

2025

Annual Report



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

Preface

Watershed's **Vision, Mission, and Values** guide our work, the organization of this report, and our Strategic Plan.

Watershed's Vision and tag line is "Clean Water, For Life!" Those four words evoke different and important concepts. We work for clean water for our lives and livelihoods, for our non-human neighbors (all life), and "for life" as in the ongoing, long-term pursuit.

Watershed's Mission is "to sustain and improve the water resources of Springfield and Greene County through education and effective management of the region's watersheds."

The **Values** of the Watershed team include stewardship, love, passion, ethical leadership, and partnership.

Our **Strategic Plan** integrates our mission, vision, and values into a framework and key areas of impact: Education and Outreach, Projects and Management, People, Funding, and Brand Awareness.

At the end of the day, water work is people work. People started Watershed work in 1984, and people--dedicated individuals--have carried the work onward. We are grateful to the founders, sponsors, partners, staff members, board members, and citizens who carry out the ongoing work of "**Clean Water, For life!**"



Water warriors on the James River for "Integrated Plan Day 2025"

Cover photo credit: Jim Stouffer



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

2025 Key Insights



400 lbs. of diverse native seed restoring 30 acres



4,796 native plants supplied to community and projects



3,873 students engaged in field trips at the Watershed Center



1,420 native seed packets distributed



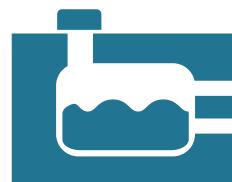
1,440 water quality data collected streams and springs



\$256,000 distributed to landowners to implement best management practices in James River Headwaters.



4,500 outreach participants



9,900 gallons septic sludge removed with our rebate program

Table of Contents

2	Preface	26	Sampling Snapshot
3	2025 Key Insights	27	Hydrilla
5	Board, Staff, Sponsors, and Partners	28	People
6	Letter from the Director	28	Volunteers
7	Watershed Center Education and Outreach	29	Monthly Meetings
12	Valley Water Mill Park Use	30	Watershed Board
13	Programs	31	Funding
14	Watershed Natives	32	Grant and Awards
17	Watershed Conservation	33	Summer Gala
20	Fellows Lake	34	Donors and Sustainers
23	Projects and Management	36	Money Matters: Programs & Investments
23	James River Headwaters Regional Conservation Partnership Project	38	Revenue and Expenses
24	DNR 319 Grants		

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Christy Wilder, Watershed Natives Manager

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Ashley Long, Fellows Lake Manager

Erica Cox, Education Strategist

Drue Lawrence, AmeriCorps Member

Johnathan Foster, Watershed Center Site Steward

Jenna Rotert, Watershed Natives Intern

Halle Pyle, Watershed Natives Intern

Chesnee Moritz, Watershed Natives Intern

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Kayla Callis, Fellows Lake Crew Member

Allison Reese, Fellows Lake Crew Member

Kiley Mahan, Fellows Lake Crew Member

Madelyn Maples, Fellows Lake Crew Member

Jessica Chapman, Fellows Lake Crew Member

Board of Directors

Aaron Robinson, Chair

Bobbilynne Keopke, Vice Chair

Michael Finch, Secretary

Michael Stelzer

Megan Chester

Shelby Wood

Our Sponsors

City Utilities of Springfield

Greene County

City of Springfield

Our Partners

Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Drury University

Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District

James River Basin Partnership

Missouri Master Naturalists, Springfield Plateau Chapter

Missouri Department of Conservation

Missouri State University

National Park Service

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ozark Greenways

Ozarks Technical Community College

Springfield-Greene County Fairgrounds

Springfield Greene County Library

Springfield-Greene County Park Board

Springfield Public Schools

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present you with our 2025 annual report. This document helps us distill and communicate a large amount of work and progress toward our mission. Everything accomplished is made possible by the team, including Watershed staff and board members, sustainers, donors, partners, and colleagues who all play important roles in the work and accomplishments.

Looking back, 2025 was a tumultuous year in many ways. We do our best to stay abreast of changes and the direction of policies and programs while focusing on the tasks at hand. As you will see, the year was extremely collaborative and productive.

The coming year will have an important milestone. Here in Missouri, voters will have the opportunity to renew the Missouri Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax. This statewide one-tenth-of-one percent (0.1%) sales tax provides dedicated funding for Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites, along with soil and water conservation efforts. This is a rare issue which unites most Missourians and passed with 80% support upon the last renewal in 2016. From our local lens, these funds are very important to provide cost-share dollars to local producers and help support clean rivers, lakes, and drinking water. The issue should be on the ballot in November, and offers a great chance to unite Missourians!

We look forward to working with you in the coming year, and are thankful for your support and the opportunity to pursue the mission. Until next time, tight lines and “clean water...for life!”

Kind Regards,

Mike Kromrey



Education & Outreach

Education and outreach is a vital part of our mission.

We strive to connect a range of learners, from “kindergarteners through engineers,” with the information they need to help our water remain clean and plentiful. In addition, connecting the next generation with nature, in a fun, hands-on, and safe environment is paramount in building a foundation for the next generation of water stewards in our community.

Field Trips

Field trips to the Watershed Center are still our educational “bread and butter.” At Valley Water Mill Park, guests can easily explore the connections between healthy land and healthy water. Interpretive signage allows for self-guided tours that both entertain and educate. Research tells us early experiences with nature are critical in creating future advocates. For many students, field trips are their first chance to wade in an Ozarks stream or catch a crayfish. These first impressions have a lasting impact on students that will stay with them for a lifetime.

Our dedicated staff and volunteers provide hands-on activities that captivate and educate. One popular and classic activity involves wading in “the creek” to collect aquatic critters.

Older students use macroinvertebrates as indicator species to assess stream health, while younger participants enjoy the thrill of catching their first crayfish.



Clarissa leading students exploring stream life

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Another favorite activity is a guided hike where participants learn about the important connection between healthy land and clean water. Valley Water Mill Park provides a microcosm of the best features found throughout the Ozarks.

Students can explore a wide variety of terrestrial and aquatic habitats within our 100 acres. Trails meander through a wetland, bottomland forest, upland forest, glades, savanna, and even a small, restored prairie area. During the hike students learn about the importance of management techniques like controlled burns and removal of invasive species.



Jonathan leading families on a hike



**Where in the world is Jeff Birchler?
Jeff wears many hats and loves teaching!**

Ideally we would get every student to take multiple field trips to the Watershed Center. However this is not always possible. From plant sales to Outdoor Fairs, these events allow us to connect with a wider audience and collaborate with other organizations.

Not only is it a fun way to engage with the public, but they leave better informed about our organization and the important role each individual plays in protecting our water quality.

