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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and MSD partner for Beargrass Creek Ecosystem Study

LOUISVILLE, KY – Louisville MSD and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are taking a big step in improving the Beargrass Creek watershed. Today, the two entities announced they are working together on the Three Forks Beargrass Creek Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, which is one of only six new General Investigation Feasibility Study projects to be selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers nationwide in a competitive pool of applicants for funding. The local project is the only ecosystem restoration and the sole inland project chosen nationwide.

This study will produce a plan that will outline what is necessary to restore the ecological form and function of the Beargrass Creek Watershed, which contains the South, Middle, and Muddy forks. The project will investigate options to restore ecosystem structure, function and processes that have been lost over time in the watershed. The current lack of riparian buffers and wetlands adjacent to Beargrass Creek have resulted in higher water temperatures, which lower dissolved oxygen levels and stress aquatic ecosystems. Portions of the creek—which are confined in concrete channels—are especially vulnerable habitats, becoming too warm for most aquatic life in the summer.

About one-third of all water that falls in the Beargrass Creek watershed lands on impervious surfaces, such as roofs and pavement—collecting toxins, pollutants, and sediments as it makes its way to the creek. Reconnecting the watershed with urban forests, wetlands, stream buffers and recreational trails will improve habitat and ecological function, as well as elevate the creek as a community amenity and resilient water resource for generations to come.

MSD and the Corps will investigate innovative restoration techniques and engineering solutions that will be compatible with local floodplain management and drainage improvements.

The maximum commitment from both organizations is \$1.5 million each for a total value of \$3 million. MSD's portion will be a mix of actual dollars and in-kind services.

“This agreement is a model example of how the environment, our economy, and the public can benefit when agencies come together with a common goal of health, safety and quality of life for our community. We are proud to partner with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for safe, clean waterways.”

— MSD Executive Director Tony Parrott.

“We are proud to partner with Louisville MSD to create a comprehensive plan, which will identify methods for improving this beautiful natural resource of the Three Forks of Beargrass Creek for generations to come. This study has been the result of years of coordination and one we are fortunate to have been selected for as it is one of only six new start projects across the Corps of Engineers and the only ecosystem restoration project selected nationwide.”

— Col. Antoinette Gant, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District

“We are fortunate to have this influx of federal funding to our community. Not only will this Three Forks Feasibility Study improve stream health, but it also has the potential to fundamentally improve land trail connections and amenities along the creek corridor. I am pleased that this investment will improve interactions with the creek and natural areas in District 8.”

— Louisville Metro Councilman Brandon Coan, District 8

“It is exciting to see federal, state and local agencies working together for the comprehensive ecological restoration of Beargrass Creek. Restoration of the ecological corridor will complement MSD’s ongoing work to enhance water quality. As emphasized in Morgan Atkinson’s Documentary [Beargrass: The Creek in Our Backyard](#), the challenges to the creek have been in the making for centuries, but with such collaboration restoration is possible and attainable. Just imagine, a healthy creek with a wide ribbon of trees through our community accessible by vibrant adjacent neighborhoods.

— David Wicks, Chairman River City Paddle Sports Board of Directors



About MSD

The Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) works to achieve and maintain clean, environmentally safe waterways for a healthy and vibrant community. The organization’s more than 670 employees provide wastewater management, drainage and flood protection services across the 376 square miles of Louisville Metro. In addition to operating and maintaining Louisville Metro’s sewer system, floodwall system, water quality treatment centers and flood pumping stations, MSD invests in hundreds of infrastructure improvement projects each year, plants more than 1,000 trees and other vegetation annually to enhance water filtration and reduce runoff, and provides numerous outreach programs to inform and educate the community about protecting our waterways.