

»» SUMMER + FALL NEWSLETTER ««



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™



A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Mike Kromrey

Our Team attended the MDC Roundtable with partners from around Missouri last week. In her Keynote, Ashley Smith with Minority Outdoor Alliance shared that “nature inherently unites us.” Indeed, it was the most diverse and united crowd I’ve participated in within the natural resources space, which was inspiring. Diversity, after all, is a hallmark of health.

I think you will see the diversity of our team and endeavors reflected in the following pages, which are supported by diverse partnerships and ways to make an impact. On that note, we’d like to include you by getting your thoughts on this draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement. Here it is:

“All living organisms depend on water to thrive. Watershed is committed to “clean water for life,” we embody this by serving everyone in our community. We recognize how crucial diversity is to the health of both human and natural communities and understand that environmental impacts significantly affect those who are vulnerable. We aim to empower our entire community to connect and make strides together as a vital part of our mission.” Let us know what you think, and may you revel in the healing powers of nature this fall.



WATERSHED natives

The summer and fall have been exciting for the Watershed Natives program! We hosted two new internships to provide job skill training, assisted the MO Dept. of Conservation (MDC) with floating wetlands, and continued to develop our new nursery location.



First batch of gravel bed
trees



WCC Director Rodney shows robust root system

PARTNERSHIPS

Watershed Natives renewed our agreement with the MDC through a Cooperative agreement in June 2022. During the summer months, we continued to grow and develop our new nursery location, which was made possible through MDC funding. We added aquatic beds, a cargo container for storage, and a shed for an office. We also partnered with MDC to assist with floating wetlands. Both of our interns worked alongside biologists to plant and monitor roots on the wetlands.



Serving nature and you®

PLANT SALES

Our GrowNative! Sale kicked off our fall events in September, and our Plants & Pints Brewery series returned for its second year! To finish the season, we will host a Tree/Shrub sale at our new nursery and a Native Seed sale at Wire Road in November. This season is coming to a close with nonstop seed collection and prepping for next season!

TREE SALE

- Watershed Natives Nursery - 3452 S. Hutchinson Ave
- Saturday, Oct 28th
- 10 am - 2 pm

SEED SALE

- Wire Road Brewing
- Saturday, Nov 4th
- 10 am - 2 pm

ACTIVITIES

This year, we offered two internships to local college students. Our goals for our nursery internships are to allow experiences to students early on in their careers and to give them opportunities to meet partners, learn new skills, and help them navigate future job searches.

Katie McNally, a Junior at Missouri State, held our full-season internship that ran from March - November. Katlin Meek, a Junior at Missouri State, had our eight-week internship during June-July.



Natives Interns help MDC plant floating wetlands



Installing the wetlands at Belladonna



Hillcrest Students at the greenhouse

HILLCREST PATHWAY

At the end of August, Hillcrest made their first visit to the nursery. During their visit, the Restoration Ecology class of seniors helped load the truck for our first plant sale. The Watershed Science and Environmental Science classes helped pull weeds in the greenhouse and wash pots/trays. This fall semester, the Academies classes have a packed full schedule of field trips and making connections with career professionals.

EDUCATIONAL UPDATE

There is no substitute for directly experiencing nature. Given the right opportunity, students can create meaningful connections that last a lifetime. At the Watershed Center, we strive to provide educational programs that are built on the foundations of inquiry-based and experiential learning.

Our location at Valley Water Mill Park enables visitors to experience some of the best natural features the Ozarks offer. The Park's 100 acres contain very diverse aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Trails meander through wetlands, bottomland forests, glades, upland forests, and savanna ecosystems.



Field Trip at Valley Water Mill
◀◀◀ Park

Sanders Spring, Valley Water Mill Lake, and the South Dry Sac River allow visitors to explore diverse water ecosystems. Karst features, such as caves, sinkholes, a spring, and a losing stream provide additional opportunities to experience nature.

Despite the very hot and dry summer, it was a busy time for field trips and outreach programs. Fortunately, teachers are some of the most flexible folks I know, and we were able to adapt our programs to fit the ever-changing conditions.

