

2024 Annual Report



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

PREFACE

The work of watershed protection is complex and multi-faceted but is simplified nicely with a Fishbone Diagram (see below). Our mission is the backbone. It is central to everything we do and directs all of our moves. The tail propels us. We are driven by our ethic, our passion, our desire to be stewards, and ultimately by love—love for creation/the earth and love for our work and community. The body of the fish is a dynamic mix of parts which work both independently and in synchrony. Each component is part of something bigger, much like our projects, programs, people, funders, volunteers, and educational endeavors. All of these components add up to something bigger than the sum of their parts. This plan is represented by the sections summarized in the bones of the diagram below. The head, the direction we are always swimming, is what we actualize as we work toward accomplishing our mission: **Clean water...for life!**



Passion, stewardship, love, and ethic powers our mission and pursuit of Clean Water for Life



Watershed

Clean Water for Life.™

2024 TAKEAWAYS



Estimated 2,000 acres impacted by conservation efforts through WCC



4,295 native plants supplied to community and projects



3,959 students engaged in field trips at the Watershed Center



1,420 native seed packets distributed



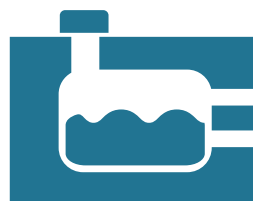
36 Water quality samples from local springs



\$276,261 distributed to landowners to implement best management practices in James River Headwaters.



3,455 outreach participants



7,740 gallons septic sludge removed with our rebate program

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STAFF

Mike Kromrey, Executive Director
Stacey Armstrong Smith, Projects Manager
Kelly Guenther, Business Director
Jeff Birchler, Watershed Center Director
Marra Holt, Communications & Outreach Mgr
Erica Cox, Education Strategist
Drue Lawrence, AmeriCorps Member
Johnathan Foster, Watershed Center Site Steward

Watershed Natives

Christy Wilder, Watershed Natives Manager
Jenna Rotert, Watershed Natives Intern
Tia Garrott, Watershed Natives Intern

Watershed Conservation Corps

Rodney Edwards, WCC Director
Jeremiah Cline, Federal Project Manager
Grant Denbow, Conservation Specialist
Henry Wilbers, Conservation Specialist
Veronica Jensen, Conservation Specialist
Mackenzie Blair, Conservation Specialist
Ryan Moore, Conservation Specialist
Kaitlyn Polly, Conservation Specialist
Taylor Hudson, Conservation Specialist

Fellows Lake

Vince Currao, Fellows Lake Director
Kelce Fritz, Fellows Lake Operations Manager
Fellows Lake Crew Members:
Bailey Nichols
Basil Johnson
Kaley Brittain
Kayla Callis
Ty Whittaker

Board of Directors

Aaron Robinson, Chair
Bobbilynne Keopke, Vice Chair
Michael Finch, Secretary
Michael Stelzer
Angela Blevins
Megan Chester

Our Sponsors

City Utilities of Springfield
Greene County
City of Springfield

Our Partners

Drury University
Community Foundation of the Ozarks
Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District
James River Basin Partnership
MFA Incorporated
Missouri Master Naturalists, Springfield Plateau Chapter
Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri State University
National Park Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Ozark Greenways
Ozarks Technical College
Project WET
Springfield-Greene County Fairgrounds
Springfield-Greene County Libraries
Springfield-Greene County Park Board
Springfield Public Schools

Dear Friends,

What a year it has been! We are pleased to share our 2024, 40th anniversary, Annual Report. It has been a year of celebration, a year of accomplishments, a year to dream, and a year to think about our mission-- past, present, and future.

In addition to the accomplishments and milestones of the year, this report stands out among the years thanks to the work of the talented Marra Holt. We've cherished working with Marra as our "storyteller" for the last couple of years. I hope you enjoy her thoughtful organization and layout of this document, and the many communication pieces, projects, and efforts she's led during her time here. We wish her well as we hit "print" on her *last day* at Watershed on her way to a new job with the City of Springfield.

This year has been a reminder the the shape of water-work is ever changing, and in order to work outward, we must continue to work inward to strengthen the organization. This includes focusing on strategic planning, policies and procedures, and continuing to build capacity through a variety of means. As we head in to 2025, those are things we plan to focus on as we continue to think about the next 40 years.

Thank you for paddling along with us toward "Clean Water for Life!"

Kind Regards,

Mike Kromrey



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Education and outreach are at the core of our mission. To protect our resources, citizens must understand where our water comes from, what factors affect our resources, and what actions can protect them. 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, visitors can easily explore the connection between healthy land and healthy water. Interpretive signage facilitates self-guided tours that both entertain and educate. Research tells that our early experiences with nature are critical in creating future advocates for the environment. For many students, these trips offer their first opportunity to wade in an Ozarks stream, catch a crayfish, or hike a woodland trail. These formative experiences leave lasting impressions, nurturing a lifelong appreciation for nature.

Our dedicated staff and volunteers provide hands-on activities that captivate and educate. One popular activity involves wading in a classic Ozark stream 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.



**Students Surveying
Macroinvertebrates**

EDUCATION & OUTREACH CONT.

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.

Erica Leads Students on a Hike



Outreach & Collaboration

While we aim to host as many field trips as possible, not every student can visit the Watershed Center. To bridge this gap, we participate in events like plant sales and outdoor fairs, broadening our reach and fostering collaboration 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.

In July, we partnered with the James River Basin Partnership (JRBP) for Watershed Day at Valley Water Mill Park. Families participated in engaging water-themed activities throughout the park, and the event sparked new opportunities for collaboration with JRBP. We also welcomed the Springfield-Greene County Library for their Fantastic Friday series. 174 participants joined us for "Wet & Wild E-dventures," enjoying reading activities alongside hands-on and art-themed explorations of Ozark water resources. The Mobile Library added an extra layer of enrichment for attendees.

Meeting people where they are helps make water conservation personal and relevant. It also introduces students to opportunities to which they might not normally be exposed. A favorite example is our program at Bob and Barb Kipfer's property on Bull Creek, where WOLF students sip "Bull Creek tea" and learn about their local water sources in a memorable, hands-on way.



Enjoying Mike's secret Bull Creek Tea recipe

EDUCATION & OUTREACH CONT.

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.



Learning About Macroinvertebrates with Clarissa and Drue

Drury University continues to use the Watershed Center as a classroom for ecology classes. For the past few years, we have had the chance to work with the incoming freshman students on a service project, usually involving Jordan Creek, which runs near the Drury campus. Some of these students go on to join the Think Green Team at Drury. This group is already self-sufficient with service projects and cleanups, needing only bags and trash pick-up support from us.

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 providing Spanish translations of our educational documents, 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 Limnology Students Study Valley Water Mill Lake

Ozark Technical Community College has become increasingly involved at the Watershed Center. Student volunteers and campus organizations have assisted with variety clean-ups and projects. Many classes have conducted field trips to the Watershed Center and participated in Jordan Creek underground tours.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH CONT.

