



## McConnells Spring Park wetland and blue hole

McConnells Spring Park, Lexington, KY

March 2017, April 2018 & June 2019

McConnells Spring Park is a designated Natural Areas Park in the heart of Lexington. The karst features that allow water to spring to the surface then sink back below ground make this a unique place. These features attracted early European settlers, and the history of this site was part of the founding of the city of Lexington. More modern arrivals to the property are invasive plants. The first phase of our work began in March 2017 with control of invasive species. Although bush honeysuckle had advanced on outlying areas of the park, it was wintercreeper that smothered the ground with a dense mat. A combination of cutting and herbicide applications were used to reduce invasive shrubs and vines enough to allow native sedges and wild rye grass to regain their populations on the forest floor. This section of woods flooded occasionally when large storm events surged through the park with runoff from adjoining industrial properties.



In April, 2018, EcoGro was hired to help bring a vision into life. A design was produced by a team of citizens enrolled in the LFUCG Citizens Environmental Academy.

This was part of a capstone project for their course. The goal of this group was to protect Lexington's historic blue hole feature from eroding banks. This erosion was exasperated by flows from large storms that short cut across the valley and into the karst feature. The design included excavating an



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ephemeral wetland in the forest and utilizing the excavated soil to form a berm that would redirect storm flows from the blue hole and continue down the forest valley. As a result, a new wetland niche was created and was a boost for amphibians.



In June, 2019, EcoGro returned to the park to stabilize eroded banks around the blue hole. This was accomplished by removing soil and creating a more shallow and stable slope. Excavated soil was used to redirect flows of runoff from adjacent industrial properties. This work was followed by the installation of native wildflowers by volunteers. As a result, the water of the blue hole is cleaner and clearer.



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