Christy makes the connection between clean water and healthy forests





Clean water? Ask the macros

JORDAN CREEK TOURS

With the Renew Jordan Creek plans moving forward, there has been renewed interest in our Jordan Creek Tours. These popular programs combine history and water ecology as we explore the close connections between Jordan Creek and Springfield.

The graffiti-covered underground passage provides unique insight between stormwater runoff and what was once a pristine Ozark stream. We also focus on the future of Jordan Creek and the Renew Jordan Creek program.

Fall is one of the favorite seasons for field trips. Springfield, Stockton, Republic, Willard, and Logan-Rogersville Public Schools, along with many home school groups, could schedule visits to the Watershed Center. We were happy to welcome some new visitors as well from Mountain Grove, Pleasant Hope, Howell Valley, and Catholic schools.

NEW FACES

We are thrilled to welcome Drue Lawrence and Erica Cox. As the previous coordinator for the Missouri Project WET, Erica is a long-time water warrior. Erica continues to teach chemistry at Bolivar High School while working at the Watershed two days per week. Field trip participants benefit from her wealth of experience and knowledge.



Clarissa guides exploration of Jordan Creek

Erica Cox leads
Project WET
activity >>>



<<<
Drue with
AmeriCorps

AMERICORPS

Drue was our AmeriCorps service member during the summer and elected to extend her service period for a full year. Drue is a recent graduate of Drury University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Biology. Drue was also an intern at Wonders of Wildlife and Dickerson Park Zoo. Drue's primary focus will be increasing our capacity to utilize volunteers and improve our educational programs.

VOLUNTEERING

We continue to refine our Volunteer Program to make the experience more rewarding for all. Volunteers can assist us in a variety of ways. Many volunteers help with aquatic and terrestrial habitat improvements throughout the park as part of our restoration efforts. There are also many options to help us with our educational and growing Watershed Native programs. Whether you want to volunteer as an individual or bring a group out, please check out how you can get involved by clicking on the About tab at watershedcommittee.org.



Makers Mark
volunteers
mulch trail <<<



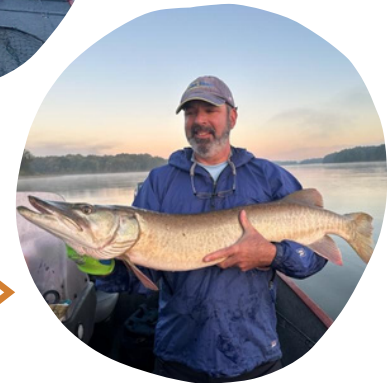
We are winding down our third season of operating all the environmental, education, and recreation activities at Fellows Lake! We have been running non-stop since Spring on the water and the trails. With about two weeks left until we wrap up the season on November 1st, it looks like the 2023 season will be one for the books.

ON THE WATERFRONT

The dog days of summer did not deter our anglers one bit. In what may be remembered as one of the hottest summers ever, thousands of intrepid anglers fished the shores of Fellows and went out on the water in our rental fleet. As summer gave way to a brilliant fall, water temperatures dropped, and the fishing action increased. Fall muskie season is in full effect and the madness has infected Watershed staff, with Fellows Operations Manager Vince Currao and Watershed Director Mike Kromrey landing some beastly muskies. Shout out to our partners at MDC for their continued work to keep Fellows a clean and safe lake.



◀◀◀
Mike and his muskie



Vince with a monster muskie ▶▶▶

The Springfield Sailing Club wrapped up the 2023 Season on September 30th, with the last of three races for the year. Club membership and excitement for sailing continue to grow at a breakneck pace. Sailing instructors stayed busy all summer and early fall as more and more folks discovered the joy of sailing at Fellows Lake.



Paddlers enjoy Fellows Lake

Our paddle craft rentals have been through the roof all season, with Stand Up Paddleboards being all the rage this summer. We are happy to see paddlers enjoying our beautiful lake and learning about what a tremendous resource it is.

