

**BLUE RIBBONS** Economic engine · Clean air and water · Forward-looking public institutions

**RED FLAGS** Extreme weather events · Invasive species and diseases · Concerns about water sources

## Green spaces a priority, but multiple threats to natural resources loom

Local residents and millions of visitors to our area **continue to enjoy the benefits of our healthy natural environment** as business, government, institutions and citizen groups work together to protect and improve our natural resources.

Local leaders have **continued their focus on the future**. Springfield's recently accepted comprehensive plan, Forward SGF, includes some long-awaited goals in the parks, greenways and natural resources section, including urban habitat restoration, tree protection, dark skies initiatives, water quality protection, completing the planned trail system, and ensuring equal accessibility to our outdoor resources.

Springfield continues to enjoy some of the **cleanest air in the country**, with the area well within the compliance limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency for ground-level ozone and particulate matter. Ozarks Clean Air Alliance, a local volunteer group, continues to work closely with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the EPA to advocate for air-quality protection.

Southwest Missouri Water, a group focused on **sustainable drinking water for the region**, is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to prepare a final report about the region's water supply. The hydropower industry is not in favor of reallocating some water for the drinking supply and could litigate to try to delay or stop it.

**Invasive species and diseases** remain a concern. Chronic wasting disease remains a threat to Missouri's wild deer population and the accompanying \$1 billion in deer-hunting receipts. Fortunately, Greene County is not one of the 23 Missouri counties into which it has spread. The Missouri Department of Conservation continues to test for the disease.

The Missouri General Assembly continues to erode or abolish environmental protections, some of which have been in place for decades. The siting and lack of regulation of concentrated animal feeding operations are of immediate concern, and protections have been taken away from local jurisdictions, which may affect water quality. Citizen representatives on state environmental boards/commissions have been systematically replaced by business/industry interests to whom environmental safeguards are seen as a hindrance.

Recycling and waste reduction have been slow to recover post-pandemic, and fewer landfills in Missouri is emerging as an issue. During the pandemic, landfills received historically high volumes, shortening the estimated lifespans of those locations. Of the remaining 17 operating landfills in Missouri — down from 75 in 1992 and 27 in 1998 — several facilities, some serving major cities, have less than 10 years of airspace left.

Locally, the Springfield Landfill has 50-plus years of space remaining at the



### RECENT SUCCESS STORY

A collaborative effort among governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations has led to the decline of hydrilla, an invasive species that has threatened Greene County and Missouri.

The Southwest Missouri Hydrilla Working Group — a team that includes the Missouri Department of Conservation, City Utilities of Springfield, City of Springfield, James River Basin Partnership, Watershed, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources — has worked together on sampling and treatment to battle hydrilla, a non-native aquatic plant first discovered in Missouri in 2013.

If left to spread, this fast-growing invasive plant can cause problems for native habitats and city-managed water facilities. Hydrilla has been identified at 37 sites in southwest Missouri, most of which are in Greene County. Eradicating hydrilla from a site can take six to 15 years, but the data from annual sampling, treatment and monitoring is encouraging. At the beginning of 2022, 23 of the 37 southwest Missouri hydrilla sites had been reclassified as “monitor-only” because the plant was no longer found at those sites.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

### ABOUT THE 2023 UPDATE

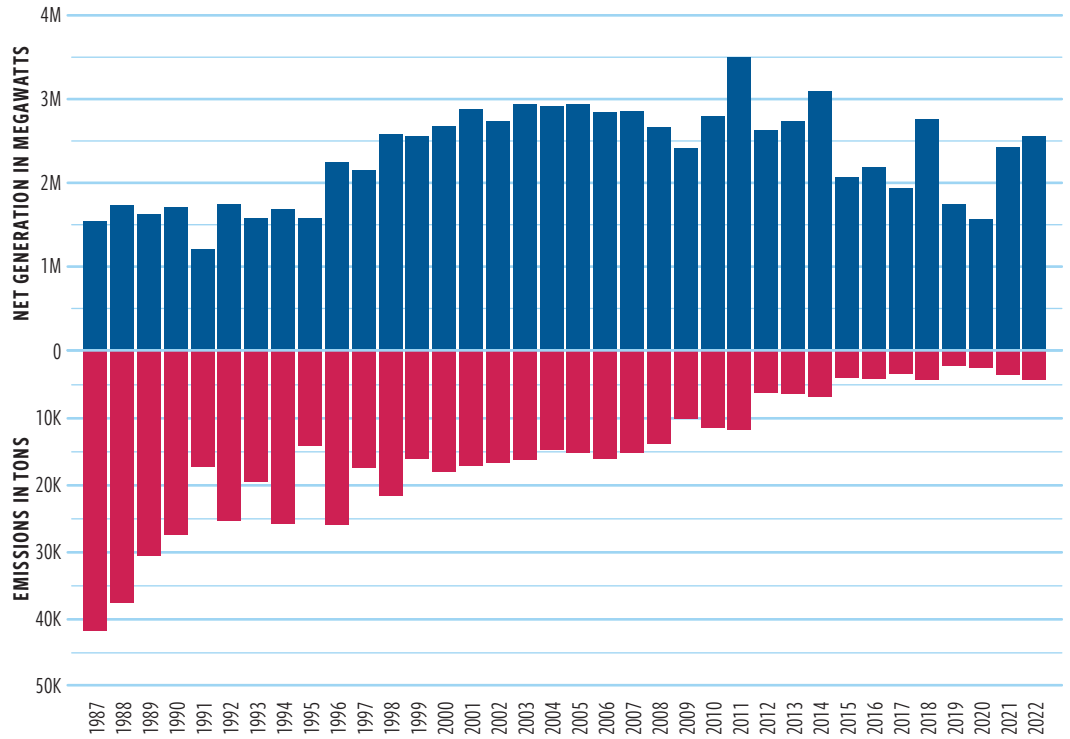
This interim update reviews current data for the Blue Ribbons and Red Flags from the 2021 report. The 20th anniversary report, to be released in 2024, will develop an updated list of Blue Ribbons and Red Flags.

current daily volume; however, with the elimination of other landfills around the state, the remaining landfills will be facing pressure to accommodate waste from a wider geographical area.

*The Natural Environment 2023 Update was produced by Barbara Lucks of the Ozarks Clean Air Alliance, with input from Joel Alexander, Ronda Burnett, Chris Nagel, Doug Neidigh, Daniel Hedrick, Errin Kemper, Mary Kromrey, Mike Kromrey, Natasha Longpine, Erick Roberts, Roddy Rodgers, Francis Skalicky, Angie Snyder and Brent Stock.*

### KEY METRICS

Generation & Emissions from City Utilities' Coal-fired Plants, 1987–2022



SOURCE: CITY UTILITIES OF SPRINGFIELD