



THE UPPER WHITE RIVER REVIEW

*The Newsletter of the South Missouri Water Quality Project, a USDA-NRCS Water Quality Office
Providing Conservation Solutions To Non-Point Source Water Pollution.*

Clear...Concise...and to the Non-Point

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Stewardship Compass by Steve Hefner



Steve Hefner, South Missouri Water Quality Project Team Leader

what the next few days would bring. I cracked open a *Captain America* comic book and waited for the plane to depart.

Eager for a great summer vacation, I made some final arrangements and headed for our local airport. The demands of the office and home routine had produced a temporary, mundane mood and a trip out of state was my prescribed cure. Before leaving, I recall telling a close friend that I was taking a trip and, "over the next 10 days I wasn't going to think about work." Settling into an airplane seat along side my family, I was excited about

Ten minutes into the flight I found myself breaking away from the superhero storyline and looking out the window at the landscape. It had been awhile since I last flew and so I wanted to view the unique perspective the airplane provided. Flying across the mid-west toward the west coast, I began to notice how much conservation was present on the landscape - windbreaks, terraces, field borders, and riparian buffers - next to home-steads, fields, and streams.

Before long I realized I was *indeed thinking about work*. I suppose the conservation mindset of a 20 year public service career is difficult to break. Before even arriving at my destination, this view of the landscape provided the much needed reference point and positive inspiration for which I was searching. I realized that although the need for conservation work seems endless, much has been accomplished through various stewardship avenues. This issue of the *Upper White River Review* highlights some conservation activities in our watershed that address natural resource protection. Contact us if you have questions.

SMWQ Turned 5 Years Old in October

October 2008 marked the 5th year anniversary of the South Missouri Water Quality Project. Conceived as a Resource Conservation and Development Project, conservation minded citizens sponsored the development of a Water Quality Project Office to assist stakeholders in the Upper White River Basin. "Our project area is widespread and includes drainage from the James, Norfolk, Jacks Fork, Current, and Black rivers in southern Missouri," said Steven Hefner, Project Team Leader.

Technical assistance provided by the project has resulted in installed conservation practices on the land. Conserva-

tionists have assessed over 25,000 acres of forestland, 6,600 acres of rural nutrient management, 600 urban lawn plans, 80 urban conservation planning activities, participated in 34 non-point source pollution related projects, and implemented a water related childhood education program that reached over 5,000 households.

"It has been very satisfying to see this idea transfer into a functioning reality," said Hefner. "Because of the staff's efforts and the conservation ethic of private landowners, these voluntary practices will yield benefits for everyone for years to come."

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Theodosia Community Receives a Home Depot Award

Remnant Trail Resurrected to Honor Local Teen

Theodosia, a rural community located near Bull Shoals Lake in Ozark County, Missouri, is a close-knit rural community where neighbors share experiences and look after one another. In June 2007, the community was devastated when a drunk driver took the life of Katelyn Dooley, a teen at Lutie High School. Like most young people, Katelyn was happy, vibrant, and ready to experience her future.

Wanting to show compassion for the family, Ozark County Soil and Water Conservation District employee Melisa Myers decided to restore an abandoned trail at Lutie High School to honor Katelyn. "I was looking for a way to remember loved ones and teach the kids how precious life is by making a beautiful place for the school and community to walk, laugh, remember, and learn," said Myers.

Myers wrote to local businesses seeking donations. Soon, Joe Adair from Home Depot in Mountain Home, Arkansas, invited Myers to the store and made an initial \$500 donation to purchase trees, shrubs, and garden supplies for the project. With materials in hand, a



Katelyn Dooley

community work day was scheduled on September 29, 2007. Over 40 people came to clear brush and plant trees, including employees of Home Depot and White River Valley Electric Company. "White River helped us dig 39 holes – a wonderful donation considering the rocky nature of soils in the Ozarks," said Myers.

As a Home Depot Team Captain, Adair decided to submit the project in the corporation's Building Community Awards Program. Each spring, Home Depot recognizes building projects that are creative, has volunteer engagement, and community impact. "I thought this project effort would make an excellent nomination," said Adair. In April, 2008, Adair learned that the Lutie Memorial Trail Project was one of only 24 projects nationwide to be selected. The \$4,000 award funded a scholarship fund, new playground equipment, and further trail development and maintenance. Reflecting on the award Myers offered, "Although we still feel a void for Katelyn, it is comforting to see that good can always be found in tragic events."

MSU Host Rain Garden Field Day at Mountain Grove

Missouri State University recently planted an Ozarks Rain Garden at the Mountain Grove campus and hosted a field day on September 9, 2008 to celebrate the event. A rain garden is a landscaped depression that soaks up rainwater, often from the roof of a house or a driveway. The gardens not only serve to decontaminate surface water runoff but also add beautiful native plants to the landscape. The project and workshop was funded in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region VII through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

The agenda included speakers presenting pertinent information for anyone considering rain garden construction. A welcome from Dr.



