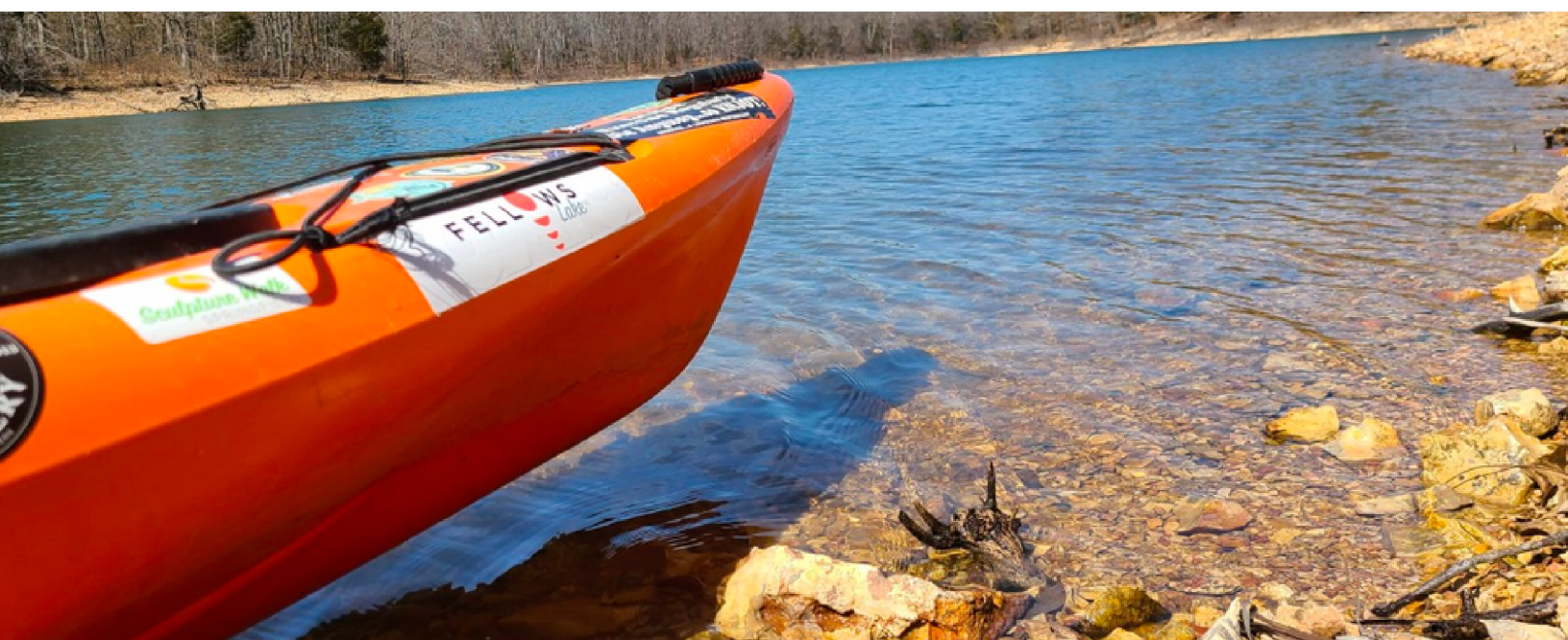


May 2023

»»» SPRING NEWSLETTER «««

WATERSHED COMMITTEE OF THE OZARKS



CLEAN WATER FOR LIFE

A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Mike Kromrey

The Watershed Newsletter contains more news than ever as we spring into a Spring full of anticipation for what's going on and what's ahead. In preparation for our 40th anniversary next year, we've been working on a new look for our old brand, which we can't wait to roll out at the Summer Gala on June 23. We are excited to share the news and developments with you in our freshly composed newsletter!



WATERSHED natives

>>> BIGGER TREES & AQUATIC PLANTS

Watershed Natives entered an exciting partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation through a cooperative agreement in June 2022. We are thrilled that the agreement enables us to expand our facilities and offer more native trees and aquatics for restoration projects, landscapers, the public, area schools, and municipalities. This January, we were able to get the gravel beds built and planted. During the spring, the aquatic nursery is going to expand with many educational components.

>>> NATIVES SOUTH

At the beginning of the year, we were given the opportunity to lease property from the City of Springfield to expand the Watershed Natives Nursery. This second site is located next to the Yardwaste Recycling Center. Here we have space to expand our Missouri Gravel Bar Bed nursery, a large tree nursery, aquatics, and demo gardens.

