



Spring Newsletter 2017

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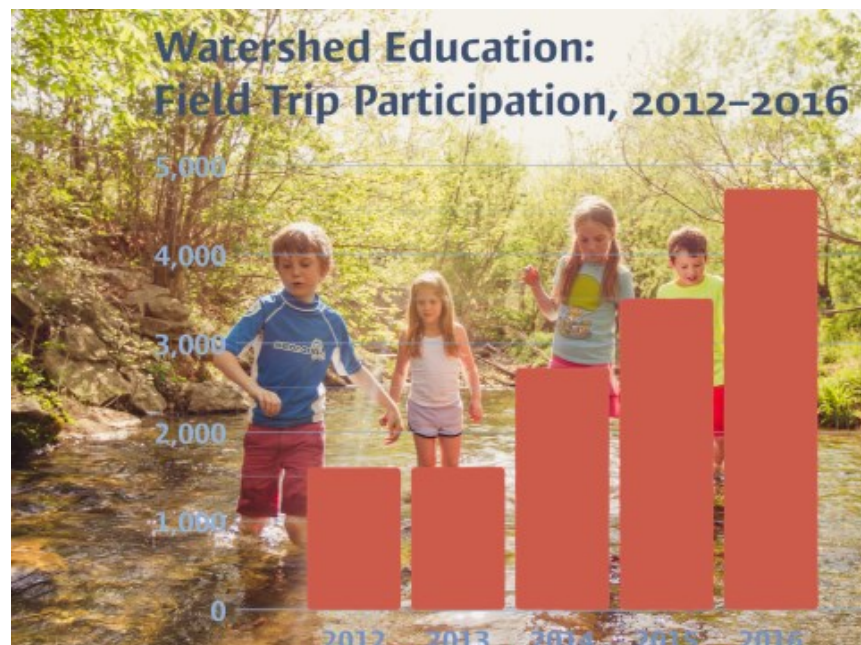
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Director's Update

Watershed Center Fellowship

The Watershed Center Fellowship Program is now in its pilot year. Fellowships are a great way to provide a unique educational and work experience, while tending to the critical needs of the organization like ecological restoration and keeping pace with our growing education programs. This year, through a Community Conservation Grant from the Missouri Department of Conservation, we were able to fund a Graduate Assistantship at Missouri State University, and hire Ben Parnell as our inaugural fellow. As he progresses toward his master's degree in biology, his fellowship duties are to make our watershed healthier and more resilient. In addition, he incorporates teaching and leading some volunteer activities. This is an elegant solution to our needs which we "borrowed" from the Leopold Foundation and discussed during the Land Ethic Leaders workshop. We will be working to secure funding for what is becoming an integral part of our strategy.



Directors Update Cont.-

Factory Farms in our Watersheds

Factory Farms are sometimes referred to as CAFOs, or Confined Animal Feeding Operations. The Springfield Business Journal (SBJ) recently published a remarkable series of articles, written by Jana Bounds, about factory farms in Southwest Missouri. The series is available on our website and on the SBJ website if you have a subscription. Essentially, legislative steps have been taken to allow increased factory farming in Missouri, including a provision to allow land ownership in Missouri by foreign-owned corporations and a reconfiguration of the Clean Water Commission which allows for a greater proportion of agricultural interests on the body which approves permits for CAFOs. The result of these and other changes could be a proliferation of CAFOs in our drinking water watersheds.

The social, economic, and environmental impacts are studied and debated; the potential water quality and quantity implications for water resources in Southwest Missouri are many. CAFOs use as much water and produce as much sewage as medium-sized towns. An increased number of CAFOs in the region increases the potential for surface and groundwater contamination, nutrient pollution which can result in algae blooms in surface waters, decreased aquifer levels (possibly affecting wells of rural neighbors of factory farm operations), decreased property values due to odor, and increased risk of antibiotic and endocrine disrupting compounds. Quality of life for people who live near CAFOs also decreases, and we are becoming familiar with tragic stories of rural residents, even Century Farmers, who are already experiencing this.

Awareness of this issue and the related water quality concerns is important. One positive action you can take is supporting local farmers by purchasing meat and produce directly from the source. You can invest in local people producing excellent food in ways which safeguard water resources. Vote with your fork and love your farmer! It's also important to remember that planning and zoning regulations in Greene County limit the size of CAFOs, but most of the counties on the Stockton Lake watershed do not have such regulations. Last, remember that clean water and beautiful, pastoral landscapes have a huge potential to generate economic growth through tourism. To learn more about these "geotourism" possibilities, check our next Monthly Meeting on May 5, 7:30 a.m. at the Midtown Carnegie Library. Linnea Iantria, Geotourism Coordinator at MSU, will be presenting.

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director

Give Ozarks Day

The Watershed Committee is participating in Give Ozarks Day 2017, a 24-hour online fundraising marathon taking place May 9. This year we are raising funds to help with our growing education and outreach programs and the Watershed Fellowship program. Our goal is \$5,000.