Rain Garden Field Day on MSU Campus in Mountain Grove

Anson Elliott, MSU Agriculture Department Head, highlighted water quality related research at the station. Tucker Fredrickson, Grant Coordinator with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, discussed mini-319 grants. Tammy Bruckerhoff, a Marketing and Business Development Specialist with

the Missouri Department of Agriculture, discussed native plants featured on the Grow Native! website (<http://www.grownative.org>). A photo journal of area rain gardens from southwest Missouri was presented by USDA-NRCS Urban Conservationist, Adam Coulter.

The morning presentations concluded with a campus tour featuring the newly constructed rain garden, other gardens designed by the Tri-County Master Gardeners, the orchards and vineyards, and various research plots on campus. The Fruit Experiment Station is open to the public during the week. If interested, stop in or call for an appointment. More information may be found at: <http://mtngrv.missouristate.edu/HomeGardeners/OzarksRainGardens.htm>

Oregon County SWCD Offers Watershed Project

Warm Fork of Spring River SALT Funded

In July, the Department of Natural Resources awarded a Special Area Land Treatment Grant (SALT) to the Oregon County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for agricultural conservation in the Warm Fork of the Spring River Watershed. The award of \$750,000 over 7 years was the culmination of months of planning between the SWCD, local steering committee members, and the South Missouri Water Quality Project. "We are delighted to be in the position to offer additional funding to the landowners of this watershed," said Sarah Wiggs, programs specialist. "We hope this project will serve to protect agricultural land within the watershed and the water quality of Mammoth Springs, Arkansas."

Mammoth Springs, with an estimated average daily output of 234 million gallons per day, collects over 90% of its recharge from Missouri. The SALT program allows funding to be utilized for agricultural non-point

source practices. The district is offering cost share on several conservation practices including planned grazing systems, nutrient and pest management, riparian forest buffers, and forestry planning.



Mammoth Springs, Fulton County, AR

agenda will demonstrate proper soil testing techniques, inform landowners of certified labs, and educate proper nutrient application of manure and commercial fertilizer. For more information call Freda Johnson at 417-778-7561, Ext. 109 or contact the Oregon County SWCD in Alton, MO.

Freda Johnson, a local Oregon County, MO resident, has been hired as a technician to assist with the project. An initial meeting held in Thayer on July 31, 2008 covered the guidelines of the program and was well received by the public. An upcoming nutrient management workshop is being planned in conjunction with Oregon County Extension for December 2008. The



Greene and Webster County Receive Watershed Projects

Adjoining Watersheds Will Both Receive Funding for Conservation

In July, two watersheds near Springfield, Missouri received grant money through the Special Area Land Treatment (SALT) Program administered through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. SALT programs provide funds for conservation practices that address agricultural non-point source pollution. The Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsored the Pearson Creek SALT project and the Webster County SWCD sponsored the James River Lower Headwaters project. Both watersheds share watershed boundaries and are located in the headwaters of the James River Basin.

Cooperators are optimistic that conservation implementation in the headwaters of the basin will protect downstream bodies of water, like Table Rock Lake. "Each project has goals that will serve to protect surface and groundwater, protect grasslands from soil erosion, nutrient and pest management, and woodland conservation. There is also a significant education component to each of these grants," said Will Rhodes, project manager from Greene County SWCD. Cost share is being offered in each project. Contact the SWCD in Greene County (417-831-5246) or Webster County (417-468-4176) for additional details.

Log Jam on Panther Creek Cleared

Abundant rainfall this year has left many areas in Missouri battling water related concerns. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has requested \$35 million to help individuals and communities in Missouri recover from damages caused by spring flooding. Funding and assistance is provided through NRCS' Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP).

"Federal EWP funds may cover up to 75 percent of the construction costs of eligible emergency measures," said Harold Deckerd, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist. "Priority is given to levee repairs, followed by drainage ditch clean out and log jam removal." In August, a log jam on Panther Creek in Webster County near the confluence with the James River was one of many statewide projects completed through the EWP Program (see photos).

EWP projects require local sponsors, who must represent a legal subdivision of state government, the state itself, a local unit of government, a levee or drainage district, or a county commission. Sponsors may provide their share of construction costs in the form of cash, in-kind services such as labor or equipment, or a combination of each. To request EWP assistance or to get more information about the program, contact the NRCS office serving your county. Look in the phone book under "U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture," or on the web at:

<http://offices.usda.gov>.

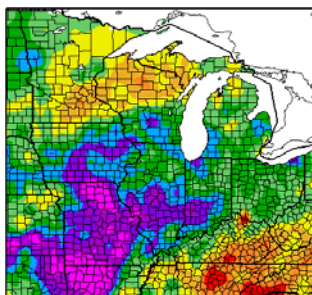


Before (top) and after (bottom) photos of Panther Creek. The EWP Program assisted in the removal of a log jam following record spring rains.