Jordan Creek Tours

The end of an era? Jordan Creek tours have always been a key component of our educational programs in which we hike members of our community through the big box culvert that forms the artificial cave running beneath downtown Springfield. During the tour, we can clearly see the many complex relationships between folklore, urban design, local history, and water quality. As we walk, we point out the wide-open storm drains, familiar from the street but new and surprising from our vantage point in the creek, clearly demonstrating the fact that stormwater is directly connected to our streams and rivers.

For over 25 years we have discussed the potential of daylighting Jordan Creek with our tour participants. It is exciting to see this long-held vision become a reality. The daylighting project will reduce flooding, encourage economic development, and improve water quality in Jordan Creek. Phase one of the Renew Jordan Creek daylighting process started this December. We do not yet know how this will ultimately impact on our popular tours.

Daylighting Vision for Western Section of Tunnel



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE
DAYLIGHTING PROJECT AT
RENEWJORDANCREEK.COM



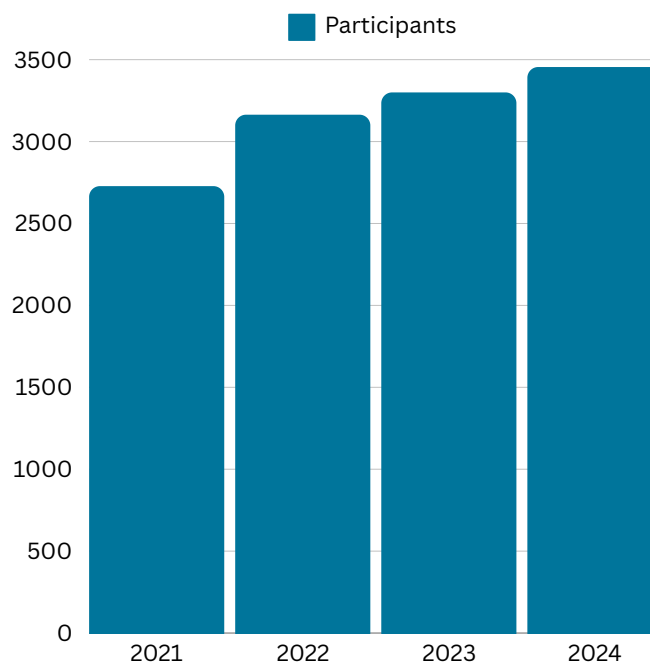
Jordan Creek Underground Tour



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Outreach Activity Participants



Activities

Activity	2021	2022	2023	2024
On Site Educational Program Participants	3,494	3,063	5,072	4,559
On Site Educational Programs	64	68	79	109
Community Events Participated In	4	10	17	26
Jordan Creek Tours	22	25	21	28

Valley Water Mill Park

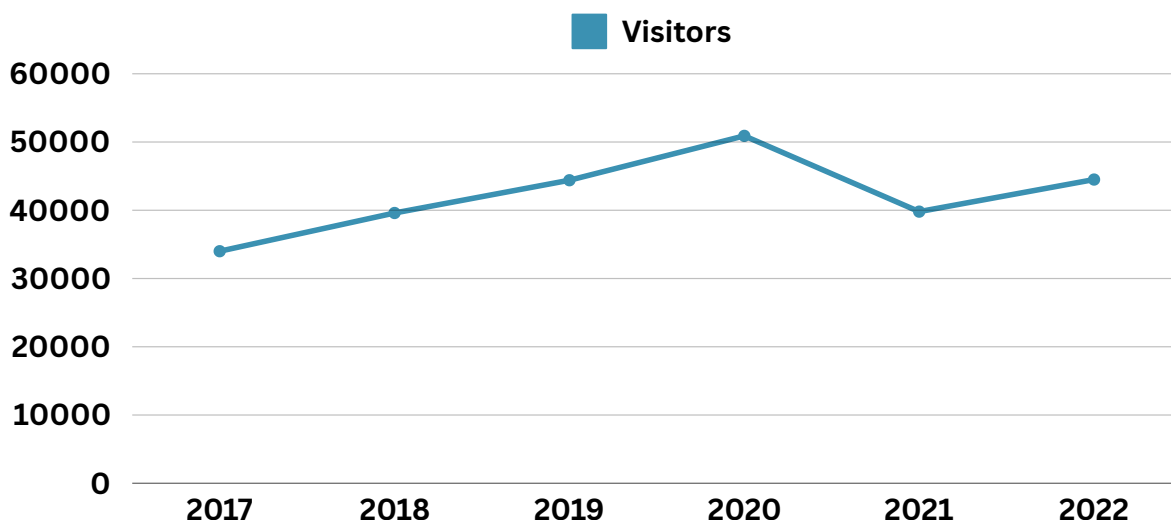
A HUB FOR NATURE & EDUCATION

Valley Water Mill Park continues to be a vital resource for both recreation and environmental education in our community. New data from Placer.ai, provided by our local Chamber of Commerce, reveals insights into visitor trends that highlight the park's increasing role as a resource for our region. In 2022, the park welcomed **over 20,600 unique visitors** across an estimated **44,500 total visits**.

The park's amenities, including walking trails, the Watershed Center, and the unique karst topography, attract a diverse range of visitors. The data also highlights the park's ability to draw in attendees from outside the immediate region, contributing to its regional significance. This increase in visitor traffic over the years illustrates the importance of continued efforts in conservation, education, and park maintenance.

One notable trend is the sustained increase in park attendance since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Like many outdoor spaces, Valley Water Mill Park saw a spike in visitation during the pandemic as people sought safe areas to enjoy nature. This increase has continued through 2022, reinforcing the park's role as a green space for the community. Today, it remains a beloved destination for nature lovers, families, and students alike. The accompanying chart illustrates these visit trends over the years.

Placer.ai Data 2017 - 2022



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

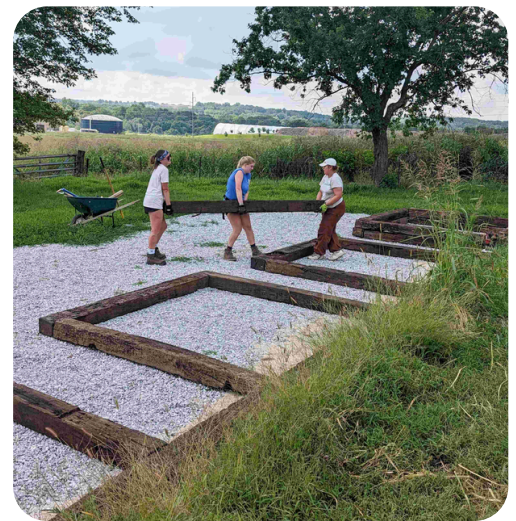
Nursery Updates

2024 has been a year of incredible growth for the Watershed Natives Program. We've focused on developing our new nursery site, strengthening our internship program, and deepening partnerships that advance our mission of clean water and conservation. A grant from the **HDR Foundation** allowed us to purchase a new greenhouse. Additional support from **FORVIS Foundation**, helped us fund installation. This greenhouse will significantly enhance our aquatic plant program by enabling us to start plants during the winter months and expand our tree and shrub propagation efforts.

Inside the New Greenhouse



Building Aquatic Beds



Thanks to funding from **the Hatch Foundation**, we purchased a UTV in July to enhance nursery operations. This essential tool has improved our efficiency in transporting plants and equipment. Both interns received training on the UTV, gaining valuable experience they can carry into their future careers.

