's hiking group.



JAMES RIVER HEADWATERS RESOURCE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (RCPP)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded RCPP funds to Watershed and partners to leverage \$2,115,247 in Southwest Missouri to support the protection of clean drinking water for more than 150,000 Missourians, improve the local farming economy, help Springfield and Greene County meet federal water quality requirements and improve aquatic ecosystems along the James River Headwaters.

Through RCPP, conservation partners collaborate with NRCS to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners implement systems that conserve water and soil resources, improve the health of wildlife habitats, and increase climate resilience. RCPP funds will provide significant cost-share opportunities for producers and landowners in the James River Watershed upstream of Lake Springfield for activities like planting trees along waterways, fencing infrastructure for prescribed grazing systems, improving wildlife cover and habitat, forest and soil health improvements, voluntary conservation easements and land rentals. Local partners for the James River Headwaters RCPP are City Utilities of Springfield, Greene County, City of Springfield, Missouri Department of Conservation, Ozark Greenways, James River Basin Partnership, MFA Incorporated, Missouri Rural Water Association, and Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District. In 2023, a total of seven landowners are currently participating in installing water systems, grazing systems, and



Soil demonstration at Hillcrest High School

forestry practices in the Upper James River basin. The project funding will be available until March 2028. To learn more about RCPP visit:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program>

GROUNDWATER MONITORING

Watershed launched a groundwater monitoring program in partnership with City Utilities of Springfield in April 2019. The program provides a proactive groundwater monitoring collection of quarterly water samples from area springs to measure water quality parameters and identify any existing or emerging groundwater contaminants in our region.

Data collected quarterly at these nine locations in Greene County include field data, microbiological data, volatile organic compounds, and metals, which include thirty-six parameters in total. Continual sample collection is building the local groundwater dataset and will help yield background water quality trends. Data collected has already proven valuable for identifying what parameters are present in local springs.



Before and after streambank stabilization on the Upper Little Sac

THE HYDRILLA PROJECT

Hydrilla is a highly invasive aquatic plant. In areas of the U.S. where hydrilla is established, it causes great expense to local economies and businesses. It damages ecosystems and water supplies, and it hampers recreational opportunities. Hydrilla was first found in southwest Missouri in 2012. Shortly after the initial detection, a Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)-led team that includes City Utilities of Springfield (CU), Greene County, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), James River Basin Partnership (JRBP) and Watershed was formed to combat hydrilla in southwest Missouri. The team's approach is multifaceted and includes a variety of detection, control, and prevention measures. This collaborative effort is the key to success as no one group can tackle an invasive such as hydrilla alone. As of today, 37 hydrilla sites have been detected in southwest Missouri with most being in private waters. These sites are in the James, Little Sac, Pomme de Terre, Niangua, and White River watersheds. Of the known sites, 35 of 37 are under a hydrilla eradication plan which includes an initial multi-year "treatment" phase followed by a multi-year "monitoring-only" phase. Going into 2024, five sites will start in the "treatment" phase, 24 sites will be in the "monitoring-only" phase, and six sites have made it to "Eradication" phase. In other words, hydrilla has been reduced to non-detectable levels in over 81 percent of the sites and six of those sites have stayed hydrilla free for five consecutive years. This is progress. The two remaining sites were lost due to change in ownership with one of those making it to the "monitoring-only" phase prior to being sold in 2021. The second "lost" site had just reached non-detectable for tubers in 2023. Engagement efforts with the new landowners will continue in 2024.

As sites are moving into the "monitoring-only" phase, we are working with the landowners on improving the overall ecosystem of their impoundments. This has included discussions on fisheries management objectives and introducing native aquatic plants (after going through 60-day quarantine period) that enhance fish habitat and water quality along with benefiting wildlife and pollinators.

Our story at Fellows Lake, the first known public waterbody to have hydrilla in Missouri, continues to follow the path towards eradication. This past year (2023) was the third year for the site to be in the "monitoring-only" phase. MDC Staff inspected the known area twice during the growing season with rakes and underwater cameras. No hydrilla was detected. MDC staff also used rakes, underwater cameras, and side imaging sonar to search the main lake for aquatic plant stands and hydrilla. Again, no hydrilla was detected. Our progress at Fellows Lake continues re-emphasizing the importance of early detections and rapid responses. This same approach of rapid response and monitoring has also been implemented to tackle the lake's latest aquatic invader, curly leaf pondweed. Similar hydrilla search efforts were undertaken in the James River above Lake Springfield. Staff from MDC and James River Basin Partnership searched two sections of river with rakes. No hydrilla was detected in their efforts.