A big development this year was the expansion of our dock! We added over 300 square feet of accessible dock for launching canoes, kayaks, and small sailboats. Including a kayak self-launcher enabling paddlers living with paralysis to launch their kayak independently. Shout out and deep gratitude to The Hatch Foundation and Eric Peterson for actualizing this accessibility vision!

EZ Dock at Fellows Lake



Speaking of accessibility, we were honored to host two special events that gave many water enthusiasts living with various disabilities an opportunity to get out on the water. Empower:abilities and MSU's Occupational Therapy program held day-long events that created amazing memories for hundreds of members of our community who live with a disability. Thank you to both of these groups and their dedicated volunteers for providing us with two of the most moving and impactful days of our whole season.

Angler with MDC at Day at the Lake >>>



MSU Students at <<< Day at the Lake

ON THE TRAILS

With over 29 miles of hike, bike, and run trails, the lake provides an exceptional escape for thousands. Ozark Greenways continues to be outstanding stewards of the trail system that encircles the lake. We love it when folks come off the trail and stop at the shop for an ice cream treat or Powerade, exclaiming, "This place is amazing!". It happens all the time, and we are grateful to our partners that make it possible.

The special events at Fellows do not stop at the water's edge, either. This season, Fellows hosted an NCAA Nationals Qualifying Triathlon, a statewide NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) race weekend festival, the Concrete Man triathlon, and numerous other events that highlighted the beauty and accessibility of our trails. Thank you to the army of volunteers that make these special events possible. We appreciate all you do to showcase everything that Fellows Lake has to offer!

MTB >>>
Race at
Fellows
Lake



ON THE HORIZON

We work closely with our community partners at the local, county, state, and federal levels to stay on track and continually improve Fellows Lake into the future! Thank you to everyone who came out to fish, paddle, sail, hike, bike, and run over the last eight months! The crew is beyond grateful for all the good people who joined us at the lake. Here are a few highlights of the past season and a quick look ahead to what to expect in 2024 and beyond.

Our last event of the season is a Moonlight Paddle on October 28th, at 2p-12 am. Our End-of-Season Bash will take place with live music and food trucks!

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

LOOKING BACK ON THE 2023 WATERSHED SUMMER GALA

Hosting an annual event like the Watershed Summer Gala requires a unique balance of continuing favorite elements, making improvements, and keeping things fresh. This year, our switch to June and the flip to Friday afforded us incredible evening weather and better attendance opportunities. The “vibe” was fun and laid back, and the event served as an annual reunion for many.

Bags were tossed, whiskey won and lost, and the catered taco bar was a huge hit. We were excited to hear from Presiding Commissioner Bob Dixon, who highlighted our partnership with Greene County, the benefits of working proactively for clean water, and how this ethic has served our community so well.



Watershed Staff at the Summer Gala

We had some exciting announcements to share, too: we showcased our new logo as we’ve graduated to do business as “Watershed,” the capital campaign kick-off investment of the Hatch Foundation, along with future plans for Fellows, including more accessible dock equipment, and plans for bridges and bathrooms - which we are all rooting for! Last but not least, an opportunity from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks for an endowment building challenge matching grant. We are thrilled and thankful for your support—none of this would be possible without YOU!



The Watershed Conservation Corps continued an array of exciting projects for the second half of the year. As we underwent administrative changes, we continued exciting projects protecting our Watersheds through native habitat improvement, invasive species management, and prescribed fire activities.

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Summer is the busiest season for the federal crew. Traveling to eight national parks in the Heartland District and returning to Dunn Ranch Prairie. The crew returned to many of the same parks as the previous year, adding Lincoln Boyhood Memorial to the list.