THE MASTER PLAN



Planting Gravel Beds

STAY TUNED AS WE GET THE SOUTH SITE UP AND RUNNING!

>>> PLANT SALES

Our first plant sale was on Earth Day, April 22nd, at Wire Road Brewing Company. It kicked off our new Craft Brewery series: **Plants and Pints** at local breweries this Spring!



Mother's Brewing Company

- GrowNative! May 27th, 2-6 pm

Wire Road Brewing Company

- Saturday, June 3rd, 10-2 pm

4 By 4 Brewing- Fremont Hills

- Friday, June 16th, 4-7 pm

>>> ROTARY GRANT

In April, we concluded the **Rotary Club of Springfield Southeast District Simplified Grant** project awarded to the Watershed Natives last fall, allowing the Natives program to purchase greenhouse and potting benches, display shelves, irrigation, and a storage shed. We were thrilled to host their April meeting at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, where members toured the greenhouse to see the new improvements and hear testimonies from students.



Shed from Grant.

Seniors in the Restoration class are in the process of finalizing their management plans for the Missouri Department of Conservation Southwest Regional office. In the fall, the next class of Seniors will get to put these plans into action!

>>> HILLCREST PATHWAY

Hillcrest students have been busy stratifying seeds over winter and began transplanting and germinating seeds for the 2023 season early this year. Some of their favorites were milkweed, purple coneflower, and purple poppy mallow.



*Hillcrest students
potting Elderberry.*



A BUSY FIELD TRIP SEASON

The 2023 spring was a busy time for field trips to the Watershed Center and Jordan Creek tours. Almost every day was booked with some type of program resulting in record-setting numbers of participation in spring educational programs. School groups ranging from kindergarten to college students have participated in field experiences this spring. Activities ranged from guided nature hikes exploring the connection between healthy land and healthy water to underground tours of Jordan Creek investigating stormwater issues and their impact on urban streams to the classic wading in an Ozarks stream and catching critters to learn about stream ecology.



◀◀◀ Pleasant Hope students studying lake food webs.



Republic students handling crayfish for the first time. ▶▶▶

GREENER GREENSPACES

We continue to improve this innovative program in which all Springfield Public Schools 7th graders participate. Within each school, students are placed in teams. Each team of students strives to improve their Greenspace. Students who make the best use of the proposed \$1,000 budget are selected to compete at the district level. A team of professionals reviews the student proposals. Winning projects are then funded, and the students can assist in creating the projects they envisioned. This year, schools elected to participate in the fall or spring. This spread the groups out more, resulting in fewer students visiting the Watershed Center at one time. But the reduced numbers on site significantly improved the quality of the program and the students' experiences on site.



MSU Collecting "macros" on the South Dry Sac.



Water chemistry station on Sanders Beach with Jarrett students.

By Jeff Birchler

GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENCE

In April, once again, WCO hosted the Missouri Environmental Education Association's (MEEA) Guidelines for Excellence Workshop. Participants experienced techniques for presenting hands-on activities aligned to both Missouri Learning Standards and Environmental Education Standards. This workshop not only provided participants with important knowledge about standards-based curricula but also provided ready-to-use activities for grades K-5. Participants traveled from as far away as Kansas City to participate. Presenters included MDC Curriculum Coordinator Wendy Parrett, MEEA Board Member Sarah Holmes, James River Basin Partnership Education Coordinator Brooke Widmar, and MEEA Assistant Director Jamin Bray.



Jamin welcoming the participants.

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CONQUERS ENVIROTHON

On May 4th, the Envirothon team from Central High School achieved a milestone in environmental education for our community. After competing and winning at the regional competition, they competed at the state-level competition and WON! This is the first time a team from Southwest Missouri has won; the top award usually goes to a team from St. Louis or Kansas City. As described by the Missouri Envirothon Website, Envirothon is a problem-solving, natural resource education program for high school students. In the field, teams of students are challenged to hone their critical thinking skills and work as a team.