Local schools enjoy amazing and impactful field trips at the Watershed Center. The number of field trip participants we serve each year has increased from 2,710 students in 2014 to over 4,700 students in 2016. Having a fellowship program will help us continue to grow by providing extra hands to help with educating students.

Consider a donation to the Watershed Committee May 9 and support clean water education in the Ozarks! \$5 minimum, every dollar counts! <https://giveozarks.org/2017/watershed-committee>



Watershed Center Update

Greener Greenspaces

We were thrilled to collaborate with Springfield Public Schools in the development of the pilot course for 7th grade students titled Greener Greenspaces. During this Project Based Learning Unit students from Carver, Pleasant View, and Reed Academy made four separate field trips to the Watershed Center. Students participated in a variety of activities to learn the value of clean water, common sources of water pollution in our area, and ways to prevent water pollution. Teams of students used this information along with independent research to create their own proposals for improvements or Greener Greenspaces around their schools. Students had to work with a targeted budget of \$500 for their project designs. The teams then shared their proposals with fellow classmates. Springfield Public Schools will then fund the implementation of the top proposal as selected by a review committee.



Getting an up-close view of plankton



Investigating stream water quality

Field Trips

Business is booming! We are on pace for another record-setting year for student visits to the Watershed Center. The number of classes visiting Valley Water Mill Park has more than doubled that of last year's count for the first part of the year. Numerous groups from kindergarteners to college classes have participated in educational field trips. These include a number of first time visitors. On three separate occasions we have hosted over 230 students in a single day.



Looking for macroinvertebrates



Students crossing the South Dry Sac

Watershed Center Update Cont.

Habitat Improvement

Thanks to the efforts of our Habitat Improvement Specialist, Ben Parnell, and numerous volunteers, a number of habitat improvement projects are underway at the Watershed Center. Throughout the winter and early spring we have targeted removal of invasive species such as wintercreeper and bush honeysuckle. A tremendous amount of removed plant material was converted to mulch to apply to our trail system and rain garden areas. A variety of native species have been planted in the wetland and savanna areas. Pipevine, passion flower, and bittersweet planted in the fall by GLADE students are well on their way to forming a living wall near the Watershed Center.



MSU students clearing out invasives



Reed spring students pulling wintercreeper

Volunteers

The habitat and facility improvements as well as the educational programs would not be possible without the fantastic volunteers and interns who are always eager to help. We are fortunate to have had a large number of MSU Citizenship and Service Learning (CASL) students, volunteers, and interns during this spring semester. The impact the hundreds of hours these individuals have spent here at the Center are clearly evident in the improvements to the park and the smiles on the faces of our guests.



Volunteer Tammy Trantham leading a water testing lesson.



Volunteer Morgan Wetzel seeding the savanna.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Coordinator

Projects Update

Little Sac Restoration and Improvement Project

Watershed Committee of the Ozarks was awarded a subgrant agreement from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources on April 1, 2014 for the Little Sac Restoration and Improvement Project. On April 1, 2016 a grant amendment was awarded bringing the total grant funding to \$360,062 with a required \$205,785 in local match. The goal of this project is to improve the drinking water watershed of Springfield and Greene County with implementation of best management practices (BMPs) that will reduce nonpoint source pollution.

Since the start of the grant, several projects have been completed including the installation of five prescribed agricultural grazing systems, the installation of three bank vegetative buffers strips and continued collection of water quality data at five locations in the watershed. These projects would not be possible without our community partnerships with City Utilities of Springfield, the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Missouri Department of Conservation. The most recently completed project was on March 1 when Watershed Committee staff and volunteers helped a local landowner plant 380 native seedlings along the Little Sac River riparian corridor. All of these installed practices will help to improve water quality, decrease soil erosion, and improve aquatic life. As we enter the final year of the grant, we have many exciting projects in the works, including updating the Upper Little Sac Watershed Management Plan in which the Ozarks Environmental Water Resources Institute (OEWRRI) at Missouri State University will be conducting water quality modeling and bacteria source tracking. We look forward to a productive final year as this grant will be completed by April 30, 2018.

Stacey Armstrong, Projects Manager



Staff and volunteers planting trees in the riparian area



Planting a selection of trees tailored to attract wildlife and protect the streambank



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

Watershed Summer Gala

Join us Saturday, July 15, 2017 for our Watershed Summer Gala.

The evening will begin at 5 p.m. at the Darr Ag Center, 2401 S. Kansas Expressway, Springfield, MO.

Highlights include Mother's Brewery beer, wine by the glass, local food buffet catered by Chartwells, silent auction featuring local artists, wine grab, whiskey pull, great music and more!

All proceeds from this evening will benefit the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks and help with our growing education and outreach programs and the Watershed Fellowship program. Cost is \$45 per guest. Tickets are available on our website www.watershedcommittee.org.

Sponsorships are also available,
contact Mike Kromrey
mike@watershedcommittee.org