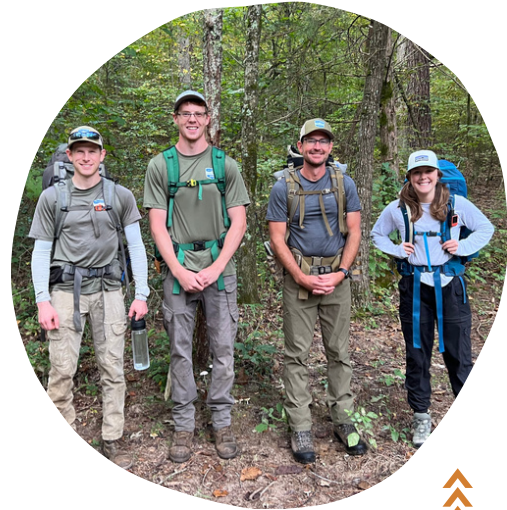
The federal crew spent May and June managing prairies. Historically, prairies ranged from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River—going as far north as Canada and as far south as Texas. Unfortunately, less than 4% of that region is true remnant prairie. Prairies are affected by invasive or weedy species that thrive in heavily disturbed areas such as roadsides and creep into surrounding areas, including prairies. Invasive plants such as *Sericea Lespedeza* and Wild Parsnip take over quickly, negatively impacting habitat health.

We worked with the Conservation Corps of Iowa (CCI) to manage 271 acres of remnant and restored prairie. The crew was able to experience some unique species that are endemic to grassland habitats, such as the Queen of the Prairie, Greater Prairie Chicken, and Northern Bobwhite Quail.



*Trifoliate Orange cleared >>>
at Hot Springs National Park*

In July and August, the crew took shelter from the heat by working in the shade of our beloved forests. The forest is important for human and environmental health, helping prevent erosion, keeping our streams and rivers healthy, and providing critical habitat for wildlife. The crew was able to do their part in protecting these valuable resources by managing invasives and treating 484 acres of forest in partnership with the National Park Service. Our target species included Japanese Stilt Grass, Trifoliolate Orange, Princess Tree, and Privet.



Watershed staff joins WCC to scout invasives

Mid-August to October tends to be the crew's favorite time of year, the start of cooler weather, pawpaws, and, of course, work on the Buffalo River. WCC continues its third season working on the Buffalo River, treating the combined total of 130 acres of kudzu and surveying and treating the infamous Tree of Heaven. It was a big year for the Buffalo River project. To celebrate the hard work of the current and past crews, WCC got the opportunity to take a backpacking trip (while surveying, of course) totaling 26 miles in the Lower Buffalo Wilderness! Watershed Director Mike Kromrey and Communications Coordinator Marra Holt joined the scout.

Watershed Conservation Corps at Buffalo National River



PRESCRIBED FIRE

In mid-September, we carried out a Prescribed Fire on the Glade portion of the park to encourage the germination of the rare species -- Missouri Bladderpod! This small yellow-flowered annual plant in the mustard family is found in Southwest Missouri, living on limestone glades and rocky outcroppings, and can be abundant in rocky pastures. However, they are threatened by habitat loss, residential development, overgrazing, and competition from encroaching woody and non-native grasses. Luckily, controlled burns are a valuable tool for managing accumulated wood vegetation, positively impacting germination rates the following season.



*Burning the Glade at
Valley Water Mill Park*

*Bladderpod at
Watershed*



LOCAL CONSERVATION

Meanwhile, the rest of the WCC continued ongoing efforts with invasive species management across existing projects and properties throughout the area. Some of the projects include Bass Pro Bass Camp, City of Springfield, and Conco Quarries. Also, the crew continued preparations across multiple sites with the intention of conducting native vegetation conversions and/or plantings, which are all on pace to take place later this fall and winter. In addition, WCC has a number of controlled burns planned on both public and private lands for this upcoming burn season.

MDC ROUNDTABLE FIELD TRIP AT THE WATERSHED CENTER

The annual Missouri Dept. of Conservation Roundtable conference is a unique opportunity for Conservation partners from around the state to connect and learn together. This year, there were two field trips to kick off the conference. A stream naturalization tour, showing sites where Springfield has taken steps to turn concrete channels into more effective habitats, and a tour of our very own Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill Park. The remainder of the conference was full of meaningful discussion, and we certainly left feeling inspired!



