

Madison County, HeartLands Conservancy win OLGA for Upper Silver Creek Watershed Plan

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MADISON COUNTY – Madison County and HeartLands Conservancy were honored to receive an Outstanding Local Government Achievement (OLGA) award for the Upper Silver Creek Watershed Plan from the East-West Gateway Council of Governments at an awards luncheon on Friday, November 17.

Over 300 people were in attendance, including St. Louis regional government leaders, as the Council of Governments recognized exemplary accomplishment through local government, intergovernmental collaboration, public/non-profit collaboration, and leadership in planning and design innovation.

One of ten watersheds in Madison County, the 120,000-acre Silver Creek watershed is 75 percent agricultural and 25 percent urban with thousands of acres of prime farmland and 13 municipalities including Troy and Hamel.

The Upper Silver Creek Watershed Plan is a roadmap that communities, agencies, and landowners can follow to improve water quality, reduce flooding, and support healthy wildlife habitats.

In developing the plan, Madison County and HeartLands Conservancy employed innovative data methods and stakeholder engagement. These included an extensive survey of residents in the watershed to identify flood prone areas and flooding impacts, delineation of the smallest sub-watershed units (a first for an Illinois watershed), use of advanced GIS tools, and targeted outreach to owners of large parcels.

“We are delighted to have this planning effort recognized,” said Steve Brendel, Madison County Stormwater Coordinator. “The county is committed to addressing stormwater and flooding issues, and we worked hard with this plan to identify where and what the issues were, with lots of assistance from county residents and experts.”

“Planning at a watershed scale is so important when we’re trying to address drainage and water quality issues,” added Janet Buchanan, Project Manager at HeartLands Conservancy. “With this plan, we were able to use mapping and outreach – the science and the conversations – to understand how upstream landscapes are affecting areas downstream.”

The plan became a flagship for countywide stormwater planning in the Metro East. Its success has spurred the creation of three more watershed plans in Madison County and a fourth in St. Clair County.

The data, strategies, and findings in the watershed plan are already translating into action with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency’s award of over \$570,000 to HeartLands Conservancy to fund projects that implement the plan’s recommendations. HeartLands Conservancy is currently working with landowners and municipalities in the watershed to install these projects, using the grant funds as a cost share.

Madison County and HeartLands Conservancy would like to thank project partners Midwest Streams, the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District, the

National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGGREC), and countless stakeholders who gave of their time to support the planning process.

For more information about the Upper Silver Creek Watershed Plan and implementation efforts, contact Janet Buchanan at HeartLands Conservancy at 618-566-4451 ext 25 or email janet.buchanan@heartlandsconservancy.org .

For updates on this project and information about other HeartLands Conservancy activities, visit <http://www.facebook.com/HeartLandsConservancy>.

ABOUT HEARTLANDS CONSERVANCY

HeartLands Conservancy, a nonprofit serving Southwestern Illinois since 1989, is devoted to the conservation of land, the preservation of green spaces in our communities, sustainable and environmentally friendly community planning, and engaging our neighbors with nature. We are investing in the nature of Southwestern Illinois. Visit: www.HeartLandsConservancy.org for more information.