

Community FOCUS Natural Environment

"When it comes to doing business, it's not profitable if it's not sustainable."

Matt O'Reilly, Green Business Owner

The community continues to make strides in environmental protection, particularly through unique partnerships as exemplified in the Parks/Waterways Sales Tax and Clean Air Alliance. Areas of concern include the need for sustained funding for stormwater and wastewater infrastructure needs, meeting federal water quality mandates, and potentially exceeding new air quality standards for ozone. On balance, the community generally supports the idea of maintaining environmental quality as an important and positive attribute of the region.

BLUE RIBBONS

Joint City/County Water Quality Protection through the Parks/Waterways Sales Tax

The county-wide Parks/Waterways Sales Tax, approved by voters in 2006, has provided funding for waterways projects and stormwater programs to protect and improve water quality and has proven to be an innovative way of working together. The city, county, local watershed groups, and other entities have combined resources to cooperate on shared water quality goals. Construction projects completed or underway in 2010 include waterway improvements at Fassnight Park, Sequiota Park, and Dickerson Park Zoo, waterway maintenance and neighborhood assistance at Springday Hills Subdivision and Legacy Trails, a low-impact development, greenway connections at Ward Branch and Cherokee Trail of Tears, and channel modifications for a future greenway at Needmore Branch. Ongoing activities include education on stormwater and water quality, classroom lessons and hands-on activities for students and teachers, rain barrel rebate program, city and county land disturbance permit programs, and water quality monitoring of streams and runoff.

Funding for Solid Waste Programs

This blue ribbon was previously identified as a red flag in the 2009 *Community Focus* report. Springfield's Solid Waste Management Division continues to be supported by stable funding provided by the Put-or-Pay agreement, which established an agreed upon amount of tonnage to be delivered to the Springfield Sanitary Landfill. This agreement generates revenue to operate the Integrated Solid Waste Management System. In 2010, the Division added one staff position to increase the number of businesses it can assist in establishing waste reduction/recycling programs.

Air Pollution Partnerships

The Ozarks Clean Air Alliance (OCAA), a subcommittee of the Environmental Collaborative of the Community



Retrofitted school bus

Partnership of the Ozarks, is a regional partnership encompassing 13 counties. OCAA continues to enhance and implement its Clean Air Action Plan. Since 2009, through the Ozark Center for Sustainable Solutions at Drury University, over \$2.3 million in federal funding has been received to retrofit vehicles with diesel emissions reduction equipment. Through this program, 248 school buses in 18 school districts have been retrofitted or replaced, helping to protect air quality for children and communities in our region. In addition, 165 heavy duty diesel trucks from 20 private companies and 2 municipalities have been retrofitted to reduce harmful air pollutants.

Local Groundwater

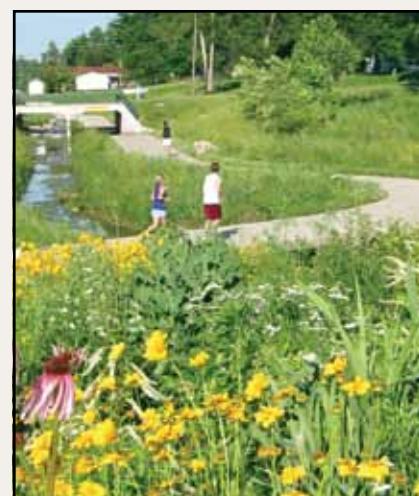
Springfield and Greene County have been proactive in examining local groundwater reserves by expanding and updating groundwater studies performed in the 1980s. New studies will model expected groundwater drawdown with differing use scenarios and will help to determine sustainable yields. Regional water supply concerns led to the formation of the Tri-State Water Coalition. At a meeting of this group in 2010, resource managers from Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma agreed to work cooperatively toward regional solutions, using the bi-state agreement signed by Missouri and Arkansas in 2008 as a template.

Green Building Policy

The City Council of Springfield has adopted an ordinance that commits the city to achieving the equivalent of the LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design) Silver level of certification for all new city buildings. Several new public and private sector buildings have been constructed meeting LEED standards, such as Hickory Hills School, Arvest Bank, BKD offices, and the Watershed Center.

Multiple Use of Open Space/Green Space

Through the cooperation of governmental entities, private developers, and citizen groups, opportunities have been identified, grant funding secured, and projects completed which maximize the multiple uses of existing green space and open space. The city and county have benefited by combining projects, including stormwater improvements, trails, greenways, recreational spaces, and park development.



Jordan Creek Greenway

Incorporating native landscapes into these projects reduces maintenance costs and adds greater value to the community environment in the long term. Examples include the upper Jordan Creek Greenway, West Meadows, and open space corridors held in partnership with Ozark Greenways.

Brownfields

Contaminated sites are dangerous to both the environment and human health and a deterrent to future development due to sizeable cleanup costs. The City of Springfield has been successful in working with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to secure over \$3,360,000 for assessing over 130 sites for remediation through the Brownfields Program. Since the inception of the program in 1999, over \$200 million in public and private funding has been leveraged to support brownfields development. An additional \$200 million has been leveraged in the community as a result of redevelopment projects, such as Jordan Valley Park, for a total of \$400 million.