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTEND ONSITE WASTEWATER CAREER DAY

As part of Septic Smart Week at the Onsite Wastewater Training Center, Missouri Smallflows Organization hosted a Career Day with Hillcrest students on September 20th. They learned about professions in the wastewater industry.



◀◀ Soil testing with the students



Students experiment with septic design >>>

Activities included learning about piping/friction loss, land contours, and soil science. Big thank you to Missouri Smallflows Organization, Stewart Concrete, Greene County Resource Management, and AmeriCorps for putting this successful event together!

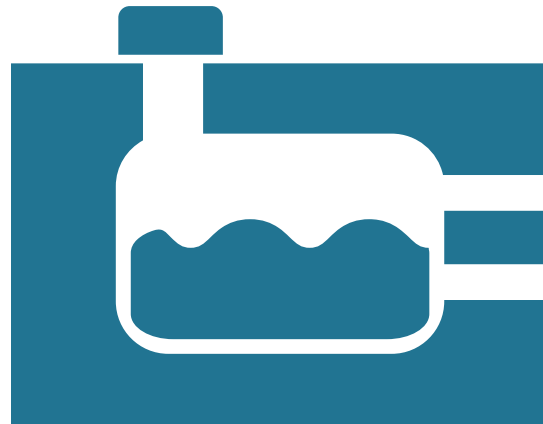
Missouri Smallflows Director, Tammy works with students



SEPTIC PUMP-OUT REBATES

Septic residents living in the Upper Little Sac Watershed are eligible for a \$60 septic pumpout rebate funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. To receive the pump-out rebate, you must fill out the form at the time of pump-out and contact Watershed to confirm that rebate funds are still available prior to pump-out.

**TO FIND THE REBATE FORM,
PLEASE VISIT:
WATERSHEDCOMMITTEE.ORG/
UPPER-LITTLE-SAC-319/**



UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Wetland Reserve Easement Information Session

- November 2nd - 5:30 pm
- at the Watershed Center
- Register by calling 417-831-5246 ex. 3

Onsite Wastewater Realtor Workshop

- November 9th - 8 am to 1 pm
- at Praise Assembly and Onsite Wastewater Training Center
- find the agenda and register: jamesriverbasin.com/owts-workshop

**FIND MORE INFORMATION
ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE**

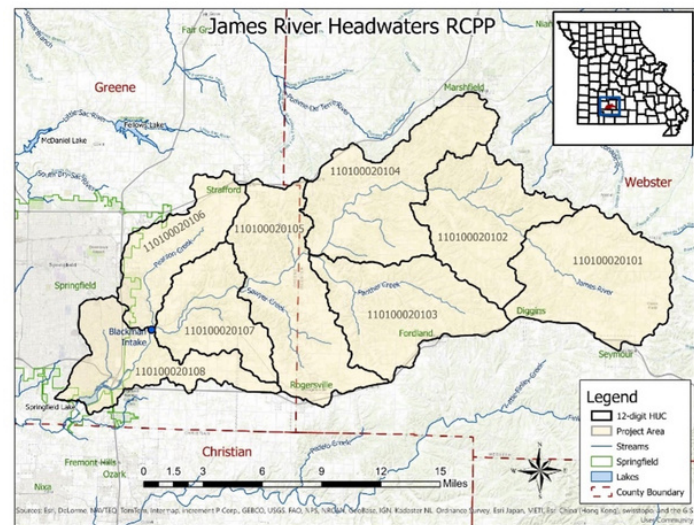
JAMES RIVER HEADWATERS RCPP

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded funds to Watershed and our 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 collaborate with NRCS to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners implement systems that conserve water and soil resources, improve the health of wildlife habitats, and increase climate resilience.

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:

- riparian buffers
- rotational grazing
- soil health



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RCPP, VISIT:

[HTTPS://WATERSHEDCOMMITTEE.ORG/](https://watershedcommittee.org/)

[SUSTAINABLE-FARMING-FUNDS-AVAILABLE-JAMES-RIVER-RCPP/](https://watershedcommittee.org/sustainable-farming-funds-available-james-river-rcpp/)