

>>> SUMMER NEWSLETTER <<<



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

On the Pipevine

At the Watershed Center entrance, people often ask, "What is that?" referring to the steel I-beam and cable structure. We usually can't help ourselves and answer, "It's a velociraptor fence," and most people chuckle at the Jurassic Park reference and likeness.

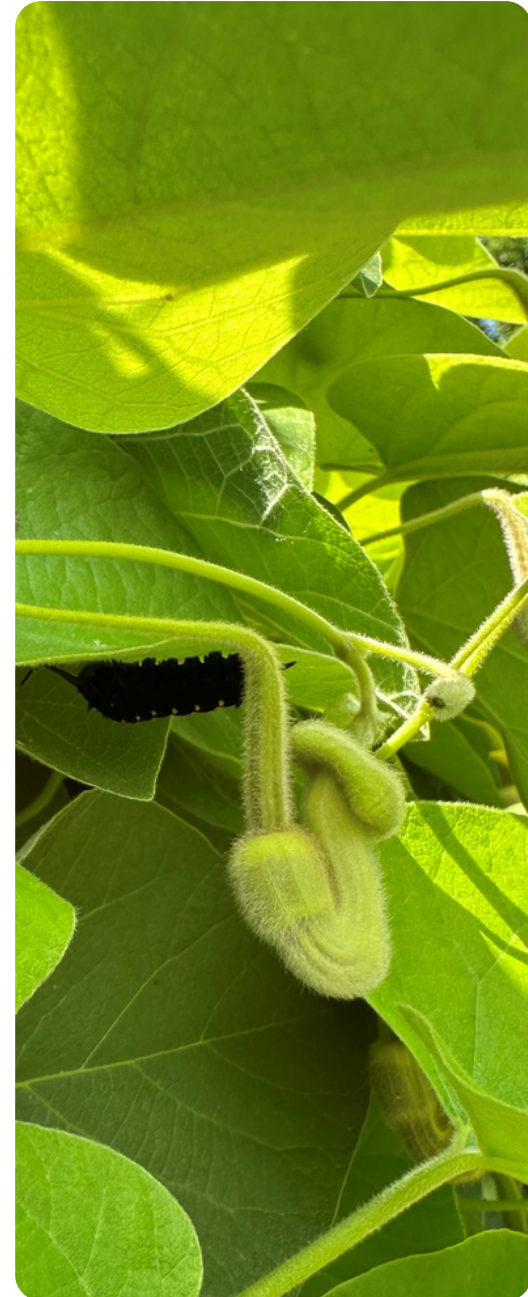
The structure was designed as a substantial trellis for plants. Now, native plants create a dense green barrier that visually separates the parking lot from the gathering area, like a living wall.

On those plants, some magic is happening. Pipevine swallowtails, large black butterflies with iridescent blue hind wings, can be found in all life stages, from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to adult. It helps open the door a little wider to understanding host-plant relationships and how we can make small changes to benefit our more-than-human neighbors.

Back to Jurassic Park: As Jeff Goldblum's character says, "Life finds a way."

Each person, project, and program you will read about in this newsletter offers a hopeful example of stewardship as we pursue "Clean Water for Life."

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director



A pipevine swallowtail caterpillar next to the pipe-shaped flower of a pipevine

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Summer at the Watershed Center

Summer is always an interesting time for field trips to the Watershed Center. This year, the cool, wet spring transitioned into an unusually green and relatively wet summer. The frequent heavy rains also meant more work for staff and volunteers to keep the trails open.

An Exciting Discovery!

More and more area schools have summer programs during June, making for a busy field-trip calendar early in the summer.

Unfortunately, the growing demand means we cannot accommodate all field-trip requests because of schools' limited calendars. Veteran field-trip planners know they need to make reservations in early spring to get their preferred dates. Some schools even choose to schedule a year in advance.

Summer programs almost always include some time wading to get a closer look at life in the stream. Younger students may focus on catching and learning about crawdads, while older students focus on the diversity of life found in the stream and what it can tell them about overall water quality. Upper-middle-school and high-school students often have an additional focus on water chemistry.



An exciting discovery!



Taking a closer look



Waynesville students exploring stream life

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

July and August typically see a shift to private and homeschool groups participating in field trips. The hot summer days make wading in a cool stream especially enjoyable for all ages. Field-trip participants this summer included the Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield, a wide variety of homeschool groups, and the Roots summer camp programs.

While our preference is to have schools visit the Watershed Center, we also take the show on the road. For classroom visits, we make the activities as hands-on as possible. We offer a wide range of activities for different age groups, designed to meet state learning standards.

And a reminder to all those educators out there: Schedule your education programs early! Fall dates tend to fill up quickly. If tight budgets are preventing field trips, please reach out to us. We have limited funds available for transportation through our Frederick Scholarship. We can also bring the creek to you through classroom visits.