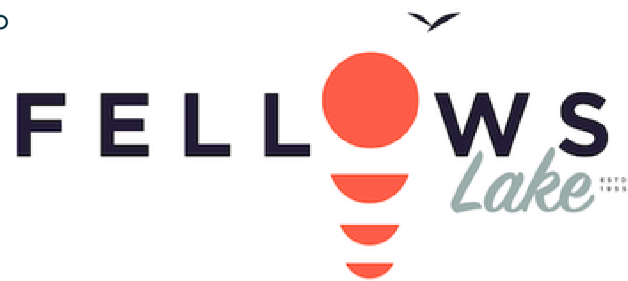


Central's Team Problem Solving

Central
Envirothon
Team. >>>



They answer written questions and conduct hands-on investigations of environmental issues in five categories: soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and current environmental issues. In addition to a written test, the teams also present an oral presentation solving a specific natural resource issue. Local educators have long invested time and effort to provide this unique opportunity by writing tests, coaching teams, teaching topic-area education, and judging. Coach and science teacher Paul Epps will be taking the team, including Eli Kromrey, Miles Montgomery, Tristan Armstrong, Kalea Aberle, and Quincy Alberhasky, to compete in the North American Competition in New Brunswick, Canada, in late July 2023. We'll be cheering them on!



Our third season at Fellows is off to a great start! We continue building relationships with our friends and partners while introducing new folks to the Fellows' peaceful beauty. Spring has sprung, and we have an abundance of diverse wildlife around the lake, including our resident duck (Ellie) and her new ducklings! Hundreds of visitors have already been at the lake enjoying the trails, kayaking, fishing, and sailing this season.

ON THE WATERFRONT

The anglers have been having a great start to the season, with reports of a wide variety of species being caught around the lake. The water temperatures have been in the 60s, and we see fish coming into the shallows in droves. Missouri Department of Conservation hosted a Muskie workshop where 12 anglers were taken out on our fleet of boats to catch the "Fish of 10,000 casts". MDC does a great job managing the fisheries and completed the 2023 Muskie and Walleye surveys already this season, and the report was very encouraging on our lake's health. Many anglers have enjoyed renting our motorboats and are anxious to come back to enjoy the lake's fishing opportunities.



Our paddling community is also thriving as Stand-Up Paddleboards are now allowed, and we have seen some fresh faces enjoying the beauty of Fellows. We also have new and old paddlers enjoying renting from our fleet of canoes, kayaks, and SUP's. This season we are hosting four major paddling events and three moonlight paddles.

**TO REGISTER, GO TO:
[HTTPS://FELLOWS-
LAKE-LLC.SQUARE.SITE/](https://fellows-lake-llc.square.site/)**

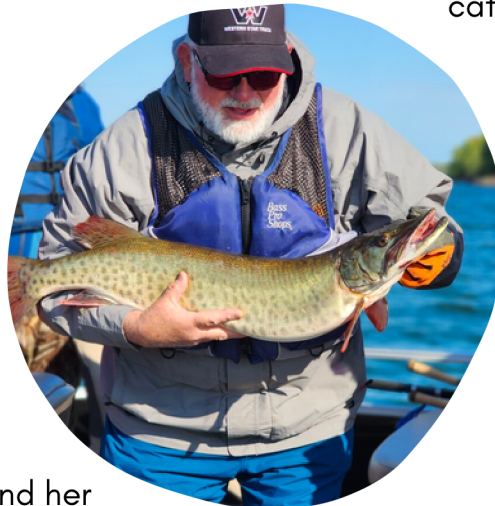
We also hosted an American Canoe Association Level 1 class free to the public on May 13th, where novice or new paddlers were taught safe and proper techniques for boat handling. We will continue to offer these every year and potentially a second one this season. The Springfield Sailing Club is off and running in its 2nd season. The season opener Regatta was held on April 29th, with 12 boats competing in three fun and exciting heats. We will be hosting two more regattas and a sailing club social later in the season. With over 100 members, the sailing club is bringing new stewards of the water to our community to preserve and protect our lake. There will also be monthly events for the club with WOW - Women on the Water - evening sails, and drill days for various boats in the fleet.



Ellie and her
 ducklings.

ON THE TRAILS

The popularity of the trails here at Fellows continues to grow with hikers, bikers, and runners. Ozark Greenways continues to maintain and improve the trails keeping them in excellent condition. Many of our partner and organization friends, such as NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association, MORC Missouri Off-Road Cyclists), Ozark Mountain Ridge Runners, Heartland Racing Co., and many more, are hosting events here on the trails. Also, the Concrete Man Triathlon is back again this season. The trails are a wonderful way to embrace the beauty of nature in the over 1,000 acres surrounding the lake. Come out and enjoy nature on the 25 miles of trails.



