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## 2021 3rd Quarter Newsletter

### Director's Update: New (Soil) Horizons

Let me give you some dirt on the exciting frontier of...dirt. Like water, soil is a precious resource. Let's dig deep for a moment with wisdom from Wendell Berry: "The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life."

Watershed's mission of clean water and our community's relationship with soil are interrelated. Healthy soils produce food and forage in abundance, filter and clean water runoff, and recharge the aquifer more quickly. More recently, scientists have realized that healthy soil is like a living super-organism or ecosystem, with billions of bacteria, fungi, plants, and animals. When we disturb nature's balance, soil can be a huge problem. Soil in our waterways is pollution, plain and simple. Our community has the regulatory and ethical responsibility to manage water pollution and soil health. Failure to do so can cause things nobody wants, like excessive algae growth, dirty water, unhealthy rivers, and declining fisheries.

Streambanks hemorrhaging soil into waterways like the photo below from the upper James River have always made me cringe for all the afore mentioned reasons. Now, however, I'm starting to view banks like this with more optimism. We now know that investing in "nonpoint source" problems like this in the watershed are a lot more cost effective than adding equipment to get similar water quality gains out of our treatment plants (point sources).

We are nearing a place where the empirical and ethical align, and flexibility in regulation may soon allow us to pursue the higher ROI solutions. We stand ready to dig in.

Mike Kromrey,  
Executive Director



*Saki Urushidani and Errin Kemper measuring an eroding stream bank*



## Field Trips at the Watershed Center

### Greener Greenspaces

The collaborative program with Springfield Public Schools (SPS) known as Greener Greenspaces returned for its 5<sup>th</sup> year. This project-based learning unit challenges teams of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students to determine the most effective way to spend \$1,000 to make their campus “Greener” or more environmentally friendly. Students make two field trips to the Watershed Center exploring water quality issues and best management practices. Students also made visits to Fantastic Caverns and the Springfield Noble Hill Sanitary Landfill. Hands-on experiences and insights from the field trips are an integral part of the Greener Greenspace unit.

All 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in the nine SPS middle schools participated in the program along with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Scholars Academy at Central High School. Schools were given the option to have on-site outreach programs as an accommodation to COVID related concerns. Two middle schools (Pershing and Reed) elected this option.

Students are putting final touches on their proposals. Top presentations from each school will be reviewed by a committee. The winning programs will receive funding to make their projects a reality this spring. We look forward to continuing to work with SPS on this rewarding program in the future.



*Water chemistry learning station*



*Collecting seeds and learning the value of native plants*



*Collecting stream macroinvertebrates to assess ecological health and impacts over time*

## Field Trips at the Watershed Center (continued)

### Parkview

Science teacher Gloria Gammel has done a terrific job getting her students hands-on experience exploring water quality issues impacting the Ozarks. Her students spent a day comparing an urban and rural stream. Ms. Gammel leads her students through Stream Team style analyses at each of the sites, collecting water chemistry data, stream discharge, and macroinvertebrate sampling. While at the Jordan Creek site, students also take an underground tour of Jordan Creek as they take a deeper look at urban stream issues. After lunch at Valley Water Mill Park, students conclude their day investigating the South Dry Sac. The water chemistry and macroinvertebrate data collected from both sites is then analyzed back in the classroom. This experience puts the *fun* in *fundamentals*.



*Jordan Creek data collection*



*Students exploring a classic Ozark stream*

### Homeschool Outdoor Fair

The Interpreters' Coalition of Springfield-Greene County hosted a Homeschool Outdoor Fair at the Botanical Center in October. Over 30 families with almost 100 children signed up for the event. A combination of outdoor activity stations, small group indoor workshops, and larger outdoor presentations offered a wide variety of activities to the participants. The Watershed Committee operated a Fish Printing activity station. Guests were able to practice a modified version of the Japanese Art of Gyotaku using latex fish replicas. While students were making replicas and learning about fish adaptations to life in the water, adults were engaged in conversations about the Watershed Committee and our mission. It was a fun and rewarding day for all involved.

Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Director



*A fun day for all!*

## Volunteer Update

The past several months have been busy for our volunteers! Over the summer, we welcomed in both new and returning individuals and groups to help us out with trash cleanups, trail maintenance, and invasive species removal. Many individuals also helped us with field trips by assisting with teaching, answering questions, and general assistance.

