

Mission: to unite as citizens and actively engage in the preservation of the Spring Creek Watershed

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**Spring Creek Coalition
P.O. Box 217
Peggs, Oklahoma 74452**

Spring Creek Watershed Landowners Spring 2010 Newsletter



THE MOST PRISTINE
LARGE OZARK STREAM
IN OKLAHOMA
MANAGED AND
PROTECTED BY
PRIVATE
LANDOWNERS

Phone: (918) 637-1449
Email info@springcreekok.org

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO SUPPORT THE SPRING CREEK COALITION

The Spring Creek Coalition (SCC) is the only organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of Spring Creek. But we can't do that without you. For the past year SCC has been funded entirely by a group of nine volunteers. Our costs include this quarterly newsletter—\$240—tree planting and other events—\$500—mailings—\$150—website—\$20 per month—and more.

Please join or renew today— \$20 for an annual membership, and \$100 for a lifetime membership.

Any donations are welcome. SCC is a 501 (c)3 not-for-profit organization.

Make checks payable to Spring Creek Coalition. Mail with your contact information to P.O. Box 217, Peggs, OK 74452.

Tree Planting a Great Success - Despite Mother Nature



Bare root tree seedlings

On March 20th, Mother Nature threw us a challenge, with sleet, snow, and temperatures in the low 30s. Nonetheless, 15 hearty Spring Creek

Coalition (SCC) volunteers showed up for the previously planned tree planting at the low-water crossing near Cave Spring.

A tent dubbed "Donna's Café" was erected to provide shelter and food. SCC Board Member Donna Drury provided hot dogs, sauerkraut, three-bean salad, homemade cookies, and beverages. Jennifer Owen donated a 1,200-pound bale of hay that the young men in the group rolled from the bridge to an open drainage ditch to provide erosion control. An estimated 400 pounds



Volunteers braved cold temperatures to plant 300 trees

plus of beer and soda cans, pieces of metal shedding, trash, and other flood-washed auto parts was picked up. Three hundred trees were planted between 11 am and 2 pm before the snow started in earnest.

"Everyone just spread out and planted until they were numb," stated Jennifer. Spring Creek had a great day, and so did those who threw themselves into the work in spite of the natural obstacles.

We'll see you all at the next annual tree-planting for Spring Creek!

**READ THE NEWSLETTERS
ON OUR WEBSITE!**

**Visit SCC at
<http://springcreekok.org>.**

Spring Creek hosts rare fish

Spring Creek – Home to Rare Fish

Many people know and appreciate the fact that Spring Creek maintains many natural features that once widely typified Ozark streams but unfortunately have declined in recent years in many of those streams. A number of specialists and landowners work together to monitor such features on Spring Creek out of interest in the features themselves or for their value as indicators of the creek's exceptional environmental quality.

Among the features monitored on Spring Creek are its rich and distinctive biological communities, and one of these is the creek's native fish fauna. David Martinez, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is one of the specialists who monitors Spring Creek's fish, and is especially interested in the conservation of rare fish species. "Spring Creek is important for harboring populations of several uncommon native fish," Martinez says. "None of these are



The rare Arkansas darter

be rare and declining through much of their ranges. Two darter species, for example, the Arkansas darter and the least darter, have been eliminated from many former habitats but maintain populations in certain

meet your neighbors

reaches of Spring Creek. Another very rare fish, the plains topminnow, also remains within a few secluded pools near the creek. Good land and water management practices by many property owners are largely responsible for the continued occurrence of these rare fish species in the Spring Creek watershed," Martinez says. (For more info about such practices, see Emily Oakley and Mike Appel's article about organic farming, and watch for future SCC newsletter articles describing additional examples).

Mr. Martinez has been studying Spring Creek's fish periodically since the 1970s, when he was introduced to the area by Drs. Pat Blair and Hague Lindsay of the University of Tulsa. He coordinates his work with others also involved in such research and is a member of the SCC Science Committee and Board of Directors.

Meet Your Neighbors – Organic Farming on Spring Creek

Running cows on pasture land or harvesting hay on Spring Creek? You bet! Supporting yourself by growing vegetables? Few do.

Emily Oakley and Mike Appel have been making a living through organic farming on five Spring Creek acres near Oaks since 2006. Emily and Mike sell their produce at Tulsa farmers' markets May through September, through community-supported agriculture (CSAs), and to local restaurants, such as Eloté Café and Catering at 5th and Boston in Tulsa.

As organic vegetable farmers, we are often asked to define organic agriculture. Many people assume organic farming limits the farmer's "toolbox" by placing restrictions on how crops

organic farming on the creek

can be grown. While it is true we are prohibited from using most agrochemicals, organic farming is more about what we can do. For us, organic farming means having a broad range of resources at our disposal to address complex relationships between soil health and production. It also means being good neighbors to the environment around us, like the creek.

Soil rich in organic matter is at the heart of an organic system. We grow cover crops during fallow periods, like millet, oats, clover, and peas, to protect the soil and the watershed from wind and rain erosion. We till in cover crops just as the plants begin to flower to maximize nutrient incorporation. The vegetation decomposes into organic matter, increasing soil tilth and water retention capacity. The deep roots of the millet and oats penetrate the subsoil, breaking up compaction and loosening the structure. Areas



Mike mowing down a spring cover crop of oats and peas

Cover crops improve fertility and smother weeds. Tender annual weeds have a hard time germinating under the shade of the cover crop and perennial weeds can't get enough light to become established. After a few years of strategic cover crops, we noticed a marked decrease

of our field that previously looked like a swamp after a heavy spring rain now allow for quick drainage. Legumes, like the peas and clover, fix astonishing rates of nitrogen. Last year, a pea cover crop fixed 200 pounds to the acre!

monitoring water temperatures

in our weed seed bank. When applying animal manures, we are careful to do so long before a rain, and we always incorporate the manure immediately after application. This minimizes run-off to the creek and protects and preserves the nitrogen in the manure by avoiding exposure to the sun.

By managing for long-term soil health, we create on-farm resources that encourage a diverse and productive whole farm system.

Emily and Mike are Spring Creek Coalition Board Members. Visit their website at www.threespringsfarm.com for more information about them and their trials and triumphs as organic farmers.

How Cold Is the Water?

Below is a chart that shows average water temperatures of Spring Creek by month over a two-year period. Temperatures were taken near Lucky Spring (east of Peggs). Water temperatures varied from a low of 50 °F degrees in January and February to a high of around 75 °F degrees in July.

