

## Lake History and Characteristics

Valley Water Mill Lake is located in northeast Springfield, Missouri. The dam is situated near the intersection of Valley Water Mill Road and Barnes Avenue (FR 171) in section 5, T29N, R21W, and impounds 13 acres at full pool (1,200 feet msl). Valley Water Mill Dam and the surrounding land are owned by City Utilities of Springfield (Springfield Water Company). The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks is under a long term lease with City Utilities to develop and provide outdoor educational opportunities focused on water resources.

The original dam at Valley Water Mill was built in the 1850s to hold back water for the operation of McCracken Mill (a grist mill). Water released from McCracken Mill, emptied into the South Dry Sac and immediately went underground, only to resurface again at Fulbright Spring which was Springfield's main water supply in the late 1800s. In 1899 the mill property and lake was sold to a private waterworks company, and a taller dam was built shortly afterwards. In 1957, Valley Water Mill Lake and the surrounding area were purchased by City Utilities of Springfield. The dam has been rebuilt and repaired on several occasions, including as recently as 2008.

Historically the lake has sustained good bass and bluegill populations through natural reproduction. The lake has not received much attention from a fish management standpoint, but today the fishery is being managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) through a Corporate and Agency Partnership Program (CAPP) agreement with the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks. In 2006, the Valley Water Mill property was incorporated into the Springfield/Greene County Parks system. The Park board is assisting in the maintenance of the grounds and housing the Outdoors Initiative program from the site. In 2008, the Watershed Committee successfully installed two fishing platforms, a boardwalk, and a bridge across the spillway of the dam. These added amenities will make fishing accessible to a large portion of the lake's shoreline.

Valley Water Mill Lake is fed by two springs, Sanders and Jarrett and thus is extremely clear with Secchi disc readings exceeding 48 inches. Aquatic vegetation will be an on-going issue at the lake; it has already survived the multiple drawdown periods. In 2006, the aquatic vegetation cover was extensive and consisted of coontail, milfoil, water purslane, *Chara*, leafy pondweed, and *Naiads*. Filamentous algae is also prevalent during the spring, summer, and fall months. Reeds canary grass also dominates the wetland area that was re-graded and re-planted in 2004. The maximum depth of the lake after sediment was removed was 14 feet at full pool.