Boys & Girls Club investigating stream life



Niangua students exploring stream life



Roots camp participants searching for crayfish



Homeschool group enjoying outdoor learning



WATERSHED natives

SUMMER AROUND THE NURSERY

Watershed Natives staff wrapped up a busy spring season with the nursery open three days a week. We were thrilled to welcome so many new faces from the Springfield community.

It has been exciting to see Watershed Natives continue to grow as a local hub for native plants, education, and conservation. Throughout the summer, our staff also stayed busy with projects at the nursery and across the community.

Across three local lakes, Watershed Natives spent the summer expanding and maintaining floating wetlands—using native plants to support cleaner water while giving the community a visible demonstration of conservation in action.” Our staff also assisted with a new floating-wetland design at Dickerson Park Zoo. Together, these efforts support our mission: Clean Water for Life.

This ongoing project reflects a strong collaborative partnership among the Missouri Department of Conservation, City Utilities, the City of Springfield, Dickerson Park Zoo, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State University, Ozarks Technical College, Springfield Public Schools, the James River Basin Partnership, and Watershed Committee of the Ozarks.

*Working on the
floating wetlands*



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development continues to be a central focus of the Watershed Natives program.

In July 2026, Watershed Natives entered Year 2 of a three-year cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation's Community Conservation Job Corps (CCJC) program.

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.

In May, Watershed welcomed three summer interns to the Watershed Natives team: Allison Todd, Baylee Smythe, and Jasmine Peterson. Over the summer, the Watershed Natives interns contributed to meaningful projects, participated in valuable training opportunities, and learned more about careers in natural resources. We are grateful to the partner agencies that helped make these experiences possible.

Special thanks to our participating agencies: Missouri Department of Conservation, City Utilities, Ozark Underground Lab, Springfield-Greene County Park Board, James River Basin Partnership, and Dickerson Park Zoo



*Working on the new glade demonstration bed
designed by Allison Todd*

Shop Native Plants

Sept. 3 - Oct. 17
Thursdays-Saturdays
9am-2pm
at
Watershed Natives Nursery
3452 S. Farm Rd. 119
Brookline, MO

September 20
10am-2pm
at
Wire Road Brewing
4453 S. Timbercreek Ave.
Battlefield, MO

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONT.

In May, the Watershed Natives interns participated in a Stormwater Management Workshop in partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation and Grow Native! Participants learned aquatic resource management principles and gained hands-on experience with lakeshore planting and floating wetland construction.

Over the summer months, they stayed busy with transplanting, seed collection, plant identification, weeding, planting, irrigation setup, and other nursery and field projects.

The Watershed Natives interns created our largest demonstration garden to date. Allison Todd designed a glade garden featuring glade-specific flowers, large fossil-covered rocks, and a walking path. We are excited to add this garden to our demonstration spaces. They also built a water garden to showcase water-loving plants.

The interns also tackled the major task of mulching and organizing the entire tree nursery, and they did an excellent job bringing the space into shape.



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



Watershed Natives Interns from left to right: Jasmine Peterson, Allison Todd, Jenna Rotert, Baylee Smythe



SUMMER TIME AT FELLOWS LAKE

Fellows Lake has a little bit of summer magic. It's close enough to be an easy escape, yet far enough from the hustle and bustle to feel like a peaceful getaway. This summer, we welcomed plenty of visitors who came to this slice of paradise kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, fishing, having family fun on the pontoon boats or simply enjoying the park and the Hatch Playground. There are also plenty of quiet spaces; if you ever find yourself on the south finger of the lake, you may be the only person around depending on the time of day you visit. You can watch herons, eagles and a variety of wildlife and simply enjoy the solace. "So lovely was the loneliness of a wild lake." – Edgar Allan Poe

In partnership with City Utilities we incorporated our Fellows Lake webpage into the newly updated [CU website](#), which includes a new reservation system. This is making it easier for folks to rent a boat, register for an event, reserve a pavilion and more. This process has added convenience to our customers and has been a success thus far!

The Springfield Sailing club held its summer regatta in June, with an amazing turnout and beautiful weather. The wind...well, it stayed home, but everyone made the most of the experience and still had an amazing day.



*Springfield Sailing
Club June Regatta*

COMMUNITY CORNER

Women on the Water Sailing Regatta - Saturday, September 12

We will host the Springfield Sailing Club for its fall Women on the Water Sailing Regatta. Not a sailor but interested? Come out and hop on our spectator boat to get up close and personal with the action. You'll see sailors moving from side to side on the boats as they navigate different winds and directions, trying to get to the front of the pack.

Sailing is a team sport, which means communication is key. You'll experience sailors working together to make these boats move as fast as they can, with sails flying in the wind. It's quite an experience!