Impressive
catch at the
Muskie
Clinic.



ON THE HORIZON

As the summer heats up, there are many other activities for the community to engage with Fellows Lake. On May 6th, MSU's Master of Occupational Therapy department hosted Access OuTdoors. This was the first of two events for individuals in our community who have mobility challenges which make accessing the lake often difficult, if not impossible. City Utilities worked diligently to ensure the landing and dock were accessible to everyone. This allows us to offer access to pontoon boat tours (wheelchair accessible), dock fishing with MDC, paddling-accessible kayaks, and sailboat rides at the event. The initial event had approximately 65 registrants who enjoyed experiencing these activities, many for the 1st time. The second event will occur in September with Empower Abilities.

Paddlers
at Access
OuTdoors.



Family
enjoys
Access
OuTdoors!

This is our second event with Empower Abilities at the lake! The DATL (Day at the Lake) was a tremendous success last year and should prove to be even better this year.

There will also be fun events such as the Watershed Summer Gala and our Season End Bash with live music, food trucks, beer, wine, games, and more. We look forward to our partners helping us to create an incredible resource for our community. Groups such as Bass Pro, United Way, Greater Ozarks Audubon, Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Ozark Greenways, US Coast Guard Aux, MDC, and more - are all working together to make Fellows Lake a destination for nature lovers of all types. Thank you to all of our supporters, and we look forward to seeing you at the Lake!

WATERSHED SUMMER GALA AT FELLOWS LAKE

Celebrate with us at our annual Summer Gala Friday, June 23, 6 pm–9 pm at Fellows Lake. Enjoy a taco bar catered by Simply Delicious, craft beer provided by Mother's Brewing Company and Wire Road Brewing, wine by the glass, or a refreshing raspberry tea. Take part in our silent auction, whiskey grab, and bag toss while listening to Steve Ames and the Hamburger Cows and enjoying the beauty of Fellows Lake. Gala tickets are \$75 each. Save your ticket as it is worth \$20 off at Fellows, including rentals and store merchandise.

Please note that we have just 150 tickets available for the event. Tickets are available online and in the Watershed office and must be purchased in advance to accommodate catering. All proceeds benefit Watershed and help support our expanding education and outreach efforts and our growing Watershed Conservation Corps and Watershed Natives programs.



Email kelly@watershedcommittee.org if you have any questions.



The Watershed Conservation Corps' first quarter was full of exciting projects and opportunities. We continued invasive species management, prescribed fire, riparian buffer establishment, and trail maintenance, all while building the professional skills and certifications our crew members need to be successful

stewards in the field of conservation. As our project experience grows, our ability to effectively plan, coordinate, and complete projects in our local watershed increases. This 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 continuing our partnerships with regional and national conservation organizations and are eager to see what the rest of the year holds.

Fresh trail in >>>
Oregon County.

OREGON COUNTY TRAIL MAINTENANCE

During December and January, the WCC federal crew worked on various trails within the Eleven Point District of the Mark Twain National Forest, clearing 40 miles of the trail corridor and repairing 1100 feet of tread damaged from erosion or illegal ATV use. The maintained trails included the Blue Ridge Horse Trail and Greer Spring Trail, as well as the trails within the Irish Wilderness. While working in the Irish Wilderness, the crew covered 11.5 miles, removing downed trees with only handsaws and crosscut saws. Removing downed trees is important to maintaining our favorite hiking trails. If a tree is blocking a trail, people are unable to stay on the designated path, which creates social trails which can impact vegetation and accelerate the erosion process.



PRESCRIBED FIRE

WCC conducted five prescribed burns in Greene and Christian counties, our most active prescribed burn season yet. These burns occurred in both woodland and grassland habitat types, adhering to each site's stewardship plan. The goal for each burn was to remove leaf litter and/or dead-standing grass, decrease woody encroachment, encourage native vegetation, and increase overall vegetative diversity. Our prescribed burns were successful and provided our crews with more field experience on the fire line. Spring fire season was busy for the WCC-Federal crew! The National Park Service (NPS) used WCC to aid in prep work and burn 950 acres at various locations, including the Buffalo National River, Pea Ridge National Military Park, and Hot Springs National Park. WCC is looking forward to the additional fall burn season in 2024, with NPS offering even more skill-building and networking opportunities for our crews.