WATERSHED NATIVES CONT.

MDC Cooperative Agreement



Our partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has been instrumental in further developing our nursery site. This year's projects included:

- Converting a shed into an office space for staff and our growing seed library.
- Preparing the foundation for our new greenhouse.
- Constructing additional aquatic growing ponds to support our expanding aquatic plant program.

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. Our program is tailored to help students with limited experience gain valuable skills, knowledge, and work experience in conservation. We welcomed Jenna Rotert as our Seasonal Intern. Jenna, a Missouri State University student majoring in Environmental and Evolutionary Biology with a minor in Chemistry, worked with us until November. Her dedication and contributions were invaluable, and we're excited to see what her future holds when she graduates in May 2025. Tia Garrott, a student at OTC, joined us as the Summer as an Intern. Her hard work and enthusiasm were a tremendous asset to the team during her time here.

Interns plant floating wetland at Fellows Lake



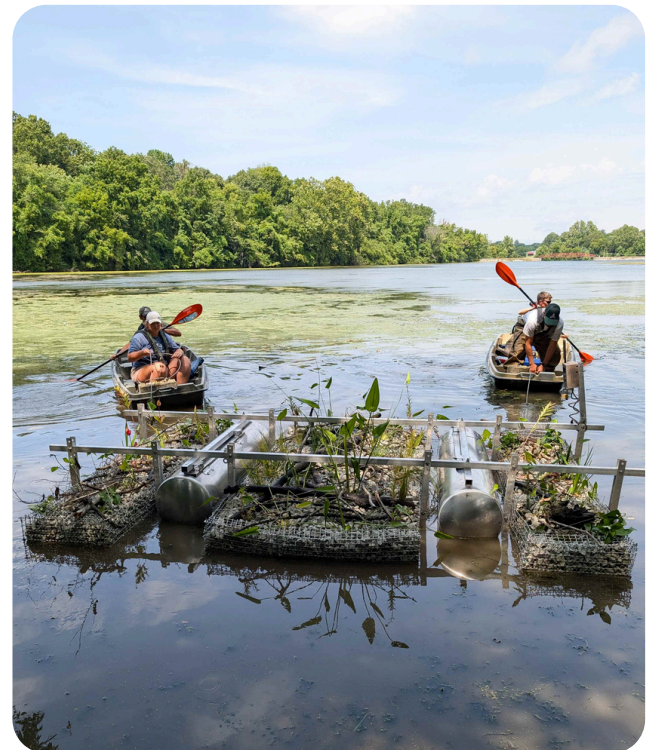
“It has been so fulfilling doing work that is making such a big impact in the community. I’m still learning what my interests are, and working with the Natives Program has driven my interest even further in plants and conservation, along with introducing me to so many people in the community who are helping me form my path after school.”

- Jenna R.

Floating Wetlands

We were involved in MDC’s Floating Wetlands Project, a collaborative effort with partners like City Utilities, the City of Springfield, Missouri State University, and others. Together, we’ve been developing artificial wetlands made without plastic components, instead using recycled glass aggregates and aluminum cages filled with aquatic plants. These wetlands are designed to filter stormwater runoff, remove contaminants, and reduce excess nutrients in drinking water sources. They’ve been installed at Fellows Lake, McDaniel Lake, and Valley Water Mill Lake, contributing directly to our mission of “Clean Water for Life.”

The plants used in the floating wetland are cultivated through the Watershed Natives nursery, and our interns have had the chance to work with MDC in the planning and design process. Natives intern, Jenna said, “Getting to do a project like the Floating Wetlands Project with MDC is opening a lot of doors for me and allowing me to learn more about myself and the field. It has been so fulfilling doing work that is making such a big impact in the community.” In the future, scientists with the Missouri Department of Conservation hope to expand the efforts to private ponds and publicly-owned lakes. “This is just the first step,” Kara Tvedt, fisheries biologist with MDC, said. “We’d eventually like to provide instructions and technical advice to landowners who want to do this on their ponds and small lakes, too.”



MDC and Watershed staff deploy wetland at Valley Water Mill Pond



Fish Find Habitat in Floating Wetland Root System

Floating wetlands are a creative solution to enhance water quality. The aquatic plants, such as arrowhead, pickerelweed, swamp milkweed, and fox sedge absorb excess nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus), which helps reduce algae blooms and filter pollutants. They also help sequester carbon and enhance biodiversity by supporting various plant and animal species.

WATERSHED NATIVES CONT.

Partnerships & Community Engagement

In October, we hosted an Open House for our partners, including MDC, the City of Springfield, Community Foundation of the Ozarks, HDR Foundation, and FORVIS Foundation. It was a joy to share the progress at our nursery and celebrate the support that has made our growth possible.

City of Springfield Employees at the Nursery Open House



Our 2024 sale season concluded in October with great success. We're grateful to everyone who purchased native plants and joined us at events like the Wire Road Plants & Pints sale, where we introduced a limited-edition pint glass. You sold us out, and we're excited to bring these back for the Spring 2025 sale season! As we reflect on this season, we're inspired by the support of our community and partners. Thank you for helping us grow—both figuratively and literally—as we continue to advance conservation and clean water initiatives.

Natives Pint Glass



Watershed Natives by the numbers

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Plants supplied	1,462	2,499	2,718	3,959
Events	19	34	20	22
Plant sale revenue	\$7,847	\$15,065	\$14,425	\$32,332

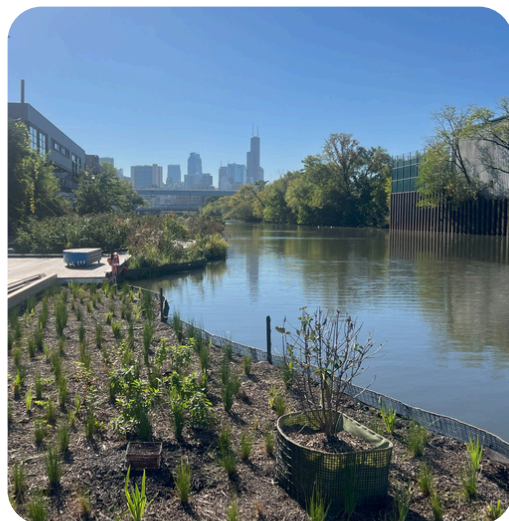
Exploring Innovative Conservation: Our Trip to the Wild Mile in Chicago

Jeff, Christy, and Marra had the opportunity to visit The Wild Mile in Chicago with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). This journey was made possible through MDC's Community Conservation Program, which fosters innovative approaches to preserving and enhancing natural resources in urban spaces. We learned firsthand about an inspiring urban conservation project that we believe has potential for our work in the Ozarks.