During the month of August, Developmental Center of the Ozarks (DCO) was our winning group for Volunteer-Palooza. DCO comes out nearly every Friday to help with landscaping around the raingarden and trees in the front of the Watershed Center. Since the beginning of the year, DCO has contributed nearly 300 volunteer hours, with roughly 14 hours during the month of August.

United Way's Day of Caring helps us accomplish some of our larger projects in one day with the use of several groups of volunteers. This quarter we hosted our second day of caring event of 2021. Three groups (Central Bank of the Ozarks, Community Foundation of the Ozarks, and Communication Workers of America) helped with trail maintenance and trash cleanup at Valley Watermill Park and planting a native flowerbed in front of the Fellows Lake Marina store.

Autumn is a great time to work on invasive plant species removal. Currently, many of our volunteers are engaged in a bottomland forest restoration project. Volunteers have been hard at work removing wintercreeper from the bottomland forest so it can be replaced with native species to prevent erosion, encourage biodiversity, and welcome pollinators.

We are thankful for all of our volunteers and their hard work! We could not accomplish these projects without them!

Rowan Castle Hoffman, Watershed Fellow/  
Volunteer Coordinator



*DCO volunteers experiencing service and learning*



*Day of Caring volunteers from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks*

## Sac and James River Watershed Conservation Outreach Project

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks was awarded the USDA Conservation Technical Assistance Grant for \$49,000 on September 15, 2018. On September 9, 2020, a grant amendment was awarded, bringing the total grant funding to \$78,000 and extending the grant until September 2022. 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 NRCS Soil Health Truck will visit Hillcrest High School for an educational field visit on Friday October 29th with a Restoration Ecology class. Future visits are planned to be scheduled for the Agriculture 2 course. This is an important target audience due to the school's location in our community's drinking watershed. The current students participating could be future local landowners and producers.

### Integrated Planning Day

On September 30, Integrated Plan partners including the City of Springfield, Greene County, City Utilities, James River Basin Partnership, Ozark Greenways and Watershed Committee met and spent the morning listening to presentations on local water history and a panel discussion on water quality monitoring. During lunch nonprofit partners spoke to the group about upcoming projects, and the afternoon was spent with hands on learning, macro invertebrate sampling, tree planting, trash clean up along the trail corridor along Wilson's Creek riparian corridor next to Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park. It was a wonderful day of connecting with local partners that help to protect our drinking watersheds.

Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager



*Photo taken by Ozark Greenways, Caleb gives instructions for tree planting and invasive plant removal*



## Watershed Conservation Corps

The Watershed Conservation Corps (WCC) third quarter was full of exciting projects and opportunities. We continued our efforts in invasive species management, riparian buffer establishment, and trail maintenance while building the professional skills and certifications our crewmembers need to be successful young adults in the field of conservation. As our crew experience grows, our ability to be effective plan, coordinate, and complete projects in our local watershed increases. This directly aids in the protection and quality of our water while improving native habitat and quality of life.

Our work is not possible without you and your support, and we thank you for your continued investment into the corps and the future of conservation in the Ozarks. We look forward to wrapping up a successful 2021 with our partners and are eager so see what 2022 brings forward.

### August: Scouting for Upcoming Projects with United States Forest Service

The WCC is proud to have the U.S. Forest Service's Mark Twain National Forest region as a project partner for recreational trail construction and maintenance. The local WCC crew took a scouting hike at Hercules Glade Wilderness Area, located in Taney County, Missouri, to identify areas of need for repair. This November, WCC will address trail obstacles, such as trees down across paths and washed out sections of trail, to provide a safe experience for recreationists.

One exciting part of this plan is that the trail work will be taking place in a designated wilderness area, meaning only primitive tools are allowed for work. Crewmembers will use crosscut saws, hand saws, and standard trail equipment instead of powered equipment (chainsaws) to remove debris and repair eroded trail. Ecologically, Hercules is in the White River Balds region, characterized by Glades and historically open (bald) hilltops and deep, more-wooded valleys. Hercules Glades is relatively close to the Springfield Area and is a local favorite hiking destination. Long Creek falls is a popular destination within the area, and while hiking, one may see road runners, cacti, tarantulas, scorpions, various lizards and snakes, and maybe even a black bear! We are excited to continue to work on the aesthetic and ecological improvements on this special landscape.



