

## »» SUMMER NEWSLETTER ««



# Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

It is said that “one can never step in the same river twice”. This quote is attributed to an ancient Greek (Heraclitus), and is a poetic acknowledgment of continual change. Change seems to be happening very quickly these days. I’m keenly aware of changes in my life, in our Country, and quite strikingly, in our rivers.

At the Watershed Monthly Meeting in August, Marc Owen, director of the Ozarks Environment and Water Resources Institute, and Todd Wagner, owner of Wagner and Associates Engineering, shared a presentation about the rate of change we are seeing in streams across the Ozarks.

Our rivers, still processing a legacy load of gravel from the initial clearing of the land, have been experiencing increased frequency and magnitude of flooding. These factors combined accelerate the rate of river movement in the valley/floodplain, which translates to increased erosion.



*Exploring the Little Sac River*

These days, even some “healthy” forested riparian areas are destabilized. What does this mean for our rivers and riparian landowners? I’m not sure. It does mean that we need to be aware and continue to work to find new ways to accelerate and amplify our efforts.

**Mike Kromrey, Executive Director**

# WATERSHED CENTER UPDATE: PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Summer's very wet start was great for the plants around here but complicated our field trip schedule along with many outdoor activities. Fortunately, our crew and the teachers leading the field trips are some of the most adaptable people I know. Staff and volunteers spent a great deal of time keeping the trails open between bouts of heavy rain. For this and many other reasons we are excited about future improvements to our Wetland section of trails.

Funding for the planning and design of the universally accessible trail is provided by Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Grant. The trail, design by Wagner and Associates, runs from our main office down to the confluence of Sander's Branch and Mill Creek. The concrete and boardwalk surface will improve accessibility for folks with limited mobility and young kids in strollers.

This layout will also handle heavy rains and flooding which will require much less maintenance to keep the trails open. At the creek's edge, a pavilion area complete with a ramp down to the water will provide better access to students of all mobilities. The design also includes replacing the wood bridge spanning Mill Creek with a more durable metal bridge.



*Engineer drawings of wetland trail improvements provided by Wagner and Associates, LLC*

# VOLUNTEERS

The United Way Day of Caring was a huge success this year. This is the largest one-day volunteer event in Southwest Missouri. Local businesses and organizations sign up teams of employees to spend the day aiding area nonprofit organizations. Typically, we have three or four projects posted on the United Way site. We are fortunate that much like our field trips, the available slots for volunteers rapidly fill up. This year volunteers from Bass Pro, Home Builders Association of Greater Springfield, and John Deere Remanufacturing assisted us with Valley Water Mill Lake clean-up, trail maintenance, and staining/resealing our office and handrails around the park. We could not accomplish our mission to protect and improve the region's water resources without the help of dedicated volunteers!

Volunteers play a major role in helping us accomplish our goal of "Clean Water for Life." The start of each semester brings a new round of volunteers from local colleges and universities. We participated once again in the annual Bear Fair on the Missouri State campus. At this event we share volunteer opportunities and educate the students about recreational and career opportunities associated with Valley Water Mill Park and Miller Park at Fellows Lake.



*Day of Caring team with Drue and Jonathan*

# EDUCATION PROGRAMS

More schools have summer programs during June. This means a busy calendar during the early parts of summer. Unfortunately, the growing demand means we cannot accommodate all field trip requests due to the schools' limited calendars. Veteran field trip teachers realize they need to make reservations in early spring to get their preferred dates.

July and August typically see a shift to private and home school groups participating in field trips. This is also a great time to host collaborative programs. In July we co-hosted James River Basin Partnership's (JRBP) Experience the Outdoors: Geology and Experience the Outdoors: Watersheds. This innovative program by JRBP encourages kids and families to spend at least 100 hours outdoors throughout the summer.

While our preference is to have schools visit the Watershed Center, we do take the show on the road. For these 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 do have limited funds for transportation available through our Fredrick Memorial Scholarship. We can also bring the creek to you via classroom visits.



*Investigating stream life and the connection to water quality*



# WATERSHED natives

## NURSERY UPDATE

It's been a busy summer at Watershed Natives! From plant sales and floating wetland-work, to seed collection and new projects, our team has been hard at work supporting native plants and clean water initiatives. We were thrilled to meet so many new faces from the Springfield community. It's exciting to grow towards becoming a local hub for native plants.