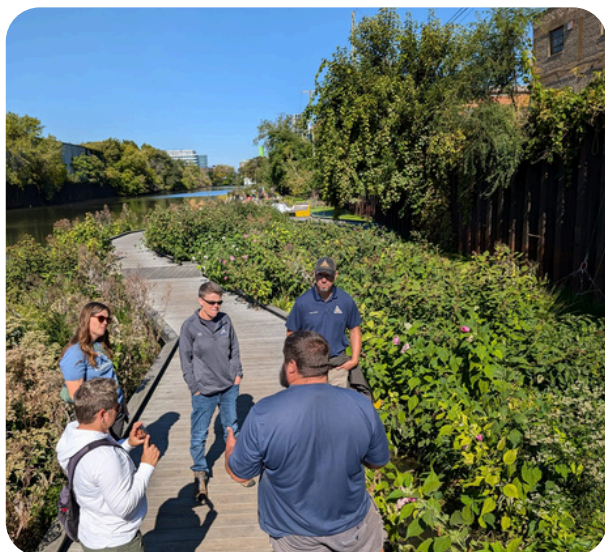
The Wild Mile's success with floating wetlands demonstrated how ecosystems can thrive in unconventional spaces. This project balances ecological restoration with community engagement. Since 2018, the Wild Mile team has been sampling nutrients and suspended solids in the water and have noted significant improvements in water quality, particularly with nitrogen and phosphorus levels, thanks to the urban forest upstream.

Key takeaways include techniques for enhancing biodiversity, such as reintroducing mussels for water filtration and using solar-powered water quality monitoring. The Wild Mile also excels in public outreach, hosting events like bird-watching and kayaking workshops, which inspire community involvement and volunteerism. We are grateful to MDC for this opportunity and excited to explore how these ideas can enhance our conservation efforts. Stay tuned for updates as we apply these innovative strategies to our work in the Ozarks!

View from the Wild Mile



MDC and Watershed staff learn about Wild Mile's Mussel Reintroduction



FOR MORE TAKEAWAYS
READ OUR [BLOG POST](#)





Readying the Workforce

The Watershed Conservation Corps (WCC) provides young professionals with invaluable work experience, training, and education in natural resource management. Many crew members from this year have successfully transitioned to roles with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and National Park Service, showcasing the program's effectiveness in preparing the next generation of local conservation leaders.

Federal Crew Highlights

Through a cooperative agreement with the **National Park Service (NPS)**, WCC's federal team worked across ten sites in the Heartland District, managing invasive species and improving habitats. Efforts included:

- Conducting prescribed burns on 200 acres at Hot Springs Nat'l Park.
- Treating 900 acres for invasive species.
- Completing 85 acres of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI).
- Clearing hazard trees along 10 miles of trails and roads.

WCC Crew conducts Prescribed Burn at Hot Springs National Park



New sites, including Pipestone National Monument (MN) and Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (KS), provided the crew with exposure to diverse habitats and techniques. Additionally, the team partnered with **The Nature Conservancy** at Dunn Ranch Prairie, treating 110 acres of grassland to support species like bison, greater prairie chickens, and bobwhite quail.

Over the last several years, the WCC has provided unique experiences for its members while positively impacting our partners. However, Watershed will not field a traveling crew in 2025 for various reasons. We are partnering with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa to ensure a seamless transition, enabling them to continue collaborating with federal partners and providing similar opportunities for future conservation professionals. We are thankful to the board, staff, partners, and donors who helped us make this opportunity possible over the years.

Local Conservation

In the Greater Springfield area, the local WCC team focused on invasive species management, native plantings, and controlled burns. Key projects included:

- **Riparian restoration** along Jordan, Wilson, Fassnight, and South Creeks for the **City of Springfield**.
- **Habitat maintenance** at **Bass Pro Shops** Base Camp and **Conco Quarries**, including native vegetation site prep and landscaping.
- **Riparian enhancement** project along upper stretches of Jordan Creek at **Coca-Cola of the Ozarks**, through invasive species management and a mass planting of diverse native shrub, forb, and grasses sourced from Watershed Natives. Supplemental seeding took place in early 2024 to accompany the container planting.
- **Streambank stabilization** support for the **Upper Little Sac 319** project through tree planting and native grass seeding.



Seeding along the Upper Little Sac River

In addition to these projects, the Corps managed multiple sites undergoing native vegetation conversions. These sites included **Canopy Development, Coca-Cola of the Ozarks, City Utilities' Blackman Facility, the Solar Farm Facility, Springfield Catholic High School**, a one-acre site near the Fellows Lake Storefront, and several private properties. The team also supported the new Watershed Natives Nursery in south Springfield near Battlefield. Their efforts included transplanting bare-root trees into containers, constructing growing areas for aquatic plants, and installing mulch beds to maintain container-stock woody plants.

Prescribed Fire at Valley Water Mill Park

Valley Water Mill Park

The local team has also continued to make great progress with habitat improvements at our home base, Valley Water Mill Park. Multiple zones of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) have been completed as well as ongoing invasive species management across the entire property. In early December, the crew was able to complete a successful controlled burn within one of the forest management zones, with the help of Marra, Drue, and Mike.





On the Water

This year, we offered a wide range of activities, from fishing and muskie orientations to sailing lessons and paddling adventures. Families, friends, and coworkers gathered to enjoy the lake in countless ways, building memories and deepening their appreciation for this vital water resource. Our mission to educate the community about the importance of protecting and sustaining Fellows Lake remains central to



Fellows Crew on 4th of July

our work. Notable highlights include the Get Eclipsed on Dock 66 event, where we celebrated the solar eclipse, and our final summer paddle, a peaceful evening filled with camaraderie as everyone pitched in to make the night special. We also hosted two exciting sailing regattas.

Fishing

Fellows Lake offers more than just a place to cast your line—it provides an opportunity to connect with nature and build meaningful skills:

Patience & Perseverance – In the age of instant gratification, fishing reminds us to slow down and embrace the waiting.

Handling Loss – Even when you do everything right, there will be days you come home empty-handed.

Problem Solving – Adjusting bait, timing, and tactics based on weather and conditions hones critical thinking.

Being Present – Fishing immerses you in the moment, letting you truly hear the splash of water, the chirping of birds, and the rustle of wildlife.

Fellows Lake provides a serene, clean, and safe environment for anglers of all ages to enjoy these moments.

Muskie 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 partnered with **Missouri State University's Master of Occupational Therapy** program and **Empower:Abilities** to host inclusive events.
- Thanks to **City Utilities**, the **Kiwanis Club of Springfield South**, and the **Hatch Foundation**, construction of an accessible playground at Miller Park is well underway, with an opening anticipated soon.
- The **Missouri Department of Conservation** conducted fish surveys, confirming the lake's thriving fish habitat.



Self-launching EZ Dock



New Playground at Miller Park

On the Trails

For those who prefer dry land during the winter, the Dirt 66 Trail offers an excellent escape. With 29 miles of rolling single-track trails, it's the perfect time to explore whether you're a mountain biker, hiker, runner, or nature lover. Even with over 47,000 visits last year, the trails remain accessible and uncrowded, thanks to six well-spaced trailheads. Ozark Greenways leads the coordination and maintenance of this system, with support from Trailspring, MORC, and a dedicated team of volunteers.

Looking Ahead

Exciting updates are on the horizon for Fellows Lake! We're planning improvements in the coming year to enhance your experience at the Marina. [Follow us on Facebook](#) to stay updated on events and activities as we prepare for an exciting spring season.

