

# Clark Conservation Area

## Ten-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2017-2026



  
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Wildlife Division Chief

15 FEB 2017  
Date

## Clark Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

### PLANNING TEAM

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Chris Williamson, Fisheries Management Biologist

Jason Jacobson, Resource Forester

Krista Noel, Natural History Biologist

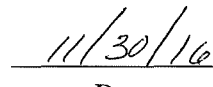
Rudd Binsbacher, Conservation Agent

John Pinkowski, Private Land Conservationist

### NORTHEAST REGION

RCT Chair

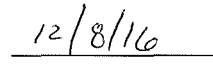
  
Signature

  
Date

### WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief

  
Signature

  
Date

## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Clark Conservation Area, #8147
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1981
- **Acreage:** 736 acres
- **County:** Clark
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statement of Purpose:**

### A. Strategic Direction

Clark Conservation Area (CA) has a diversity of natural communities that support an array of species. The management of the area is focused on encouraging healthy populations of turkey, deer, and associated non-game species; conserving and enhancing water quality, upland forests, bottomland hardwoods, and diverse natural communities; and providing compatible outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.

### B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of Clark CA includes quality bottomland hardwood forests, upland forests, and woodland communities; fewer invasive species; established stable, wooded stream corridors that improve water quality; and more public use opportunities.

### C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

### I. Special Considerations

A. **Priority Areas:** None

B. **Natural Areas:** None

### II. Important Natural Features and Resources

A. **Species of Conservation Concern:** None

B. **Caves:** None

C. **Springs:** None

### III. Existing Infrastructure

- Two parking lots
- One lake (35 acres). Two-thirds of the lake is owned by the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department). Please respect private land boundaries.

**IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations**

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** None
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** Water line easement on the north 40-acre Bear Creek tract; and watershed lake easement on the Bear Creek lake tract, which allows the water to inundate from the construction of a watershed lake dam (Figure 1).
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundaries:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

**MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

**V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations:**

Clark CA is made up of eight tracts of land. Several of the tracts are land-locked. Those accessible to the public include the Nixon Branch and Bear Creek tracts (Figure 2). The area is largely forested.

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Forest resources on Clark CA consist of both upland and bottomland communities. Dense tree canopy has had a significant negative impact on understory plant diversity. Current management plans will improve forest health.
- 2) Public exposure to active forest and woodland management, such as timber harvest and prescribed burning, provide an opportunity for the public to learn how healthy plant communities support a greater abundance of wildlife. Actively managing the forests and woodlands on Clark CA demonstrates the benefits of these practices to the public. Using creative communication and education plans is essential to emphasize the value of these management practices.
- 3) There is very little open land on Clark CA, but small openings are being created for landings to accommodate timber harvest activities. Food plots supplement natural food supplies and provide cover for wildlife to sustain and (in some cases) attract wildlife, creating more hunting and viewing opportunities for area users.

**Management Objective 1:** Improve the health of forest and woodland communities to benefit wildlife and increase diversity of natural communities.

**Strategy 1:** Complete forest and woodland improvement projects on Nixon Branch and Bear Creek tracts as per the completed forest inventory. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Complete timber sales on Nixon Branch Tract as per the completed forest inventory and where access allows. (Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Following timber harvest, conduct post-harvest management as per the completed forest inventory. (Forestry)

**Strategy 4:** Utilize best management practices to maintain soil, water, and visual integrity. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 2:** Educate area users about the benefits of healthy forest and woodland management.

**Strategy 1:** Post “Healthy Woods” signs adjacent to actively managed forest and woodland areas. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Post general information on Atlas Database about when and where to expect active forest and woodland management. (Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Post general information on bulletin boards about why active forest and woodland management benefits conservation areas. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 3:** Provide food and cover for wildlife.