We recently concluded our three-year cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). This agreement helped lay the foundation for the Watershed Natives Nursery, including site development, the tree nursery, aquatic ponds, the greenhouse foundation, office building, new signage, demonstration beds, and tools to support our internship program. Native plants benefit water quality, forest, fish, and wildlife. We are honored and grateful for MDC's support in achieving our shared goals.



*Natives staff working on the demonstration garden*

# FLOATING WETLAND PROJECT

This summer, we continued maintaining our floating wetlands which included weeding and replanting established wetlands and expanding installations at McDaniel, Fellows, and Valley Watermill Lakes. It is rewarding to see the plants flourish and the wildlife that uses these “tiny islands” of habitat. 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 College, Springfield Public Schools, the James River Basin Partnership, and Watershed Natives.



*Maintaining the floating wetland on Valley Water Mill Lake*

## PLANT SALES

### **August 30, 10am-2pm**

- Watershed Natives Nursery
- 3452 S. Farm Rd 119 Brookline, MO 65619

### **Sept. 6 & 27 & Oct. 18 10am-2pm**

- Watershed Natives Nursery
- 3452 S. Farm Rd 119 Brookline, MO 65619

### **Sept. 20 & Oct 11 10am-2pm**

- Wire Road Brewing

### **Tuesdays from 9am-1pm during Sept. & Oct.**

- Watershed Natives Nursery
- 3452 S. Farm Rd 119 Brookline, MO 65619

# SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In May, we welcomed two summer interns: Chesnee Moritz and Halle Pyle. Chesnee is a Hillcrest graduate who participated in the College and Careers Academy program. She is currently studying Wildlife Conservation with a minor in Horticulture at Missouri State University. Halle, also a Hillcrest graduate, recently earned her degree in Conservation and Wildlife Management (with a minor in Horticulture) from College of the Ozarks. We were also thrilled to officially welcome Jenna Rotert as our first Greenhouse Technician. Jenna began as an intern in March 2024 and graduated this May from Missouri State University.

This team was outstanding, showing up rain or shine (sometimes both at once!). In addition to the important work of growing native plants and developing the plant-growing infrastructure, the team participated in a variety of experiences, including working with partner organizations, seed harvesting, and attending Watershed Monthly Meetings.



*Chesnee, Jenna, and Halle pausing from work building the aquatic beds*



## 5<sup>TH</sup> SEASON AT FELLOWS LAKE

This year marks the 5<sup>th</sup> season of Watershed operating the store and “Dock 66” at Fellows Lake, doing business as Fellows Lake, LLC.

This arrangement allows Watershed and Fellows Lake staff to not only rent boats, sell goods, and host events, but to educate visitors about the lake’s role in providing clean water and how responsible recreation supports environmental sustainability.

Watershed Director, Mike Kromrey, said, “Fellows Lake is our primary drinking water source, and being the point of contact for visitors helps us further our mission by providing the information folks need to be good stewards of this precious resource.”

Thank you to the Fellows Lake staff and the partners at Miller Park, City Utilities, Ozark Greenways and the Missouri Department of Conservation for your continued efforts towards Clean Water for Life.

Although we did endure an unusually cool and rainy spring, this summer we have had an influx of people coming out to enjoy all Fellows Lake has to offer. The family-friendly environment, close proximity to Springfield, and warm summer days have been the perfect recipe for a day at the lake.

Heading into Fall, our weekdays tend to be quieter and slower-paced, resulting in glass-like water and perfect kayaking and fishing conditions. Fellows motorized rental boats are equipped with fish finders and an aerator to help you on your fishing quest.

If you are just learning or are in need of a fishing pole, we also have a Rod and Reel Loaner Program through the Missouri Department of Conservation. We have fishing rods and tackle boxes for use through this program. If interested, come into the shop and talk to one of the Fellows Lake crew members.



## COMMUNITY CORNER

We've had an amazing summer working with different groups around the area. We hosted the summer sailing regatta on July 9th for the Springfield Sailing Club; despite the rain and cloudy skies, we had an awesome turnout, boats sailing around and people enjoying the water.

Fellows hosted a field trip for the Greenwood Laboratory School where students paddled around the lake, went on a pontoon tour and finished with a fishing lesson given by the Fellows Lake crew. Lots of laughter and good times were had.

Thank you to the Bass Pro interns for coming out and doing a lake cleanup. They brought 38 interns out to paddle around the shorelines and clean up trash. Thank you for caring about our water sources and keeping Springfield's drinking water clean!

Show Me Women Paddlers hosted an intro to paddling session at the lake this August. They received funding through L.L. Bean and ACA Paddlesport's to cover the cost of the event, and Fellows Lake store was able to facilitate all the rentals needed for the event. They taught the basics of water safety and proper equipment for a successful float.