GET TRAIL INFO AT
OZARKGREENWAYS.ORG



PROJECTS

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.

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. So far, the RCPP has a total of 7 obligated contracts with landowners for practices including prescribed grazing systems, watering systems, forestry practices and planting native warm season grasses. Also, 6 additional applications were received in the recent fall signup. So far, \$276,261 in project funds have been obligated to implement these watershed improvements. Project funding will be available until March 2028.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Upper James River 319

On July 9, 2024, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced that the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks received a \$400,000 grant for restoration and improvements to the Upper James River. The funding, provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, is supported by community partners contributing \$266,800 over the project's duration, bringing the total project cost to \$666,800. The project is expected to be completed by May 2027.

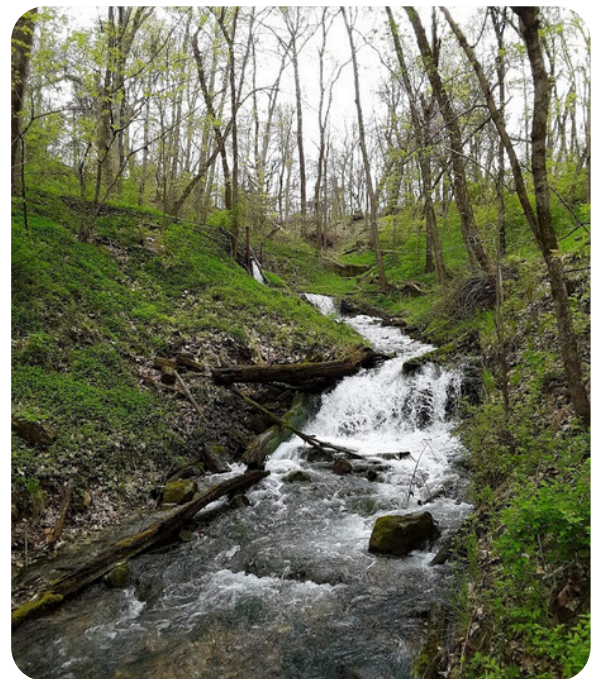
The Upper James River Stream Restoration Project aims to design and implement streambank stabilization and enhance the riparian corridor on the Upper James River. The project will help address the E. coli impairment in the James River by implementing best management practices outlined in the EPA-approved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

Groundwater Monitoring

We 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 identifying parameters present in local area springs.

Hoffmeister Spring



FOR MORE PROJECT UPDATES,
SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT OUR
PROJECTS PAGE ON
[WATERSHEDCOMMITTEE.ORG](https://www.watershedcommittee.org)



PROJECTS CONT.

Upper Little Sac 319

In October 2021, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced that the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks had been awarded a \$400,000 grant for restoration and improvements to the Little Sac River. Funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, the project focuses on reducing bacteria in the Upper Little Sac River basin while also addressing soil erosion and nutrient levels in the watershed. These goals are being achieved through proven practices to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff. Community partners are contributing \$266,667 over the life of the project, bringing the total cost to \$666,667. With a time extension, the project is now expected to be completed in the summer of 2026.

This year's projects included septic pumpouts, nonpoint source educational events, stream riparian corridor establishment, two native plant factsheets, and rain garden designs. The septic pumpout rebate program removed approximately 7,740 gallons of onsite wastewater sludge from the watershed. Nonpoint source educational events were held in partnership with Missouri Smallflows and Greene County, including the Inspection/Evaluation for Real Estate Professionals session, two landowner Onsite Wastewater Workshops, and tours of the demonstration site.

Educational Event at the Onsite Wastewater Training Center



**Dickerson Park Zoo
Rain Garden**

The Dickerson Park Zoo rain garden is supported in part by funding from a 319 grant, the project introduced four bioretention areas, interconnected by dry gravel bed swales, to efficiently manage stormwater runoff. These innovative features are capable of holding up to 3,424 cubic feet of runoff, ensuring 99% of the water quality volume is captured and treated. The gardens are not only functional but also a vibrant addition to the landscape, brimming with life. A carefully curated selection of 48 shrubs, along with 2,207 grasses and perennial flowers, were planted to create a dynamic ecosystem. Together, these elements not only enhance the site's beauty but also provide essential habitat for local wildlife, demonstrating the transformative potential of green infrastructure.

Joining Forces to Establish Riparian Corridor along the Upper Little Sac River

Riparian corridor establishment took place along the Little Sac River, adjacent to the stream stabilization project completed in 2023. Watershed's programs joined forces with the Tucker family to plant 325 native shrubs and trees along the streambank, which acts as a natural filter for runoff and provides habitat for local wildlife. Trees were purchased from Watershed Natives that were cultivated with the help of Hillcrest High School students and volunteers. The Watershed Conservation Corps planted trees, reinforced the ground, and seeded native grasses. Seeing these programs work together in harmony was a testament to our shared mission.



WCC and Watershed Staff Grade Ground Before Seeding

Special thanks to the Tucker family for their help drilling seed and planting holes, and for their ongoing commitment to land stewardship. This final phase of the multi-year stream stabilization project completed the corridor, dedicated in memory of potomologist Dave Derrick and stream geomorphologist Zeke Kuehn. These water quality improvements were made possible by the grant steering committee and project partners who assisted with implementation and performance monitoring.