*WCC Local Crew standing on the Coy Bald Trail at Hercules Glades Wilderness*

## September: Integrated Plan Field Day

The WCC held a field day in conjunction with the 4th Annual Integrated Plan Day, which focused on protecting our local drinking water quality and regional water quality. The field day was held at our Wilson's Creek riparian establishment project, located at Rutledge Wilson Park. We gave a brief talk about riparian buffer zones and their relation to water quality and helped attendees plant trees in spaces where tree mortality occurred from previous flood events. WCC collected willow stakes from the site to provide additional trees for future plantings along Fassnacht Creek, a tributary of Wilson's Creek, and will continue to monitor the zone for future plantings. We are thankful for our partners at James River Basin Partnership and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board for the opportunity to improve urban riparian buffers, and Brian Kuehn for his skilled assistance with planning and installation.



*Saki, an engineer with SGF Environmental Services lends a hand with tree plantings.*

## October: Invasive Species Management at Current River

We are coming to the end of our third year in partnership with the National Park Service and the Heartland Inventory & Monitoring Network. We have completed over seven months of stewardship at the Buffalo National River, Hot Springs National Monument, Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, and George Washington Carver National Monument. Our crew has been a vital asset to the region's parks and are outstanding representatives of our organization in the field. Currently the crew is at Ozark National Scenic Riverways conducting invasive species management along the Current River in coordination with our partners and other conservation corps members from the Midwest. This will be the final project with NPS for this year's crew, but we are planning to hire new, full-time crew members for the 2022 season.



*WCC Crew treating autumn olive along the Current River*

Adam Barton, Watershed Conservation Corps Program Manager



# WATERSHED natives

## Partnerships

### Missouri Department of Conservation

A unique partnership of helps manage Valley Water Mill Lake, including the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), City Utilities, and Springfield Greene County Parks. Watershed Natives joined the team to help Fisheries Management Biologist Kara Tvedt with MDC on a project to restore native species of aquatic plants at Valley Water Mill Lak in mid-September. Three species of native aquatic plant species were planted in the upper, more shallow part of the Lake. The pickerelweed, spatterdock, and Missouri waterlilies will help take up nutrients entering the lake, slow runoff, trap sediment, and provide habitat.



*MDC staff planting MO aquatic native lilies*

### Community Foundation of the Ozarks

In July, the Watershed and Fellows Lake LLC team started a natives flower bed in front of the store at Fellows Lake. In September, our friends from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks (CFO) participated in Day of Caring and volunteered to help complete this project. This native bed now features shrubs, grasses, and flowers of all shapes, sizes, textures, and colors. This winter educational signs are going to be developed to identify plants and introduce a new audience to native plants.

**Springfield-Greene County Library** and Watershed Natives are working on introducing natives to their seed library. Already the library offers seed that a library member can check out, and this fall staff have been working on a few species to start this library. These seeds will be available in the library early in 2022.



*CFO volunteers planting natives*



## Partnerships (continued)

In the fall of 2020, Watershed Natives was awarded a Youth Engagement grant from the **Ozark Society Foundation**. Funds from this grant were used to create germination stations, and we are now building additional cold-frame style plant germination boxes. The boxes allow seed to undergo natural freeze-thaw process necessary for many seeds to germinate, while protecting the seeds from rodents, birds, and other unwanted guests.



**THE OZARK SOCIETY**  
CONSERVATION EDUCATION RECREATION

### Hillcrest High School- College & Career Pathways program

Programs with the Pathway students at Hillcrest High School began the first week of September. Students have gotten experience direct sowing and stratifying seeds, soil mixing, repotting shrubs, and seed sorting. Part of this program students also participate in the less glamorous project of a nursery like cleaning and weeding potting. This program is such a unique opportunity to watch students progress and flourish through simple projects and open their eyes to opportunities in this career path.

Watershed Natives nursery is located at the **Ozark Empire Fairgrounds** which allowed us to reach a new audience during the Ozark Empire Fair in early August. During the fair programs were offered teaching about native plants, water quality, and seed dispersal.

### New Product!

A major goal of the Watershed Natives is education and introducing new audiences to native plants. To do this we have looked at new outreach methods to engage the public



in a different way. This fall we are offering Watershed Natives calendars, notepad sets, and native dried bouquets for sale. These items are great gifts as we enter the holiday season and offer a handmade element to any table.

