

Ensuring Public Support for Ecological Restoration Projects

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Abstract: Ecological restoration projects have come and gone over the years. Some have succeeded and others have failed. The projects that have succeeded in the long run have one element in common: society decided to adopt and support the fundamental concepts of the restoration project. The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Alligator Gar Restoration project began with almost immediate support for various reasons. This was not by accident. MDC involved the Missouri public in a variety of ways to gain social acceptance for a species that had been hated for decades. Our presentation will outline the different steps that MDC took to ensure a good response from Missouri residents. These steps allowed us to put youth to work, recruit future fish biologists, gain a substantial workforce to complete research, acquire free media attention, all while gaining public support for the project. So far the project has been a success in many different realms, and if these steps are used by others while restoration is taking place, they will insure public support.

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