In 2024, treatments will resume in early April and monitoring activities will resume in July. Both activities will be on-going throughout the growing season. Other planned activities include continued inspections/monitoring of area streams and small impoundments, public outreach, and habitat enhancement. We also plan on continuing coordinated inspection efforts at Fellows Lake and other larger waterbodies within southwest Missouri. With hydrilla on the landscape, we cannot afford to let up. Diligence is key to controlling this invasive.

Contributed by Kara Tvedt, Fisheries Biologist, MDC

Hydrilla Sites and Status - SW Region



People

Watershed is all about **People**—people who are dedicated to protecting our water resources now and for the future. Our board, staff, sponsors, volunteers, partners, and supporters are a group of dedicated and dynamic individuals who make our mission possible. This chapter is about those people.

VOLUNTEERS

The tremendous successes of 2023 simply would not be possible without the help of an impressive group of volunteers. We are continually amazed by the number of individuals and organizations willing to dedicate their time to helping us protect and improve the region's water resources.

Growing Opportunities

As we increase our programs, opportunities for volunteers also increase. Individuals and groups have many options at Valley Water Mill Park where they can assist with educational programs, perform trail maintenance, or work with a variety of habitat restoration projects. We were also able to connect volunteers with opportunities at Fellows Lake. Some of our volunteers enjoy working with the Watershed Natives Program. Over the last year we have significantly increased our native plant production at two different locations. In 2024, there will be even more ways in which you or your organization can become involved.



Group volunteer days are a fun way to socialize, give back to the community, and learn some things along the way. The **United Way of the Ozarks Day of Caring** is always a huge benefit to the Watershed Committee. Each year many businesses and their employees donate half of their day to help with needed projects. This year volunteers from **Bass Pro Shops, City of Springfield, Amwins, American National, and Ollis/Akers/Arney** helped with various projects. Groups at the Watershed Center helped repair trails, mulch the rain garden, and clean up trash in Valley Water Mill Lake. At Fellows Lake, groups helped clean up trash in and around the Lake and maintain native plant beds. Thank you for your hard work as we continue to make connections through nature!

One of our favorite group volunteer events is the **Summit Service Day**. The entire Summit Preparatory School student body, from kindergartners to seniors, spent a volunteer day at the Watershed Center. The staff, students, and many parents planted native species in the restored glade, improved trails, cleared brush, and started new native grass plugs. Having the students return each year allows them to see the impact their efforts are having on the park and to take pride in their work.

*Summit Prep
students plant
coneflowers*



STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

As our staff continues to grow in numbers, we aim to keep providing opportunities for development through trainings, workshops, and networking events. We also work to engage our community in conservation and education through hosting events such as workshops and tours.

This year, our staff participated in a wide array of events:

Many Watershed and Watershed Conservation Corps Staff completed a [Wilderness First-Aid Course with the Wilderness Medicine Training Center](#) in February.

Also in February, Fellows Lake managers attended the [U.S. Sailing Leadership Forum](#) to learn about various lake and marina operations while networking with other lake leaders. Fellows Lake hosted an American Heart Association [CPR AED & First Aid](#) training for its team and Fellows Lake Manager, Matt Taylor completed [SafeSport training](#) to maintain instructor certifications.

Vince Currao with Fellows Lake received his [Missouri Master Naturalist](#) training and [Prescribed Burn Certification](#) from the Missouri Department of Conservation, furthering his knowledge of conservation.

In April, Watershed hosted our second Guidelines for Excellence Workshop provided by the [Missouri Environmental Education Association \(MEEA\)](#). Educators from throughout the region participated in this hands-on program, focused on hands-on activities that promote environmental education and align with Missouri Learning Standards.