Empower Abilities Day at the Lake - Saturday, October 3

We will host the annual Empower Abilities Day at the Lake event.

Empower Abilities is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1985 by a grassroots group of citizens working to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities. The organization partners with many others to help create more inclusive and accessible communities.

Photos from previous Day at the Lake events.



MOONLIGHT PADDLE AT FELLOWS LAKE

The Moonlight Paddle at Fellows Lake was a wonderful evening on the water, bringing together approximately 200 participants for a night of paddling, stargazing, and enjoying the lake under the stars.

As the sun went down, Fellows Lake came alive with the glow of kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, and other watercraft decorated with lights. Paddlers made their way across the lake, creating a beautiful display of lights on the water while enjoying a peaceful nighttime experience.

The evening also provided an opportunity to slow down and appreciate the night sky. The Springfield Astronomical Society joined us for star gazing, giving participants another way to experience Fellows Lake after dark.

With approximately 200 people attending, the event was a great example of how Fellows Lake can bring the community together to enjoy the outdoors in a unique and memorable way. We are grateful to everyone who participated, helped with the event, and made the evening such a success. Thank you to all of our Moonlight Paddle participants for helping us light up Fellows Lake!



by Alex Heflin

ON THE WATER

Summer Fishing at Fellows

This summer, fishing at Fellows Lake is thriving, with anglers consistently reporting success in catching largemouth bass, walleye, muskellunge, and crappie. Recent surveys conducted by the Missouri Department of Conservation show healthy populations of bass and walleye, and the lake remains a top destination for muskies in southwest Missouri. As summer water temperatures rise, many game fish have moved into deeper waters during the midday hours, making early morning and evening the best times to fish.

Overall, Fellows Lake continues to be one of the premier fishing spots in the Springfield area. Whether you're targeting trophy muskies, keeper walleye, or robust largemouth bass, the lake offers numerous opportunities for anglers.



Staff Update

We are pleased to announce that Alex Heflin has been promoted to Fellows Lake Operations Manager. Hailing from Maryville, Missouri, Alex earned his nursing degree in 2009 before embarking on a commendable career in the United States Navy.

After his military service, Alex moved to Marshfield, Missouri, and joined the Fellows Lake team in March 2026. He brings a disciplined, service-oriented mindset to lake operations, public engagement, and conservation-focused recreation in collaboration with the Watershed. His efforts exemplify a strong commitment to protecting vital natural resources and promoting responsible community usage.

WATERSHED CONSERVATION

This summer Watershed Conservation's main focus has been invasive plant treatments across many sites and project planning/preparation for the upcoming months. The Conservation team has also spent the summer months monitoring and maintaining the numerous diverse native grassland (DNG) conversion sites we successfully seeded over the past few winters. We currently have 8 different sites that have been seeded (converted) or are in the site prep stage of a conversion.

During the establishment phase (typically years 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 in the second and third growing season are starting to show themselves with nice diversity (see photo below) as well as providing an oasis for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. We are currently prepping one more site for a winter seeding, an additional area at the City Utilities Solar Farm facility located on the northeast side of Springfield. This latest addition will bring the total areas converted to around 10 acres on this particular property.

As the summer months wind down, Watershed Conservation will be wrapping up sericia lespedeza treatments and shifting focus to invasive woody plant management, ongoing timber stand improvements, and site prep duties.



Springfield-Catholic conversion site

JAMES RIVER HEADWATERS RESOURCE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded RCPP funds to the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks and its 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, the project emphasizes practices such as riparian buffers, rotational grazing, and soil health.

Watershed, in partnership with the James River Basin Partnership, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Webster and Greene County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Missouri Department of Conservation, held an Eastern Gamagrass Native Warm-Season Grass Workshop on July 9 at Ragsdale Farm in Seymour, Missouri.

Participants learned about Eastern gamagrass, water-quality benefits, establishment, maintenance, and financial opportunities to establish conservation practices through various conservation partner programs.

Producers can sign up by contacting their local USDA-NRCS Field Office:

Greene County: 417-831-5246

Webster County: 417-468-2088

Project funding will be available until March 2028.



Watershed & partners



Workshop attendees

WATERSHED SUMMER GALA

Summer flies by, and the Gala has come and gone, but here's a quick recap for you, whether you attended this year or not: We gathered, we celebrated, and had a darn good time while supporting Watershed's mission on a perfect evening in the Ozarks. A huge thank you to our business sustainers, Wire Road Brewing, donors, staff, board, and attendees for making it happen.



PCNET folks enjoying the Gala, photo credit: Kiley Mahan



Mike Kromrey with Gala guests, photo credit: Kiley Mahan



 **SUMMER** *Gala* 2026

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