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## Fall Newsletter 2018

### Director's Update: Partnership is in the Water

Over the past few months, I've had the opportunity to meet people from across both Missouri and the country to discuss water and conservation. Many good things are happening! I met Chris Rainwater from Homer Alaska who maintains a cattle operation in balance with the needs of endangered species in his area. I met Jerry Doan from North Dakota who broke with traditional grazing practices to rebuild his soil, to make his farm profitable, and, ultimately, to draw his family back to the farm. Now, his children each contribute to the thriving enterprise by lending their individual talents developed in college and through other careers. We met local farmers producing Audubon-certified, bird-friendly beef while improving their profits and their piece of the watershed. It is remarkably hopeful to see elegant solutions to age-old challenges like making a living from a piece of land.

There were some similarities to these win-win-win operations. Partnerships were a common thread in all of the successful projects. Partnerships between neighbors, partnerships between landowners, government agencies and conservation groups, and perhaps most importantly, partnerships between humans and nature. Listening was key to these partnerships. Another striking similarity between these stories is that the desires of the landowners never really changed. What changed was knowledge, and again, gaining knowledge involved listening and keenly observing.

Over 90% of the watersheds that supply our drinking water are privately owned. Finding common ground and working to share opportunities which are successful for all parties, including "nature" as a party, is both an important and an exciting niche that we fill as Watershed Committee of the Ozarks. We are excited to listen and to continue to build partnerships.

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director



*Learning how a native prairie provided food for cattle throughout the summer drought*

## Projects Update

### Little Sac Restoration and Improvement Project

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks (WCO) 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 and while also extending the grant to 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.

The WCO has been working with community partners to revitalize the Little Sac Agricultural Demonstration area next to Fellows Lake Dam, which next year can provide local farmers and producers a local site to learn about BMPs such as grazing management, soil health, and solar watering. Recently, internal electric fencing was installed at the agricultural demonstration area, putting us one step closer to having the site ready for grazing management and educational use. The stream crossing project is currently out for bid.

In managed grazing, pastures are divided into sections, or paddocks, which are grazed one at a time. Livestock are grazed only long enough to eat the desired amount of the most nutritious forage, then the paddock is rested and allowed to regrow. Animal performance is usually improved, and herd health can be improved because cattle spend less time in wet areas. Streamside vegetation also stays healthier, reducing erosion and improving water quality.

Several other projects completed throughout the grant include installation five prescribed agricultural grazing systems, installation of three bank vegetative buffers strips, improvements to riparian corridors, completion the Longitudinal Peaked Stone Toe Protection streambank stabilization project, and collection of water quality data at five locations in the watershed.

All of these projects help reduce nonpoint source pollutants from entering the Little Sac River, which will benefit our drinking water supply for many years to come. We are very thankful to all of our community partners that make these projects possible, including the landowners, the grant steering committee, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Greene County, Missouri Department of Conservation, City Utilities of Springfield, the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager



*New internal fence at the Agricultural Demonstration Area*



*Functional Watering System at the Agricultural Demonstration Area*

# Watershed Center Update

## Field Trips

Fall is a favorite season for field trips to the Watershed Center. Students from a number of public, private, and home school groups, along with local colleges and universities, have been exploring nature and water-related issues here at the park. This year over 5,000 students have participated in field trips to the Center. Our goal is to provide all students in the region with quality field experiences that develop and nurture a life-long appreciation of our fantastic Ozark water resources.



*Jarrett students at the Watershed Center*

## Greener Greenspace Expands

Our collaborative program with Springfield Public Schools has expanded to include Cherokee, Hickory Hills, Jarrett, Pershing, Pipkin, and Westport. Seventh grade students in these schools participated in two field trips to the Center. Teams of students were challenged to come up with solutions and improvements to environmental problems they identified in their community. During their first visit, students learn about the watershed, water quality issues, and BMPs. The second field trip focused on stream ecology, invasive species, native plants, and rain gardens. An added element this year is a third field trip to the Springfield Sanitary Landfill and Fantastic Caverns where students learned about recycling, solid waste disposal, karst topography, and groundwater resources. Students use the information they learned in the classroom along with field experiences to create presentations to share with their classmates. Students with the top proposal will receive funding from the district to implement their plan.



*A closer look at Sanders Branch*

## New SPS Collaboration

This fall kicked off the start of a new collaboration with Springfield Public Schools (SPS). High school students in Earth Science classes are now participating in a hydrology unit. As part of this unit, students participate in a field trip to Jordan Creek in downtown Springfield. During this field trip, students perform a variety of water quality tests as they learn about issues impacting urban streams. Students also participate in an underground tour of Jordan Creek as they learn about the history of Springfield and the connections between our local waterways, our economy, and urban planning.



*Water testing on Jordan Creek*

Ultimately, we hope that the SPS students will develop a lifelong appreciation for Ozarks water resources as they continue participate in collaborative programs at the elementary, middle, and high school level. The Watershed Committee staff greatly appreciates the opportunity to work closely with the SPS system to make this happen.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Coordinator



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## Watershed Conservation Corps Update

Once you notice it, you can't "un-see it." That yellowish green understory in the woods...the scourge of a watershed near you...scarier than a jack-o-lantern...its Bush Honeysuckle! In seriousness, if you pay attention you can really see four types of invasive species this time of year. As the leaves fall off most native trees and shrubs, Japanese and Bush Honeysuckle cling to their yellow-green leaves and red berries. Burning bushes gone rogue are a bright, reddish purple or pink. And the dreaded winter creeper stays deep green through late fall. All of these plants have attractive qualities, which is why they were brought to an ecosystem near you. But as you may know, they have a tendency to take over, which is detrimental to biodiversity and can ultimately degrade water quality and cause decline in native species. What can you do? The Missouri Department of Conservation has some great "Googlable" fact sheets on invasive species. If you think you have them, or if you know you do and want to get rid of them, give the Watershed Conservation Corps a call!



*Highly invasive Bush Honeysuckle becomes easy to spot in fall*