*Show Me Women Paddlers teaching intro to paddling at Fellows Lake*

## MOONLIGHT PADDLE

When you think about summer at Fellows Lake, you've got to mention the traditional Moonlight Paddles. This is the only time during the year you can be out on the lake paddling and fishing under the moon.

The August 9 Moonlight Paddle was something magical as we all watched the Sturgeon Full Moon rise, resulting in beautiful pictures and a memorable experience for everyone.

October 11<sup>th</sup> is the last Moonlight Paddle of the season and you may find this one to be a "little spooky." Keep an eye on our [Facebook page](#) for registration details.

Special thanks to the Show Me Women Paddlers for their help in ensuring the safety of all the participants!



*August Moonlight Paddle participants*

# WATERSHED CONSERVATION

This summer has been a pretty standard mode of operation for Watershed Conservation with the main focus being invasive plant treatments across many sites and project planning/preparation for the upcoming months. It's hard to believe that leaves will be falling before we know it. What hasn't been standard is the excessive amount of rain the area has seen for the April-July months. It has been a long time since I can remember the Missouri drought map only showing a D0 (abnormally dry and the lowest category on the drought monitor) in the middle of August!

Conservation has also spent the summer months 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. 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 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.



*Springfield Catholic High School conversion site*

## WATERSHED CONSERVATION CONT.

Our conversion sites that are in the second growing season are really starting to show themselves with nice diversity (see pictures) as well as providing an oasis for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.

We are currently prepping more sites for a winter seeding, including an additional area at the City Utilities Solar Farm facility located on the NE side of Springfield.

As the summer months wind down, Watershed Conservation will be wrapping up their sericia lesp. treatments for the year and shifting focus to controlled burns, invasive woody plant management, ongoing timber stand improvements, and fall season site prep duties.

If you are interested in diverse native grasslands, forest improvements, invasive plant control, or any type of habitat management for your property or business please get a hold of us. Find more information on our website <https://watershedcommittee.org/conservation/>



*Ozarks Coca Cola/Dr. Pepper Bottling Company conversion site*

# 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 funding is provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

The project's focus is reducing bacteria in the Upper Little Sac River basin while also helping to decrease soil erosion and lower nutrient levels in the watershed. This is being accomplished by using practices proven to be effective in reducing pollution from stormwater runoff. Community partners provide a contribution of \$266,667 over the life of the project which helps make this project possible, bringing the total cost of the project to \$666,667. The project received a time extension and will be completed in the summer of 2026.

Recently on July 31, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources 319 staff, grant steering committee members and local partners, toured the Oscar Bloom Golf course to view the current stream erosion conditions. Our 319 grant helped fund the design for a streambank stabilization, green stormwater improvements and riparian corridor native planting at this site. The design is complete, and construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2026.

Thank you to the City of Springfield and Springfield-Greene County Park Board for their partnership to make this project possible.



*Sediment erosion at Oscar Blom Golf Course (July 2025), the future Little Sac grant project site*

# JAMES RIVER HEADWATERS RESOURCE CONSERVATION PROJECT (RCPP)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded RCPP 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.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Missouri invites qualifying farmers and landowners to apply to receive technical and financial assistance through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP offers a continuous application sign-up. However, to be considered for this round of funding, applications must be received by September 15, 2025. Applicants can sign up by contacting their local USDA-NRCS Field Office in Greene (417) 831-5246 or Webster County (417) 468-2088.

## SNAPSHOT SAMPLING JULY 12

In collaboration with the James River Basin Partnership and the City of Springfield Southwest Wastewater Treatment Laboratory, the Watershed staff successfully collected 88 water quality samples in four hours on Saturday July 12<sup>th</sup>. This data is part of a local snapshot sampling project that occurs every three years.

Thank you to all the volunteers who made it possible for us to collect this valuable data!



*Volunteer Paul, measuring water temperature at Hoffmeister Spring*



# SUMMER *Gala* 2025

It was a wonderful evening at the 2025 Watershed Summer Gala! The night was filled with joy, community spirit, and support for our mission as we celebrated together on the summer solstice. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended, donated, and supported us as sponsors. Your contributions are instrumental in helping us work toward Clean Water for Life!



# THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS!

## PRESENTING SPONSOR



## PLATINUM SPONSOR



## SILVER SPONSORS



## BRONZE SPONSORS



## SUPPORTING SPONSORS