Riparian Corridor along the Upper Little Sac After Planting



THE HYDRILLA PROJECT

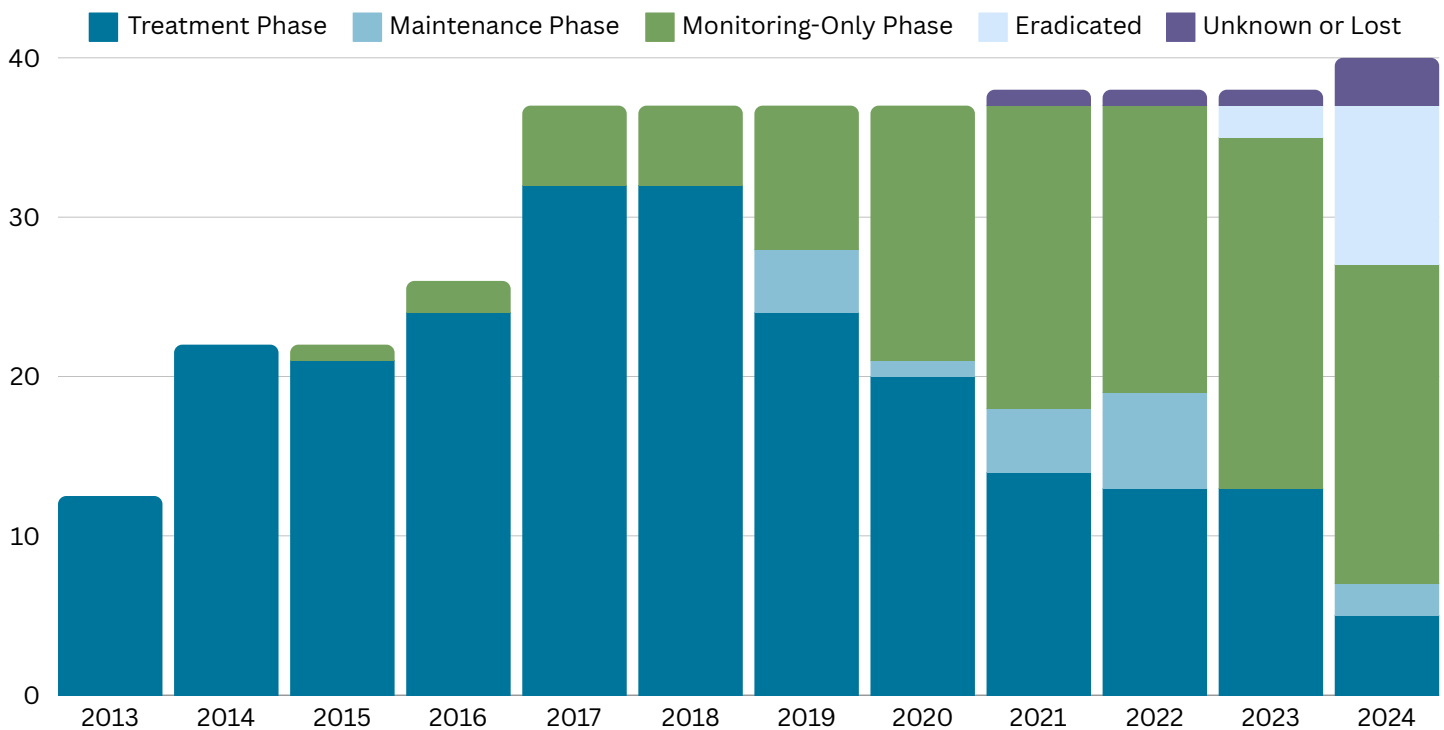
Hydrilla, a highly invasive aquatic plant, poses significant threats to ecosystems, water supplies, recreation, and local economies. First detected in southwest Missouri in 2012, hydrilla prompted the formation of a collaborative team led by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) with partners including City Utilities of Springfield, Greene County, the US Army Corps of Engineers, DNR, JRBP, and Watershed. This team implements detection, control, and prevention measures, emphasizing the need for collective action.

To date, 38 hydrilla sites have been identified in southwest Missouri, primarily in private waters across the James, Little Sac, Pomme de Terre, Niangua, and White River watersheds. Of these, 36 are under a multi-year eradication plan. Two sites were lost due to ownership changes, with outreach efforts continuing to engage the new landowners.

Fellows Lake, Missouri's first public waterbody with hydrilla, has been in the "monitoring-only" phase for four years. Inspections in 2024 found no hydrilla, highlighting the success of early detection and rapid response. This same strategy is being applied to tackle curly leaf pondweed, another invasive species at the lake.

In addition to eradication efforts, the team collaborates with landowners to enhance ecosystem health by discussing fisheries management and introducing quarantined native aquatic plants to improve habitat, water quality, and biodiversity.

In 2025, tuber monitoring will assess active treatment sites, with results determining if sites progress to monitoring-only or remain in treatment. Treatments will continue for active sites, alongside inspections, public outreach, and habitat improvements at Fellows Lake and other regional waterbodies. Sustained diligence remains vital to controlling hydrilla and protecting Missouri's waters.



Contributed by Kara Tvedt, Fisheries Biologist, MDC

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 tremendous success of Watershed is largely thanks to an incredible group of volunteers and interns. Our volunteers represent a wide range of ages and abilities, contributing their time and talents in various ways. Long-time volunteers like Levi Decker have dedicated hundreds of hours over the years, supporting our native plant program and helping maintain our building and grounds. Missouri State University students from the CASL program contribute over 40 hours each semester, gaining hands-on experience while contributing to our mission. Two standout events for group volunteering are United Way’s Day of Caring and Summit Day at Watershed. Day of Caring is an annual event, the largest one-day volunteer effort in Southwest Missouri, saw teams from Bass Pro, Springfield Contractors Association, and John Deere Remanufacturing tackle projects like trail maintenance and clean-up at Valley Water Mill Lake and Fellows Lake.

On Summit Day, Summit Preparatory School brought 178 pre-K–12 students for a full day of volunteering, from planting seeds to trail maintenance. Many older students return each year to see the progress of their past projects, like restoring native plants to glade areas.

Thanks to these dedicated volunteers and groups, we continue to make meaningful strides in conservation, education, and stewardship at Watershed.



**Volunteer Elise Bowsher Exploring
Macros with WOLF Students**

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 2024, despite the 7:30 a.m. meeting time. We are thankful to all our participants and presenters. Our topics for 2024 were:

January: Greene County Septic Remediation Project – Brent Stock and Todd Wilkinson, JRBP, Tammy Trantham, Missouri Smallflows, Michael Bowers, Greene County, Carin Love and Jerry Harmin, H2Ozarks, and Stacey Armstrong Smith, Watershed

February: Celebrating Wetlands in Missouri and Around the World – Frank Nelson, Wetland Systems Manager, Missouri Dept. Of Conservation

March: The Gasconade Mills: A historical retrospective on the first commercial harvests of shortleaf pine in Missouri – James Guldin, Ph.D. Retired Research Scientist in Forest Science

April: Saving Bull Creek – Loring Bullard and Bob Kipfer discussed their newly published book

May: Questionable Judgement – Building and Rowing a Wooden Boat Through the Grand Canyon: Jason Frantz

June: Bass Pro Sustainability Update – Dan Hoy, Bass Pro Cabela’s Director of Facilities.

July: Cancelled due to proximity with Independence Day

August: New Sustainability Programs at the Ozarks Environmental and Water Resources Institute at MSU – Doug Neidigh: Mr. Neidigh is the Sustainability Unit Manager at OEWR

September: Building Our Streamgauge Network – Andrew Schiller: Streamgauge Project Leader at the Missouri Hydrology Information Center (MoHIC)

October: Chataqua Style Discussion at Fellows Lake

November: Steel Creek, an Ozarks adaptation of Hemingway’s essay, The Big Two-Hearted River – Carter Shipman

December: John, Jim, and the James: Recreation in Ozarks Streams – Brent Stock, Director of James River Basin Partnership

October Meeting at Fellows Lake



STAFF DEVELOPMENT & PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

As our staff continues to grow in numbers, we aim to keep providing opportunities for development through trainings, workshops, and networking events. We also work to engage our community in conservation and education through hosting events such as workshops and tours. This year, our staff participated in a wide array of events:

Many of our staff participated the Integrated Plan Field Day with community partners.

