

Just the Beginning

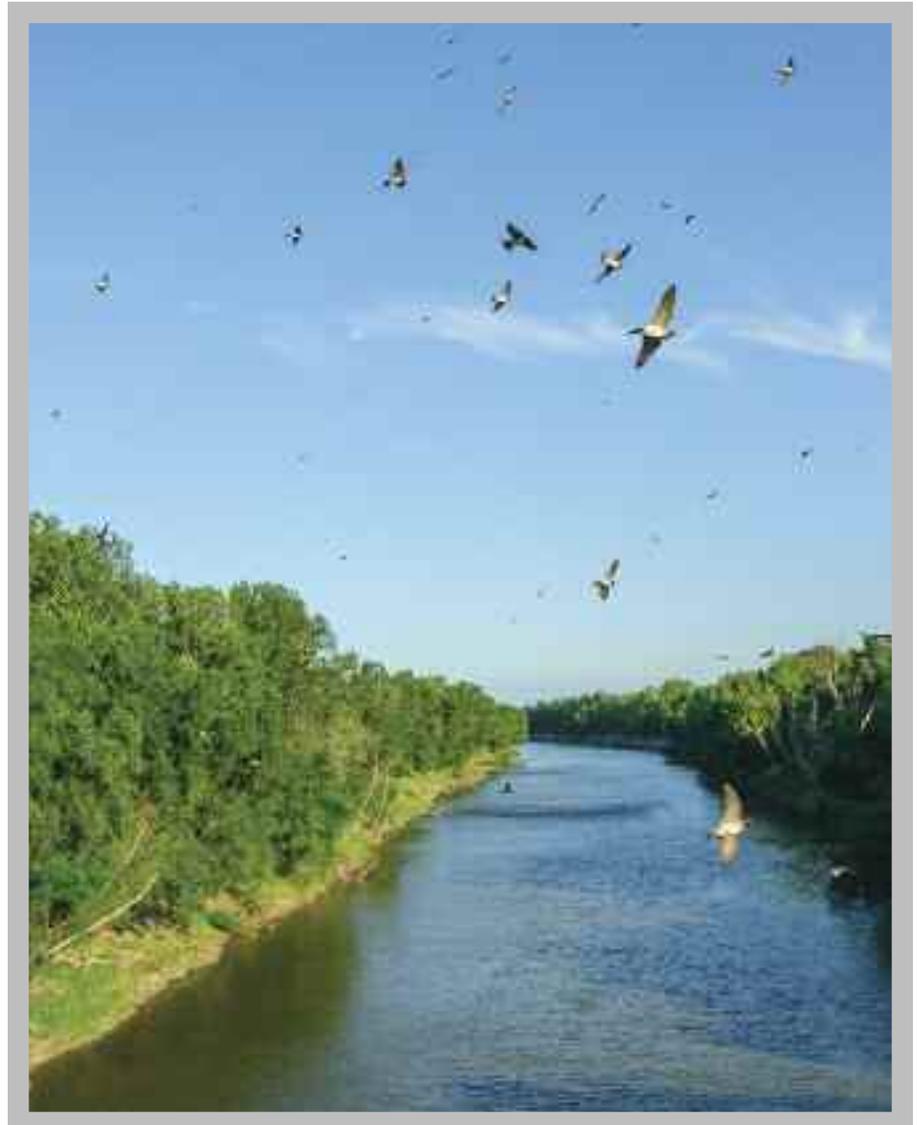
by Jennifer Hoggatt
photograph by Scott Myers

Our state waters and watersheds have a story to tell, and we're listening. Every body of water has a watershed; it's the land around it that drains into it. Even our underground water has a watershed. And, the activities that occur on that land around or on top of a water body have an impact on that water body. Those familiar with a particular watershed know its story better than anyone, and we want to hear those stories, too.

Historically, the department has directed its efforts toward implementation of the federal Clean Water Act. In doing so, we focused on point-source discharges or discharges from a pipe. By addressing these types of discharges, we have made great strides in reducing pollution. However, pollutants remain and finding their source has become more challenging. Today, we often cannot "see" the source of pollution. Instead, we must "seek" the source of pollution. Seeking means listening to the story a watershed has to tell.

The department's watershed approach, known as Our Missouri Waters, began its pilot phase this past year. Throughout the year, we focused on three watersheds in the state to try out a new approach to gather and share information about what is really going on in each watershed. What are the concerns? What are the opportunities? What are the real challenges faced in addressing those concerns? Finding the answers to these questions is not the end, it is just the beginning. The Department of Natural Resources is committed to working with all partners toward practical actions that result in clean and abundant water for generations to come.

DNR hosted three summits to mark the start of a continuing process to



Cliff swallows soar above the Chariton River near the Chariton-Carroll county line.

discover the story of the watershed, set goals for the watershed and plan action that helps us reach those goals.

Currently, we are assessing how our process is working thus far and recommending improvements as we transition from a pilot to full implementation. In 2014, the department will begin its full implementation by starting conversations in additional watersheds throughout the state. However, we won't forget about our three pilot watersheds. Their process

has only just begun. We will continue the conversations and continue to work toward our shared goals.

To follow our progress, to learn more about the watershed approach and to learn more about the events from the first three pilot watersheds – Spring River, Lower Grand and Big River – visit dnr.mo.gov/omwi.htm.

Jennifer Hoggatt is the department's statewide coordinator for the Our Missouri Waters initiative.