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## Summer Newsletter 2018

### Director's Update: Growing Diversity

*"I can't imagine anything more important than air, water, soil, energy and biodiversity. These are the things that keep us alive." —David Suzuki*

When you think of diversity, do you immediately think of human—perhaps even racial or ethnic diversity? We often think of diversity strictly in human terms. And indeed, diversity is an important aspect of our human communities. In both human and natural communities, there are a myriad of jobs/niches that need to be filled for the health of the community. In the natural world, diversity is critically important. It is usually referred to as biodiversity. Soils are more productive when they have a diversity of organisms. Prairies and forests have a greater water holding capacity and more wildlife when they are more diverse. Even within our own bodies, diverse microorganisms help us to break down food and to process nutrients—a lack of diversity within us can lead to declines in our health.

It is exciting to see diversity thriving in many of the areas touched by the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks (WCO). Biodiversity at the Watershed Center seems to be improving—we have added new species of plants and birds to our list. The watershed/landscape improvements made through recent grant projects ensure a continued increase in diversity. We continue to offer diverse programs. In many cases, these programs enable further integration with our sponsors and partners, improving the already symbiotic relationships we've cultivated. Our projects continue to span both agricultural and urban settings, but also continue to explore new and different ways to pursue clean water. The WCO board and staff are always brainstorming ways to diversify our portfolio to grow our revenue streams. These pursuits of diversity will enable us to sustain and grow our mission.

The benefits of diversity go beyond health and relationships. Building diversity builds resilience (the ability to withstand stressors). We have varying degrees of control over stressors to our human and natural communities. Fire, drought, climate change, economic swings, political upheavals, etc. will continue to challenge our communities. But, we can take notes from nature and work to improve diversity in these communities (human and natural). We know the benefits are mutual and increase our resilience.

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director

## 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. Recently, on June 21, 2018, a grant amendment was awarded bringing the total grant funding to \$380,442 with a required \$225,222 in local match in addition to extending the grant until May 31, 2019. The goal of this project is to improve the drinking watershed of Springfield and Greene County with implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will reduce nonpoint source pollution.

This summer, several improvements were completed at the Little Sac agricultural demonstration area near Fellows Lake including the installation of a new perimeter fence and entrance gate. A new galvanized metal watering tank was purchased to replace the old rusty tank. In addition, two concrete tanks and one tire-watering tank were cleaned out which makes the watering system on the site operational. The new perimeter fencing and entrance gate have been installed. The site is currently being brush hogged in preparation for the installation of the new internal electrical fencing to complete the rotational grazing system. The stream crossing concept design for the site is currently under review and will be the next project to be completed.

The final year of the grant will be focused on writing and updating our EPA nine element Upper Little Sac Watershed Management Plan. Part of the plan updates include the Bacteria Source Tracking Report for the Little Sac River, which was recently completed by Missouri State University Ozarks Environmental and Water Resources Institute. Bacteria samples were collected at five sites in the watershed in fall 2017 to look for presence of human, bovine, chicken, goose and dog bacteria markers. The results for this [report](#) can be found online.

Several other projects completed throughout the duration of the grant, including the installation of five prescribed agricultural grazing systems, three bank vegetative buffers strips, and riparian corridor improvements. Also completed were the Longitudinal Peaked Stone Toe Protection (LPSTP) streambank stabilization project and collection of water quality data at five locations in the watershed. These projects would not be possible without our grant partnerships with City Utilities of Springfield, the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Missouri Department of Conservation. All of these installed practices help to improve water quality, decrease soil erosion, and improve aquatic life.

Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager



*New fence at the Agricultural Demonstration Area*



*LPSTP Streambank Stabilization taking root*



## Watershed Center Update

### A Summer of Field Trips

We continued our trend of busy summers full of field trips with over 2,300 visitors to the park this season. Students from Stockton, Marionville, Republic, Willard, and many Springfield schools participated in educational programs at the Watershed Center.