Guidelines for Excellence Workshop at the Watershed Center ➔



Watershed Natives hosted the [Rotary Club of Springfield Southeast](#)'s April Meeting at its Fairgrounds nursery, showing the Rotary what improvements to the greenhouse were made possible through their contribution. In May, [The Nature Conservancy Missouri](#) staff toured the nursery at the Fairgrounds and learned about our education and outreach programs.



In October, the Community and Private Land Conservation Branch of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) came to visit the new [Watershed Natives Nursery](#) in Battlefield, near Springfield's Yard Waste Recycle Center. They got to see our progress with gravel tree beds and aquatic species, all made possible through a Cooperative Agreement with MDC.

➔ *MDC staff visit Watershed Natives nursery*

A majority of Watershed's Staff attended the 2023 MDC [Partner's Roundtable](#) held in October. The Conservation Department's partners from around the state visited the Watershed Center for a field trip kicking-off the two-day event. Inspirational keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and multiple networking opportunities provided a unique opportunity for environmental groups throughout the state to collaborate and share information about pressing issues currently impacting Missourians.

MDC Partners Roundtable



Communications Coordinator, Marra Holt attended the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce [2023 Non-Profit Outlook](#) in October to network with area non-profits while discussing points for success with Brian Fogle. Marra also attended December's [Good Morning Springfield](#) at the White River Conference Center, meeting Watershed's partners and getting a recap of a wonderful year in Springfield. In December, Marra and AmeriCorps member, Drue Lawrence attended [90 Ideas in 90 Minutes](#), hearing key takeaways from the area's business professionals.

In December, many of our staff completed grant-focused workshops. Business Director, Kelly Guenther and Watershed Conservation Corps staff Grant Denbow and Jeremiah Cline, attended a course on [Managing Federal Grants and Agreements](#). In addition, Kelly completed the Financial Administration of Federal Grants and Agreements course. AmeriCorps member, Drue also reviewed a [Grant Workshop](#) from the Darr Foundation.

OUR BOARD

We owe a special thanks to our Board Members, who volunteer about 300 hours each year, helping us with major decisions, monthly meetings, and guiding us as we move forward into our 40th year!

Michael Stelzer, Chair: at-large board member, second term began January 2023.

Michael's background in business and branding began with ownership of a design firm focusing on identity development and package design for companies like 7-Up, Monsanto, Holiday Inn, and Bass Pro Shops. After the sale of the firm, he became Creative Director for an ad agency where he worked with clients such as Tyson, Sara Lee, Simplot, and other national brands. From here, he co-founded Marlin, an ad agency focused on food and beverage. This employee-owned company grew into 5 offices, 180 people, and a client roster that included global brands such as Starbucks, Unilever, Heinz, Nestle, and Frito-Lay. A love of nature and the outdoors drew him to, and keeps him in, the Ozarks. Currently, Michael is in post-retirement as a full-time blacksmith/sculptor working out of his dirt floor forge on his farm close to the Upper James River.



Aaron Robison, Vice Chair: at-large board member, second term begins January 2024.

Aaron was born and raised in Springfield and spent much of his time in the summers canoeing, fishing, and relaxing in the rivers that we are blessed with in Missouri. When time came to choose a path in college, the idea of playing with water for a living seemed amazing, and what better place to learn a trade than Rolla Missouri just minutes from some of the best floating rivers in the state. Aaron received a bachelor of science degree in Civil Engineering with a focus on environmental engineering and hydraulics. A job in Kansas City allowed him to develop a unique skill set of designing water and wastewater treatment facilities around the country. While working in Kansas City he earned a Master of Business Administration degree from University of Missouri Kansas City. Being in Kansas City also chanced a meeting with a beautiful young lady with ties to Springfield, she would later become his wife and mother of their 3 children. The Robison family came back to Southwest Missouri in 2016 and ended up settling down in a house on the James River. Mr. Robison has devoted his career to helping to provide safe drinking water to communities across the US, through design and delivery of water treatment facilities. His profession also allows him to help protect our environment and drinking water sources through work on wastewater collection and treatment systems. He can't wait to use career learned skills and homemade passion to help our environment and serve his hometown community.



