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## Sponsors

City Utilities of Springfield  
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## Spring Newsletter 2019

### Director's Update: Welcome Back...

This beautiful yellow flower means an awful lot to us. It's called Missouri bladderpod, and it only occurs in this little part of Missouri—Greene, Christian, Dade, and Lawrence County and a few spots in Arkansas—nowhere else on Planet Earth. The original geography of the plant coupled with habitat loss have made it exceedingly rare. It was first discovered at Valley Water Mill Park in 2013. At that time, two hundred plants were recorded. But in 2015, there were none recorded, and none in 2016, 2017, and 2018. We wondered if it would ever come back, and we feared that it wouldn't.

So as you can imagine, when seven-hundred and twenty plants shone like a carpet of sunshine this spring, we rejoiced. We wanted to share the development with the world, but we held this little secret close out of protectiveness for this rediscovered jewel.

We try hard to “walk the walk” and demonstrate ways to keep water clean at the Watershed Center. Along the way we've learned that a very important step towards effective stewardship is having a plan. With water quality and education as our primary goals, the Missouri Department of Conservation developed a science-based management plan which listed the tasks necessary to accomplish our goals. Many of the tasks involved are laborious and sometimes overwhelming. These are things like removing invasive species, writing burn plans, organizing volunteer work days, writing grants for funding, and more. It is hard work, and it sometimes leaves us quietly wondering if we are making a difference. That's why when this strange and wonderful plant emerged like a phoenix from the ashes, we were filled with emotion. The seeds were there in the soil, waiting for the conditions they needed to thrive, and those conditions would not have occurred without our collective effort. It was a visible, beautiful symbol of success—like getting a “thank you” or a high-five from Mother Nature.

Missouri bladderpod is not the only success of our labor; it's just the mascot. The biodiversity of plants has increased two or three fold in this section of the park. The summer tanager, in its extravagant red plumage, seems to have taken up residence there too. Now there are more roots and leaves to protect the soil, take up nutrients and hold water. And once again, I think, we find that caring for nature, water, and ourselves are not so different.



*Missouri Bladderpod reappears at Valley Water Mill Park!*

## 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 with total grant funding to \$380,442 with a required \$225,222 in local match, with an extension of 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 that will reduce nonpoint source pollution.

The WCO has been working to update the Upper Little Sac Watershed Management Plan. This plan is an EPA nine element plan that identifies sources of pollution, estimates the load reductions, and describes the management measures to be implemented in critical areas to help reduce those pollutants over a 20-year timeframe. The plan is currently in the editing stage before being submitted to Missouri Department of Natural Resources and EPA for review.

Improvements to the Little Sac Grazing Demonstration area have been continuing as part of the grant. In December, the water crossing to connect the north and south pastures was completed by Wildscape Environmental which has allowed a local farmer to begin grazing his cattle on the property. These recent improvements have allowed the demonstration area to be functional once again.

Several other projects completed throughout the grant include installation five prescribed agricultural grazing systems, installation of three bank vegetative buffer 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 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, and the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District.



*Stabilized stream crossing at the Little Sac Grazing Demonstration*



*Little Sac stabilization project in its second spring, after a minor flood event*

## Projects Update

### USDA Conservation Technical Assistance Grant

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks was awarded the USDA Conservation Technical Assistance Grant for \$49,000 on September 15, 2018. The project is titled the Sac and James River Watershed Conservation Outreach Project and the objective of the project is to promote public awareness and implementation of Farm Bill activities, especially in historically underserved communities and in watersheds critical to drinking water supply. The project partners include the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Missouri Department of Conservation, and the grant will last for 2 years.

### Groundwater Monitoring

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks is partnering with City Utilities of Springfield to begin a groundwater monitoring program. This program will provide a proactive groundwater monitoring collection of quarterly water samples from area springs to measure water quality parameters and identify any existing or emerging groundwater contaminants in our region. The first samples were collected April 30 and the next collection will be in the summer.

Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager



*Ritter West Spring*

### MDC honors Watershed Committee of the Ozarks

We were excited to receive an award from MDC in February, the following is an excerpt from what Francis Skalicky wrote for the MDC Newsroom, a statewide electronic publication:

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Protecting the watersheds of southwest Missouri involves more than caring for water. Maintaining the environmental beauty of our waterways takes comprehensive stewardship of the land around the streams as well as the water flowing through them. It takes an ongoing educational effort that connects the people to the watershed and helps them understand their value. In other words, it's work the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks does throughout the year.

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks (WCO) was recognized in February by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), receiving the Outstanding Partner of the Year Award from MDC's Forestry Division. WCO is a 501c3 organization in Springfield situated at Valley Watermill Lake on the northeast side of the community at 2400 E. Valley Water Mill Road. In addition to the Watershed Center building, the facility's office site includes an amphitheater, hiking trails that wind through 44 acres of forested property, a boardwalk, and two fishing piers alongside a 13-acre lake. In 2018 WCO achieved Certified Tree Farm status through the management of their forested acres. They've also implemented an aggressive invasive species removal plan and have conducted timber stand improvement work and controlled burns. The WCO also offers a variety of educational programs.



