



NRCS-Assisted Watershed Projects

Little Otter Creek Watershed Project

Caldwell County, Missouri

There are 2,100 watershed projects in the nation established by local units of government with the assistance of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Program (Public Law 78-534 and Public Law 83-566). These projects consist of over 11,000 flood control dams and thousands of conservation practices that provide over \$2 billion in annual benefits in flood prevention, water supplies, recreational areas, and other benefits. The following is just one example of how the Watershed Program is benefiting local communities and the nation.

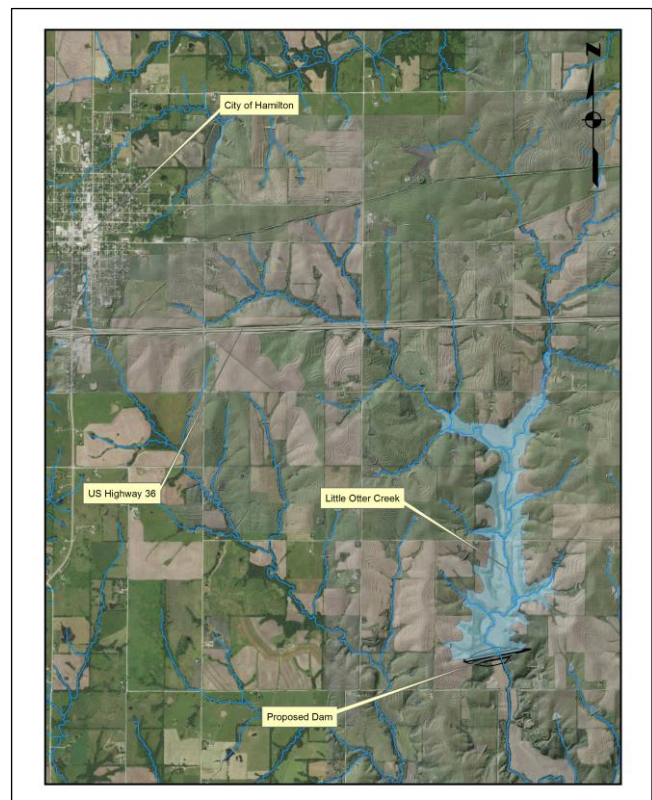
It took nearly 30 years of planning, design, reviews, and permitting, but the Little Otter Creek Lake is finally becoming a reality.

The dam for the Little Otter Creek Lake is located approximately three miles east of Hamilton, Missouri in Caldwell County. It will provide a source of drinking water to communities in Caldwell County (Population 9,424) and surrounding areas, along with providing flood control and recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, biking, and the enjoyment of nature. The 345-acre reservoir will supply 1.24 million gallons of raw drinking water per day.

The initial idea for the Little Otter Creek Lake Project began in the 1980's when during a severe drought the need for a dependable future source of water for the citizens of Caldwell County was recognized.

The first formal report on this proposed water supply was written in 1989 and on June 22, 1990, county officials met with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Planning Staff to discuss the possibility of building a rural water supply system that would also assist in flood prevention during years with more rain.

In late 1991, the Caldwell County Commission requested assistance through the NRCS's Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act and on August 3, 1992 they filed an application for federal assistance for a lake project with the NRCS.



NRCS in Missouri and the Caldwell County Commission announced the award of a contract to construct the Little Otter Creek Reservoir in the Fall of 2020. The contract for \$14,400,486.75 was awarded to Phillips Hardy, Incorporated of Booneville.

“Projects like this can take many years to complete, so a great deal of credit goes to dedicated local community leaders, who when faced with challenges, know the needs are too great to give up. They show serious commitment and continue to work for solutions to flooding and the need for good quality water supplies,” said Dan Sebert, Executive Director for the National Watershed Coalition. “One of the main challenges in completing this and other similar projects was limited Federal appropriations for the Watershed Program from 2004 to 2010 and no funding for the program from 2011 to 2016. Through the efforts of many Congress began to restore funding for the Watershed Program in 2017.”

The project is being funded primarily through federal funds provided by NRCS. Other sources of funding include Caldwell County’s 0.5% sales tax and State of Missouri appropriations. The local citizens of Caldwell County overwhelmingly passed a ½ cent county sales tax in 2004 for the lake and have contributed over four million dollars of local tax money to date. Most of those funds have been used for land acquisition, surveys, permitting, and other preliminary activities.

The Little Otter Creek Lake will be the first water supply lake that the Corp of Engineers has approved in over twenty-five years in Missouri. The Federal government has committed over \$16 million and over \$5.5 million is being provide by the state and local government toward this lake project.

A groundbreaking ceremony took place March 19, 2021 and completion of the lake is expected to take up to two years.

The Caldwell County Commission serves as the primary project sponsor working with the Caldwell County Soil and Water Conservation District and other local units of government. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) will provide fish and wildlife management assistance for the 700-acre project, which will include the 345-acre lake.

Information about the NRCS Watershed Program can be found on the NRCS web page: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/watershed-and-flood-prevention-operations-wfpo-program>

Information about the USDA Watershed Program that includes fact sheets, videos, power point presentations and news and feature articles can also be found on the National Watershed Coalition web page at: www.watershedcoalition.org

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