With field trip budgets shrinking, we find ways to take streams, lakes, and ponds to the classroom. After meeting the students, all the organisms are returned to their homes.

Not all outreach programs happen in a classroom or in a community center. Sometimes we meet at other more convenient locations. It helps tell the story when the source of the water you are referring to is in their backyard.

It also introduces students to opportunities to which they might not normally be exposed. One of our favorite outreach activities is meeting the WOLF students at Bob and Barb Kipfer's place on Bull Creek to taste Bull Creek tea.



Taking the stream to the classroom

EDUCATION & OUTREACH



Exploring microscopic life found in a drop of water

In July we partnered with James River Basin Partnership (JRB) to host Watershed Day at the Valley Water Mill Park. The event was open to the public and families were able to participate in a variety of water-themed activities throughout the park. This event has served as a catalyst to explore even more opportunities to collaborate with JRB.

In 2025 we again partnered with the Greene County Library as part of their StoryWalk series. This year families had a chance to read A Frog in the Bog while hiking the trails. JRB, Missouri Department of Conservation, and City of Springfield Environmental Services collaborated with Parents as Teachers to offer Adventure in the Ozarks.

This outdoor event targeted younger kids ages 2-5 and provided a variety of hands-on educational opportunities.

This year's Homeschool Outdoor Fair held at the Missouri Botanical Center was a huge success. A wide variety of outdoor-minded organizations participated in the annual event.

Over 620 people pre-registered for the event. Despite the threat of rain, it was a huge turnout. Watershed offered guests an opportunity to explore Life in a Drop of Water.

Using digital microscopes and field microscopes, inquisitive guests were able to see the wide variety of microscopic life living in our lakes and ponds.



Brooke (JRB) explaining the fine art of fish printing

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Higher Education

Local universities and colleges provide many benefits to our community, infusing this Midwestern town with energy and vigor in a way that only young, excited, and expanding minds can. Our local students often improve trails, teach during field trips, manage invasive species, and amplify our message of water conservation. We are proud to host these future leaders as they use the Watershed Center as a living laboratory to study streams, forests, and sustainable design.

Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) has become increasingly involved with the Watershed Center. Individual student volunteers and campus organizations have assisted with a variety clean-ups and projects.

Many classes have conducted field trips to the Watershed Center. OTC students play an integral role in the collaborative floating wetlands project initiated by the Missouri Department of Conservation.



OTC students installing underwater cameras on the floating wetlands

Missouri State University's Citizenship and Service-Learning (CASL) Program allows students to earn extra course credit for participating in a local organization's work for 40 hours over the course of a semester.

These students helped us in a variety of ways from creating educational posters on plankton, to a variety of on-site habitat projects. In addition to providing many volunteers, students in the Science and Education departments stay busy learning about native plants, macroinvertebrates, and how to teach the Discover Nature Schools Curriculum.

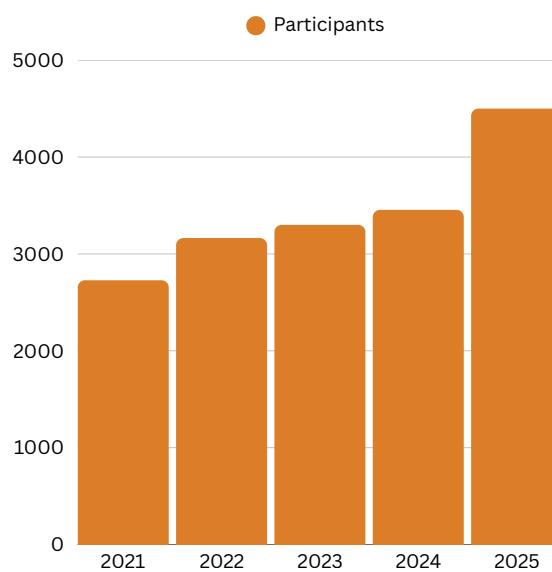


MSU students stream ecology activity

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Outreach Activity Participants



Activities

Activity	2022	2023	2024	2025
On-Site Educational Program Participants	3063	5072	4559	3873
On-Site Educational Programs	68	79	109	93
Community Events Participated In	10	17	26	50
Outreach Activity Participants	3164	3300	3455	4500

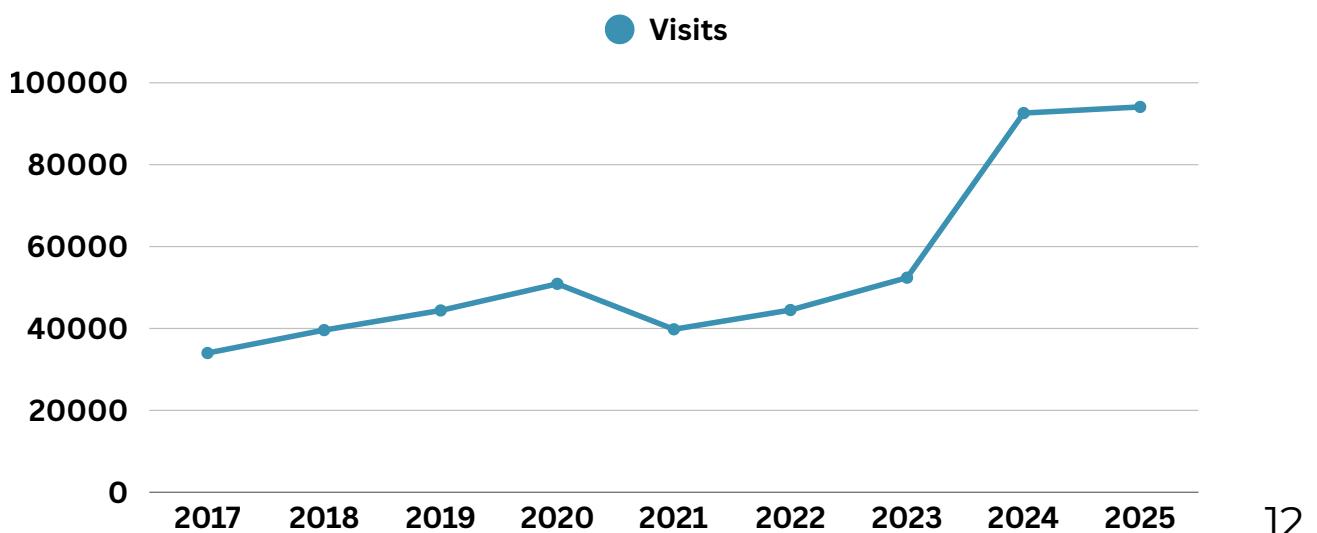
Valley Water Mill Park

A HUB FOR NATURE & EDUCATION

Valley Water Mill Park provides access to nature and recreation on the edge of the City. We jokingly call it “Nature Center North.” In fact, this area has drawn people for a very long time. Archaeological evidence shows people have used this place for the better part of 9,000 years. Sanders Spring and the South Dry Sac continue to be key natural draws, in addition walking trails, the Watershed Center, and unique karst topography.