“The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks is like having another nature center on the north side of Springfield,” MDC Resource Forester Paul Johnson said. “WCO actively participates in public outreach of all kinds. Their efforts have reached countless numbers of elementary and high school students, college students, and have provided opportunities for volunteer service. They have found many ways to spread conservation through education, advocacy and hands-on work.”

## Watershed Center Update

### Summit Preparatory School All Service Day

Our thanks to the many organizations who helped make the Summit Preparatory School All Service Day at the Watershed Center a huge success! Almost 200 students and parents found time to help with a variety of projects throughout the park. Students ranging from pre-school to seniors worked to improve trail access, eliminate invasive species, and restore native habitats. This was the second year for the Watershed to host this program, and we are looking forward to many more.

Many factors combined to make this a success. Throughout the day Missouri State University Wildlife Society's members were there to assist the students with their tasks. Funding to purchase tools for students to use was made available by the "Jeep's ExtremeTerrain's Clean Trail Grant." WCO was able to purchase plants with funds from a Community Conservation Grant provided by the Missouri Department of Conservation.



*Pre-K planting Little Blue Stem*



*Summit Prep Students creating a new trail connecting the C.W. Titus Facility to the Trailhead*



*Education Outreach Specialist Clarissa helping students with planting*

### A Busy Field Trip Season

Despite the frequent rains and thunderstorms, it has been a busy spring for field trips to the Watershed Center and Jordan Creek tours. Over 55 school groups ranging from kindergarten to college students have participated in field experiences this spring. We have also continued our collaboration with the Springfield Art Museum to offer the STEAM Residency experience for area rural schools.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Coordinator

## Watershed Summer Gala

Please join us for the 2019 Watershed Summer Gala! Don't let the "gala" word scare you—this is a laid back, fun event with a purpose. All proceeds benefit the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks and help us with our growing education and outreach efforts and the Watershed Fellowship program. Here's how the details are shaping up:

**Date: Saturday, July 13, 2019**

**Agenda:** The Gala will begin at 5:00 p.m. at the Bond Learning Center, 2401 S. Kansas Expressway, and wrap up around 8:00 pm. Delicious local food, beer and wine will be available throughout the evening. The silent auction and raffle end at 7:30 p.m.

**Tickets:** Tickets are available now! They are \$50 in advance. Tickets will be \$55 at the door, and we may sell out this year, so ordering in advance is encouraged. Visit our website, [watershedcommittee.org](http://watershedcommittee.org)

### Things To Do at the Event:

If you play the **Whiskey Pull** you are guaranteed a good bottle of whiskey, and proceeds from the \$30 chance go directly to Watershed Center education programs. Some lucky folks will walk away with a very special bottle worth two or three times the price of the chance! This game is made possible by the board and staff of the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks.

The **Wine Grab** is another way you can make a donation to Watershed Center Education Programs and all players will walk out with a great bottle of wine. Like the Whiskey Pull, some folks will draw a bottle valued well over the \$20 chance.

Some call it **Bag Toss**, others call it Corn Hole...we think it's a great way for you donate to Watershed Center education programs and have a chance to win **an awesome item**. For \$5 you get a ticket for the raffle, AND 4 throws. Each additional bag-in-the-hole gets you another ticket and chance to win!

Check out the **best Silent Auction in town**. We are humbled by the support of local artists, craftsman, makers, and local businesses who make it possible.

**Food:** The food will be set up in stations around the room. Get ready to be blown away by the amazing menu presented by Chartwell's. As always, selections will focus on local, seasonal ingredients and the bounty of summer in the Ozarks.

**Beverages:** We will have great a selection of beverages on the house! *Mother's Brewery* will be serving two fabulous beers and for \$10, you can purchase a "bottomless" WCO tumbler to keep those drinks cool. In addition to beer, we will have:

- Red and white wine
- Refreshing Iced Tea
- Award winning, **high quality drinking water**—so good its worth protecting!

**For Sponsorship Opportunities, contact Mike Kromrey 417-866-1127**



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

## Watershed Conservation Corps Update

The Watershed Conservation Corps is getting ready for some exciting work this summer! Project sites will include Wilson's Creek National Battlefield and Mark Twain National Forest. We've also been busy here in Springfield for the past two months, with projects including planting 1,200 trees on a permanent conservation easement with Missouri Department of Conservation and Wildscape Environmental Services, a native plant installation with Discovery Center Springfield and Olsson, a 7-acre glade restoration at Lake Springfield with Springfield-Greene County Park Board (pictured), and our ongoing native plant management of Base Camp with Bass Pro Shops.

Our partners are serious about conservation and work tirelessly to protect and invest in the future of our beautiful city and its water resources. We're honored to play a part in the incredible work they're doing and "to engage and employ young people in hands-on watershed improvement."

Caleb Sanders, WCC Program Manager



Glade/Savanna restoration at Lake Springfield  
(use tree in foreground for reference)