



Fall Newsletter 2016

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Director's Update

Monarchs, Bees, and Land Health

I have walked hundreds of miles behind a lawn mower. It was my first job as a teenager—mowing grass for people in my neighborhood. During college, I mowed grass to help make ends meet. And now as a homeowner I mow my own small yard in a neighborhood where most people aspire to “the perfect lawn.” These experiences have given me a deep sense of empathy for the feelings of orderliness and beauty often associated with lawns and landscaping in general. It’s natural for us to want lollipop trees and “perfect” lawns and these are not inherently bad at all.

But, we also want to see monarch butterflies and honey bees. Most people get excited when a new bird appears at the feeder, for wildlife sightings in town, and love the thought of wildflowers. Aldo Leopold famously encouraged us to expand our definition of community to include plants and animals, lands and waters and think about “land health.” This is where our well-manicured, orderly environment often falls short.

One of the most exciting and hopeful ways that nearly all of us can take action for the creatures we love is to use more native landscaping, and mow a little less, wherever our touch is felt. By embracing the diversity and chaos of native plants, you can create pockets of nature that become beautiful inside and out. You will begin to see diversity of plants, animals, and fungi, and hear a variety of sounds from birds, bugs, or even frogs. And those creatures which have captured our hearts will find and use these places which they desperately need to survive. And it just so happens that these species are indicators; what’s good for monarchs and bees is good for us too.

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director



Our Missouri Waters Update



Sac River Our Missouri Waters

Since May 1st, 2015 the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks has been working with watershed landowners on the collaborative Our Missouri Waters effort for the Sac River Watershed to gather local input and encourage landowners to identify water resource priorities for the next five years. The Sac River Watershed Advisory Committee is comprised of twenty-four landowners that attended seven educational and facilitated meetings throughout the year. These meetings provided the opportunity for landowners to meet other local landowners, to share their resource concerns, and discuss ideas on how to address those concerns. One of the committee discussions revealed more educational materials are desired in the local county offices in the watershed. Three educational factsheets, about streams, sinkholes, and springs respectively, are being created so county offices in the watershed will have those materials available for landowners.

The committee was recently invited to tour Hammons Walnut Farm on Tuesday October 25th. The farm is located in El Dorado Springs, just north of the Stockton Dam. The group was able to tour the walnut orchards, learn about the harvesting process and viewed sections of streambank on Cedar Creek and the Sac River.

The Sac River Healthy Watershed Plan is the document that has been completed to summarize the committee process and recommendations. This working document will help maximize resources and focus watershed priorities over the next five years. The project was completed on October 31st. To learn more information about Our Missouri Waters, visit www.dnr.mo.gov/omw or www.watershedcommittee.org.



Cedar Creek

Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager

Fall Medicine Take Back

The Fall Medicine Take Back was held on Saturday October 22nd at four area pharmacies. The event was a success, collecting a total 1859 pounds of unused medicine which was a record breaking total for the fall event! Properly disposing of medicine during the take back is important because it helps protect our local water quality. Thank you to the Ozarks Area Pharmacy Association, Greene County Sheriff's Office, City of Springfield, The Community Partnership, event sponsors and volunteers that helped coordinate this event.

Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager



Medicine Take Back at Hy-Vee

Watershed Center Update

A Fall Full of Field Trips

The months of September and October were a busy time for field trips to the Watershed Center. Over thirty groups representing elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges, as well as civic and professional groups visited Valley Water Mill Park. This resulted in over 1,300 participants in lessons and activities related to water quality. Everyone seemed to enjoy and learn from their Watershed Center experiences. One Republic 7th grade student stated “I loved my experience at the Watershed Center because I love how I got to do activities that I have never been able to do like look at bugs I have never seen and having a 3-D model to explain pollution. My favorite part was hiking because I love to hike and talk to my friends! Thank you so much for the experience.”



Niangua High School students sampling “bugs”



Pershing Elementary students in the stream

Volunteers Making a Difference

Savanna and glade ecosystems were once abundant throughout the Ozarks. Fire suppression and invasive species have greatly reduced these unique habitats. A savanna is a grassland dotted with a few large trees like post oak and hickory. Native grasses and wildflowers cover the ground. Glades are rocky clearings with thin soil located within timbered areas. This warmer, drier habitat results in plants and animals more typical of a desert or dry tallgrass prairie. Prickly pear cactus, tarantulas, and scorpions are some of the native species you might find in the glade.

A number of volunteers under the guidance of Ben Parnell, our Habitat Improvement Specialist, continue to make significant improvements in our savanna and glade habitats. Ben and the volunteers have worked to remove the invasive species like bush honeysuckle and red cedar from these habitats. Native plant seeds have been collected and will be spread throughout the restoration areas. We hope to use prescribed fire to encourage further growth of native plants and suppress the invasive species.

These habitat improvements not only benefit our native plant and animal communities but also improve our water quality. Diverse native communities are resilient to stressors like extreme storms or unplanned fires. They also improve water infiltration and are better at preventing erosion. They are beautiful too.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Coordinator



Volunteers working to restore the savanna



2400 E. Valley Water Mill Rd.
Springfield, MO 65803

Parks, Soils and Waters Tax Renewal

In Praise of the Parks, Soils, and Waters 2016 Tax Renewal

The Board of the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks voted unanimously to support the Parks, Soils, and Waters Sales Tax renewal. Since 1983, this source of funding has been used efficiently and effectively to support our beautiful Missouri State Parks, and the Soil and Water Program for the state. Here in Greene County, we work frequently with the Soil and Water Conservation District staff who are funded with this revenue source. They have tremendous expertise with agricultural practices that benefit farmers, livestock, soils and waters, and they have developed relationships with many farmers and landowners. This renewal really does benefit all the citizens of Missouri, now and for the future. Please consider voting yes on Amendment 1, to keep this good thing going.

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director

