CHARITON RIVER WATERSHED INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is responsible for managing the forests, fish, and wildlife of the State of Missouri. The water, fish, and other animals inhabiting our streams are a public resource, but the quality of stream fishing and overall stream health is almost entirely dependent upon land management decisions made by private citizens who own more than 93% of the State, including the corridors and beds of our streams.

Since the mid 1980s, MDC biologists have provided on-site stream habitat evaluation and planning services to landowners, usually in response to geographically random streambank erosion problems. Local attempts at spot-treatment, while instructive, have done little to address the watershed-wide problems that affect our streams. Clearly, any substantial progress toward improving our stream fisheries will occur only if a significant number of people from all walks of life acquire an understanding of the physical, chemical and biological character of these resources and their values to society. Only from such a common understanding may there arise a shared vision and science-based plan for watershed conservation that incorporates the perspectives and reflects the needs of all stakeholders.

The main objectives of this report are: 1) to summarize the widely scattered physical, chemical, and biological information most relevant to the stream fishery of the Chariton River watershed; and 2) to identify opportunities for conserving (wisely managing) Chariton River basin streams on a watershed scale. In addition to providing guidance for MDC operations, we hope this document will facilitate citizen-led initiatives to manage the watershed in a way that will benefit our fisheries, our rural economy in general, and future generations who will inherit our legacy.

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