Bobbilyne Koepke, Secretary: City appointed board member, second term began January 2023. Bobbilyne is a Principal Geologist with Environmental Works, where she has proudly worked for the past 10 years. As a Lake of the Ozarks native, Bobbilyne grew up camping, hiking, and fishing with her family. She graduated from Missouri State University (then SMSU) in 2003 with a focus on environmental journalism, working for KOLR-10 after graduation. Eventually she migrated south, getting her master's degree in New Orleans while researching human impacts on erosion and deposition in the Mississippi River Delta. While in school, Bobbilyne began working for an



environmental consulting firm, primarily in wetland permitting and restoration. Her favorite project was utilizing satellite infrared imagery to complete a land loss assessment for St. Bernard Parish after hurricanes Katrina & Rita. Eventually Bobbilyne moved back to the Springfield area where she joined Environmental Works. Her projects focus on investigation, risk assessment, and cleanup of commercial properties, ranging from current gas stations to former landfills, with a goal of protecting groundwater for drinking and recreational uses. She also recently served as an Adjunct Instructor for a summer field geology camp at MSU. When not working, Bobbilyne spends as much time in the outdoors as possible, hiking and floating with her husband and son.

Jason Hainline: Greene County Appointee, second term began January 2020. Jason Hainline is a design associate with Dake Wells Architecture, a design-centered practice with an emphasis on progressive and sustainable design solutions. While attending Drury University, Jason began his career in the Design Development Department of Bass Pro Shops. Following, Jason moved to Boulder, Colorado and joined a nationally recognized environmentally sustainable architecture consulting firm, ENSAR Group, led by the late Greg Franta, FAIA, co-founder of the American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment. With a move back home to the Ozarks, Jason joined EMSI, an international green building consulting practice that established green building consulting in China. Jason's experience in sustainable design includes site and landscape planning, energy-efficient architectural design and analysis, daylighting, material selection, and LEED™ coordination. He has been active in a wide range of projects in the US and abroad that include facilities for each branch of the military, the National Park Service, private retail developments, low and high-rise offices, laboratories, educational buildings, restaurants, and private residences. Jason has worked in numerous countries, including Brazil, Egypt, Dubai, Poland, Czech Republic, India, Vietnam, as well as throughout China. Currently he is serving as a board member of the Springfield Component of the American Institute of Architects. In the fall of 2013, Jason was selected into the 2013 Class of LEED Fellows for his contributions to the green building movement.



Mike Finch: City Utilities Appointee, second term begins January 2024. Michael Finch is retired from City Utilities of Springfield, Missouri after 34 years, the last ten years as their Chief Financial Officer. Over his career, Mike served in several roles including Financial Analyst, Director of IT Application Support, and Director of Financial Reporting and Forecasting. Over roughly two-thirds of his career, Mike was directly involved in the development of City Utilities' Annual Operating Budget and five-year Operating Plan. City Utilities is a municipal utility, with annual revenues of roughly \$500 million, that provides electric, natural gas, water, broadband/fiber, and transit services to Springfield and surrounding area. Mike holds a Masters of Business Administration degree from Drury College (now Drury University) in Springfield, Missouri. Undergraduate degrees include a BA in Accounting and Business Administration, with an emphasis in Economics, from Drury. In 2007, Mike was a member of Leadership Missouri and in 2011 he was a member of Leadership Springfield.



Angela Blevins : at-large board member, second term began January 2022. Angela Blevins grew up alongside the James River in rural Southwest Missouri. Throughout her childhood and young adulthood she floated the James River and many other local rivers with her family. She and her husband, Tom, have traveled all over the world. Through their travels she has fallen in love with the ocean and has grown to appreciate protecting all waterways big and small, salt and freshwater. Growing up, Angela shared her parents' passion for building and joined her family's construction company. After her parents' retirement, Angela and her brother formed their own construction company and today she is co-owner of BP Builders. Throughout her 20 years in the construction industry she has held the belief that it's possible for building and growth to go hand in hand with sustaining our natural resources. Expansion doesn't have to mean destroying the natural environment. Angela is a past president of the Junior League of Springfield. She has served on the Isabel's House Board, has been chair of the Better U Committee for the American Heart Association, and is currently a board member of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks. In her spare time, Angela and Tom enjoy kayaking, hiking, and learning all they can about other cultures. Angela is a self-proclaimed geo-nerd and loves learning everything she can about geology.



