



Spring Newsletter 2018

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Director's Update: Treasures of the Watershed Center

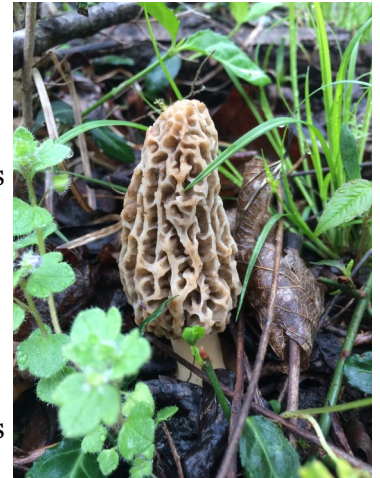
Mushrooms! Migrating birds! Fishing, hiking, gardening, planting trees! Spring in the Ozarks is such an exciting time. And after “second winter,” I think we were all extra ready for spring this year!

The Watershed Center and Valley Water Mill Park really shine as an asset to the community in the spring. Visitors of all ages are flocking here to enjoy their spring days. For some, this place offers a treasured and “secret” mushroom hunting spot. For others it is a place to fish, to exercise, to “nature bathe” and decompress. For students it’s an adventure and a chance to get outside the classroom. Although visitors’ ages and motivations for coming are quite diverse, each visitors’ experience shares a common thread: the sparkling water which flows through the heart of the Park. You can’t be here without noticing and considering water.

Over the winter, Watershed Center Coordinator, Jeff Birchler, led an overhaul and upgrade to the interpretive signage. The new signs will help to enrich our springtime visitors’ experience and opportunities for learning about water resources. The signs contain fascinating information, are neatly packaged, and are strategically located. These signs were funded in-part by our Summer Gala fundraising efforts—thank you! Many people are already using them and enjoying them.

2018 promises to be an exciting year. Some projects, like the Little Sac Restoration and Improvement Project are wrapping up. Others, like the Watershed Conservation Corps and Agricultural Demonstration Area, are just beginning. We think the year holds great potential for growth and we are looking forward to sharing this place and new experiences with you. Don’t forget to visit us! Seeing familiar faces seems to always generate learning and collaboration, and we can’t wait to share the many treasures of the Watershed Center.

Mike Kromrey



The Watershed Center has many treasures: some are more obvious than others.

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 watershed of Springfield and Greene County with implementation of best management practices (BMPs) that will reduce nonpoint source pollution.

During winter and early spring, several improvements were completed at the Little Sac Agricultural Demonstration Area near Fellows Lake including removal of the old internal fencing and overgrown perimeter fence. The original well had become silted in with sediment and was cleaned out. A new solar pump and solar panel to run the water well were also installed. The Missouri Department of Conservation Stream Unit from Sedalia toured the site to look at the stream crossing and provide potential suggestions for improvements to the crossing. Wildscape Environmental Services also conducted a stream longitudinal survey and created a preliminary stream crossing design. In addition, a prescribed burn plan was created for the site with technical assistance from the Missouri Department of Conservation. The Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) simulated flow model for bacteria in the Little Sac watershed was also recently completed by Missouri State University Ozarks Environmental and Water Resources Institute. SWAT is the EPA approved model, which is required to for updating the Watershed Committee's Upper Little Sac Watershed Management Plan. This model will help guide the locations of future projects in the watershed with the goal of reducing fecal coliform in our drinking watershed.

Several other projects completed throughout the grant have included the installation of five prescribed agricultural grazing systems, the installation of three bank vegetative buffers strips, riparian corridor improvements 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



Fence removal at the Little Sac Agricultural Demonstration Area.



Burning "thorn trees" (honey locust) and cedar trees which had invaded the pastures at the Agricultural Demonstration Area.