**Strategy 1:** Follow forest management guidelines for small openings created as log landings which may include but not be limited to green browse or annual food plots in the short term. (Wildlife, Forestry)

**Management Objective 4:** Reduce invasive plant species.

**Strategy 1:** Reduce fescue, autumn olive, and garlic mustard by increasing management activities including but not limited to spraying, mechanical methods, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Prevent the spread of invasive plants by cleaning mower decks so seeds and plant material are not moved to unaffected areas. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Actively monitor for other invasive species and treat them if/when they appear. (Wildlife)

## **VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations**

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) The Department owns approximately 23 acres of a 35-acre lake on the largest of the tracts that make up the Bear Creek Tract. The lake dam is located on adjacent property. Because the lake is not entirely owned by the Department, no efforts

have been made to manage a fishery or develop access to this lake. Currently, the only access is provided via a 0.3-mile long footpath from the parking lot.

- 2) One mile of Nixon Branch flows through the Nixon Branch Tract, and 0.25 miles of Shaffer Creek flows through the Landlocked 80-acre Tract.

**Management Objective 1:** Establish or maintain a forested corridor along all streams on the area.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain a minimum 100 foot forested corridor through natural regeneration or planting, where not limited by area boundary or utility easement. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Relocate access roads or parking lots that are in the stream corridor, if feasible. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

**Strategy 3:** All management activities on Clark CA should follow the *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife)

## VII. Public Use Management Considerations

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Clark CA offers numerous public use opportunities, including hunting, fishing, camping, and picnicking. Hunting is one of the main reasons people visit the area in the fall. Spring and fall turkey seasons attract hunters to the area with good numbers of turkeys present. Small game hunting opportunities exist, especially for squirrels.
- 2) Primitive camping is permitted in two graveled parking areas. Pack-in camping is allowed anytime, except during firearms deer and turkey seasons. No amenities are provided, and some tracts have no parking areas, while others have no public access.

**Management Objective 1:** Provide quality hunting for squirrels, deer, and turkey.

Manage for a variety of small game species, where appropriate habitat exists.

**Strategy 1:** Manage the area's diverse habitats for a variety of wildlife species through the establishment of annual food plots, edge work, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Provide designated primitive camping and picnic areas.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain parking lots according to Department standards. Prior to the hunting seasons, mow these areas so they are user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing. (Forestry)

## VIII. Administrative Considerations

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) The conservation area consists of eight separate tracts scattered across Clark County. Due to the small size, the irregular boundary of some tracts, and access issues, trespassing is a common complaint from the neighboring landowners.
- 2) Three of the tracts are land-locked and are not accessible to the public. One additional tract may need a survey to determine if it also is landlocked.
- 3) Three tracts have road access, but no parking lots are provided to accommodate parking or camping.
- 4) The road that accesses the north side of the Bear Creek Lake Tract is a private road that is access for the Bear Creek Church (closed) and Cemetery.

**Management Objective 1:** Keep boundary lines adequately posted.

**Strategy 1:** Area staff should repost boundaries as signs are removed or damaged. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Assess opportunities to acquire easements or purchase adjoining lands.

**Strategy 1:** When available, adjacent land will be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Where purchase is not an option, pursue gaining easement through private land for public access. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Request a survey to determine if the 20-acre tract near the town of Neeper is landlocked. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 4:** Consider the option to pursue selling or trading landlocked tracts that cannot be made accessible to the public. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 3:** Maintain a good relationship with the community by not degrading the private road on the north side of the Bear Creek Lake Tract that is used to access the old Bear Creek Church and Cemetery.

**Strategy 1:** Discourage traffic on the private road on the north side of Bear Creek Lake Tract by expanding the existing parking lot on the east side to accommodate area users. (Wildlife)

### **Lands Proposed for Acquisition:**

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities may be considered.





## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

Clark Conservation Area’s original warranty deed is dated 1978. The purchase was lengthy and complicated because the property was scattered across Clark County in 12 parcels of land. The seller was Consolidated Packaging Corporation, previously known as Crandon Paper Mill or Company (and in some writings was referred to as Crandon Tree or Forest Farm). The original purchase was 2,717.46 acres. The final purchase from Consolidated Packaging Corporation was made in 1981, which added another 98.5 acres to the total purchase. Portions of these acquisitions became parts of Fox Valley and Charlie Heath Memorial Conservation Areas. Today, Clark CA totals 736 acres in eight tracts.

Early management by Consolidated Packaging Corporation of these parcels was for the production of pulp and paper to construct boxes. The company had enrolled these lands into the Forest Cropland System that was administered by the Department. This program was established to help prevent land use conversion of forestland by providing tax benefits to forestland owners who maintained their woodlands to certain specifications.

Clark CA is mostly covered by timber. There were small portions of a few tracts that were still open in the mid-1960s, but these also have converted to timber. The paper company created plantations of trees, some of which were stands of cottonwoods and pines and are still evident.

In the mid-1970s, a lake was built on private land, damming Bear Creek. This lake inundates the portion of Clark CA known as the Bear Creek Lake Tract. The Department does not own the entire lake, as it is shared with three other landowners.

### Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	713		98
Lake	23		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>736</b>		<b>100</b>
Stream Frontage (Nixon Branch, Shaffer Creek)		1.25	

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Clark Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period January 1–31, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The Clark Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than

respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through the Clark Conservation Area public comment period

**Suggests allowing archery hunting only on the small acre tracts for safety reasons.**

Deer hunting regulations on conservation areas are periodically reviewed and deer season hunting pressure is annually monitored on Clark CA. Deer herd size, deer population trends, amount of hunting pressure, size of the conservation area, and potential for neighboring crop damage by deer are a few of the elements that factor into selecting the deer regulations for conservation areas. At this time, the planning team thinks that the existing regulation (archery and firearms hunting allowed) is appropriate for Clark CA.

**Concerned with area users trespassing onto private property. Concerned with trees dropped onto boundary line during logging activities, preventing landowner from putting up a fence.**

All boundaries are marked with signs, and the boundary is indicated on the brochures. Any trespassing should be immediately reported to the conservation agent or the county sheriff. Staff have removed trees previously felled on the boundary line and staff are always willing to discuss potential cost-share on boundary fences with adjacent landowners.

**References:**

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

**Maps:**

- Figure 1: Area Map of Clark Conservation Area
- Figure 2: Easement Boundaries for Clark Conservation Area
- Figure 3: Landcover Map of Nixon and Circle A Tracts
- Figure 4: Landcover Map of Bear Creek Tracts
- Figure 5: Landcover Map of the 20-acre Tract near Neeper

**Additional Appendices:**

Appendix A. Clark Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map of Clark Conservation Area