Funding

Funding is necessary to protect our water. **Our sponsors—City Utilities, Greene County, and the City of Springfield provide our core operational funding.** This three-way agreement is a powerful fund-leveraging mechanism for each sponsor. In addition, we work to expand our revenue and impact by diversifying our income streams which include **Grants and Awards, Fundraising, Program Revenue, and Investments/Endowment.**

Sponsor Support

Organization	2020	2021	2022	2023
City of Springfield	\$ 65,000	\$65,000	\$ 66,950	\$ 68,658
City Utilities of Springfield	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$205,000	\$212,180
Greene County	\$ 65,000	\$65,000	\$ 66,950	\$ 68,658
Springfield-Greene County Parks	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,293

Grants and Awards

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks has earned over 11 million dollars in grant revenue over our 39-year history, and over 3 million in the last 5 years. These funds have enabled us to positively impact valuable and irreplaceable water resources and our community's connection to them. Grants and awards are a great way to leverage local funds and advance our mission. Below is a table representing grant activity within the last three years:

MDC Community Conservation Grant	2020	\$ 20,080
Missouri Humanities CARES Grant	2020	\$ 2,500
Ozark Society Foundation Grant	2020	\$ 2,000
CFO Collective Impact Grant	2020	\$ 25,000
CFO Watershed Pandemic Impact Assistance	2020	\$ 10,000
Greene County CARES Funding	2020	\$ 4,400
USDA James River Headwaters RCPP Award	2021	\$2,115,247
MDC Community Conservation Grant	2021	\$ 6,000
Conservation Federation of Missouri	2021	\$ 1,000
National Parks Service Foundation	2021	\$74,605
CFO Clean Green Grant	2021	\$10,988
Upper Little Sac Watershed 319 grant	2021	\$400,000
Community Foundation of the Ozarks CIG grant	2022	\$ 21,060
National Parks Service Foundation	2022	\$ 84,628
Southeast Rotary and Rotary International	2022	\$14,630
Springfield Metro Rotary	2022	\$ 6,500
Hatch Foundation Grant	2023	\$300,000
HDR Grant	2023	\$ 45,555
Community Foundation of the Ozarks	2023	\$30,000

Fundraising

The Watershed Committee raised just over \$121,000 in 2023 through the Watershed Summer Gala event, one-time donations, sustaining donors, and gifts from organizations.

This year, our switch to June and the flip to Friday afforded us incredible evening weather and better attendance opportunity. The “vibe” was fun, laid back, and the event serves as an annual reunion for many. Bags were tossed, whiskey won and lost, and the catered taco bar from Simply Delicious was a huge hit.

We were excited to hear from Commissioner Bob Dixon, who highlighted our partnership with Greene County, the benefits of working proactively for clean water, and how this ethic has served our community so well. We had some exciting announcements to share, too: we showcased our new logo as we’ve graduated to do business as “Watershed,” the capital campaign kick-off investment of the Hatch Foundation, along with plans for Fellows, including more accessible dock equipment and bridges, and we are all rooting for continued improvements like bathrooms! And last but not least, we announced an opportunity from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks in an endowment-building-challenge matching grant. We are thrilled and thankful for your support—none of this would be possible without YOU!

SUMMER Gala 2023



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BRONZE SPONSORS



PLATINUM SPONSORS



SUPPORTING SPONSORS



GOLD SPONSORS

Nahon Family Memorial Fund
Mike & Gayle Ashley

SILVER SPONSOR



BENEFITTING



OUR GENEROUS 2023 BUSINESS AND INDIVIDUAL SUSTAINERS

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who donated their financial resources, time, talent, and good-heartedness to the Watershed this past year.

Business Sustainers

Presenting \$15,000

Peterson Wealth Advisors

Legacy \$10,000

Bass Pro Shops

Platinum \$7,500-\$8,000

PCNet

Vital Farms

Gold \$4,000-\$6,000

Nahon Family Foundation Fund

Mike and Gayle Ashley

Silver

Bailey Pyle Builders

Bronze \$1,000

Arkifex

Commerce Bank

Commercial Metals Company

HDR

Hogan Land Title Company

Elite Promotions

Ozarks Coca-Cola/Dr. Pepper Bottling Co.

