

Lower Meramec River Demonstration Project

The Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation jointly initiated the Upper Mississippi River Watershed Fund. The Foundation funds projects that benefit the forests of the Upper Mississippi while improving wildlife habitat and water quality.

Background

The Meramec River is the primary source of drinking water for more than 500,000 people in the city of St. Louis and nearby Kirkwood. St. Louis is just one of many American cities whose drinking water sources are not adequately protected. Research shows that the most effective way to protect water supplies is to conserve and sustain forests and other lands that provide these “environmental services” naturally.

The U.S. Forest Service used a Geographic Information System (GIS) to analyze 540 watersheds across the 20 Northeastern and Midwestern States to assess their ability to produce clean water. They identified watersheds that are most threatened by land use change and those most in need of forest management to protect water supplies.

The Meramec River scored near the top of the list because of how important healthy watersheds and private forests are to drinking water supplies and because of the forest conversion pressure on this drinking water supply watershed.

The focus of this study is the Lower Meramec River. It covers nearly 500 square miles and includes 33 subwatersheds that drain directly into the river. The study area spans 20 cities with a combined population of about 174,000. Roughly 2.5 million people live within one-half hour’s drive of the river.

Location

This river flows through sections of Franklin, St. Louis, and Jefferson Counties in Missouri.

Goals

- Use GIS analysis to identify high-priority lands for protection and restoration
- Produce a detailed plan to guide restoration of the Lower Meramec River that serves as a prototype for projects elsewhere
- Raise public awareness about the need to conserve and protect lands to safeguard water quality

Results

Project products include:

- An ongoing computer model and maps that identify priority areas for conservation
- Brochures and articles, some directed at local audiences (such as drinking water consumers) and others intended for national distribution
- A report of issues and recommendations based on the GIS data and input from technical experts, stakeholders, and the public
- A final action plan to guide on-the-ground management actions and serve as a prototype for future efforts.

Outcomes/Accomplishments

The scientifically based findings and greater public awareness will enable water suppliers, land use planners, foresters, wildlife managers, and local and State officials to conserve and restore natural resources in drinking water supply areas. Results are also expected to help raise revenues for onsite conservation activities.

Partners

The Trust for Public Land, U.S. Forest Service, Open Space Council, and the East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Grant Amount

\$ 25,000



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