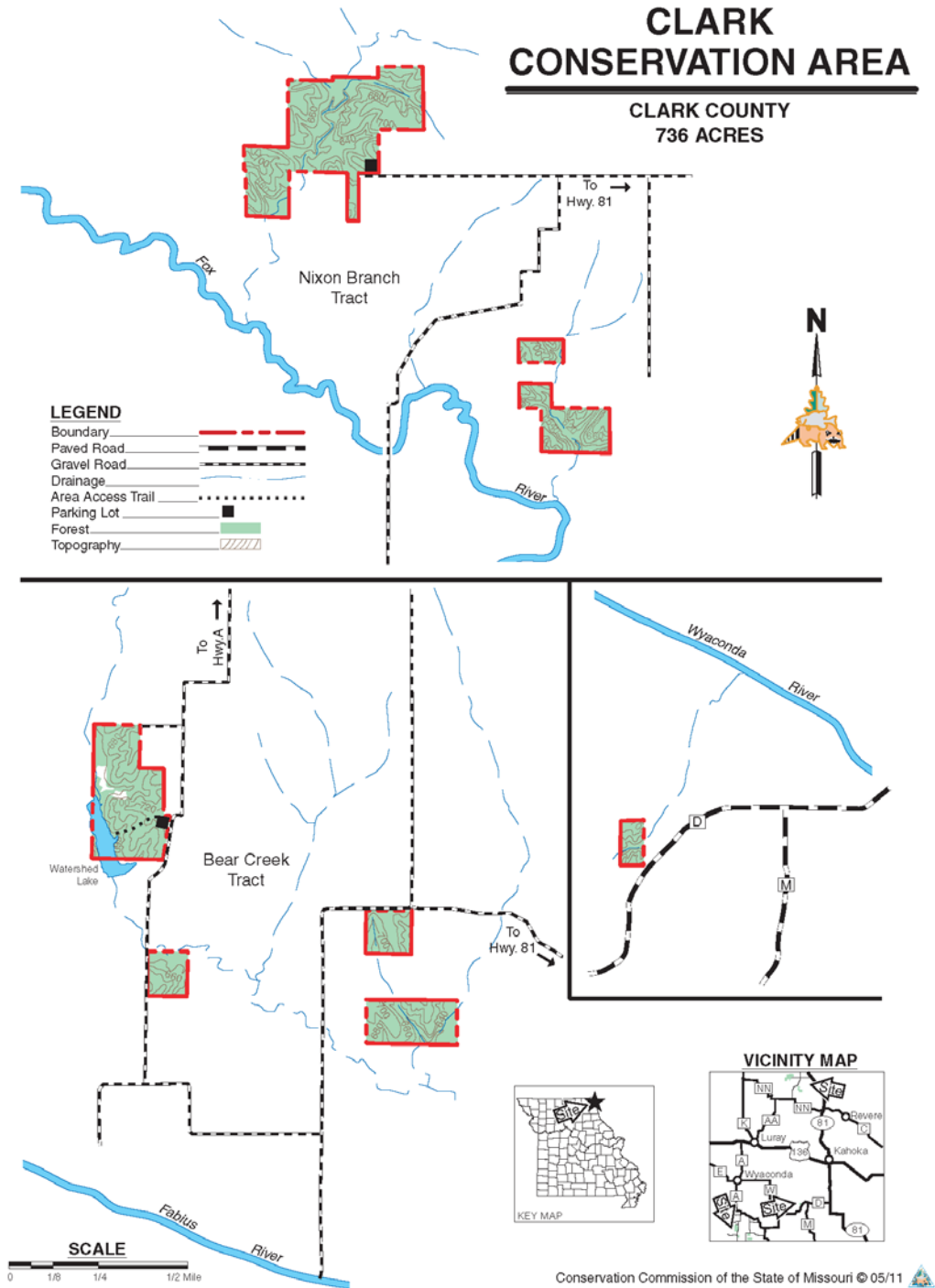


Figure 2: Easement Boundaries for Clark Conservation Area