- **Mike Kromrey** joined the boards of the LAD Foundation and the Lovett Pinetum. He was also honored as one of Biz 417's 10 for the Next 10. [Read the article here.](#) He also attended the Center for Watershed Protection's National Conference on Nonpoint Source Pollution in Kansas City, supported by a scholarship from the Missouri Department of Conservation.
- **Stacey Armstrong-Smith** participated in Environmental Collaborative meetings, Missouri State University's Professional Science Master's Advisory Board, and the Source Water Protection Planning Committee. She also completed the National Wildlife Federation's "Grow More" agricultural outreach training.
- **Kelly Guenther** participated in the Drury Nonprofit Conference, she attended Polices with a Purpose and The Fundamentals of Capital Fundraising, and Gearing Up for a Successful Year End all through the Network for Strong Communities and Community Foundation of the Ozarks. She also attended the Ollis Wellness Conference.
- **Jeff Birchler** participated in the Missouri Environmental Educators Association.
- **Marra Holt** joined the Network for Young Professionals and participated in the Drury Nonprofit Conference. She also attended the National Wildlife Federation's "Grow More" agricultural outreach training and Clifton Strengths Training through NSC and CFO.
- **Kelce Fritz** Participated in the Drury Nonprofit Leadership Conference, Ollis Wellness Conference, and Fundraising workshops, including "Gearing Up for a Successful Year End" through the Network for Strong Communities.
- **Christy Wilder** completed wetlands training with the Missouri Department of Conservation in St. Louis. She completed the Clifton Strengths Training through NSC and CFO.
- **Rodney Edwards** maintained his Commercial Applicator license.
- **Grant Denbow** participated in multiple prescribed burn classes, gained USFS National Sawyer certification, and maintained his Commercial Applicator license.
- **Johnathan Foster** gained USFS National Sawyer certification, and maintained their Commercial Applicator license.
- **The Watershed Conservation Corps Crew** completed Wilderness First Aid Certification, sawyer courses, and wildland fire training to prepare for conducting prescribed burns.



WCC During Sawyer Training

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



Angela Blevins



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	2021	2022	2023	2024
City of Springfield	\$65,000	\$66,950	\$68,658	\$71,027
City Utilities of Springfield	\$200,000	\$205,000	\$212,180	\$218,545
Greene County	\$65,000	\$66,950	\$68,658	\$71,027
Springfield-Greene County Parks	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,293	\$23,000



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 three years:

USDA James River Headwaters RCPP Award	2021	2,225,247
CFO Collective Impact Grant	2021	25,000
Upper Little Sac Watershed 319 Grant	2021	400,000
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 Cabella’s Outdoor Fund	2024	5,000
CFO Fellowship Grant	2024	15,000
CFO Musgrave Foundation Grant	2024	5,000

Fundraising

Watershed raised just over \$176,456 in 2024 through fundraising including the Watershed Summer Gala. The Gala evening was filled with joy, community spirit, and support for our mission as we celebrated 40 years of Watershed! Attendees enjoyed a first look at the conceptual design for possible expansion of the Watershed Center and participated in engaging activities like the duck race and square game. 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, 4 By 4 Brewing, and the Homebrewers Association. Thank you to Wire Road Brewing for hosting the Gala in their new event space, and to everyone who attended and supported us as sponsors. We hope to see you at the 2025 Summer Gala on June 20th!

SUMMER Gala 2024

PRESENTED BY



Hatch

SPECIAL THANKS



FORV/S

LEGACY SPONSOR



PLATINUM SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS



DAKE | WELLS
architecture

BRONZE SPONSORS



Lawrence Concrete
Mike & Gayle Ashley

SUPPORTING SPONSORS



Nahon Family Memorial Fund



BENEFITTING



Watershed
Clean Water for Life.™

Our Generous 2024 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

Hatch Foundation

Legacy \$10,000

Bass Pro Shops

Platinum \$8,000

PCNet

Silver \$2,500

Bailey Pyle Builders

Dake Wells Architecture

Bronze \$1,000

Arkifex

Commerce Bank

Commercial Metals Company

HDR

Hogan Land Title Company

Elite Promotions

Lawrence Concrete

Mike and Gayle Ashley

Ozarks Coca-Cola/Dr. Pepper Bottling Co.

Supporting \$500

Advanced Car Care

At Home Real Estate Company

Ball Architecture

Central Bank of the Ozarks

Crawford, Murphy & Tilly

Environmental Works

Gearhead

Greater Ozarks Audubon Society

Hutchins Advertising

Mama Jeans

Missouri Master Naturalist Spfld Plateau

Ollis, Akers, Arney

Olsson

Wagner and Associates

Individual Sustainers

Up to \$99

Blayne Radford

Kelly and Michael Guenther

Lyndsey Strahan

Marra Holt

Mike and Mary Kromrey

Stephen Sample

Susan Mattheis

Tricia Holt

\$100-\$299

Ben and Jodi Caruthers

Bobbi and David Koepke

Charlie Burwick and Lisa Berger

DeDe Vest

Gary Leonard

Jane Earnhart

Jason and Amber Hainline

Jeff Bromberger

Matt Taylor

Michael Stelzer

Mike Finch

Tim and Sally Smith

Vince Currao

\$300-\$499

Angela and Tom Blevins

Jan and Michael Wooten

\$500-\$999

Bill Cheek

Bob and Barbara Kipfer

Charlie and Lisa Berger

Dave and Elisa Coonrod

Scott Bratcher, *in memory of Tommy Bieker*

Susan Mattheis

Our Generous 2024 Donors

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who donated their financial resources, time, talent, and good-heartedness to the Watershed in 2024.

Watershed Donors

Up to \$99

Chanelle Head
Emma Loder
Lauren Bair
Mattea Ingemi

\$100-\$299

Crista Hogan
DeAnn B Holt
Debbie Smith
Drew Holt
Josh Pantleo
Missouri Dept. of Conservation, *Nature Center Pickerel Frogs Call for Clean Water*
Missouri Waste Control Coalition, *in honor of Dan Hoy*
PayPal Giving Club
Ryan Whitley, *in honor of the Abou Ben Adhem Keystone Kops*
Sam Freeman
Tamara Conn, *in honor of Grant Williams and the VOX Landscape Design Team*
Vriesland Growers Coop.

\$500

Andrew Novinger

\$1,000-\$1,500

Illumine Collect
Mike and Gayle Ashley
Nahon Family Memorial Fund

\$2,000

Bill and Becky Scorcse

In Kind Donors

4x4 Brewing Company
BeSpoke Head Spa
Beth K. Spangler
Big Momma's Coffee
Cellar + Plate
Dancing Mule
Darkstone Coffee
Diane DuFresne Massage
Echelon Coffee
FETCH pet supply
Gearhead
Greater Ozarks Audubon Society
Greenhouse Coffee
Homebrewers Association
Hormann Meats
Hotel Vandivort
Jimms Steakhouse & Pub
Just for Him
Kingdom Coffee
KSX Art
Kuat Bike Rack
Mark Bower Photography
Michael Stelzer
Mike Ashley
Mike Kromrey
Ozark Adventures
Ozark Mountain Trading Company
REI
Rob Pullium
Roots Coffee Bar
Soap REfill Station
Tea Bar and Bites
The Coffee Ethic
Theta Float Spa
Two Men and a Garden
Volt Credit Union
Wire Road Brewing Company
Wonders of Wildlife
X-Golf
Yeti Cooler
Zenith Climbing Co.

Our Generous 2024 Donors Cont.

Donor Spotlight

Prime Inc. Foundation generously contributed a \$100,000 unrestricted donation to support our 40th Anniversary Capacity Building Campaign. This incredible gift provides critical flexibility to invest in programs, projects, and infrastructure that strengthen Watershed's long-term impact.

