



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

Making Room for Light

Today my lunchtime trail-jog at the Watershed Center turned into a walk. The cool air, warm sun, and verdant greenery enveloped me, and I felt a deep sense of relief that the Ozarks landscape is hydrated and growing after winter and extended drought. The particular place that slowed me down (in a good way) was an area along the trail where we have been removing invasive species, thinning the overstory, and burning for several years now. The forest floor now abounds with more diversity, including a carpet of flowers and forbs that are responding to the light reaching the forest floor. With continued work, we have made room for light!

I think this lesson from the forest translates to our lives too--it takes some work, but we can make space and let the light in. At Watershed, it helps to be surrounded with the brightness of our Watershed team: the smart and supportive Watershed board, our connected and dedicated sponsors, and our tremendously talented staff. As we pursue "clean water, for life", much of the joy and light is derived from those around us, working for the common good, learning, and supporting our Community.

[Mike Kromrey, Executive Director](#)



Plants responding to light; note the dense vegetation on the forest floor

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Watershed Center Springs to Life!

Spring is an awesome time of year for field trips to the Watershed Center. Almost every day was booked with some type of program. School groups from kindergarten to college participated in field experiences. Groups enjoyed guided nature hikes to explore the connection between healthy land and healthy water. Other groups engaged in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) challenges like the Project WET Water Crossings activity. Many groups enjoyed the classic: wading in an Ozarks stream and catching critters to learn about stream ecology.

Guided hikes are a great chance to explore the diverse habitats found here, and the boardwalks provide an excellent viewing point for the wetland habitat and chance to talk about Wetlands, which provide many benefits to people and wildlife. Wetlands reduce flood damage by storing runoff, filtering pollutants from the water, and providing habitat to a large variety of species. The plants and animals found in the wetland display unique adaptations to the wet conditions.

For older students, carrying out a variety of tests is an effective way to study water quality issues. Students explore temperature, turbidity, pH, dissolved oxygen, phosphates, and nitrates in both stream and lake habitats. Potential sources of pollution and prevention through best management practices are covered as part of this activity. The data collected may be analyzed further back in the classroom, adding an important follow-up to their field experience.



Christy pointing out unique plants in the wetland



High School Chemistry students at work

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In the Project WET Water Crossing activity students are challenged to transport their possessions across a section of water. They must work as a team to create a scale model of a water conveyance device out of materials found in nature. Given a meter length of string, students attempt to create a craft that successfully carries a golf ball down the stream.

We focus on the importance of trial and error and emphasis not all are successful on their first effort. Part of the discussion also focuses on how the influence of water crossings impacted settlement patterns and the challenges presented by crossing larger rivers. Students (and teachers) enjoy this challenge.

Anytime we can get students in the water to experience a classic Ozark stream is a win. If they are younger students, sometimes the activity turns into the great crawdad hunt. For many students, this is their first experience wading in a creek. The squeals of delight mean this will be an experience they will always remember. For older students, we can focus on the creatures caught as indicator species. Through analyzing their collections, we can come up with a water quality index score. Data can be further analyzed back in the classroom by comparing different sites or reviewing seasonal changes. Students quickly realize they can learn a great deal about water quality if they just "Ask the bugs."



Students focused on the design phase of the challenge



MSU Biology II students collecting macroinvertebrates 3



WATERSHED natives

NURSERY UPDATE

Spring comes with an exciting series of annual events and milestones in the plant community. In February, the Lawn and Garden Show at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds is a great opportunity to meet new folks and reconnect with familiar faces. In March, we picked up hundreds of trees and shrubs from the Missouri Department of Conservation Tree Nursery to prepare for the busy planting season ahead. In April, staff participated in “Headwaters to Horizons: Exploring Aquatic Careers”, an event hosted by several partner agencies to introduce local students to careers focused on water and natural resources.

With the growing season now in full swing and the greenhouse at capacity, we’ve officially opened the nursery for regular hours. Visitors can shop every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM, April through mid-June. It’s exciting to continue growing as a local hub for native plants.



Native plants for sale in the greenhouse

Where and When to purchase plants:

**Watershed Natives Nursery
3452 S. Farm Rd. 119, Brookline MO**

**The Nursery is open on Thursday,
Friday, and Saturday 9am-2pm
through mid-June**

**Plants & Pints
at Wire Road Brewing
4453 S. Timbercreek Ave., Battlefield, MO**

May 10 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

June 7 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

FLOATING WETLAND PROJECT

So far this spring has been another exciting season with floating wetlands. We've had the opportunity to work with several other communities as they prepare to launch their own programs. Both Rolla and Bolivar will be introducing floating wetlands in their city parks, and we've enjoyed collaborating with them to select the right plant mix for their islands, which are scheduled for deployment in May.

Locally, maintenance work began in April. Tasks included sorting new floating-rock, fabricating wetland structures, adding plants as needed and adding new structures at McDaniel, Fellows, and Valley Water Mill Lakes, progress is well underway. We look forward to the nutrient uptake, habitat, and educational opportunities the floating wetlands provide. This ongoing project is a collaborative partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, City Utilities, the City of Springfield, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State University, Ozarks Technical Community College, Springfield Public Schools, the James River Basin Partnership, and Watershed Natives.