The online store on our website will be open Thanksgiving week <https://watershedcommittee.org/store/>. Pick up is the Watershed Center.

Christy Wilder, Watershed Natives Program Manager



*Hillcrest students preparing pots for planting*



*Mixing soil, stratifying seeds for the fall/winter semester*



## Fellows Lake Update

“We are here to educate.” These were the words Kelce Arrington passed along to a customer, who conveyed that message back to us along with their report of a very positive interaction with our staff and overall Fellows Lake experience. As we wrap up our first season, we are so grateful for the support of our neighbors, City Utilities, and community as we work to provide positive, meaningful and engaging experiences at the Lake. Our fishing friends are still filling the parking lot, angling for crappie, walleye, and the fall favorite....musky. As the temperatures cool and trail conditions permit, cyclists and hikers are enjoying the Dirt 66 trail system, to which linear feet are added every day. The traditional season ends on October 31, but with our office and store on the hill, **we plan to stay open to some degree throughout the fall and winter months.**



*Mike with a Musky...they do exist!  
Photo by Trent Jackson*

## New Dock and Rental Boats

Houston, we have a dock! We are thrilled by the quality construction and functionality of the structure. Although the season is winding down, we are still open to rent our BRAND NEW Tracker boats at very competitive rates, thanks to Bass Pro Shops and Tracker Marine. Upcoming improvements will include boat lifts and an improved approach so all guests can easily wheel or walk aboard .



## Springfield Sailing Club

We continue to develop an accredited sailing program at Fellows Lake, which has been dubbed the Springfield Sailing Club. Many have expressed interest in both learning to sail and teaching sailing. Thanks to the generosity of our sailing community, the fleet has grown to 12 boats and we will be able to rent these to beginners (after having taken a lesson) and to experienced sailors once they have been checked out on the nuances of each vessel. We had our first instructor meeting for the Springfield Sailing Club and are looking forward to having 5 instructors ready to begin sailing lessons in early spring 2022!



*Soon-to-be Sailing instructors for the Springfield Sailing Club*

## Programs and Events

The last big news is the store will be remaining open year round! We anticipate being open from 8-4 M-F and if we catch some warm sunny days we will open on the weekends. We will be renting the motorized and larger sailboats during the winter months as well as continue to provide snacks, tackle, bait, and of course coffee and conversation. Do call the lake store (417-840-2965) to make reservations after November 1st for any boat rentals so we can coordinate our schedule to accommodate your day on the lake.

Matt Taylor, Fellows Lake LLC Operations Manager (and sailing enthusiast)

## Trails

There are currently 12.95 miles of trail completed and open to the public at Fellows Lake. An additional 6.5 miles of trail will open this Fall with the completion of two new trails. "The Hoff" and "Bullwinkle." The Hoff, located on the west corner of the lake just south of the dam, consists of a new trailhead and 4.5 miles of a contour flow trail. Riders will experience beautiful lake views and a fast trail. There is minimal topographical relief through this section, but the intention is to use as much of the topography and side slope as possible. This section features a beautiful new trail bridge over a small drainage ravine and a handmade bench crafted from scrap materials courtesy of Progressive Trail Design. Bullwinkle, located on the lake's southeast corner, will add 2 miles to the lake loop. This trail will have a figure-eight configuration. There is a low area that will require a small boardwalk to connect the two loops. The majority of the trail will be a contour flow trail. It will be a beginner-friendly, fast, and flowy trail with beautiful berms and some trail art that inspired the trail's namesake. Construction continues on phases 9 and 6 for completion this Winter.



*"Bullwinkle" the trail-section mascot*



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

## Join the Watershed Sustainer Team

Watershed Sustainers are a dedicated group of local individuals, families, and businesses who support clean water and give back to the community by automatic monthly or yearly contributions. Sustainers provide WCO with a reliable stream of support for projects and education and outreach programs to sustain and improve the water resources of Springfield and Greene County.



If you, your family, or your business would like to become a sustainer, you can learn more and sign up on our website on our Donate page. Please join us!

[https://watershedcommittee.org/get\\_involved/become-a-watershed-sustainer/](https://watershedcommittee.org/get_involved/become-a-watershed-sustainer/)