## Easement Boundaries Clark Conservation Area

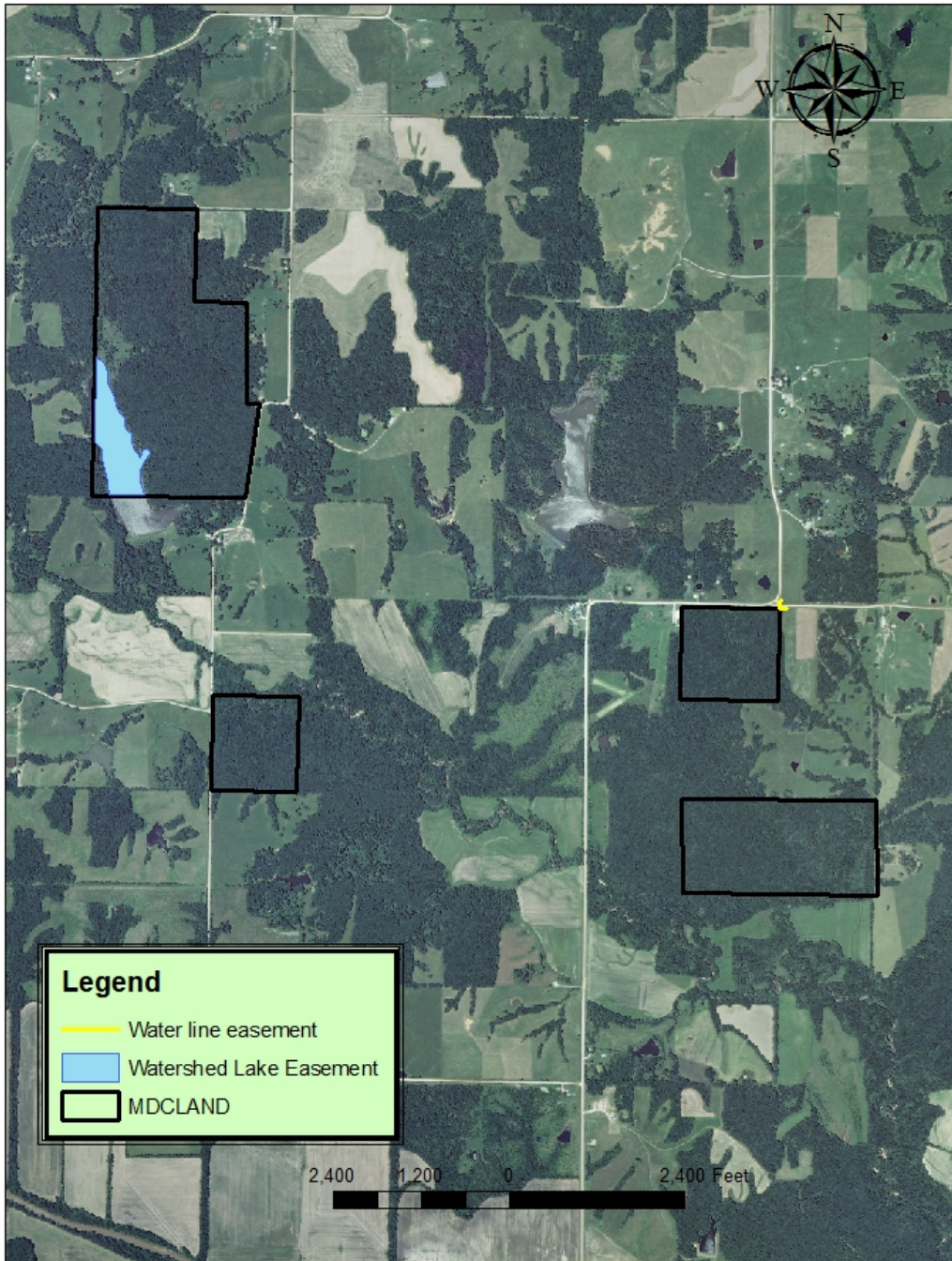




