

A green rectangular graphic with a repeating pattern of stylized leaves. In the center is a white rectangle containing the text "FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI" in bold green capital letters, and "IMPACT STORIES" in green capital letters below it.

FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI IMPACT STORIES

Cattle Farm turned Conservation Oasis

Shoal Creek is a humble yet beautiful body of water flowing through Neosho. It lies within 45 acres of land that are part of a restoration project that is managed by Shoal Creek Watershed Restoration Project. These 45 acres are being reforested and converted after hosting livestock cows for many years. While cattle farms can be managed to limit the environmental damage, if livestock are overpopulated in a confined sector of land, they will overgraze, which results in biodiversity loss and soil erosion. The soil becomes compacted by the weight of the livestock, losing its ability to filter water and host life. A way to combat this is by planting trees, which introduces resilient, native biodiversity that can revitalize the soil and wildlife that surrounds it.

The planting of these trees will provide many benefits for the land, the wildlife, and the watershed at Shoal Creek, in addition to the original goals of reducing streambank erosion and improving water quality. Water quality monitoring at Shoal Creek predates the restoration work, which will allow for data comparisons of the water quality before and after the land and soil restoration. This may eventually provide an interesting data set that could enlighten us on the impact of trees in our ecosystems.

Undoing that past damage is a lot of work and it can look differently depending on the end goal. This area is being rehabilitated but not to become a public park since the stewards want this area to stay wild. Park management and regulations would change the integrity of the space, not necessarily prioritizing the health of the local vegetation and wildlife. The land does not have many trails, since this land's purpose was not human recreation but rather ecological diversity, balance, and flourishing.

An important metric of success for this restoration project has been the migratory bird path. The park staff noted the bird's love for the excess vegetation in the field. Finding a silver lining to the aggressive plants that they have yet to tackle. The flourishing natural ecosystem (especially aquatic amphibians) is the guiding motivator at Shoal Creek's restoration site.



Forest
ReLeaf
OF MISSOURI

