

Sustaining Floyds Fork

By Gabrielle Fugate

Known to many in Jefferson County, there lies a four thousand acre park in the easternmost area: the Parklands at Floyds Fork. There's activities that appeal to all ages such as hiking, biking, paddling, and fishing along with recreation areas. As the last natural living waterway in Jefferson County, the creek that runs through the park houses forty kinds of fish, over one hundred kinds of birds, and various reptiles and amphibians. Many schools take field trips here to enhance student's knowledge of the environment around them, and why it is important to protect it.

Lesser known to these athletes, students, and recreation seekers, Beckley Creek that flows through Floyds Fork is a tributary (a stream that flows into a larger river) that spans sixty-two miles of Kentucky and ends in the Salt River. Since it opened 1890, the park has been home to conservation efforts to protect the diverse wildlife of the area.

Conservation is the prevention of wasteful uses of resources. Floyds Fork's four thousand acres preserve the habitat of over one hundred kinds of birds or threatened plants. For example, Kentucky Glade Cress is a flower that blooms annually in Floyds Fork and it's not found anywhere else in the world (Service)! The U.S. Fish and Wildlife services hatched a plan for the plant in 2021 and was finalized in 2022 to determine when the Kentucky Glade Cress should be removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants. They found the disappearance of the plant was due to loss of their natural habitat. The recovery of Kentucky Glade Cress aims to revamp the current habitat - open areas with shallow, rocky soil - and eventually introduce the species into suitable areas. This effort of conservation wouldn't be possible without the land at Floyds Fork (Service).

Additionally, organizations like Biohabitat are working with the conservationists at the park to not only support its own conservation goals of inspiring others to preserve native ecosystems, but to implement more specific ingenuity like designing protection methods for the park (Inc, Younts). Biohabitats is responsible for creating designs and outlining details of features of the park and displaying the complex initiatives in an easy to understand manner.

Another conservation partner is Louisville Keep Your Fork. This non-profit organization advocates and aims to influence everyone from residents to civic leaders on matters that concern the park like construction near it (Louisville). The runoff from projects near the park is harmful to the plants, and organisms that live in the water. It contaminates the natural life that can only be found in this area of Jefferson County (Louisville).

So why does Floyds Fork need conservation from various organizations? The park was established after the industrial revolution began, but the growth of industry hasn't stopped. The construction of buildings and infrastructure near the park can send harmful waste into the soil and water that is the lifeblood of the park. This will directly impact the many threatened species that inhabit Floyds Fork and continue to undo all the park and the organization that help it aim to diminish. As the park provides sanctuary for threatened species and aims to restore wildlife habitats, construction runoff would directly undermine the efforts.

Floyds Fork and its partners are not opposed to construction as it benefits the human community, but they make plans to work with the new construction efforts to limit the harm they bring to the preserve. By working together and advocating for the park, sustaining Kentucky's wildlife doesn't have to be difficult. Education and immersion in this topic could encourage current and future generations to keep it wild in Kentucky!

Works Cited

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