The first visitors left behind stone tools; current visitors usually have smartphones. Through an artificial intelligence platform called PlacerAI provided by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, we can learn a lot about our more recent visitors. Visitors’ cell phones provide data about how often visits are made, how long folks stay, what zip codes visitors are coming from, and even where they tend to go before and after. The most high-level information is what we share here, and what we have been able to track since 2017 with consistent metrics. The graph below shows the increasing number of times the park is visited. Some people visit multiple times, which is accounted for in the comprehensive report. In general, unique visitors average about half of total visits. In 2025, for example, PlacerAI recorded 44,700 unique visitors and 94,100 visits.

Placer.ai Data 2017 - 2025



PROGRAMS

Each of our programs take a unique approach to addressing water quality and overall ecosystem health while emphasizing education, workforce development, and outreach.

WATERSHED NATIVES

At the Nursery

Over the 2025 season, Watershed Natives focused on establishing a strong foundation at our nursery while deepening partnerships across southwest Missouri. This year marked significant growth in infrastructure, programming, community engagement, and overall positioning of Watershed Natives for long-term success.

The spring sales season officially launched with a full schedule at our nursery location, adjacent to the City of Springfield's Yardwaste Recycling Center. For the first time, the greenhouse was open to the public for on-site visits and plant shopping, allowing community members to purchase native plants for home landscaping as well as larger-scale restoration projects.



WATERSHED NATIVES

At the Nursery

Early in the year, a deer fence was installed around the tree and shrub-growing area to prevent deer damage (which was significant). Throughout the summer, Watershed staff infilled the fenced area with plant stock. These improvements increased the growing capacity and improved the overall site functionality.

Community Conservation Job Corps interns played a vital role in site development, including the creation of our first three demonstration gardens designed to highlight native plants suitable for sun, shade, and part-shade conditions. Additional intern support included seed collection, plant identification, planting, weeding, irrigation system installation, and ongoing maintenance.

To strengthen outreach and communication, Watershed Natives launched new social media: “Watershed Natives Greenhouse and Nursery” on Facebook and Instagram. These platforms provide timely updates on nursery hours, plant availability, educational posts and program activities while helping advance Watershed’s broader vision of “Clean Water, for Life!”



Inside the New Greenhouse

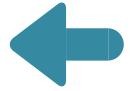


Watershed Natives interns working on the demonstration garden



Watershed Natives Greenhouse & Nursery

A program of The Watershed | Native plants – Trees, Shrubs, Aquatics, Wildflowers, Grasses • Education • Biodiversity • Growth



Watershed Natives new Facebook Page!

WATERSHED NATIVES

MDC Cooperative Agreement

In June, Watershed Natives concluded a three-year cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). This partnership was instrumental in establishing the nursery's core infrastructure. Funding supported site development, the tree nursery, aquatic ponds, the greenhouse foundation, office facilities, signage, tools, and resources for the internship program. We are deeply grateful for MDC's support during this foundational phase.

In July, Watershed Natives entered into a new cooperative agreement with MDC through the Community Conservation Job Corps 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.



Internships

This year marked the second round of our Seasonal and Summer Internship positions. Designed for college students early in their careers, these internships provide hands-on opportunities to learn about native plants and explore career paths.

Workforce development remained a central focus in 2025. We were pleased to welcome Jenna Rotert as our first 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 her new role, she assumed expanded responsibilities while gaining valuable supervisory experience.

In May, two summer interns joined the Watershed Natives team: Chesnee Moritz, a Hillcrest High School graduate and College and Careers Academy participant, is currently studying Wildlife Conservation with a minor in Horticulture at Missouri State University. Halle Pyle, also a Hillcrest graduate, earned a degree in Conservation and Wildlife Management with a minor in Horticulture from the College of the Ozarks.



from left to right, Chesnee, Jenna and Halle

Floating Wetlands

Watershed staff continued to assist with maintenance and expansion of floating wetlands in 2025, including weeding, replanting, and new installations at McDaniel, Fellows, and Valley Water Mill Lakes.

In addition, Watershed Natives partnered with local schools to develop new floating wetland designs capable of withstanding harsh weather and extreme conditions. These man-made wetlands utilize recycled glass aggregates housed in aluminum cages and are planted with native aquatic species. The native plants supported by the structures help filter contaminants, absorb excess nutrients, reduce stormwater runoff, and improve drinking water quality.

In December, Watershed staff participated in a regional partner meeting to evaluate the 2025 season and discuss strategies for implementation in 2026. This effort represents a continued collaboration with the Missouri Department of Conservation, City Utilities, the City of Springfield, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State University, Ozarks Technical Community College, Springfield Public Schools, the James River Basin Partnership, and the Watershed Team.



MDC and Watershed staff working on a floating wetland

Watershed Natives by the numbers

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Plants supplied	2,499	2,718	3,959	4,796
Events	34	20	22	38
Plant sale revenue	\$15,506	\$14,425	\$32,332	\$33,670

Watershed Conservation

Invasive Management

This year the team completed multiple invasive plant removals (predominately bush honeysuckle) across multiple sites for the City of Springfield, including along a section of the Greenways trails. Over the past few years, by utilizing the combination of a ground crew and a skid steer with a forestry mulcher, Watershed Conservation has made a significant positive impact across multiple areas where bush honeysuckle has been the dominate vegetation type.

Invasive plants are bad for our Watershed and Missouri because **they outcompete and displace native plants, disrupting ecosystems by reducing food and habitat for local wildlife, harming biodiversity, and degrading natural areas**. They negatively impact Missouri's economy by reducing forage for livestock, harming the timber industry, and diminishing outdoor recreation opportunities for hunters, hikers, and birdwatchers, and generally degrading the health of watersheds that we rely on for drinking water. On a positive note, 2025 was a landmark year because our state legislature passed Senate Bill 105 phasing out the sale and transport of some common invasive species.