Figure 3: Landcover Map of Nixon and Circle A Tracts

### Landcover Nixon and Circle A Tracts Clark Conservation Area

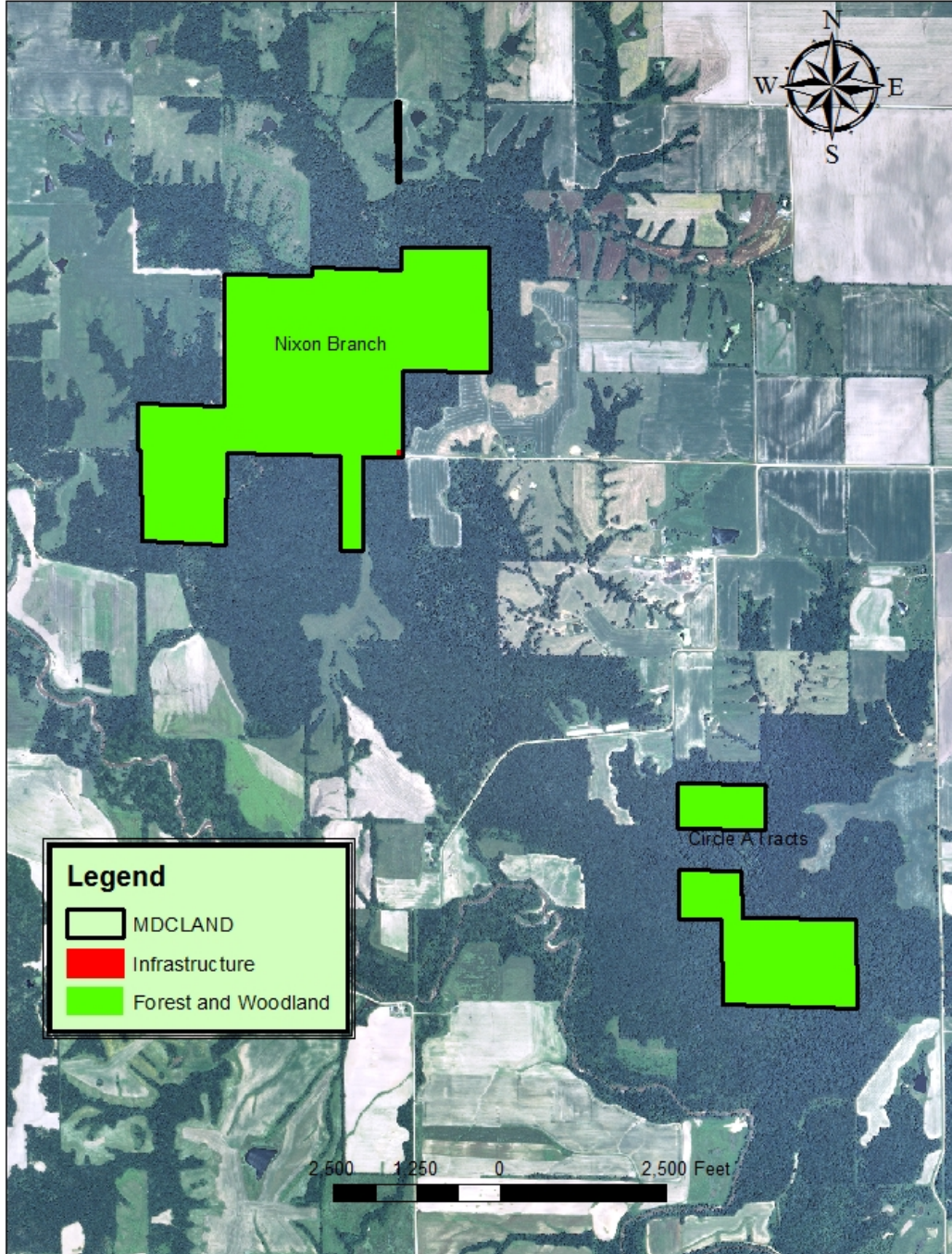
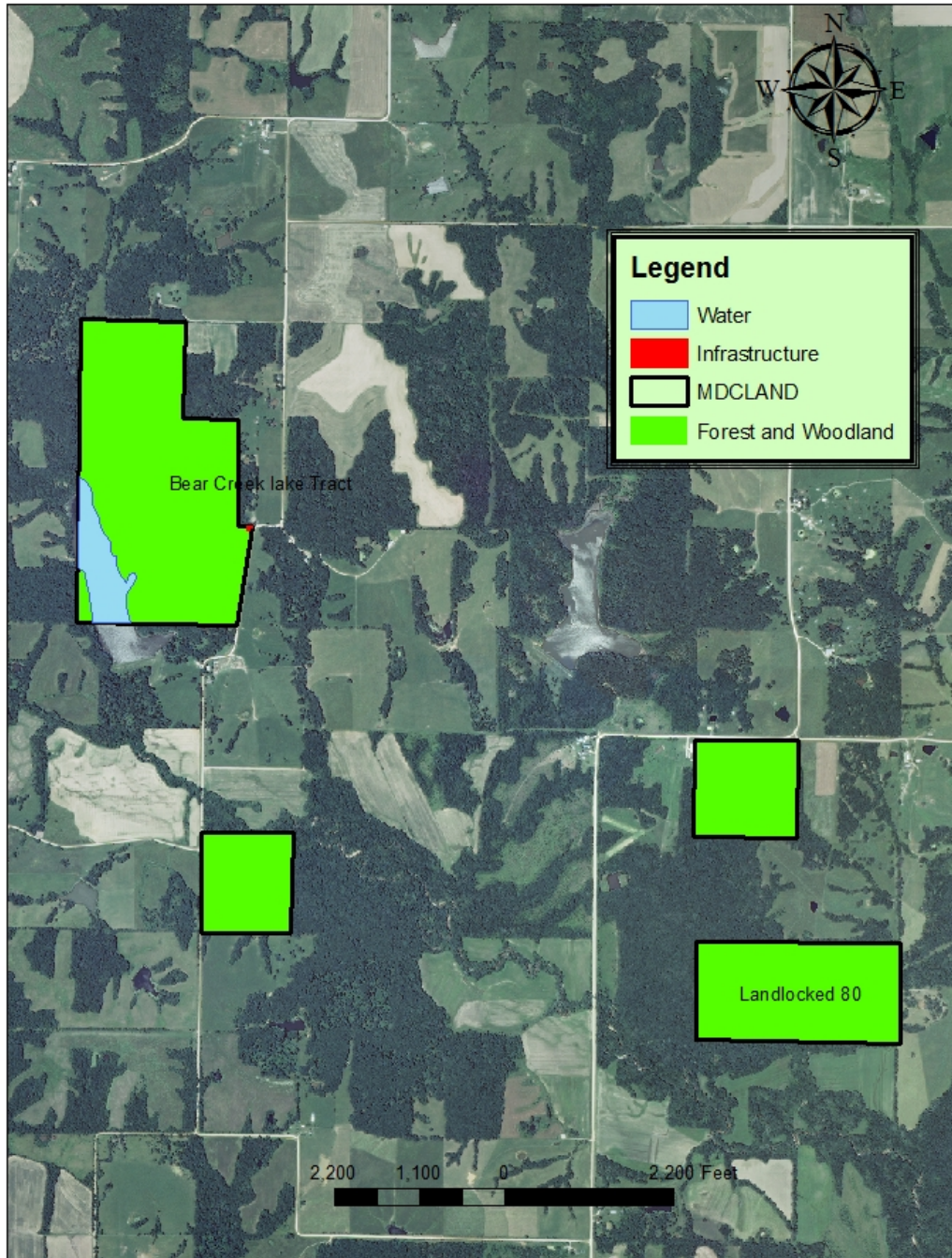




