



Spring Newsletter 2016

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Director's Update

Watershed Center Coordinator Transition

After 4 years with the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, Watershed Center Coordinator Rob Hunt is moving on. He will be starting anew in Columbia, Missouri with his soon-to-be wife Abbey. During his time with us, he accumulated many outstanding accomplishments including developing and refining the educational programming at the Watershed Center, growing and improving the volunteer program, and overcoming some major challenges with the Watershed Center building and site. His sense of humor and willingness to listen to people made working with Rob a joy. We will miss him and wish him the best of luck in his next endeavor as the Natural Resource Education Coordinator with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.



In hopes of a personnel transition that could involve Rob helping to train his replacement before his last day, WCO advertised the position and interviewed several qualified applicants. We are excited to announce that Jeff Birchler will be our new Watershed Center Coordinator. Jeff comes with a wealth of experience, including 29 years of teaching science with Springfield Public Schools, building houses, starting a volunteer organization, and much more. We think Jeff has what it takes to continue to grow and improve on the educational programs, and we know he has a passion for our mission!

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director

Our Missouri Waters Update



Sac River Our Missouri Waters

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks has been working with watershed landowners on the collaborative Our Missouri Waters effort for the Sac River to gather local input and allow landowners to identify water resource priorities for the next five years. The local watershed advisory committee was assembled of volunteers and they held their first facilitated meeting in Greenfield on February 23rd. Twenty-six landowners participated in the first committee meeting. A preliminary survey about watershed knowledge, values and concerns was conducted and the results shared with every participant of the introductory community meetings. During the facilitated meeting, committee members broke out into three category groups of Agriculture, Water Quality, and Recreation. Then they discussed and created a list of watershed concerns or problems. Watershed Committee of the Ozarks is providing information, education, and field trips based on the questions and interests of the committee.

The first educational presentation was by Army Corps of Engineers Water Management Department from Kansas City in March which gave a background about Stockton Dam, how flows are calculated and information on the new turbine. The committee also went on a tour of Stockton Dam to see the facilities. The second educational meeting was held on April 19th in Greenfield presenters provided information about watershed monitoring, soils, municipal wastewater systems and landfills.

The outcome of this process will be the Sac River Healthy Watershed Plan that will help maximize resources and focus watershed priorities over the next five years. To learn more information about Our Missouri Waters, visit www.dnr.mo.gov/omw or www.watershedcommittee.org

Stacey Armstrong, Projects Manager



Committee members on a tour of Stockton Dam

Watershed Center Update

We are always working to increase our reach and impact with the public, recruit energetic volunteers, and improve the trails and habitats at Valley Water Mill and this spring has been especially active. A group of fresh college volunteers eager to get some experience in land management have been working on new habitat improvement projects, and we have already seen about 1,000 students on over 20 field trips. Here are some highlights:

New Field Trips

To improve the field trip experience for students, teachers, and volunteers, we have worked hard to streamline and redesign the field trips at the Watershed Center. For our upper elementary and middle school groups, we have implemented a four station rotation that incorporates the best of what the site has to offer while still allowing for easy travel and smooth timing.

Watershed Center Update Cont.-

With this rotation, students engage in nature journaling in the wetland, hands-on learning about stream ecosystems at the spring branch, pond life and sampling at the lake, and stormwater basics at the education facility. We have had a lot of success so far and think that this new setup will improve the impact we have on students and make training volunteers more streamlined.

Reaching Across Watersheds: Watershed Festivals at the Watershed Center

Formerly held in school gymnasiums or recreation centers, some of the James River Basin Partnerships Watershed Festivals got some fresh air this year. Ozark Upper Elementary brought 450 students out over 4 days to the Watershed Center where Rob Hunt hosted and Brent Stock, JRBP Project Coordinator, lead field trips. Brent did an excellent job working with the kids and volunteers and Rob got to take a step back and enjoy teaching, rather than organizing, during the field trips. We got to try out the new field trip setup described above with a few changes. The event was hugely beneficial to expose more students than ever to the Watershed Center and water resources. We are excited to see how this opportunity will grow in the coming years as we work together to teach more and more of our youth about clean water in a setting where it connects the best.

Fifth Grader Finds Cave

On a fifth grade work day in March, students from Field Elementary came out to the Watershed Center to cut and stack invasive honeysuckle bushes as part of their unit on invasive species in the wild.

This hands-on learning is an awesome thing to witness and we had a blast. The highlight of the day was when young Coen called out that he had found a cave. After a few follow up visits from the Springfield Plateau Grotto in the following weeks, it was confirmed that he had! GRN-392 is the registered name of this newly identified karst feature, and “Coen’s Pit” is the informal label for this twenty-foot vertical drop into the ridge. To learn more, find the Springfield Public School news release about the cave on their website.

http://www.springfieldpublicschools.org/pages/SPSMO/News/Fifth-graders_discover_nature



Coen is pictured front left. He is surrounded by his classmates.

Rob Honored by Master Naturalists

At the February meeting of the Missouri Master Naturalists Springfield Plateau Chapter, Rob Hunt presented a session to the group based on what he had learned at the Land Ethic Leaders training in Wisconsin. To his surprise, he was ambushed after his presentation and given the distinction of Honorary Member of the Master Naturalists. He now enjoys full membership with the group which he loves and has worked with since his first day on the job. He plans to remain as active as possible in the Columbia, Jefferson City area and to put his membership to use.



2400 E. Valley Water Mill Rd.
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May 3, 2016 Give Ozarks Day

Last year during Give Ozarks Day we darn near hit our goal of \$5,000 to help repair the boardwalk and fishing piers. This year we are again participating in Give Ozarks Day raising funds to help improve the trails and interpretive signage at the Watershed Center.

We would love your support on May 3rd to reach our \$5,000 goal. Each donation (\$5 minimum) throughout every hour of the day will enter WCO to win prizes ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500! For example, if you would like to donate \$30.00, your donation helps even more if you break it up over different hours of the day. This is a 24 hour online blitz of giving and we're excited to be a part of it! All donations are given through our Give Ozarks Day website. Visit the website to watch our video. <https://giveozarks.org/2016/watershed-committee>

And **SAVE THE DATE**

July 16, 2016 for our Watershed Summer Gala!