Here are a couple of 2025 photos from an invasive removal site along an Ozark Greenways Trail before and after treatment:

BEFORE

Impenetrable, invasive bush honeysuckle



AFTER

Invasives removed, erosion control installed, native seeds spread



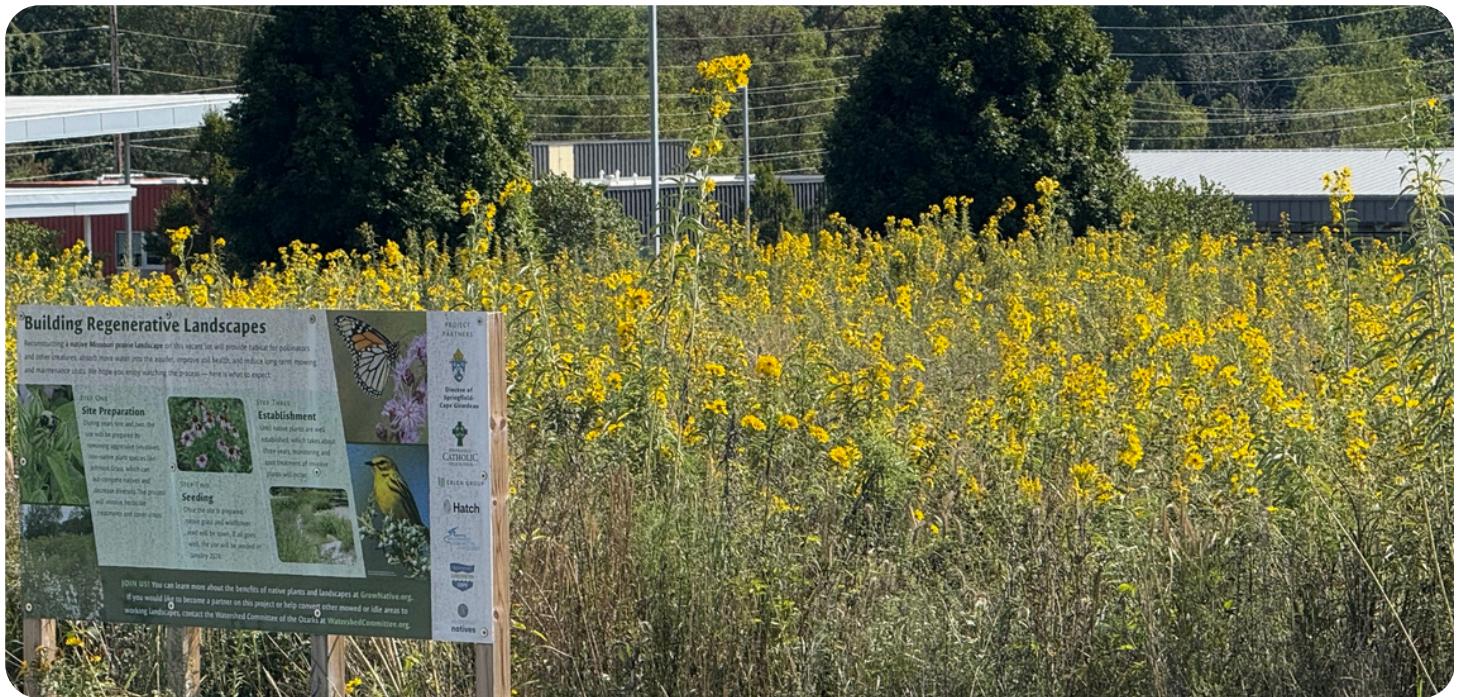
Watershed Conservation

Year in Summary

This year has been another productive year with continued ecological improvement work in the greater Springfield area. Invasive species management remained a top priority throughout the year, but the team also took part in various other conservation practices such as native plantings, controlled burns, and forest/woodland improvements. In 2025, the conservation team spread over 400 pounds of native grass and forb seed across 6 different sites for a total of around 30 acres.

Significant time was dedicated to invasive plant treatments and seeding a diverse native mix into the numerous conversion sites that have been in the preparation phase. An added challenge was record rainfall amounts April-June months followed by drought conditions for the remainder of the year.

Throughout the year, the Conservation team was also monitoring and maintaining the diverse native grassland conversion sites that the group successfully seeded over the past few winters, which are starting to add up. We currently have ~10 different sites that have been seeded (converted) or are in the site-prep stage (1-2 years) of a conversion. Our conversion sites that were in the second growing season started to show themselves with nice diversity as well as providing an oasis for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. We are currently prepping more sites for a 2026 winter seeding, including an additional area at the City Utilities Solar Farm facility located on the northeast side of Springfield.



Native sunflowers blooming at Springfield Catholic High School native planting

Watershed Conservation

Restoration

The Conservation team continued work on a variety of projects on public and private land in the community, including progress on multi-year projects, which is key to successful restoration outcomes. We worked with Conco Quarries on a couple sites. We expanded the large, formal native landscaping bed in front of the scale house at the Willard location and continued native vegetation management/maintenance for the Galloway location which included inter-seeding a custom native forb mix following a controlled burn.

In cooperation with James River Basin Partnership (JRBP), Watershed Conservation enhanced a large stormwater detention basin at the Transland Trucking facility on the northeast side of Springfield. The improvements were completed by treating/removing invasive species within the basin followed up by inter-seeding a select mix of native grass and forbs into the treated areas.

Began ecological maintenance duties for the green infrastructure areas at the Canopy Development, an environmentally conscious, low-impact housing community that is bordered by Greenways trails and located on the North side of Springfield.

The team made great progress with ongoing habitat enhancement at Valley Water Mill Park, mostly by completing 2 more sections of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI), including facilitating a timber harvest on-site, and began another zone of TSI by using a forestry mulcher to get a jump start on the invasive species dominance and reducing the stand density of smaller diameter trees/shrubs. We plan to continue working on the new TSI section in 2026 and continue invasive plant management across the entire park.

If you are interested in diverse native grasslands, forest improvements, invasive plant control, or any type of habitat management for your property or business, contact:
Rodney@watershedcommittee.org.



Prescribed fire is a powerful management tool



Diverse, native seeds destined for restoration projects

Fellows Lake

On the Water

Our fifth season at Fellows Lake has been one for the books, and we are looking forward to the next chapter. We are grateful to all our customers and the people that stopped by to say hello and chat with the Dock 66 crew.

As the information hub of Fellows Lake, we are always enthusiastic to share all our knowledge of the lake, trails, and general information, and we are excited to continue to do so going into the 2026 season.

We were excited to partner again with the Springfield Sailing Club for a fifth year to continue to grow this small, but mighty, community full of dedicated sailors who volunteer their time to help beginner sailors get started.

We had the highest participation rate of any of our regattas this past spring with eleven boats racing down Fellows Lake. These boats had a combination of experienced sailors and sailors who were learning the ropes (quite literally).

We hope to see continued growth going into 2026 with more people taking lessons and perhaps some additional sailing instructors.



Regatta at Fellows Lake



Getting a “kick” out of the new pedal boat!

Springfield-Greene County Park Board donated extra kayaks and paddleboards to Fellows Lake, and they were perfect for our visitors to the lake. We have been able to offer a better fishing experience to those who want to kayak fish on Fellows as well as visitors who want to give paddleboarding a try.

