

# NATURE

MISSOURI

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Little Creek's restoration is underway in Harrison County © Daniel Jensen/Shive-Hattery

## Big Improvements at Little Creek

### Stream restoration creates a path for a native fish

In a tallgrass prairie just south of the Iowa border, The Nature Conservancy in Missouri has been preparing a homecoming for a tiny minnow.

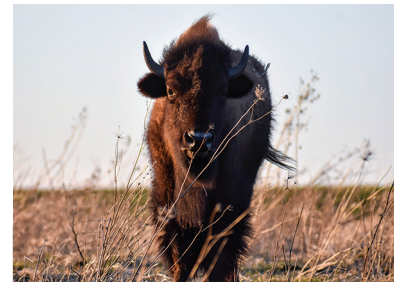
Construction crews spent the spring of 2022 on TNC property near Hatfield, replacing the erosion-carved edges of Little Creek with gently sloping banks, assembled from layers of stones, earth and tangled tree roots to accommodate the natural rise and fall of the creek. Roots of freshly planted native grasses, shrubs and trees guard against future erosion and filter water running into the channel. There is even a bioengineered wedge that functions as an underwater fish ramp over a previously impassible culvert.

It should be just the place for the Topeka Shiner. The silvery little fish is a native of the Great Plains and was once plentiful in prairie streams. But rapid destruction of

its habitat, including dams and culverts that cut it off from cooling pools and food, landed it on the endangered species list in 1998. Ongoing efforts to boost the shiner's population have shown progress but are far from complete. The Little Creek project helps undo some of that damage. Just as important, it offers a scalable model that others can adopt.

"This is an opportunity," says Steve Herrington, director of science and impact measures for the Nature Conservancy in Missouri. "We're learning from projects like this and how to transfer what we learn to improve streams and habitats across the state."

Learn more about this project at [nature.org/littlecreekmo](http://nature.org/littlecreekmo)



Bison roaming the tallgrass prairie at Dunn Ranch Prairie © Doyle Murphy/TNC

### The Rare Remaining Prairies

Did you know the once sweeping tallgrass prairies of America's heartland are now Earth's most endangered habitats?

The Grasslands Matching Gift program was created to inspire new support for TNC's work in the Grand River Grasslands, which includes restoration at Dunn Ranch Prairie. First-time gifts of \$1,000 to \$10,000 will be matched dollar for dollar.

Learn more about this matching opportunity: Contact Mona at [mona.monteleone@tnc.org](mailto:mona.monteleone@tnc.org) or call 314-968-1105.



Treesilience partners train on the Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities app in Pine Lawn. © Doyle Murphy/TNC

# Tuning Into Trees

## A digital tool helps us keep an eye on our leafy protectors

It's time to get to know some trees. We're not talking about trivia-night stats and facts—this isn't about reciting the scientific name for a dogwood (*cornaceae*) or the global carbon flux of forests (400 gigatonnes). No, it's more personal. How is that oak on the corner doing? Is its canopy thinning? Leaves newly discolored?

It's easy to take trees for granted, but experts say becoming more familiar with our tall friends makes a difference in their health and, as a result, our health. The Nature Conservancy's Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities app can help. It provides tools for assessing and tracking the condition of trees. The ground-level data collected by everyday people can clue them into what's happening in their own backyards while contributing to a bigger picture that communities and researchers can use to identify concerns early and set priorities. This spring, TNC and its partners in the Treesilience St. Louis program spent a day testing out the Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities app under the watch of Dr. Rich Hallett of the USDA Forest Service and Rachel Holmes, TNC's North American Cities urban forestry lead.

Treesilience St. Louis, part of a national program, addresses dead, dying and hazardous trees while restoring canopy in the region. Collaborators Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, Beyond Housing and Davey Tree Expert Company team up to remove dead or dying trees and replant two trees for every one taken down. Trees hit their full potential for cleaning the air and cooling neighborhoods in their adult years, so ensuring our trees are healthy for years to come is vital.

"It's great if you're going to plant a tree today," Holmes says, "but if it's not going to make it to that 25- to 30-year line, what are we doing?"



Learn more about the Treesilience St. Louis program at [nature.org/treesiliencestlouis](https://nature.org/treesiliencestlouis)

## NATURE MISSOURI

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### mitigation banks currently in Missouri approved under section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

\*Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, June 2022

### The Mitigator

Meet Wes Hauser, The Nature Conservancy's first mitigation specialist in Missouri.

Hauser grew up in Missouri, ranging around the De Soto area as a nature-focused Boy Scout. He now works to protect wetlands and waterways in his home state.

TNC's mitigation work helps offset damage from development by creating "mitigation banks"—nearby sites where we can carry out new conservation projects—and sell credits.

Hauser says high-quality TNC projects can create guideposts for the emerging industry.



Missouri State Director Adam McLane (left) and Wes Hauser © Doyle Murphy/TNC

"Regulators see that, and they take note of what mitigation can be," he says. "When that happens, it raises the bar for everybody."

Hauser explains more about his work during an appearance on our podcast, *It's in Our Nature*. Listen to the full podcast at [nature.org/mopodcast](https://nature.org/mopodcast)

