

LaBarque Creek Watershed Project

First Forest Legacy Project in Missouri

The Challenge

The 13-square-mile, mostly forested LaBarque Creek watershed lies in the rapidly developing transition zone between suburban and rural St. Louis. The area is home to about 1,300 people, the majority of whom are concentrated on only about 20 percent of the watershed. The remainder of the watershed is held in relatively large tracts, providing a high degree of conservation opportunity. Development pressure is high in the area due to easy access and close proximity to the city. LaBarque Creek is an easy 15-minute drive out Interstate 44 from the southwest side of St. Louis.

LaBarque Creek flows into the Meramec River, which is the source of drinking water for about 20 percent of the people in metropolitan St. Louis. The river is biologically diverse and provides habitat for several endangered mussel species. The river area is also an important source of recreation opportunities. LaBarque Creek also features more than 6 ½ miles of permanently flowing, high quality stream habitat that supports at least 44 species of fish. The area is also home to several rare species of plants. Keeping clean water flowing through LaBarque Creek and into the Meramec River is critical.

The Solution

The 154-acre tract, which became Missouri's first Forest Legacy project, was purchased in December 2008. Forest Legacy funds paid about one-third of the purchase price. Over half of the acquisition cost was provided by several funding partners: the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Sierra Club, Webster Groves Nature Study Society, American Bottom Conservancy, and the Conservation Heritage Foundation.



The forested streambanks of LaBarque Creek prevent soil erosion and protect water quality for aquatic life and downstream public water supplies.

Resulting Benefits

The LaBarque Creek Forest Legacy tract protects both banks of over two-thirds of a mile of the creek, helping to maintain excellent water quality and aquatic habitat. The protected tract on LaBarque Creek helps to ensure clean drinking water from the Meramec River for over 200,000 people in metropolitan St. Louis, and supports habitat for fish and rare plants.

Sharing Success

This Forest Legacy tract is directly adjacent to and is managed as part of the Young Conservation Area. The conservation area is a State forest managed for multiple resource values, including public recreation, by the Missouri Department of Conservation Forestry Division. Acquisition of the LaBarque Creek tract by the State of Missouri expands public ownership to about one-third of the watershed land area and assures the land in this important watershed is kept in a natural condition. Missouri's second Forest Legacy project, already underway, is also located in the LaBarque Creek watershed.

Collaboration by diverse organizations secured an important Missouri natural resource.



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