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EPA Approves Mill Creek Watershed Plan

Goal to increase water quality through collaborative initiatives

LOUISVILLE, KY— Revitalization is on the horizon for Mill Creek after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved a watershed plan that aims to enhance water quality through collaborative initiatives, community engagement and grant opportunities.

The plan brings together Louisville MSD, Kentucky Division of Water (DOW), several project partners, and the general public to combat nonpoint source pollution in the Mill Creek Watershed, a 34-square-mile basin located in southwest Louisville that contains 156.8 stream miles.

Mill Creek currently falls short of meeting local and state standards for healthy waterways. MSD Watershed Program Coordinator Meredith Meyers said this plan creates a path to help solve those issues.

“More than a century of urban growth has dramatically changed how Mill Creek functions and how people connect to it,” Meyers said. “This watershed plan creates an exciting opportunity to bring residents, organizations and agencies together — investing in cleaner water and a healthier, more resilient watershed.”

Nonpoint source pollution generally occurs when rainfall and/or snowmelt picks up and carries garbage, sediment, oil from automobiles, and other pollutants into waterways. The EPA approval of the Mill Creek Watershed Plan opens the door for 319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant Program funding, which awards approximately \$1,000,000 for Kentucky-based projects each year. MSD, project partners and community organizations are all now able to apply.

Assistant Director of the Kentucky Division of Water Joanna Ashford said the plan’s approval “reflects strong collaboration among state, local, and community partners.”

A Watershed Steering Committee will identify early projects and coordinate the resources needed to continue to put the plan into action. The steering committee includes representatives from project partners such as MSD, Kentucky Waterways Alliance, Louisville Metro Parks, University of Louisville, Kentucky Watershed Watch, Southwest Dream Team, and AECOM.

"We are excited to get to work planning for and implementing best management practices in the watershed to highlight Mill Creek as a community asset, not only for recreational use but for educational opportunities as well," said Parks and Recreation Administrator Jessica Kane.

Background

The Mill Creek Watershed Plan is the second EPA-approved watershed plan currently in place in the Louisville metro area.

The first, The Middle Fork Beargrass Creek Watershed Plan, went into effect in 2022. So far, it has paved the way for four 319(h) grants that were awarded to help mitigate nonpoint source pollution in Beargrass Creek. MSD has received three, which resulted in establishing a watershed coordinator, and green infrastructure projects in Cherokee Park and a Middle Fork Beargrass Creek residential neighborhood. The other was awarded to Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District to engage with residents on nature-based solutions.

These plans are part of MSD's Healthy Watershed Initiative, a community-wide planning and implementation program to protect and restore our watersheds by reducing the pollutants within them. It's part of MSD's critical role of providing safe, clean waterways for Louisville Metro.

For more information, visit <https://louisvillemSD.org/healthywatershed>.

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About MSD

The Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) works to achieve and maintain clean, environmentally safe waterways for a healthy and vibrant community. The organization's employees provide wastewater management, drainage and flood protection services across the 376 square miles of Louisville Metro, and wastewater service in portions of Bullitt and Oldham counties. In addition to operating and maintaining Louisville Metro's sewer system, floodwall system, water quality treatment centers and flood pumping stations, MSD invests in hundreds of infrastructure improvement projects each year, plants more than 1,000 trees and other vegetation annually to enhance water filtration and reduce runoff, and provides numerous outreach programs to inform and educate the community about protecting our waterways.