



United States Department of Agriculture

## JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

# Kinkaid Lake Watershed Restoration



Lake Kinkaid © Kinkaid-Reed's Creek Conservancy District

Kinkaid Lake is a 2,350-acre reservoir that provides drinking water for more than 30,000 people. But the lake is so much more than a water source; it is where life happens in southwest Illinois. Each year, half a million people head to the lake, which is surrounded by public lands, including the Shawnee National Forest. Families picnic and swim among shaded forests while others on boats of all sorts take in the scenery. Thrill-seekers jump from sandstone bluffs and enjoy rock-climbing over the water. The 60-square mile watershed is crossed by trails frequented by hikers, bikers and horseback riders. Birdwatchers come to spot migrating songbirds, and upland forests draw hunters and mushroom foragers. But Kinkaid Lake is perhaps most known for fishing. Anglers reel in muskellunge, crappie, white bass and walleye during popular fishing tournaments. People who live, work and play in this area value the role the lake plays in their lives, and that's why partners have worked for decades to stabilize erosion and reduce sediment and nutrient pollution. Modeling has shown that enough sediment to fill more than 2,200 dump trucks enters the lake each year. This Joint Chiefs' project strengthened long-standing partnerships and funded projects designed to reduce the threats of erosion to water quality for people and the multitude of fish and other wildlife in and around the lake.



ILLINOIS

## Kinkaid Lake Watershed Restoration RESULTS



Record crappie © Illinois DNR



**Reduced wildfire threats to communities:** More than 1,800 acres of the Shawnee National Forest were treated with prescribed fire to help reduce the threat of wildfires and the soil erosion that would follow, and to support water quality goals.



**Enhanced water quality:** More than 3,000 feet of shoreline was stabilized and 50 erosion control structures were installed throughout the watershed to keep excess sediment from entering local waterways.



**Enhanced wildlife habitat:** Improving wildlife habitat secured a healthy future for the local culture and economy. The state record crappie was recently caught in Kinkaid Lake. Statewide, more than \$3 billion in economic impact can be attributed to fishing.

### PROJECT IMPACT

**\$300,000+**  
Matching Funds

Total awarded through the Joint Chiefs' from 2015-17: \$1.14 million

Local agencies and partners contributed more than \$300,000 to match Joint Chiefs' funds, and this project partnership is leading to further collaboration and investments.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



Cascade on Lake Kinkaid © Kinkaid-Reed's Creek Conservancy District

## Improving Lake Kinkaid's Cultural and Economic Impacts

Scott Wilmouth understands that Lake Kinkaid is the cultural and economic center of his community because his roots run deep here. His parents and grandparents farmed in the area, and today, he raises cattle on a century-old farm. As manager of the Kinkaid-Reed's Creek Conservancy District, where he has worked for almost three decades, he oversees the local water treatment plant and works with partners to manage Lake Kinkaid.

Wilmouth has watched the lake change over time. "With the torrential rainfalls we get these days, a lot of erosion is coming into the lake," Wilmouth said.

Gullies that get bigger with every rainfall lift and transplant soil into the lake. The lake's popularity is both a blessing and a curse. According to Wilmouth, "Most summer weekends, you could stir the boats on the lake with a stick." Waves from boats batter the shore, depositing even more soil into the water, causing the lake to get muddier and shallower, each year. A beach and a boat ramp were recently closed after becoming unstable.

Partnering with USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service was not a new idea for Wilmouth, but the Joint Chiefs' funding offered a chance to make a big difference on public and private lands. "We installed several thousand feet of gully stabilization to eliminate erosion," said Wilmouth. They also used prescribed fire to improve grassland health for wildlife habitat and the productivity of his cattle operation.

Wilmouth said the entire community and its future is tied to the health of the lake. "I would like for this community to grow for people to have opportunities that allow them to stay here, and for that to happen, we must continue to protect this lake."



Scott Wilmouth, Cattle Producer  
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### Key Partners

Boy Scouts of America  
HMG Engineering  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Illinois EPA  
Jackson County Board  
Jackson County Farm Bureau/  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Kinkaid Area Watershed Project  
Kinkaid -Reeds Creek Conservancy District  
Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development  
Southern Illinois University