Our new watercraft have been a phenomenal addition that has allowed larger friend group outings with many laughs ringing across the water.

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.

We hosted monthly summer moonlight paddles this year, which were a blast including a "Spooky" October paddle.

Moonlight Paddle participants



Fishing at Fellows Lake with two all-stars and one nice musky

Fishing

There's something about fishing that goes beyond the tug on the line or the splash of a catch – it's about time slowing down, about conversations that flow as easily as the water itself. Fishing will take you back in time if you allow it to.

If you plan to do any winter fishing, remember to take a buddy, keep an eye on the weather, bring extra clothing, and remember to have fun even if it's a little cold.

On the Trails

Have you ever walked Dirt 66 trails in the crisp winter months? You should try it sometime; the crunch of the ground and the stillness in the air is quite an experience. You will feel like you are all alone in the wilderness while being close to Springfield and surrounding neighbors of the lake.

Remember you should always have a hiking buddy or tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return. Bring layers and appropriate winter clothing while hiking; safety is always first.

**Please consider following the Facebook page:
[Fellows/McDaniel Lake fishing reports page for Fellows](#)
Lake fishing reports.**

It's full of our local anglers who graciously share the who, what, when, and where of fishing at Fellows.

Community Corner

We are deeply grateful for the organizations that engaged with us this year. Our success wouldn't be possible without the incredible support of our sponsors, volunteers, and partners. Thank you for helping us protect and promote Fellows! We had many successful events this year and couldn't have done it without the help of Show Me Women Paddlers who volunteered their time to keep eyes on the water for us as a dedicated and experienced group of safety boaters.

This year we hosted MSU Occupational Therapy for their Access Outdoors event where we get folks out on the water with help from volunteers. We hosted Empower Abilities Day At the Lake this past fall with an amazing turnout of people and volunteers. The Hatch "Playground for All" opened this year and has quickly become a well utilized and loved aspect of Miller Park at Fellows Lake.



First time fishing!

This year they were able to have a car show in addition to all of the other activities and we hope to continue to grow and expand this event every year to get even more people out who may otherwise not have the opportunity to do these sorts of things in a safe and controlled environment.

We will continue to support these organizations while keeping our mission at the forefront of everything that we do which is to sustain and improve the water resources of Springfield and Greene County through education and effective management of the region's watersheds.



Look at this one!

The Missouri Department of Conservation continues its involvement in fish surveys and continually monitoring for invasive aquatic species. They have improved and expanded the floating wetlands over the last year as you will continue to see these important structures on the lake.

PROJECTS

Source water protection, watershed management plans, stormwater best management practices (BMPs), and policy recommendations are the water protection techniques important to all members of our community.

James River Headwaters Resource Conservation Partnership Project (RCPP)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has awarded RCPP funds to the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks and its partners, leveraging \$2,115,247 in Southwest Missouri. These funds will support the protection of clean drinking water for over 150,000 Missourians, enhance the local farming economy, help Springfield and Greene County meet federal water quality standards, and improve aquatic ecosystems along the James River Headwaters. The project focuses on implementing practices such as riparian buffers, rotational grazing, and soil health improvements.

Local partners for the James River Headwaters RCPP are City Utilities of Springfield, Greene County, City of Springfield, Missouri Department of Conservation, Ozark Greenways, James River Basin Partnership, MFA Incorporated, Missouri Rural Water Association and Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District.

So far, the RCPP has a total of 11 obligated contracts with landowners for practices including prescribed grazing systems, watering systems, forestry practices and planting native warm season grasses. Also, 10 additional applications were received in the recent fall signup. So far, \$256,000 in project funds have been obligated to implement these watershed improvements. Project funding will be available until March 2028.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RCPP VISIT:

WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV/PROGRAMS-INITIATIVES/RCPP-REGIONAL-CONSERVATION-PARTNERSHIP-PROGRAM



Understanding Ag Soil Health Class

Upper Little Sac 319

In 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 August 2026.

This year's grant projects included septic pumpouts, snapshot sample collection, and design completion of the Oscar Blom Golf Course stream stabilization project.

The septic pumpout rebate program removed 3,260 gallons of on-site wastewater sludge from the watershed this year which is 9,900 gallons removed in total.



Erosion at Oscar Blom Golf Course

Upper James River 319

The Upper James River Stream Restoration Project aims to design and implement a streambank stabilization project and enhance the riparian corridor on the Upper James River. The project will help address the E. coli impairment in the James River by implementing best management practices outlined in the EPA-approved watershed-based plan, focusing on critical areas defined in the plan.

In 2024, a highly eroding streambank was identified and was in the early design phase. In 2025, the streambank stabilization design was completed by Wagner and Associates LLC. The project construction is scheduled to be completed in 2026.



Upper James 319 site

Groundwater Monitoring

Watershed launched a groundwater monitoring program in partnership with City Utilities of Springfield in 2019 to proactively collect quarterly water samples from area springs. This program measures water quality parameters and identifies existing or emerging groundwater contaminants in the region.

Quarterly sampling at ten Greene County locations analyzes 36 parameters, including field data, microbiological data, volatile organic compounds, and metals. The expanding dataset offers valuable insights into local groundwater conditions, helping establish background water quality trends. Collected data has already proven instrumental in defining and tracking water quality parameters present in local area springs.



Sampling with CU staff

Sampling Snapshot

In collaboration with the James River Basin Partnership, City of Springfield Southwest Wastewater Treatment Laboratory staff, Watershed staff and 11 volunteers, 88 water quality samples were collected at 23 sites on Saturday July 12th in Little Sac Watershed. This data is part of a local snapshot sampling project that occurs every three years. A big thank you to all the volunteers and the laboratory staff that made this collection event possible! This data is valuable in watershed planning and future project implementation.

These water quality improvements would not be possible without the grant steering committee participation and guidance. Also, numerous project partners assist with implementation and performance monitoring of the selected practices.

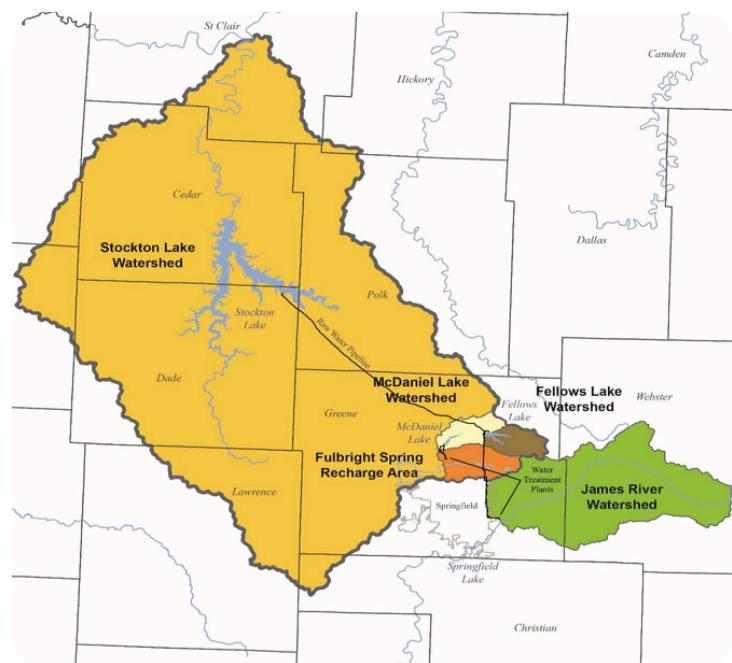


Volunteer Paul collecting a sample for Summer Snapshot

Source Water Protection Plan Implementation and Outreach Project

On September 30, 2025, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) awarded the Southwest Missouri Council of Governments (SMCOG) a grant for Source Water Protection Plan implementation and outreach. Federal funding is provided by Section 604(b) Water Quality Planning Grants.

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.

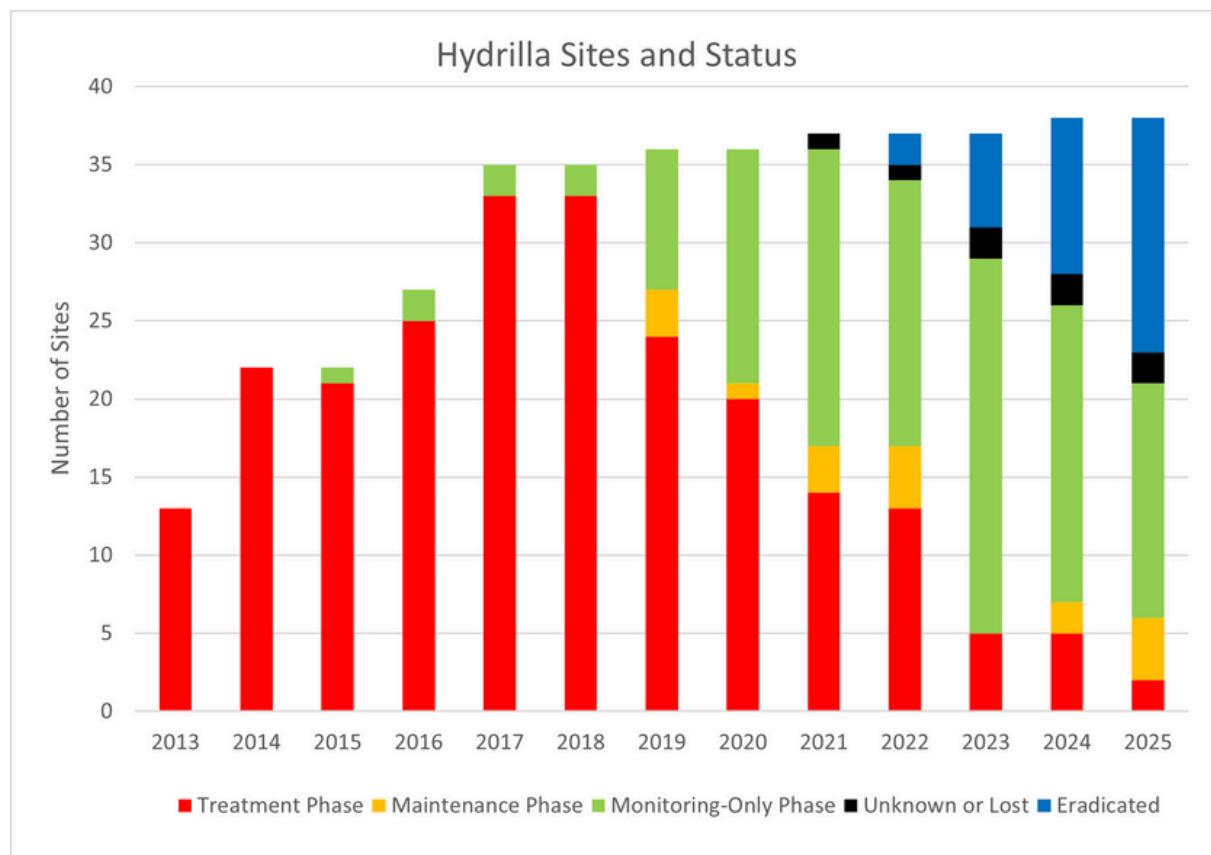


Springfield Source Water Map

The Hydrilla Project

Hydrilla is a highly invasive aquatic plant. In areas of the U.S. where hydrilla has become established, it causes great expense to local economies and businesses. It damages ecosystems and water supplies, and it hampers recreational opportunities. Hydrilla was first found in southwest Missouri in 2012. Shortly after the initial detection, a Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)-led team that includes City Utilities of Springfield (CU), Greene County, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), James River Basin Partnership (JRPB) and WCO was formed to combat hydrilla in southwest Missouri. The team's approach is multifaceted and includes a variety of detection, control, and prevention measures. This collaborative effort has been and continues to be the key to success as no one group can tackle an invasive such as hydrilla alone.

Our story at Fellows Lake, the first known public waterbody to have hydrilla in Missouri, continues to highlight the importance of early detection and rapid response. Hydrilla was first detected in the upper portion of Fellows Lake in 2017. This past year (2025) was the fifth year for the site to be in the “monitoring-only” phase. MDC, CU, and WCO staff inspected the known area during late summer with rakes and underwater cameras. Hydrilla was not detected. In essence, this site has now successfully moved through the “treatment” and “monitoring-only” phases and now officially moves into the “eradication” phase. This same approach of rapid response and monitoring has also been implemented to tackle the lake’s latest aquatic invader, curly leaf pondweed. We also plan on continuing coordinated inspection efforts at Fellows Lake and other larger waterbodies within southwest Missouri. With hydrilla on the landscape, we cannot afford to let up and let it slip into or even back into precious water resources. Diligence is key to controlling this invasive species.



PEOPLE

Watershed is all about people—people who are dedicated to protecting our water resources now and for the future. Our board, staff, sponsors, volunteers, partners, and supporters are a group of dedicated and dynamic individuals who make our mission possible. This chapter is about those people.

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.



Drue and Jonathan with the Day of Caring volunteers

Monthly Meetings

Watershed's monthly meetings are a long-standing tradition where we gather with the community and stakeholders on the first Friday of each month to discuss important water-related topics. This practice began forty years ago with the inception of the Watershed Committee, providing a space for pertinent discussion, announcements, and powerful networking opportunities. Now, the tradition remains strong, with around 400 participants in attendance in 2025 despite the 7:30 a.m. meeting time. We are thankful to all our participants and presenters. Our topics for 2025 were:

January: (we start in February because the First Friday is so close to the holiday)

February: Renew Jordan Creek, The RAISE Grant, and code review as a follow-up to the Forward SGF Community Comprehensive Plan: Carrie Lamb, Water Quality Compliance Officer and Ben Tegeler, Senior Planner, both with the City of Springfield

March: A Land Ethic for Water-Stories from the fields of Millsap Farms: Curtis and Sarah Millsap

April: Ozarks Chinquapin, Seeds of Hope: Tim Smith, Missouri Department of Conservation

May: Meeting cancelled due to power outage

June: Weird Watersheds and Other Topographic Curiosities of the Ozarks: Erica and Joanna Reuter

July: Cancelled due to proximity with Independence Day

August: Why Ozarks Streams are Changing - And How Streambank Stabilization Can Help: Marc Owen and Todd Wagner

September: Ozarks Underwater and How To: David Appleton

October: Chautauqua Style Discussion at Fellows Lake

November: An Environmental Journey-Tales of Tragedy of Hope from the Heartland: Loring Bullard

December: Springfield Public Schools Outdoor Education Showpiece: Brad Brummel, Coordinator of Health and Physical Education for Springfield Public Schools



October Meeting at Fellows Lake

OUR BOARD

We owe a special thanks to our Board Members who volunteer about 300 hours each year, helping us with major decisions, monthly meetings, and guiding our efforts. [Visit the staff and board page on our website](#) to learn more about our board members and their background!



Aaron Robinson, Chair



Bobbilynne Koepke, Vice Chair



Michael Finch, Secretary



Shelby Wood



Michael Stelzer



Megan Chester

FUNDING

Funding is essential to protect our water resources. Our core operational support comes from City Utilities, Greene County, and the City of Springfield—an impactful partnership that maximizes funding efficiency for each sponsor. Additionally, we work to broaden our revenue and impact through diversified income streams, including grants and awards, fundraising efforts, program revenue, and investments/endowment.

Sponsor Support

Organization	2022	2023	2024	2025
City of Springfield	\$66,950	\$68,658	\$71,027.26	\$73,153.08
City Utilities of Springfield	\$205,000	\$212,180	\$218,545.80	\$225,101.76
Greene County	\$66,950	\$68,658	\$71,027.26	\$73,153.08
Springfield-Greene County Parks	\$16,000	\$16,293	\$23,000	\$24,763



Grants and Awards

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks has earned over 11 million dollars in grant revenue over our 40-year history, and over 3 million in the last 5 years. These funds have enabled us to positively impact valuable and irreplaceable water resources and our community's connection to them. Grants and awards are a great way to leverage local funds and advance our mission. Below is a table representing grant activity within the last four years:

CFO CIG Grant	2022	21,060
National Parks Service Foundation	2022	84,628
Southeast Rotary and Rotary International	2022	14,630
Springfield Metro Rotary	2022	6,500
Hatch Foundation Grant	2023	300,000
HDR Grant	2023	45,555
Community Foundation of the Ozarks	2023	16,000
Forvis Foundation	2024	10,000
Upper James River DNR 319	2024	400,000
BPS and Cabela's Outdoor Fund	2024	5,000
CFO Fellowship Grant	2024	15,000
CFO Musgrave Foundation Grant	2024	5,000
MDC Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Grant	2025	\$19,151
CFO Everyone Outdoors Grant	2025	\$10,000
3M Site Hometown Donation	2025	\$2,000

Fundraising

Watershed raised just over \$78,000 in 2025 through fundraising including the Watershed Summer Gala. The Gala evening was filled with joy, community spirit, and support for our mission. The silent auction featured amazing items from local artists and businesses, and the evening was filled with live music by the Lake Fellows, tasty tacos from Simply Delicious Catering, and beverages from Wire Road Brewing and the Homebrewers Association. Thank you to Wire Road Brewing for hosting the Gala in their event space, and to everyone who attended and supported us as sponsors. We hope to see you at the 2026 Summer Gala!



SUMMER
Gala
2025

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Watershed
Clean Water for Life.

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SUMMER
Gala
2025

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volt
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33

Our Generous 2025 Watershed Sustainers

We would like to extend our thanks to our Business and Individual sustainers for their continued annual support over the years.

Business Sustainers

Presenting \$10,000

Bass Pro Shops

Platinum \$8,000

PCNet

Silver \$2,500

Bailey Pyle Builders

Dake Wells Architecture

HDR

Wire Road Brewing

Bronze \$1,000

Commerce Bank

Commercial Metals Company

Elite Promotions

Hogan Land Title

OWN Engineering

Ozarks Coca-Cola/Dr. Pepper Bottling Co.

Spencer Fane, LLC

Supporting \$500

Advanced Car Care Center

At Home Real Estate Company

Central Bank of the Ozarks

Crawford, Murphy & Tilly

Environmental Works

Greater Ozarks Audubon Society

Mama Jeans

Missouri Master Naturalist Spfld Plateau

Olsson

Wagner and Associates

Individual Sustainers

\$500-\$999

Bill Cheek

Bob and Barbara Kipfer

Dave and Elisa Coonrod

Lyndsey Strahan

Scott Bratcher, *in memory of Tommy Bieker*

\$300-\$499

Angela and Tom Blevins

Jan and Michael Wooten

\$100-\$299

Ben and Jodi Caruthers

Bobbi and David Koepke

Charlie Burwick and Lisa Berger

Elizabeth Robertson

Jane Earnhart

Jeff Bromberger

Michael Stelzer

Mike Finch

Tim and Sally Smith

Up to \$99

Blayne Radford

Lyndsey Strahan

Marra Holt

Matt Taylor

Mike and Mary Kromrey

Stephen Sample

Susan Mattheis

Tricia Holt

Vince Currao

Our Generous 2025 Donors Cont.

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who donated their financial resources, time, talent, and good-heartedness to the Watershed in 2025.

Watershed Donors

\$10,000

Anonymous

\$3,000

Louis Griesemer

\$2,000

Bill and Becky Scorse

Paul Nahon Family Memorial Fund

\$300- \$500

Erica Cox

\$100-\$299

Debbie Smith

Essential Yoga

Sunni Nutt

Up to \$99

James Edwards

Jesse Lipson

Joseph Essman

In Kind Donors

Bob and Barb Kipfer

Bob Ranney

Brian Kuehn

Bryan Vance

Chris and Nicole Brown

Greater Ozarks Audubon Society

Homebrewers Association

Jason Frantz

J.D. Slaughter

Kelly and Michael Guenther

Mark Bower Photography

Michael Stelzer

Mike Ashley

Mike Kromrey

Simply Delicious Catering

Soap Refill Station

Tie and Timber

Two Men and a Garden

Volt Credit Union

Warby Parker

Watershed Natives

Wild Birds Unlimited

Wire Road Brewing Company

Grant Awards

Watershed received \$2,000 via the **3M Site Hometown Donation** Program.

Watershed was awarded a \$10,000 **CFO Everyone Outdoors grant** which provided match for the MDC Outdoor Recreation Grant.

Partial funding for the planning and design of the universally accessible wetland trail was provided by **Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Grant**. The trail and 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. The design includes a pavilion area complete with a ramp down to the water which will provide better access to students of all mobilities. Funding to build the accessible wetland trail is still needed.

Money Matters

Programs

Program revenue has been an increasingly important strategy for the growth and impact of our mission. We have seen many wonderful programs in our field come and go with the funding source. We are keenly focused on creating financially sustainable programs with enough funding diversity to stand the test of time. As the old saying goes, “no margins, no mission.” The following graph illustrates the growth and impact of program revenue:

Year	# Employees	Hours Worked	Payroll	Donations	Grants	Program Revenue
2019	13	18,754	\$337,031	\$62,328	\$68,273	\$119,140
2020	18	23,714	\$415,950	\$43,850	\$88,958	\$215,896
2021	25	23,564	\$547,690	\$1,224,178	\$92,603	\$308,764
2022	23	28,564	\$658,222	\$121,800	\$150,258	\$691,226
2023	23	32,841	\$668,550	\$124,666	\$566,303	\$675,234
2024	21	34,040	\$739,622	\$176,456	\$37,000	\$584,753
2025	23	25,922	\$604,507	\$78,085	\$31,151	\$360,000

Investments & Endowment

Long-Term Fund

Watershed developed a Long-Term Fund, with the assistance of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. The Fund is treated as an endowment, with the added benefit of being unrestricted, so it can be accessed (with Board approval). As this fund grows it will provide interest that can be reinvested or applied to projects or personnel to further our mission. With the help of our gracious donors, this fund balance was at \$215,556 at the end of the year.

Endowment Fund

Watershed established a restricted Endowment Fund in 2008, held at the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. Thanks to a generous, anonymous gift of \$1.1 million dollars in 2021, the endowment is starting to generate significant income which can be used, in addition to half of the major gift which will remain unrestricted/liquid. At the end of 2025 the endowment was at \$1,533,374.

Fredrick Memorial Scholarship Fund

The Fredrick Memorial Scholarship Fund was established in 2009 by the Fredrick Family in honor of Jeff Fredrick. The initial funding provided financing for high school or college students' attendance to a workshop, conference, or symposium related to water resources. Since that time donations have been used to supplement our Watershed Fellowship Program, which we believe is in line with the original vision for the fund. The current balance of the fund is just over \$33,317.

Sustaining Donors

The Sustaining Donors Program is an avenue for people to invest in Watershed, providing consistent support for our programs and education. Sustaining Donors are an integral piece of our fundraising pie and we value their commitment to our mission.

What is a Watershed Sustainer?

Watershed Sustainers are a dedicated family of water warriors who support clean water with automatic monthly or yearly contributions. Individual and Business Sustainers provide Watershed with a reliable stream of support for projects and education to sustain and improve the water resources of Springfield and Greene County.

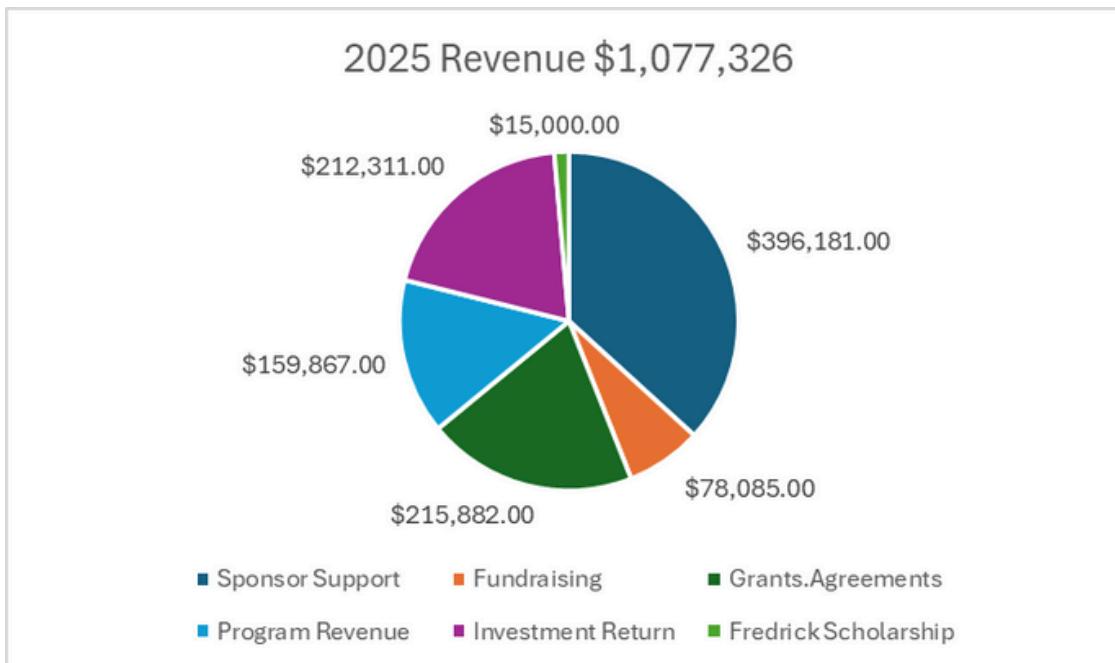
You can become an Individual Watershed Sustainer for a minimum \$50/yearly commitment. You can become a Business Sustainer for a minimum \$500/yearly commitment.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING A SUSTAINER VISIT:

WATERSHEDCOMMITTEE.ORG/GET_INVOLVED/BECOME-A-WATERSHED-SUSTAINER/

Revenue and Expenses

Watershed is a 501(c)3 organization that depends on sponsor support, grant, and donor dollars. Income from these sources allows us to fund our education and outreach programs, implement grant work, maintain the Watershed Center, and provide other important services. In 2025 almost 20% of our income came from grants, and this money is restricted to specific projects and programs, such as the Watershed Natives Program, habitat improvements, and our trail restoration project. Unrestricted funds support general operations as well as our education and outreach programs, including our collaborative efforts with Springfield Public Schools. Unrestricted funds also help support our programs and maintain and improve the Watershed Center and Valley Water Mill Park.





Watershed

watershedcommittee.org