The HDR Foundation awarded \$45,555 to fund the purchase of a greenhouse for the Watershed Natives nursery. This addition will enhance our aquatic plant program by allowing us to start plants during winter and expand tree and shrub propagation, greatly benefiting local ecosystems.

A \$10,000 donation from the **FORVIS Foundation** helped fund the installation of our greenhouse, ensuring we can efficiently grow native plants.



Christy Shows Partners the Greenhouse

The Missouri Department of Conservation awarded Watershed a Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Grant, up to \$55,000, not to exceed 50% of the total project cost, to go towards the design of the accessible boardwalk trail and learning station through the wetland.



Sketch of Proposed Accessible Boardwalk and Trail by Dake Wells Architecture

Community Foundation of the Ozarks awarded Watershed a Fellowship Grant for \$15,000, to support the Watershed Fellowship program.

Watershed was awarded a **Musgrave Grant Foundation Award** in the amount of \$5,000, as recommended by Danny Perches

BPS and Cabelas Outdoor Fund awarded Watershed \$5,000 to purchase a live minnow cooler for Fellows Lake

We are deeply grateful to these generous donors for their commitment to our mission and the community!

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

Investments & Endowment

Long-Term Fund

The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks 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 \$193,750 at the end of the year.

Endowment Fund

The Watershed Committee 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 2024 the endowment was at \$1,376,713.

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 \$44,741.

Sustaining Donors

The Sustaining Donors Program is a new 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 our their commitment to our mission.

Charitable Giving through IRA's

Presented by Eric K Peterson, CFP® Peterson Wealth Advisors

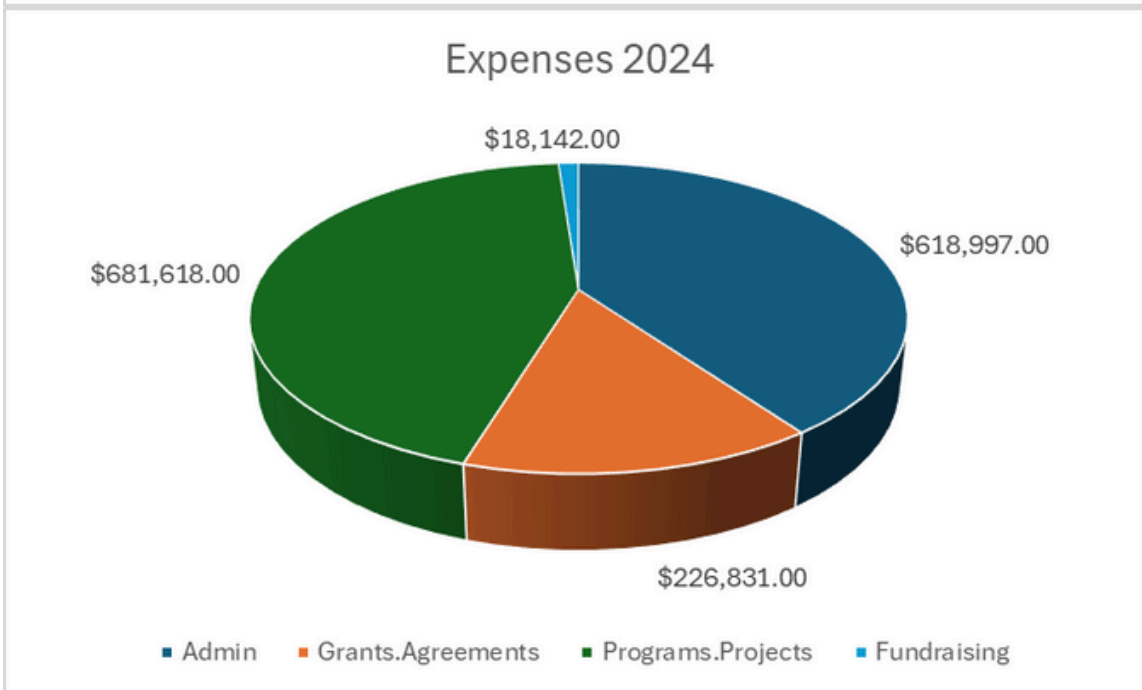
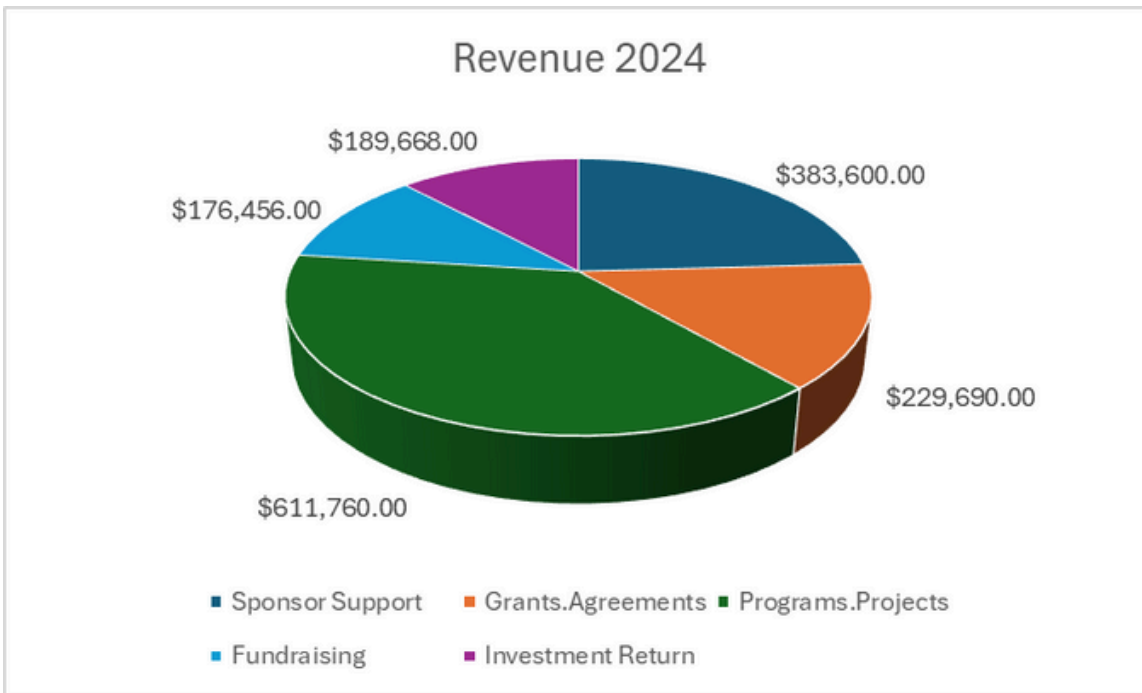
A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a payment made directly from an IRA to a charitable organization. Specific requirements and circumstances must be met before an IRA owner can make a QCD. To help you understand the ins and outs of this charitable distribution, Peterson Wealth Advisors have summarized the rules in a blog post on our website. Learn more at watershedcommittee.org/blog/



LEARN MORE ABOUT
CHARITABLE GIVING THROUGH
IRA'S ON OUR BLOG

Revenue and Expenses

Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, Inc. 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 2024, almost 15% 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