2008 Already a Very Wet Year

By all accounts, 2008 has been a wet year for the Upper White River Basin. Through November 19th rainfall totals were between 12-20 inches over normal expected levels (Figure 1). Record spring rains set a historical pace through the first six months of the year, but was subsided by a dry July and August.

Departure from Normal Precipitation
(in) 1/1/2008—11/18/2008



/19/2008 at HPRDC using provisional data.

NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Abundant rainfall returned in September with tropical storms Gustav and Ike. These storms supplied more rain in the west where three USDA Service Centers (Ozark, Cassville, and Springfield) have already set cumulative records. Despite localized flooding, the generous rain has relieved water supply demands and permitted recharge of reservoirs and aquifers.

Area Organizations Utilizing Rapid Watershed Assessments

In July, a team of NRCS conservationists completed an additional 14 Rapid Watershed Assessments (RWA) for Missouri, bringing the total to 19 RWAs statewide. "RWAs provide initial estimates of where conservation investments best address resource concerns," stated Steve Hefner. "They include physical descriptions of the watershed, census and social data, and current and desired future conditions."

Hefner, one of the members of the RWA development team, indicated that 40% of the state has been assessed and the reports posted on-line would be an excellent place for watershed stakeholders to retrieve data for a watershed management plan. Locally, the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks have utilized the data for their watershed planning efforts in the Little Sac River Watershed.

The project was funded through the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative Grant. The reports may be found on-line at: <http://www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RWAs.html>

Education/Outreach and Volunteer Update

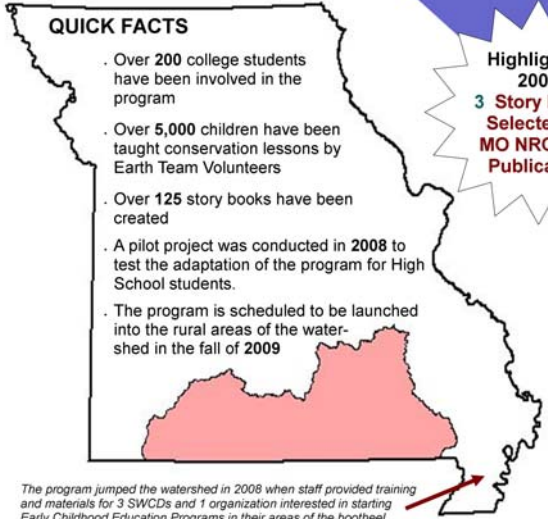
South Missouri Water Quality Project

USDA-NRCS Early Childhood Education Program

QUICK FACTS

- Over 200 college students have been involved in the program
- Over 5,000 children have been taught conservation lessons by Earth Team Volunteers
- Over 125 story books have been created
- A pilot project was conducted in 2008 to test the adaptation of the program for High School students.
- The program is scheduled to be launched into the rural areas of the watershed in the fall of 2009

Highlight in 2008
3 Story books
Selected by
MO NRCS for
Publication



The program jumped the watershed in 2008 when staff provided training and materials for 3 SWCDs and 1 organization interested in starting Early Childhood Education Programs in their areas of the bootheel.

Communities Reached through the USDA-NRCS Early Childhood Education Water Program during the Past 3 Years		
• Ozark	• Ellington	• Ash Grove
• Rogersville	• Marshfield	• Bolivar
• Springfield	• Forsyth	• Lampe
• Branson	• Battlefield	• Reeds Springs
• Republic	• Sparta	• Mansfield
• Strafford	• Fair Grove	
• Nixa	• Willard	

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Program Jumps the Watershed in 2008



From Left: Sandy Curtis and Adrienne Hunter display water storybooks

In September of 2008, the Early Childhood Education Program jumped the watershed when SMWQ staff facilitated a meeting of four conservation-minded/civic organizations interested in developing early childhood education water programs in the bootheel area of Missouri.

Program training, Earth Team and administrative instruction, forms, and approximately 60 story books with related materials were gifted to participating organizations by the South Missouri Water Quality Project to assist in jump-starting early childhood programming during the fall.

Day Recognized at the Missouri State Fair

Becky Day, a Howell County livestock producer and member of the South Missouri Water Quality Project steering committee, recently was recognized as Howell County's Farm Family for 2008. Each year County Extension Councils and local Farm Bureau Boards select a family from each Missouri county prior to the state fair. Day was honored at a dinner from the director's tent on the fairgrounds and received a plaque.



Becky Day (holding plaque) poses with family members and officials at the Missouri State Fair.

Former Earth Team Volunteer Now at City Utilities



Brittany Baker

Brittany Baker, former Missouri State University student and SMWQ Earth Team Volunteer, is now a GIS Technician with City Utilities of

Springfield. When asked to explain the work she does in her new position, she said, "I draw gas lines and gas fittings into the computer for what will eventually become maps of the underground gas network for the city of Springfield." She then added, "Working with USDA and the SMWQ staff gave me the opportunity to gain real-world experience in making maps!"