In 2002, the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks embarked on a $12.5 million watershed protection project at Valley Water Mill. A three-page road sub-watershed of the Fulbright Spring recharge area, Valley Water Mill is located on the north Springfield side of the South Dry Sac River, just south of the interchange of I-70 and I-255. The river flows south toward Springfield and reappears at Fulbright Spring, a public spring that supplies the city with a significant portion of its water. The rapid pace of urban growth in the geologically sensitive Valley Water Mill sub-watershed has threatened the pollution of runoff from developed areas and from eroding stream zones, with significant sediment loss occurring during storm events. The Watershed Committee embarked on a project to develop a Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill, a publicly owned parcel on the South Dry Sac River and a component of the community’s green water supply. The Watershed Center will provide watershed management demonstrations, exhibit the water professionals, and make water friendly, educational features, including interactive exhibits and passive solar and sustainable design. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill

In 1999, the Watershed Committee embarked on a project to develop a Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill, a publicly owned parcel on the South Dry Sac River and a component of the community’s green water supply. The Watershed Center will provide watershed management demonstrations, exhibit the water professionals, and make water friendly, educational features, including interactive exhibits and passive solar and sustainable design. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Fulbright Spring, the city of Springfield’s original public water source beginning in 1861, still supplies the city with a significant portion of its water. The rapid pace of urban growth in the geologically sensitive Valley Water Mill sub-watershed has threatened the pollution of runoff from developed areas and from eroding stream zones, with significant sediment loss occurring during storm events. The Watershed Committee embarked on a project to develop a Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill, a publicly owned parcel on the South Dry Sac River and a component of the community’s green water supply. The Watershed Center will provide watershed management demonstrations, exhibit the water professionals, and make water friendly, educational features, including interactive exhibits and passive solar and sustainable design. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Springside Learning Station

The Springside Learning Station, situated on Sterling Spring, is an unclogged deck built entirely of recycled plastic "lumber." This outdoor classroom will accommodate 30 people. Here in a natural limestone amphitheater with a view of the large boiling spring, students and guests can learn about streamside and water quality. The Springside Learning Station will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Lakeside Learning Station

The Watershed Center’s largest outdoor classroom is an open-sided theater with a view of the large boiling spring, students and guests can learn about streamside and water quality. The Springside Learning Station will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Wetland Assessment

Missouri State University (then called Southwest Missouri State University), under the direction of Dr. Robert Pavlowsky, completed an assessment of the reservoir and stream channels in the Valley Water Mill sub-watershed. Students measured base and storm flows, channel changes, and water quality. Results indicated that water quality in the reservoir and downstream channels was significant sediment loss occurring during storm events. The Watershed Committee embarked on a project to develop a Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill, a publicly owned parcel on the South Dry Sac River and a component of the community’s green water supply. The Watershed Center will provide watershed management demonstrations, exhibit the water professionals, and make water friendly, educational features, including interactive exhibits and passive solar and sustainable design. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Sediment Excavation

The Watershed Committee hired Wright Water Engineers of Greater St. Louis to develop grading plans and construction drawings for the excavation of up to 10,000 cubic yards of sediment from the reservoir, which had not been “cleaned” since about 1970. Development upstream of the reservoir as well as eroding stream channels had accelerated sedimentation during the past three decades. City utilities, the driving water supplier in Springfield, provided funding for the excavation work, which became a stream restoration project. Sediment excavation occurred in September 2004 and accomplished three goals: 1) provided downstream water quality benefits by increasing storage time and settling capacity in the reservoir, 2) maximized the depth of the reservoir, which helps decrease bottom-mixed aquatic vegetation and improve fishing, and 3) increased the storage capacity of the water supply.

Streambank Restoration

During the project, about a mile of stream zone was restored. Working with two major landowners, hundreds of trees were planted on the riparian zone above and below the Valley Water Mill reservoir. About 23,000 feet of channel and bank stabilization and construction was completed on a stream section. The Watershed Committee, through this 319 grant, provided trees for volunteers to plant in the riparian/greenway corridor. The Watershed Committee has undertaken this project to develop a Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill, a publicly owned parcel on the South Dry Sac River and a component of the community’s green water supply. The Watershed Center will provide watershed management demonstrations, exhibit the water professionals, and make water friendly, educational features, including interactive exhibits and passive solar and sustainable design. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Watershed Enhancement

The Watershed Enhancement Project developed by the Watershed Enhancement Project, a group of friends and local residents, included the development of several specific wetland zones (e.g., wet meadow, streamside, and wet meadow zones) that focus on different water related opportunities. Activities included 60 types of native wetland plant species. Prior to this, the reservoir had been largely used as a landfill. The project involved the design and construction of wetland areas, biofilters for runoff treatment, water harvesting systems, and passive solar. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

Our Partners

The Watering Station of the Watershed Center at Valley Water Mill, a publicly owned parcel on the South Dry Sac River and a component of the community’s green water supply. The Watershed Center will provide watershed management demonstrations, exhibit the water professionals, and make water friendly, educational features, including interactive exhibits and passive solar and sustainable design. It is the hope of the Watershed Center that these efforts will become common practices throughout Springfield.

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