Watershed Center Update

Field Trips

Spring is always a busy season for field trips to the Watershed Center. This year is certainly no exception. In fact, many school districts have made first time visits to the park. Within the last few weeks students from Everton, Greenfield, Fair Grove, and Joplin have joined our regular field trip participants. We are excited about expanding the reach of our educational programs. Our goal is to include all schools in the watersheds that supply our drinking water as well as become a regional source of educational opportunities.



Sparta students exploring stream ecology.

Placeworks STEAM Collaboration

Our first year of collaboration with the Springfield Art Museum in offering a STEAM program to rural schools was a resounding success! Grant funding through the Museum's Placeworks program allowed schools to have two classroom visits, a field trip to the Art Museum, and a field trip to the Watershed Center. Students explored art and nature through the medium of journaling. We will continue the program next year and expect to reach even more schools.



Kate Baird introducing journaling to students.

OHRD Grant

We are excited to have been awarded a \$21,000 grant through the Ozarks Headwaters Recycling and Materials Management District. The grant funds are designed to reduce the amount of solid waste generated at the Watershed Center. Our grant will allow us to install recycling bins throughout the Park and create an educational program focusing on the connection between solid waste disposal and water quality. A key component of this educational program is to work with school groups visiting on field trips to educate both students and parents about Litter Less Lunches. Students eating lunch at the Watershed Center will participate in a recycling and composting activity in an effort to both educate them and reduce the waste stream of materials flowing to the landfill. We hope that our Litter Less Lunch message spreads to both the parents and schools and they find ways to reduce the impact of school lunches on waste streams flowing to landfills.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Coordinator

Habitat Improvement Update

Watershed Conservation Corps

We are preparing to embark on a new endeavor! With our mission in focus, we have identified a niche to provide watershed improving services in the community and education and workforce skills and training for youth. To meet this community need, the Watershed Committee will begin the Watershed Conservation Corps (WCC). The mission of the WCC is “to engage and employ young people in hands-on watershed improvement.”

This summer we will start small and begin by piloting the WCC. We plan on hiring 4 crew members and a crew manager. WCC will work with private and public landowners on outdoor projects that will provide watershed benefits and improve overall watershed health, such as installing and/or maintaining green infrastructure like rain gardens, detention basin retrofits, stream restoration sites, removing invasive species, trail maintenance, and projects related to ecological maintenance and/or restoration plans.

This program has the exciting potential to physically improve the health of our local watersheds, build a network of young professionals versed in watershed stewardship practices, and support the growing movement towards green infrastructure. The other exciting aspect of the endeavor is that it will function as a small business. Although we will likely need to seek sources of funding to get started, we will be working towards the goal of the WCC generating enough revenue to support and grow itself. Like any “business start-up” we don’t have it all figured out yet, but we are looking forward to hitting the ground running and learning as we go. If you have any need or ideas for watershed health-improving projects for the WCC, please let us know!

MOBCI Update:

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MOBCI) grant is nearing completion at Valley Water Mill Park. Since receiving it nearly one year ago, Watershed Committee of the Ozarks has directed over 2,400 hours of volunteer service to restore native habitats at the Park and toward the fulfillment of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative aim to “get people excited about birds through pursuing and enacting integrated, all bird conservation.” And while the work we have achieved through MOBCI has been measurable, we see the need for continued work including removing various and pervasive invasives, and continuing to restore the many habitats present at the Park. We very much hope to partner with MOBCI again in the future.



The prairie plot at the Watershed Center is responding with lushness to the first prescribed burn in January.

River Cleanup

Protect the Source for

Drinking Water Week

Saturday, May 12

9 a.m. - Noon

South Access and Trailhead

5220 S. Southwood Road



Join us as we **clean** the **James River** shoreline

from land and boat. A limited number of canoes are available and will be reserved first come, first served. Please register by May 9 by calling 417-866-1127 or visit watershedcommittee.org/about-us/river-clean-up/.

Connecting our Community to Clean Drinking Water.





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

Watershed Summer Gala

Join us Saturday, July 14, 2018 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 will include a local food buffet catered by Chartwells, Mother's Brewery beer, wine by the glass, 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.