*Splash!* continues to be a big component of our summer programs. Almost 700 second and third grade students participated in this innovative program which explores the connections between nature and our drinking water. This year, classroom activities were supplemented with three field trips to the Watershed Center. Students created journey sticks while exploring the park during a guided hike and learned about the connection between healthy land and healthy water. Students used a stream table model to learn firsthand about erosion and threats to our Ozarks streams. Students also got their hands wet, touching and exploring the diverse life that lives in our lakes and ponds.

Classes also had a chance to wade in the water while they explored an Ozark stream. For many this was their first chance to catch a crayfish and learn about stream life. During their final visit to the park, students were thrilled to fish in the lake. For many students, this was their first time fishing—which is a treat for all of us! The Watershed Committee staff is delighted to be partners with Springfield Public Schools in this unique program.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Coordinator



*Fishing as a “hook” to connect kids with nature in Splash!*



*The Streamside Learning Station is a delightful “classroom” on a hot summer day*



## Education Outreach Specialist

We are thrilled to welcome Clarissa Hatley to the City of Springfield's Department of Environmental Services. Clarissa is the new Education Outreach Specialist focusing on water related issues. Many of you will recognize Clarissa from her volunteer and intern days at the Watershed Center. Clarissa earned a Bachelor of Science in Geography and is completing her Master of Science degree in Geospatial Sciences with an emphasis in Geography and Planning. In her new position, Clarissa will spend part of her time at the Watershed Center assisting in education programs. This new position will foster increased collaboration between the Watershed and City's educational outreach programs



*Clarissa interacting with students in her new job as Education Outreach Specialist*

## Watershed Center Fellowship

Our Watershed Center Fellowship program has been a huge success to date. This program provides recent college graduates with a unique educational and work experience, while assisting us to meet our critical needs like volunteer coordination, ecological restoration, and keeping pace with our growing educational programs. We are excited to announce Seth Wheeler as our latest Watershed Center Fellow. Seth graduated in May of 2018 from Arkansas Tech University with a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife Science. Seth's degree program and related experiences made him a perfect fit for the Watershed team. He has already made a big impact at the Watershed by coordinating volunteer efforts, assisting in habitat improvement projects, and leading a variety of educational activities.



*Seth Wheeler, our Watershed Center Fellow*

## Watershed Conservation Corps

We've just wrapped up the Watershed Conservation Corps for the summer and the program was an absolute success. The Corps completed 8 unique projects in as many places. At Wilson's Creek, for instance, the Corps spent six days removing red cedar in a rare Missouri Bladderpod habitat. At Lake Springfield, the Corps worked with Park Superintendent Matt Coats on removing invasive bush honeysuckle from the sensitive glade habitat. The Corps also worked at George Washington Carver National Monument, Bass Pro's Base Camp, Valley Water Mill Park, and private residences.



*The hard-working Watershed Conservation Corps making a healthier watershed*

What we've learned from our pilot year is that there is definite need for the services our program provides in our area and that our conservation corps is more than capable of providing these services. We thank all of our 2018 partners and hope that the work continues for years to come. If you are seeking any of the services our corps offers, please reach out to the Watershed Conservation Corps Program Manager Caleb Sanders ([caleb@watershedcommittee.org](mailto:caleb@watershedcommittee.org)) to request more information.



# Watershed Summer Gala

## Watershed Summer Gala Wrap-Up

The 5th annual Watershed Summer Gala was a great success! In total, we raised about \$25,000 after expenses, which will help us continue the Watershed Center Fellowship and continue growing education programs at the Watershed Center. And, I think it's safe to say, everyone had a good time! The food was fantastic, the fellowship was superb, and the outpouring of support from our sponsors and silent auction donors was astounding.

We couldn't do the event without the support of our staff, volunteers, and interns, and we are thankful that so many people care enough about our mission to take the time to help out. We look forward to seeing you again next year! Meanwhile, if you are interested in becoming a sustaining sponsor of the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, visit our website at [www.watershedcommittee.org/sustainingsponsor/](http://www.watershedcommittee.org/sustainingsponsor/) or give us a call at 417-866-1127.

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director





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Thanks again to all of our Watershed Summer Gala Sponsors!

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