Supporting \$500

Advanced Car Care

At Home Real Estate Company

Ball Architecture

Central Bank of the Ozarks

Crawford, Murphy & Tilly

Environmental Works

Greater Ozarks Audubon Society

Missouri Master Naturalist-Springfield Plateau

Olsson

Wagner and Associates

Wire Road Brewing Company

Donors

up to \$99

Blayne Radford

Brendan Brothers

Emma Loder

Jesse Tyler

Kelly and Michael Guenther

Mark Bower

Marra Holt

Stephen Sample

\$100-\$299

Andrew and Bridget Dierks

Ben and Jodi Caruthers

Craig and Ann Young

DeDe Vest

Elizabeth Roberston

Jeff Bromberger

Johnathan and Karen Jones

John Havel

Mike Finch

Stephanie and Jacob Hurt

Aaron Scott

Jane Earnhart

Sean Patrick Fay

Tim and Sally Smith

\$300-\$499

Bob and Barb Kipfer

Tom and Angela Blevins

\$500-\$999

Bill Cheek

Dave and Elisa Coonrod

Rotary Club of Springfield Southeast

Scott Bratcher

\$10,000

Ted and Bonnie Tabor

OUR GENEROUS 2023 DONORS CONT.

Donor Spotlight

The Hatch Foundation contributed \$300,000 toward Watershed's programs, which was allocated to the accessible dock and equipment for the Watershed Conservation Corps. **Eric Peterson Wealth Advisors** gifted \$25,000 toward the accessible dock, and the **Community Foundation of the Ozarks** gave \$10,000 as part of an endowment match challenge. **Ted and Bonnie Tabor** generously donated \$10,000 to support our programs. Thank you for your generosity!

In-Kind Donors

Bill Record
Bob Kipfer
Brian Vance
Brian Grimm
Dan Hoy
Greater Ozarks Audubon Society
Fellows Lake LLC
Marc Bower
Mary Ellen Chiles
Mike Kromrey
Helen Votaw
Watershed Natives
Wire Road Brewing Company

Watershed Conservation Corps Gifts

Louis & Caroline Griesemer Fund donated \$2,000 to the Watershed Conservation Corps program. \$25-\$100 donations to the Watershed Conservation Corps program included Megan Keeler.

Sailing Program Gifts

Eric Peterson donated \$25,000 for accessibility equipment for the Sailing Program. Mike and Gayle Ashely donated \$6,000 for the educational component of the Sailing Program. The Nahon Family Memorial Fund donated \$4,000 to the Sailing Program. Jim Rogers donated \$600 for the Sailing Program. Stockton Lake Park Marina donated \$500 for the Sailing Program. Stephan and Karen Ott donated \$50 in honor of Eric Peterson.

Slip or Sail Raffle

The Slip or Sail Raffle raised just over \$2,000 for the Sailing Program.

Need to send an update or report an error? Contact Kelly Guenther, Director of Business Operations 417.866.1127 or kelly@watershedcommittee.org



The Hatch Foundation and Eric Peterson hold a ribbon cutting in honor of new accessible dock at Day at the Lake



Money Matters

Program revenue has been an increasingly important strategy for the growth and impact of our mission. We have seen many wonderful programs in our field come and go with the funding source. We are keenly focused on creating financially sustainable programs with enough funding diversity to stand the test of time. As the old saying goes, “no margins, no mission.” The following graph illustrates the growth and impact of program revenue:

Year	# Employees	Hours Worked	Payroll	Donations	Grants	Program Revenue
2019	13	18,754	\$337,031	\$62,328	\$68,273	\$119,140
2020	18	23,714	\$415,950	\$43,850	\$88,958	\$215,896
2021	25	28,564	\$547,690	\$1,224,178	\$92,603	\$308,764
2022	23	32,841	\$658,222	\$121,800	\$150,258	\$691,226
2023	23	30,555	\$668,550	\$124,666	\$566,303	\$675,234

Investments/Endowment

Long-Term Fund

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks developed a Long-Term Fund, with the assistance of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. The Fund is treated as an endowment, with the added benefit of being unrestricted, so it can be accessed (with Board approval). As this fund grows it will provide interest that can be reinvested or applied to projects or personnel to further our mission. With the help of our gracious donors, this fund balance was at \$171,669.76 at the end of the year.

