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We are fortunate to live in a state rich in water resources—with more than 110,000 miles of rivers and streams. In this issue of *Nature Conservancy* magazine, you will read about significant work taking place in the Mississippi River Basin.

As a trustee of The Nature Conservancy in Missouri, I am proud of the science and on-the-ground effort to make our rivers and streams healthier. From rural strategies to urban opportunities, TNC is working across the state to ensure we are reducing harmful nutrients and expanding how we work with communities to benefit both people and nature.

And, as an employee of Enterprise Holdings, I am proud that we have helped fund these programs for the rivers and the communities that depend on them.

Claire Carstensen,
Missouri Trustee

Claire Carstensen

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Floating on Huzzah Creek © Kristy Stoyer/TNC

Collaborating to Improve Water Quality in Missouri

How TNC is working in rural and urban communities to protect our water resources

Water is the most important resource on the planet. Every living thing depends upon it. In the coming years—with a changing climate—Missouri is expected to see hotter, drier summers and wetter springs and winters.

This combination could impact communities' clean drinking water and increase the struggle of Missouri farmers to produce quality crops in times of drought or heavy rain.

"Where water comes from, where it goes and how it gets there is complex."

Adam McLane, Missouri State Director

Thanks in part to generous funding from Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, The Nature Conservancy is implementing on-the-ground conservation projects across Missouri—from our rural agricultural fields to our growing urban cities—to increase water quality and protect community health.

"Where water comes from, where it goes and how it gets there is complex," says Adam McLane, Missouri State Director. "Effectively protecting our water resources requires deep collaboration and a diverse set of voices and partners at the table."
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Farmland along the Missouri River © Route 3 Films

TNC staff and volunteers at Jubilee Community Church © Kristy Stoyer/TNC

HOW FARMING CAN PLAY A ROLE

Farms make up nearly two-thirds of Missouri's total land acreage, which means our agricultural partners can help play a big role in protecting our water. "An increased focus on soil health, fertilizer application and use of vegetative buffers along waterways can have a dramatic impact on the health of our shared water resources," says McLane.

In collaboration with partners, a 4R initiative for Missouri was recently launched. This program works with agricultural retailers to verify individualized plans for farmers to identify the right place, right time, right rate and right source of nutrient application to maximize crop production. These plans will promote and improve soil quality. Healthy soils help hold in water during drought, and decrease the amount of harmful nutrient runoff during times of heavy rain.

"Our goal is to verify 250,000 acres statewide through 4R nutrient management plans by 2025," says McLane. "This will make a significant impact to the quality of our rivers and the communities that rely on them here in Missouri and all the way to the Gulf."

A FOCUS ON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to agricultural needs, our cities place an incredible demand on our water resources and hold a lot of potential to help protect them.

Over the years, a loss of green space in cities has been proved to have negative impacts on people's physical and mental health, in addition to destroying habitat for plants and animals and increasing the pressure on sewer systems.

"In cities, it's not about people or nature," says McLane. "It's about people and nature, and how they benefit—and need—each other."

Incorporating green infrastructure into our cities, which is designed to reduce and treat stormwater at its source, is a resilient way to manage heavy rain events while also providing benefits to the community.

In St. Louis, TNC has collaborated with a variety of partners and anchor institutions to bring resilience and equity through place-based community projects.

Project Oasis at Jubilee Community Church is a great example of how a project can incorporate green infrastructure while also providing positive impacts to the community and benefits to nature.

"Jubilee Community Church and the team they assembled to bring a vision to life, benefiting both people and nature, is an amazing model," says McLane. Once-vacant lots now house a massive underground cistern that captures all the runoff from the church's roof, before it hits the stressed stormwater system.

"Above ground, that water is used to irrigate a large community garden that provides access to fresh produce for the local community, along with jobs and job training," says McLane.

With smart planning, science-based solutions and a collaborative approach, we can protect Missouri's water resources so they can continue to provide for us today and for generations to come.

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Reconnecting Floodplains

Rock Port, Missouri, located a little more than 100 miles north of Kansas City, is a small farming community on the Missouri River. After withstanding decades of repetitive floods, leaders of the local levee district knew they had to make a change after the flood of 2019 once again devastated their community.

Construction of a large-scale levee setback began in the summer of 2020—reconnecting and restoring more than 1,000 acres of floodplain and providing more room for the river during times of high water.

Learn more about this project at **nature.org/moriverlevee**

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