Maintaining the floating wetland on Fellows Lake

WATERSHED NATIVES INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In July, 2025, Watershed Natives entered into a new cooperative agreement with MDC through the Community Conservation Job Corps program (CCJC). This agreement supports the development of a centralized conservation hub and provides interns with hands-on experience through conservation projects, professional training opportunities, and exposure to career pathways within the conservation field.

This agreement allows us to keep to focus on workforce development in 2026. Jenna Rotert is returning as the Greenhouse Technician. Jenna began as an intern in March 2024 and graduated from Missouri State University in May 2025 with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology. In this role, she has expanded responsibilities while gaining valuable supervisory experience.

In March, we hosted interviews for the summer internship program through our MDC Cooperative Agreement (CCJC) and were impressed by the number and experience of applicants. This year, three interns will join our team in mid-May, and we're excited to have their support throughout the season.



Internships provide real world experience running a small business and growing native plants, along with interning with partner organizations to learn a wide range of skills

Check out [Watershed Natives website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) to keep up on updates!



6TH SEASON AT FELLOWS LAKE

This year marks the 6th season of operating the store and “Dock 66” at Fellows Lake. Each year we work to make improvements, and this year we have some big ones. With the help of City Utilities, we are upgrading and adding signage, and now you can make online reservations for boat and pavillion rentals. And that’s not all...we have NEW BOATS for rent, thanks to Bass Pro Shops and White River Marine group.



Another exciting 2026 development is the incredible staff on board this year! The Fellows crew comes from a variety of backgrounds, including conservation, the U.S. Navy and teaching/education. The Fellows team of ten are waiting to serve you and answer all the questions you may have about Fellows Lake.



Fellows staff from left to right: Kayla, Max, Wynter, Calvin, Brett, Katie, Kylie, Allison and Kelce (not pictured, Alex)

The Fellows Lake Store is the hub of the lake, and we try our best to stay on top of trail, fishing and event information as best we can. If we don’t know the answer, we will find out for you.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Saturday, April 25 we hosted the annual Access Outdoors and although the weather turned cold, we still had a very successful turnout. There were many newcomers and some that return each year to enjoy boat rides and fishing. This is one of the only times we allow fishing off the Fellows Lake marina dock, and the participants and volunteers sure do love it. Thank you to MSU Occupational Therapy volunteers and coordinators for putting this event on each year.

We continue our efforts to partner with and expand the Springfield Sailing Club and programs. The club spent some time with the Fellows Crew doing training exercises and going over safety on the water.

The Springfield Sailing Club's Spring sailing regatta, is on Saturday, May 2nd at 10:30 a.m. Whether you want to participate or just come watch, we are happy to have you out and answer any questions you may have. Find more information on their website springfieldsailingclub.com

The Hatch Playground at Miller Park received some additional parking to help ensure a fun, safe and continued accessible environment for folks.

The Missouri Department of Conservation spent some time doing invasive and aquatic species training to help ensure the continued cleanliness of Fellows Lake.



Additional parking by the Hatch Playgournd

Summer Moonlight Paddles at Fellows Lake are a favorite for many and will be on the calendar soon. Keep an eye on the new [Fellows Lake website](#) for more information and sign up opportunities.

By Kelce Fritz

ON THE WATER

We have some very exciting news to share to really kick off the Spring season- WE HAVE NEW BOATS! Five years ago, Bass Pro generously donated new boats to us and what an impact having those boats has been to us and the community. Well, this year they have done it again, and have traded out the old with new. We now have two 2026 Bass Buggy's and two Bass Trackers equipped with fish finders, trolling motors, and 40 HP engines. In addition, we also have a 2026 Party Barge to go out and enjoy the day with family and friends.

Remember, we are wheelchair accessible and will accommodate just about any need you have. Feel free to call the shop and chat with any of our Fellows Lake crew members for questions.

Our fleet of paddle craft is up and running and awaiting your arrival for a nice paddle on the water. There are a variety of kayaks, sit-ins and sit on tops, canoes, tandem kayaks, pedal boats and stand-up paddleboards.

Fishing

Fellows Lake can be tricky for fishing, but like all lakes if you take the time to really figure it out, the reward can be large. You may find yourself out there skunked over and over again but do not give up. Change your bait, change your location, and change your attitude because a bad day fishing on the lake is better than a good day sitting at home or in the office at work.

If you're on Facebook, check out the [Fellows/McDaniel Lake](#) fishing report page. There are some wise fishermen who often share tips, tricks and fishing locations.



NEW BOATS for rent thanks to Bass Pro Shops and White River Marine Group 9

WATERSHED CONSERVATION

This spring has been a pretty standard mode of operation for Watershed Conservation with the focus on controlled burning, invasive plant treatments, and project planning/preparation for the upcoming months. We were lucky enough to hit a nice 2-week window of ideal burn weather earlier this season and took advantage of those conditions with multiple burns on private properties in addition to at Valley Water Mill Park. It was a fun, productive burn season as we were able to step in and assist a few landowners with their own controlled burns.