Endowment Fund

The Watershed Committee established a restricted Endowment Fund in 2008, held at the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. Thanks to a generous, anonymous gift of \$1.1 million dollars in 2021, the endowment is starting to generate significant income which can be used, in addition to half of the major gift which will remain unrestricted/liquid. At the end of 2023 the endowment was at \$1,250,111.

Fredrick Memorial Scholarship Fund

The Fredrick Memorial Scholarship Fund was established in 2009 by the Fredrick Family in honor of Jeff Fredrick. The initial funding provided financing for high school or college students' attendance to a workshop, conference, or symposium related to water resources. Since that time donations have been used to supplement our Watershed Fellowship Program, which we believe is in line with the original vision for the fund. The current balance of the fund is just over \$54,103.

Sustaining Donors

The Sustaining Donors Program is a new avenue for people to invest in the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks. One-time donors are fantastic, but building relationships with people and businesses that lead to yearly commitment is even better.

Charitable Giving through IRA's

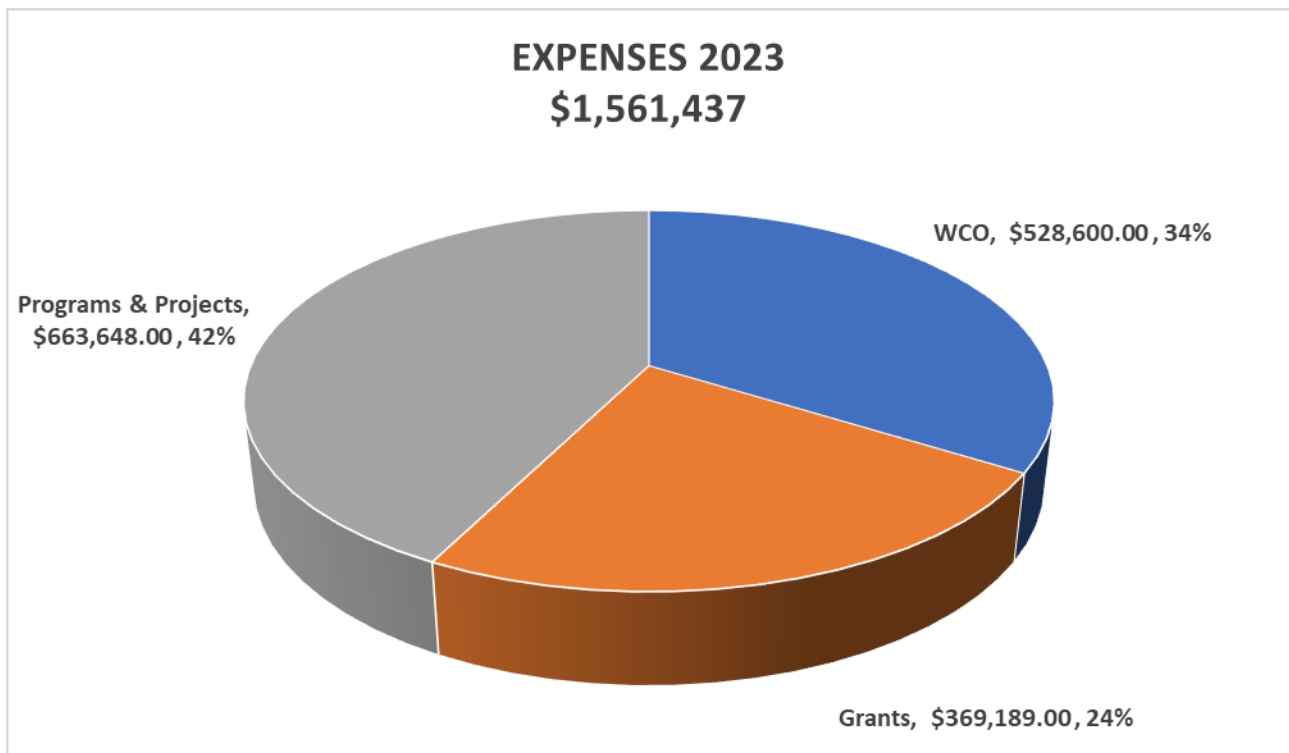
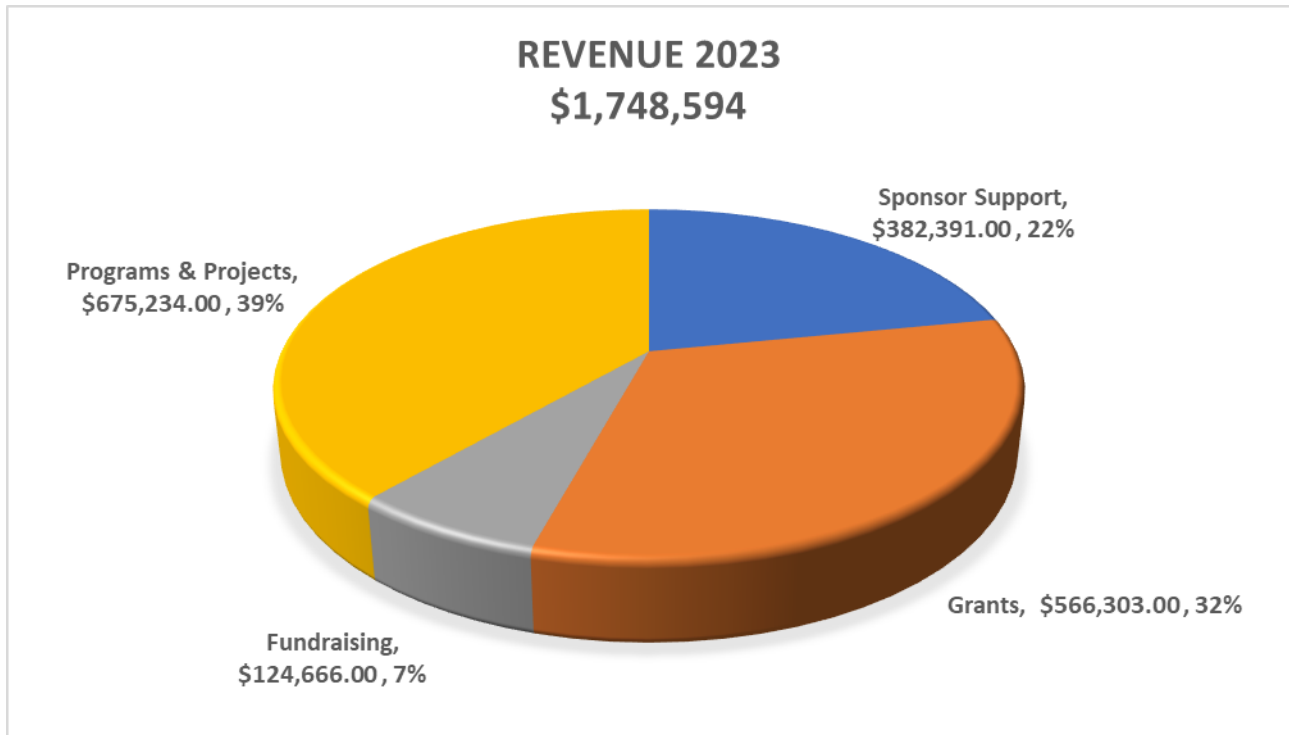
Presented by Eric K Peterson, CFP® Peterson Wealth Advisors

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a payment made directly from an IRA to a charitable organization. Specific requirements and circumstances must be met before an IRA owner can make a QCD. To help you understand the ins and outs of this charitable distribution, Peterson Wealth Advisors have summarized the rules in a blog post on our website.

Learn more at watershedcommittee.org/blog/

REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization that depends on sponsor support, grant, and donor dollars. Income from these sources allows us to fund our education and outreach programs, implement grant work, maintain the Watershed Center, and provide other important services. Last year, almost 32% of our income came from grants, and this money is restricted to specific projects and programs, such as the Watershed Natives Program, habitat improvements, and our trail restoration project. Unrestricted funds support general operations as well as our education and outreach programs, including our collaborative efforts with Springfield Public Schools. Unrestricted funds also help support our programs and maintain and improve the Watershed Center and Valley Water Mill Park.





Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™