

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A THOUSAND STREAMS¹

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Abstract: The problem presented with the term “stream restoration” is that people often assume the intent is to recreate some previous pristine condition. In reality, streams are dynamic systems that are continually adjusting to changes in their watersheds. Since we have drastically altered the watershed land use and stream geometry from its unspoiled “pre-settlement” conditions it is unrealistic to attempt to “restore” a stream to its original shape, pattern and profile. Stream restoration should instead be viewed as returning a stream system to a state of equilibrium that is consistent with its current watershed condition.

To accomplish this goal it is first necessary to understand the changes that have taken place, how the stream is reacting and adjusting to those changes while gaining some knowledge of what additional adjustments will occur naturally before the stream returns to a state of equilibrium.

This presentation will explore the practical experience gained from applying stream restoration techniques to “natural” streams in Illinois and how these experiences may relate to stream restoration projects in a mine reclamation setting.

Additional Key Words: Natural stream design, stream equilibrium and in-stream structures

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