Sustainability Plan for the City of Springfield*

Sustainability is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as “progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” As our community grows, it must incorporate sustainable solutions that will protect our environment and resources while reducing future economic burdens. The City of Springfield has taken a step toward this goal by commissioning the Natural Environment Committee through the 2030 Strategic Plan. This committee has developed a plan with goals and objectives for integrating environmentally sustainable strategies into the community. The Natural Environment Report outlines objectives which span topics of air quality, clean energy sources, clean and adequate water supplies, storm water management, green building, and maintenance of public green spaces and urban forests.

RED FLAGS

Stormwater Management Funding

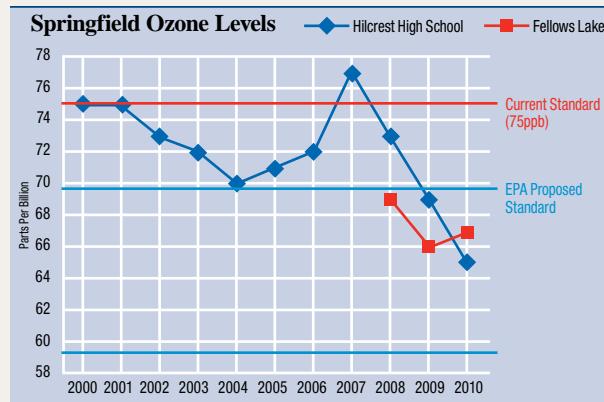
The lack of an adequate, long-term funding source for stormwater management in Springfield and Greene County has been classified as a red flag since the 2005 *Community Focus* report. Funding is needed to address aging stormwater infrastructure, flood protection, and compliance with the city and county Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits for water quality protection. The city and county MS4 permits are an unfunded mandate of the federal Clean Water Act requiring communities across the country to conduct a variety of programs and activities to reduce the impacts of urban stormwater runoff pollution on area waterways. The five-year, county-wide Parks/Waterways sales tax approved by voters in 2006 provides 1/8 cent to temporarily fund some ongoing needs, but sunsets in 2012. The national economic downturn and competing local needs have increased the difficulty of obtaining public support for a long-term funding initiative.

Wastewater Infrastructure Funding

While the City of Springfield has developed and operated award-winning wastewater treatment plants that consistently meet or exceed all required standards, it has also worked to keep sewer rates low. The city is now faced with the effects of the economic downturn, increasing operating costs, aging infrastructure, and increased state and federal regulatory requirements under the Clean Water Act. Cash reserves, necessary for emergencies and bond requirements, are declining. The Springfield City Council appointed a citizens' Wastewater Improvements Task Force to work with city staff and an outside consulting firm to conduct a rate study and make recommendations as to the most fair and equitable manner of increasing rates to meet these needs. The Wastewater Improvements Task Force completed its work in June 2011, and recommended a wastewater rate increase, which City Council subsequently approved with modifications for industrial users.

Air Quality Awareness

Springfield is on the verge of failing to meet several air quality standards. Local citizens are not aware of the detrimental



Source: Springfield-Greene County Health Department

impacts should this happen, nor are they aware of the steps they can take to reduce air pollution. The announcement of the standard for ground-level ozone was postponed in 2010, rescheduled for July 2011. Any reduction in the acceptable level of ozone, which is anticipated, will likely put Springfield in non-attainment of this standard as well. Non-attainment means the air quality needs to be improved to protect public health and the environment. Local communities are responsible for improving their air quality. The EPA can impose sanctions, including withholding federal highway funds, until standards are met. Meeting air standards will prevent unnecessary economic burdens associated with the non-attainment designation and protect public health.

Loss of Local Control/Authority

A combination of reduced state revenue and political pressure has undermined the ability of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to finance and staff local air and water pollution control programs. Local governments, also strapped for funds, are therefore reducing or eliminating staffs and programs, and thus relinquishing control from the local level back to the EPA. As a result, programs such as permitting, inspections and reporting for businesses could become more difficult, with permitting delayed. Environmental quality could suffer through the loss of local protection agencies and, in some cases, less stringent federal regulations will be enforced. Loss of control could also mean local governments will lose the ability to deal with local issues in the most appropriate and cost-effective way.

Regional Water Supply

Southwest Missouri is rapidly growing in population and the availability of adequate supplies of safe water has been recognized as a potential problem for the future. Although groundwater is plentiful under the region, significant drawdown under urban areas, such as Springfield and Joplin, has raised concern. In the western part of the region, potential contamination from past mining activities and saltwater intrusion could create water supply problems. There are several large reservoirs in the region, but these are located 30-50 miles from major population centers, so large pipelines would be needed to transport raw water. Building new reservoirs closer to population centers is an option, but with significant social, environmental, and political ramifications.

Availability of Green Space/Open Space

More and more, green space is increasingly seen as essential to environmental protection, as well as for parks and recreational use. However, citizen demand for open and green spaces within the urban area and development pressures continue to increase. Therefore, it is very important to identify and protect potential green/open space for a variety of community needs.