

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact
Elizabeth Niven, Media Relations
The Nature Conservancy in Missouri
Office: 314-968-1105, cell: 314-706-3001
eniven@tnc.org

NATURE CONSERVANCY HIRES UPPER MISSISSIPPI FLOODPLAIN ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

ST. LOUIS — The Nature Conservancy announces that Todd Strole has joined the Conservancy as the associate director for the Upper Mississippi Floodplain Initiative in St. Louis.

As the associate director, Strole will identify and establish conservation partnerships with agencies and organizations currently working on restoration and conservation along the mainstem of the Mississippi River in Illinois, Missouri and Iowa. The Conservancy will bring additional science capabilities and other large-scale river restoration project experience to the partnerships. The Conservancy's goal is to create a high-quality functional floodplain habitat along the Mississippi by working through cooperative partnerships on restoration projects and finally, by initiating restoration work along the mainstem of the Mississippi.

After spending 16 years with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Strole is accomplished at forming partnerships with a variety of conservation partners from federal, state and local agencies as well as with not-for-profit organizations. His last position with Illinois DNR was as acting chief of the Division of Habitat Resources.

"I'm looking forward to taking a leadership role in floodplain restoration in the St. Louis area. This is a great opportunity to work with the communities along the river and the organizations that I have established relationships from my previous position," said Strole.

"It is critical that we establish these partnerships and learn what other conservation groups are doing and what their priorities are. From there, we can build on these successes and initiate our own restoration project along the mainstem of the Mississippi," said Doug Blodgett, the Nature Conservancy's director of Upper Mississippi Floodplain Initiative. "Todd will be instrumental in determining priorities for accomplishing our own goals and methods for helping other groups with our experience."

Creating a high-quality functional floodplain habitat has many components. A floodplain habitat is considered wetlands. Wetlands, an area distinguished by the presence of water either at the surface or within the root zone, are invaluable in controlling floodwaters, recharging groundwater and filtering pollutants. They serve as vital habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

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Fish use them as spawning grounds. Wetlands also provide sanctuaries for rare and endangered species. Wetlands help create a healthier river and are vital to river restoration.

While the Conservancy has several major floodplain restoration projects, Strole will establish the first mainstem Mississippi River restoration project for the Conservancy. This will raise awareness in the community for successful river restoration work and the need for continued work to provide a healthier river for those 30 million people who call the Upper Mississippi River basin home.

Strole and his family reside in Marine, Illinois.

The Nature Conservancy ranks conservation of great rivers among its global priorities. The Conservancy and Caterpillar Inc., through its Caterpillar Foundation, have embarked on the Great Rivers Partnership, an ambitious effort to guide protection of the world's imperiled freshwater systems and transform the way large working river systems are preserved and protected. The Mississippi River basin, Brazil's Paraguay-Parana River system and China's Yangtze River form the partnership to create a new model for sustaining the world's great river systems and the plants, animals and people that depend on them.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 14 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

Together with our members and conservation partners, The Nature Conservancy in Missouri has protected more than 138,000 acres of critical natural lands since 1956. Visit us on the Web at nature.org/missouri.