*Prescribed
Fire at
Hot Springs
National
Park*

INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT

April is the official start of invasive plant management for the federal crew. They are working hard to protect everyone's favorite spring ephemerals by removing autumn olive from woodlands and riparian zones in Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) can be detrimental to the Ozarks by altering the soil chemistry as well as out competing our beloved natives. So far, with the help of the Conservation Corps of Iowa, the federal crew has cleared about 80 acres of Autumn Olive.



Federal crew
burns with NPS.



TREE & SHRUB PLANTINGS

Since 2021, WCC has participated in a cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation to implement best management practices along the Upper James River. This agreement gave our staff the opportunity to plant 700 native bottomland tree species purchased from the George O. White State Forest Nursery. Trees were planted from October 2022 to March 2023 by hand along a 600ft stretch of the James River in Webster County. We are thankful to partner with MDC on this project to protect one of Springfield's drinking water sources. We have also planted an additional 600 trees and shrubs related to other projects, totaling over 1300 woody species planted in the past three months.



Felling cedar at Pea Ridge National Park.

CEDAR MANAGEMENT

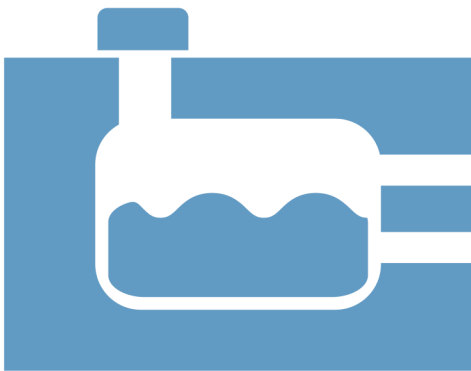
When the crew was not helping on fire, they helped remove the eastern redcedar that have encroached the prairies at Pea Ridge. Historically, the park would have been covered by 1% of eastern redcedar, and cedar encroachment would have been maintained by agriculture and fire. Because fire has been removed from some areas of the park, many of the prairie ecosystems are currently threatened by encroachment. As a result, cedar density is too high to carry a fire and must be reduced to allow other plants to grow to have the necessary fuels to burn.



LOCAL WATER QUALITY ORGANIZATIONS OFFER SEPTIC REMEDIATION GRANTS

The James River Basin Partnership, H2Ozarks, Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, and Missouri Smallflows Organization are pleased to offer a septic system remediation program to Greene County homeowners residing within the James and Sac River Watersheds. Funding is made possible through the use of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds distributed through the Greene County Commission. There are more than 20,000 onsite wastewater treatment systems (septic systems) in Greene County. Failing or poorly functioning septic systems contribute to pollution of groundwater, streams, and springs.

If you are a Greene County resident living in the James or Sac River Watersheds, and your septic system is failing, then you may be eligible to apply for one of our remediation grants. Please note that this program is limited to residential-zoned property owners only. Grants will be targeted to limited-income households and based on two factors: (1) total family members in the household, and (2) verifiable annual income.



**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE
PROGRAM AND APPLY FOR A
GRANT, PLEASE VISIT:**

**[WWW.JAMESRIVERBASIN.COM/
GREENE-SEPTIC](http://WWW.JAMESRIVERBASIN.COM/GREENE-SEPTIC)**

JAMES RIVER HEADWATERS RCPP

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded RCPP funds to the 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.

Through RCPP, conservation partners work in collaboration with NRCS to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to implement systems that conserve water and soil resources, improve the health of wildlife habitats and increase climate resilience.



WCC Plants
Native trees at
James River.

RCPP funds will provide significant cost-share opportunities for agricultural producers and landowners in the James River Watershed upstream of Lake Springfield for activities such as:

- Planting trees along waterways
- Fencing infrastructure for prescribed grazing systems
- Improving wildlife cover and habitat
- Forest and soil health improvements

In 2022, WCO worked with NRCS to finalize RCPP agreements. Landowner applications were received in the fall, then in January 2023 seven eligible landowners moved into the funding stage for grazing systems and/or forestry practices in the Upper James River basin. The project funding will be available until March 2028.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RCPP VISIT:

[HTTPS://WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV/PROGR
AMS-INITIATIVES/RCPP-REGIONAL-
CONSERVATION-PARTNERSHIP-
PROGRAM](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program)