The conservation team has also spent the first part of the year monitoring and maintaining the numerous diverse native grassland (DNG) conversion sites that the group successfully seeded over the past few winters, which are starting to add up. During the establishment phase (typically year 1 and 2 after seeding), sites may need to be periodically bush hogged or mowed to reduce annual weed pressure and/or spot treated for some of the undesirable weeds if necessary. Our conversion sites that are in the second and third growing seasons are really starting to show themselves with nice diversity as well as providing an oasis for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. We are currently prepping another site for a winter seeding, including an additional area at the City Utilities Solar Farm facility located on the NE side of Springfield.

As the spring months wind down, and we shift into summer, Watershed Conservation will be continuing invasive treatments as well as maintaining multiple native plant/green infrastructure sites in the Springfield area. If you are interested in diverse native grasslands, forest improvements, invasive plant control, or any type of habitat management for your property or business, email Rodney@watershedcommittee.org

The team with friends on one of several prescribed fires in the late winter/early spring



UPPER LITTLE SAC 319 GRANT

October 2021, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks received a \$400,000 grant for restoration and improvements to the Little Sac River. The project received a time extension and will be completed in the summer of 2026.

The Oscar Blom Golf course streambank stabilization and green stormwater improvements were constructed in January, while the native riparian corridor plantings were planted this Spring. The grant helped pay for the design of this project. Thank you to the City of Springfield and Springfield-Greene County Park Board for their partnership to make this project possible.

On April 24, the Academy of Exploration, a Choice Program of Springfield Public Schools, 144 fourth, fifth and sixth grade students volunteered to pick up trash on their school campus which is in the Pea Ridge Creek watershed that flows into the Little Sac River. These students worked diligently to pick up 50 bags of litter. We would like to express a thank you to these students and dedicated teachers for their efforts to improve the water quality in the Little Sac Watershed.



Academy of Exploration students

Mark your calendars, on Thursday May 21 at 5:30pm Watershed in partnership with Missouri Smallflows will host an educational onsite wastewater workshop for landowners.

This workshop will begin with an educational presentation at the Watershed Center followed by a tour of the Onsite Wastewater Training Center. This workshop is FREE, but registration is encouraged. Call 417-408-3310 to register.

By Stacey Armstrong Smith

JAMES RIVER HEADWATERS RESOURCE CONSERVATION PROJECT (RCP)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded RCP funds to Watershed Committee of the Ozarks and partners to leverage \$2,115,247 in Southwest Missouri to support the protection of clean drinking water for more than 150,000 Missourians, improve the local farming economy, help Springfield and Greene County meet federal water quality requirements and improve aquatic ecosystems along the James River Headwaters. To accomplish this, this project is emphasizing practices like riparian buffers, rotational grazing, and soil health. Last fall ten new applications were received and approved for the FY2026 sign-up. The estimated contacts for the ten applications total \$355,372.02 in obligated funds for producers. RCP offers a continuous application sign-up. **Applicants can sign up by contacting their local USDA-NRCS Field Office in Greene (417) 831-5246 or Webster County (417) 468-2088.** Project funding will be available until March 2028.

SOURCEWATER IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

On September 30, 2025, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources awarded the Southwest Missouri Council of Governments (SMCOG) a grant for Source Water Protection Plan implementation and outreach. In partnership with SMCOG, Watershed will assist in implementing the \$45,000 in funds toward the department endorsed source water protection plan (SWPP) milestones. This plan will be used to provide education to the public about the water supply in our community. The project is expected to be completed in September 2027.

On Thursday April 23, as part of the Source Water Protection Plan milestones, Watershed hosted a McDaniel Lake and Shoreline Cleanup in partnership with City Utilities and Missouri Department of Conservation. The cleanup covered a large area of shoreline and lasted four hours. The volunteers successfully removed 40 large bags, 1 suitcase and 3 large buckets of trash. Thank you to City Utilities staff and community partners for volunteering your time to clean up trash around our drinking water lake. Together we can make a difference!



Clean up on McDaniel Lake



SUMMER *Gala* 2026

YOU'RE INVITED! FRIDAY, JUNE 19 · 6 PM–9 PM

Join us for the 12th Annual Watershed Summer Gala at the Back Road at Wire Road Brewing to enjoy local craft brews, a gourmet taco bar, live music, silent auction, whiskey grab, seeing old friends and meeting new ones. Let's raise our glasses to support the Watershed and Clean Water for Life!



[Buy your tickets today!](#)

We would like to thank HDR Engineering for "stepping up" their sponsorship levels from Bronze to Silver and Environmental Works from Supporter to Bronze!



Thank you to all of Watershed's Sustaining Business Sponsors!

Legacy \$10,000



Platinum \$8,000



Silver \$2,500



Bronze \$1,000



Supporting \$500