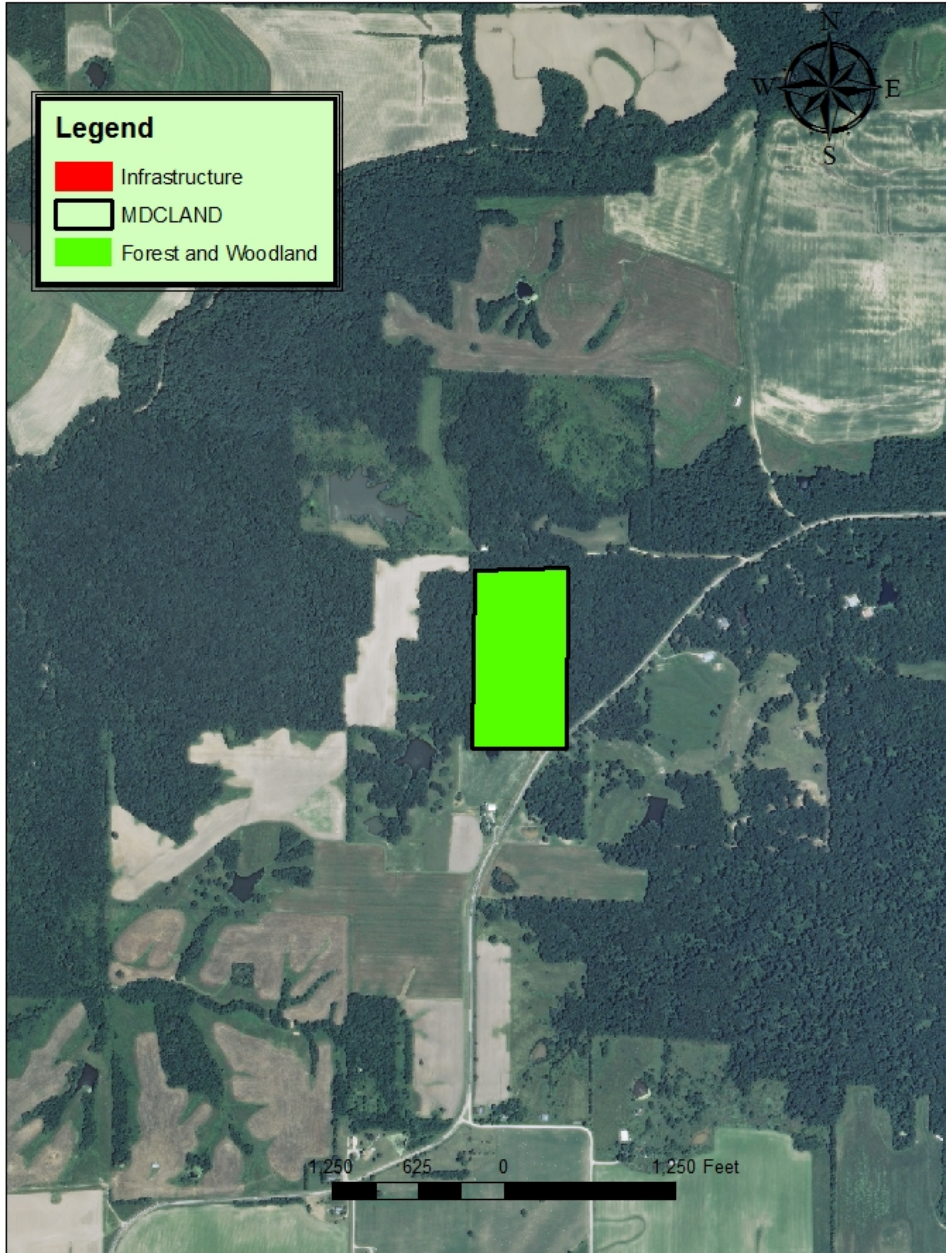
Figure 4: Landcover Map of Bear Creek Tracts

### Landcover Bear Creek Tracts Clark Conservation Area



**Figure 5: Landcover Map of Neeper Tract**

Landcover of the 20 acre tract near Neeper,  
Clark Conservation Area





## Appendix A. Clark Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (January 1-31, 2016):

No issues with the plan.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the plan for these conservation areas as your plans do affect neighboring landowners. Thank you.

My concerns are as follows:

Trespassing. Continues to be a problem and “private property” signs are torn down quite often. My plan to help with this was to put a fence up this winter to give a clearer boundary between the public/private boundaries. However, as the area was logged this year, trees were dropped over the property line that would need to be removed first.

Safety. With the small acreage tract that is adjoining my property, it tends to push hunters to the outside corners (or over them). I would like to see this area used as bow hunting only. I do not think it is wise to allow an unlimited number of high-powered rifles to hunt on such a small tract; it is only inviting accidents.

Again, thanks for allowing input on your long-term plans. I understand that Missourians pay for these areas and should be allowed to use them in a responsible manner, but with the extra people that are going to use the new Bear Creek parking lot, I think those suggestions will help everyone involved.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions