

Shannon Ranch Conservation Area

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2017-2031



Isa B. Allen
Forestry Division Chief

7-27-16
Date

Shannon Ranch Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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OZARK REGION

RCT Chair


Signature


Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forestry Management Chief


Signature


Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Shannon Ranch Conservation Area, #8423
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1984
- **Acreage:** 1,565 acres
- **County:** Douglas
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry, Design and Development (roads)
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for multiple resources with emphasis on forests, associated plant and wildlife species, watershed protection, and compatible recreational opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Shannon Ranch Conservation Area (CA) is a healthy forest/woodland and diverse old field/grassland habitat.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** Shannon Ranch Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area, Priority Forest Landscape
 - B. Natural Areas:** None

- II. Important Natural Features and Resources**
 - A. Species of Conservation Concern:** Species of conservation concern are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the natural history biologist.
 - B. Caves:** None
 - C. Springs:** Yes, records kept with Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) natural history biologist.

- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - six parking lots
 - picnic tables and grills
 - one camping area (3 camp sites)
 - one scenic overlook
 - 11 fishless ponds (3.0 acres)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Yes. Floodplain restriction, 5 acres.
- 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:** State Highway 95, Howell-Oregon Electric right of way
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** None observed.
- F. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- G. Boundary Issues:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Improve and restore forest/woodland and glade landscapes.
- 2) Improve habitat for deer and other game species.
- 3) Improve habitat and natural diversity by limiting the spread of invasive plant species.

Management Objective 1: Maintain, enhance and restore forest/woodland and glade natural communities. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 1: Implement management recommendations from the conservation area 2004 forest inventory for compartment 1, and the 2002 inventory for compartment 2. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Continue to use best management practices to manage glade habitats and monitor species of conservation concern restoration sites. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Implement Best Management Practices to prevent erosion during any forest management activities according to the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practices – Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* booklet (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

Strategy 4: Conduct a forest inventory of Compartment 2 in FY22, and Compartment 1 in FY24. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Maintain and enhance deer and other game habitats. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 1: Implement active field management to reduce woody encroachment and encourage old field structure. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Improve forest wildlife habitat by managing forest structure to provide early successional habitat. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Reduce the impact of invasive plant species on natural communities. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 1: Continue to control invasive species, including fescue, sericea lespedeza, Johnson grass, and autumn olive. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Monitor the area for invasive species. Suppress any infestations that may develop, as soon as possible, using appropriate methods. (Forestry, Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage and protect karst land features and White River drainage basin.

Management Objective 1: Protect and enhance the riparian corridor and karst features on the area. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 1: Minimize sedimentation within the area from land management practices and/or road systems that will affect biodiversity of unique habitats, by following the practices recommended in *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Maintain a riparian corridor with a minimum of 100 feet from the top of the bank on each side for third-order streams and larger (per Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Forestry, Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide for hunting and viewing opportunities.
- 2) Provide public use access and balance area use by stakeholders.

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting and viewing opportunities. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 1: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain existing service roads for use by the public and Department staff. (Forestry)

Strategy 1: Monitor and clear/improve area trails as needed. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Continue to monitor area use and limit special use permits that could impact use by other stakeholders. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Maintain signs along boundary lines every 5 years or as needed. (Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Acquisition of land.

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. (Forestry)

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31
Terrestrial Resources Management															
<i>Objective 1</i>															
Strategy 4						X		X							
<i>Objective 2</i>															
Strategy 1		X			X			X			X			X	
Strategy 2		X			X			X			X			X	
<i>Objective 3</i>															
Strategy 1	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Aquatic Resources Management															
<i>Objective 1</i>															
Strategy 1	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Strategy 2	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Pubic Use Management Considerations															
<i>Objective 2</i>															
Strategy 1	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Strategy 3		X					X					X			

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Shannon Ranch Conservation Area was named in honor of the Shannon family who farmed it for many years. The original 985 acres was acquired from a group of Springfield Missouri doctors who agreed to reduce the price to 60 percent of the appraised value. Possession was obtained in 1984 using funds derived from the Conservation Sales Tax. The property had been heavily logged and grazed before acquisition.

On Oct. 3, 1988 the Missouri Conservation Commission acquired the 340-acre Underdal tract located on the northwest corner of Shannon Ranch CA. The failed dairy operation was purchased for \$80,000. The open land was overgrazed and in need of lime and fertilizer. All of the merchantable timber had been removed.

In 1998 the Missouri Conservation Commission acquired 240 acres located to the east, expanding ownership to both sides of Highway W. The acquisition was part of a multiple tract deal between the Department and the U.S. Forest Service. The tract is entirely forested, containing mostly oak and pine timber. The property has a distant history of high-grade timber harvest and wildfire.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Upland Forest/Woodlands	825	53
Glade	120	8
Savanna	475	30
Grassland (Non-prairie)	133	8
Roads	12	1
Total	1,565	100

Public Input Summary:

The draft Shannon Ranch Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period February 1–29, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from five respondents (Appendix A). The Shannon Ranch 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 Shannon Ranch Conservation Area public comment period

Curious why area has fishless ponds.

Fishless ponds provide a variety of benefits to wildlife, and they are fairly low cost to install and maintain. Fishless ponds, including those that only hold water for a few months, are especially important as breeding areas for many amphibians. Many species of frogs and salamanders will not spawn in waters that contain fish due to the high predation rates on eggs, larvae, and even adults. They also provide habitat for reptiles, dragonflies, and other invertebrates.

Suggests allowing multi-use trails for horseback riding and mountain biking. Offers volunteer service to assist with trail development and maintenance.

Horseback riding is currently limited to roadways open to vehicular traffic and on a limited basis, by special use permit. The area manager will continue to monitor special use permits and make adjustments as needed.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014) *Missouri Watershed Protection Practices – Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* booklet.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: County Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Aerial Map

Figure 5: Land Cover Map

Figure 6: Easement Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Shannon Ranch Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

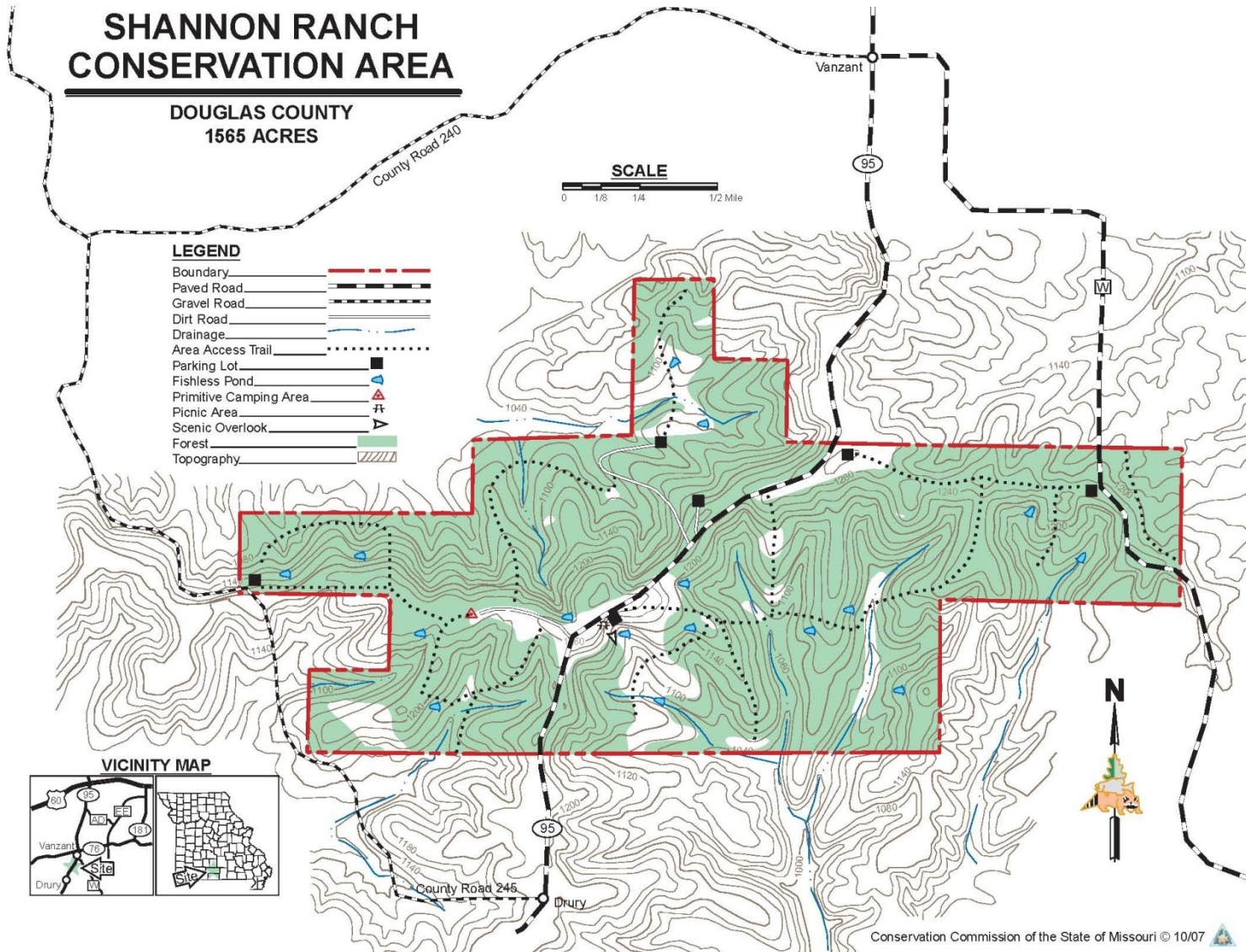


Figure 2: County Location Map

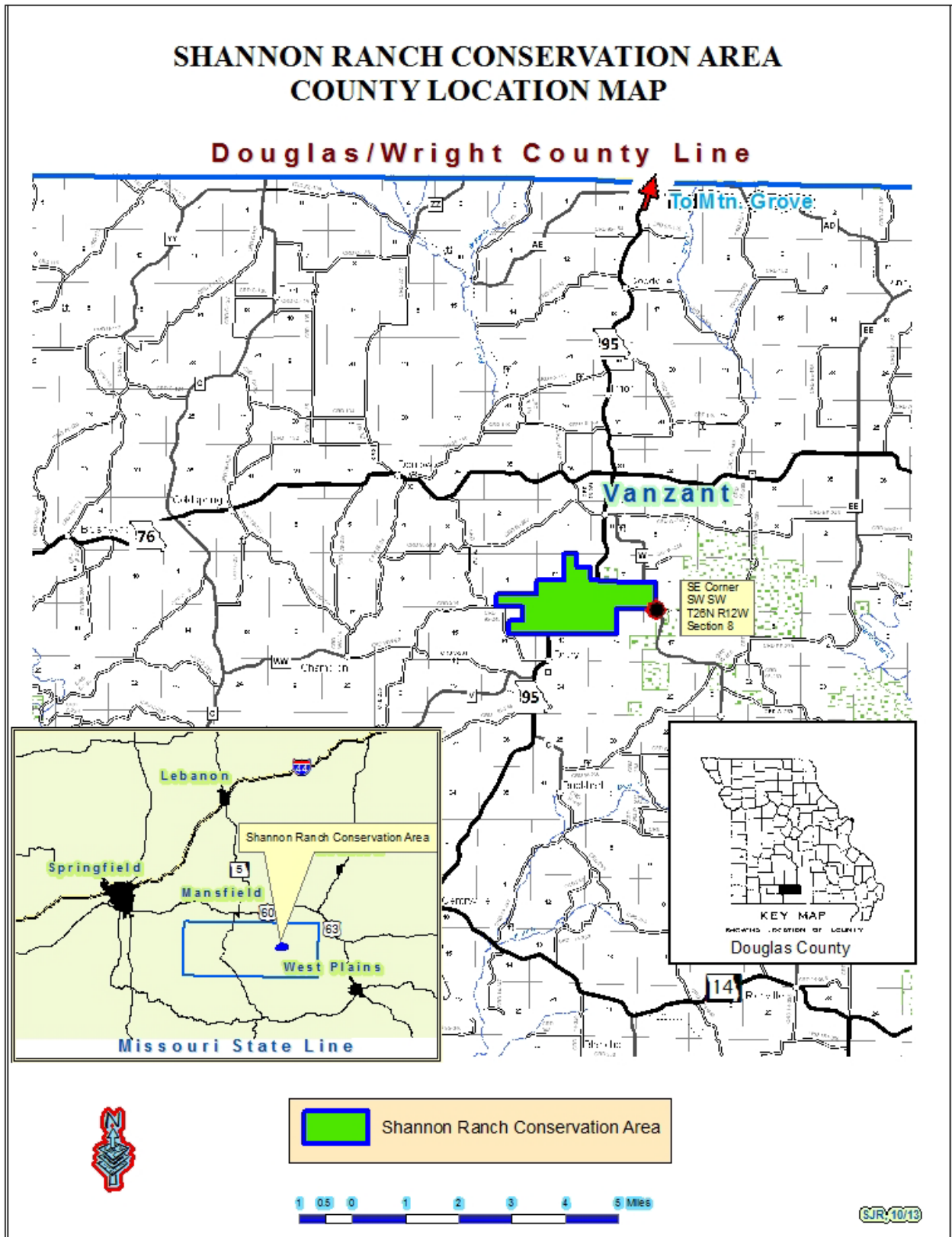


Figure 3: Topographic Map

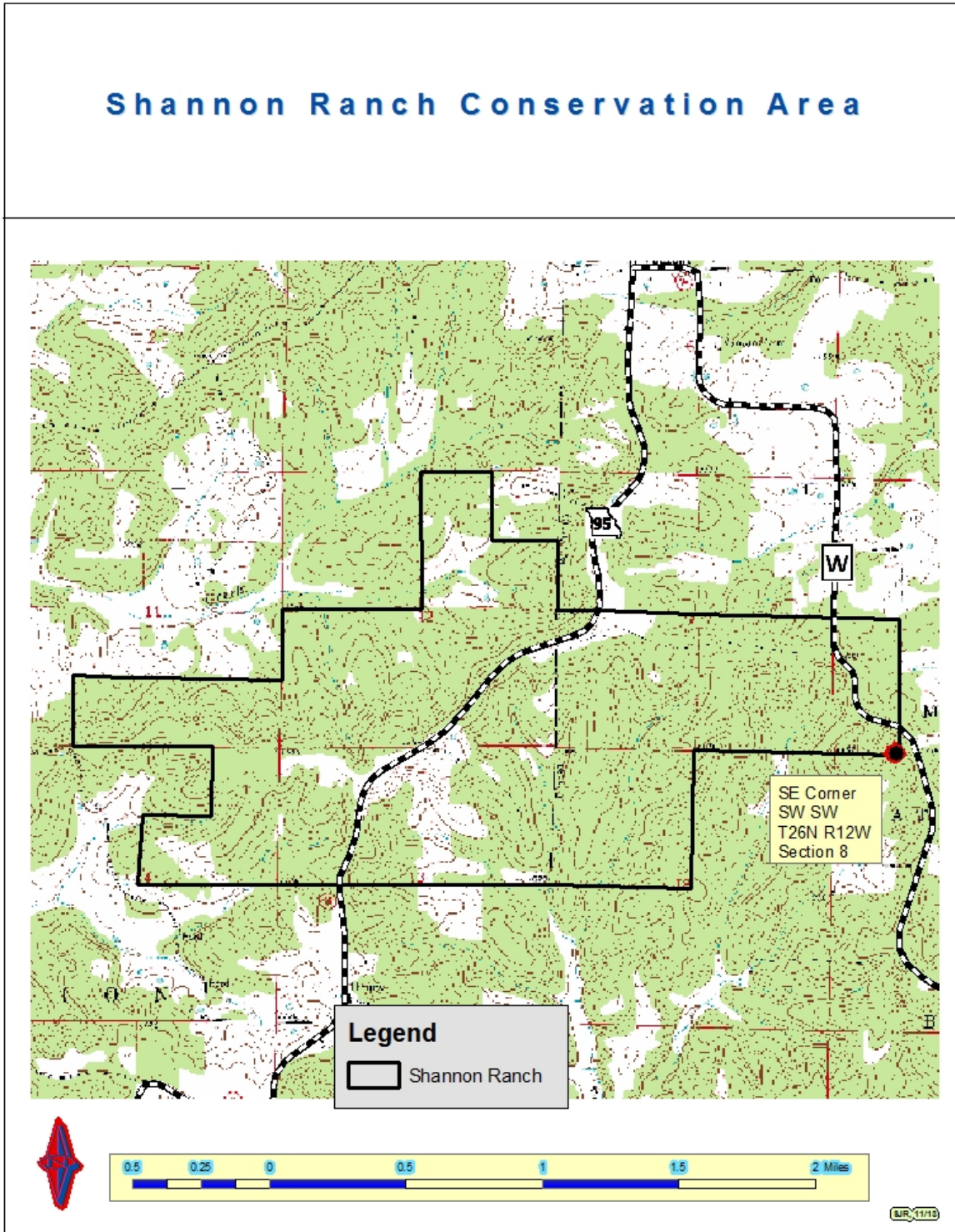


Figure 4: Aerial Map

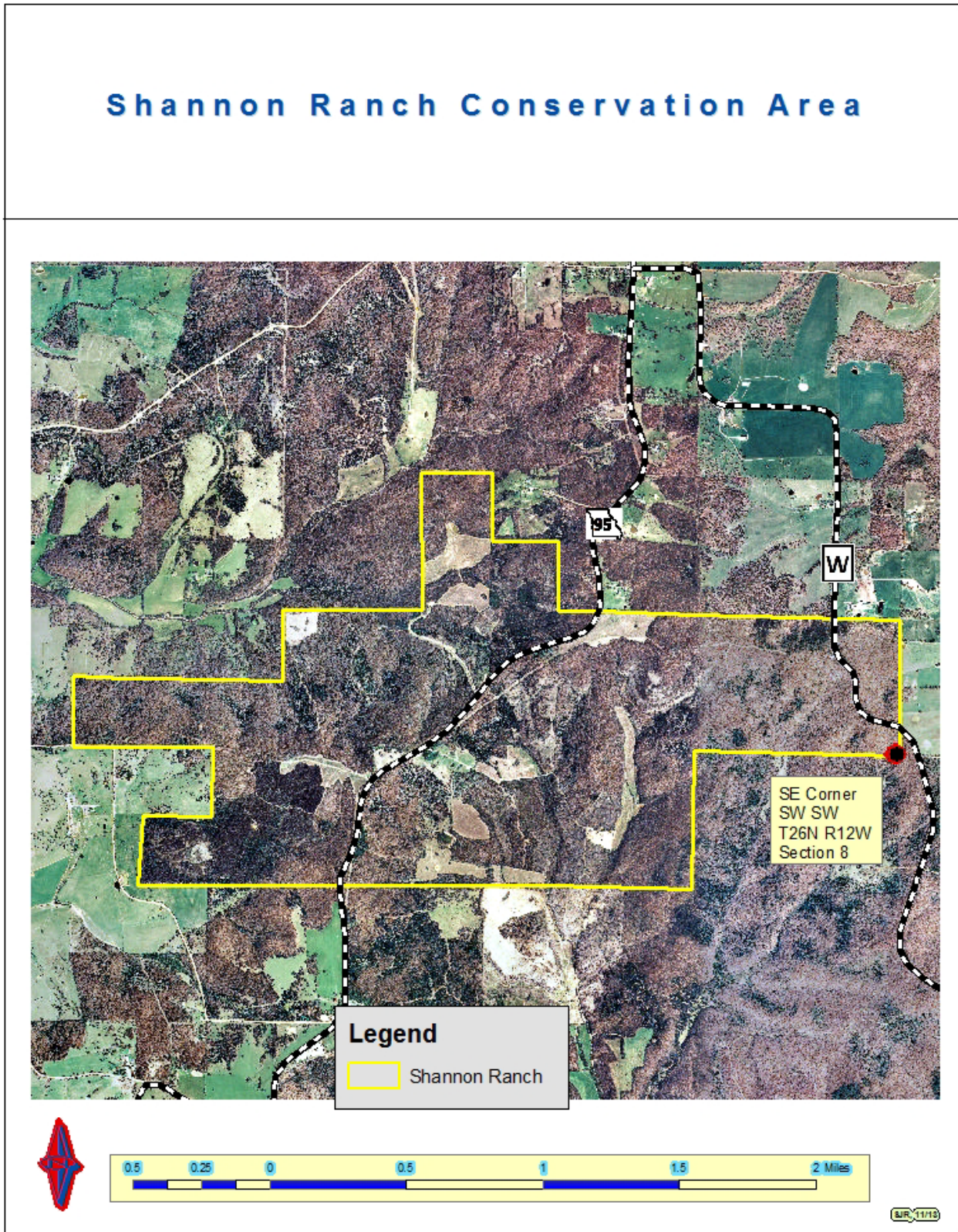


Figure 5: Land Cover Map

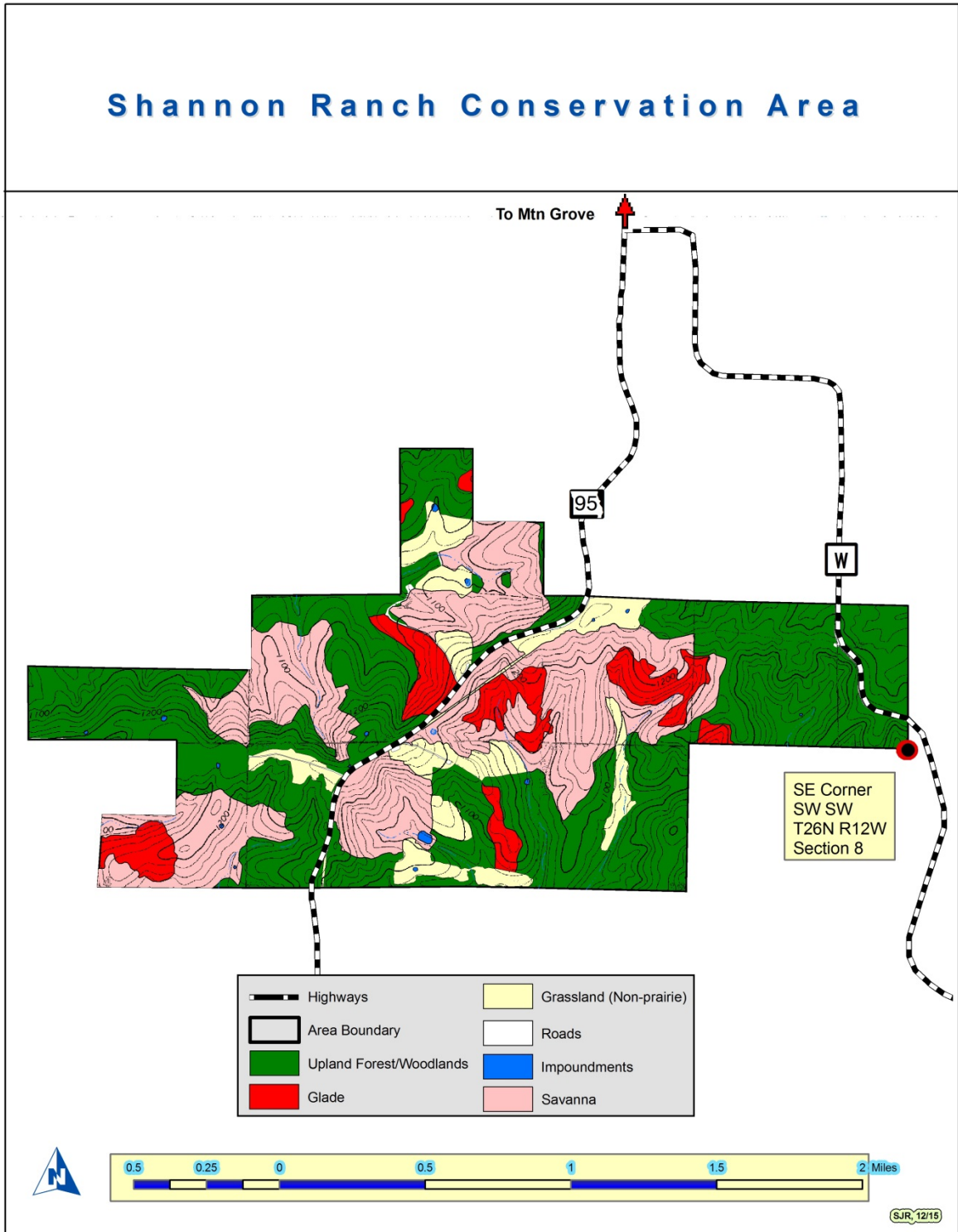
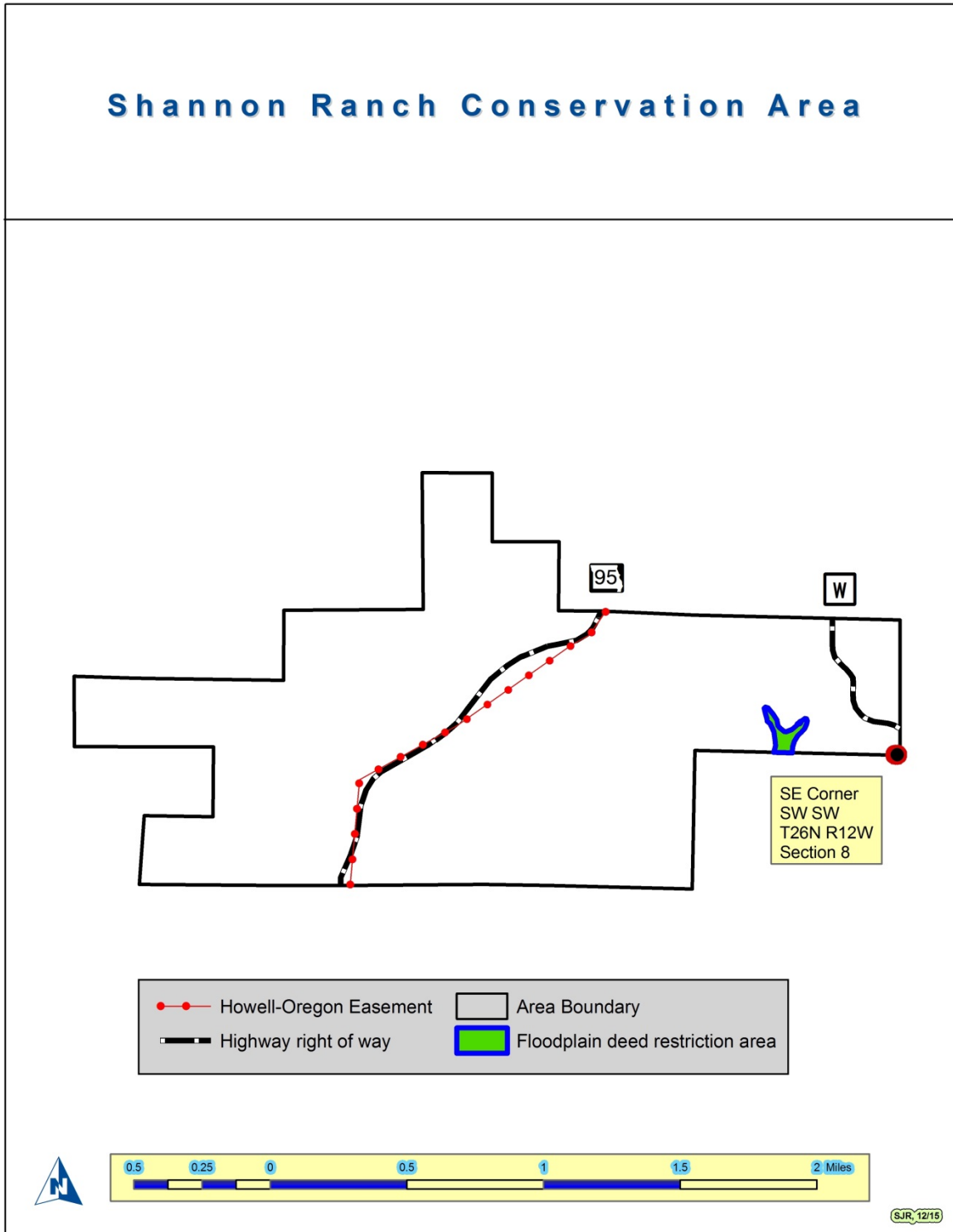


Figure 6: Easement Map



Appendix A. Shannon Ranch Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (February 1-29, 2016):

It is my hope that in your planning for future use of Shannon Ranch C.A. that you would allow for multiuse trails which would include equestrian trails. The acreage allows for the placement of 10-12 miles of trails that when placed by good trail standards could be easily maintained and be sustainable. More trail miles for equestrians is needed to help underserved areas and Douglas County in the area of Shannon Ranch is one of these. The amenities of trail heads already exists along with easy access by road. With the interest and support of volunteer organizations to help maintain and support trails it would not be a drain on MDC man hours. The topography is such that would support well placed trail without harming the environment. There are several chapters of Show-Me MO Back Country Horsemen in close proximity that would be eager to adopt multiuse trails making trails work for all trail users. Please consider making this area open to designated multiuse trails.

I would like to see this area opened up to horseback riding and if terrain permits , mountain biking

When planning the future of Shannon Ranch CA I request the planners consider the construct of trails into this beautiful land. My husband and I love to ride horses in the Ozarks, so equestrian trails would be something I would definitely enjoy. The trails could be multi-use trails. This would allow more Missourians to experience our great state.

how come all the management plans in the ozark region, contain fishless ponds?

First, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Shannon Ranch CA Draft Management Plan. Equestrian trail riders in Douglas County are fortunate to be well served by trails on the Mark Twain National Forest, but, based on the equine population, they are still underserved with respect to public land riding opportunities. Shannon Ranch CA is on the top priority list of Conservation Areas recommended for multi-use trail development in the 2015 “Expanding Public Land Multi-Use Trails in Missouri” proposal by Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen.

Shannon Ranch CA exhibits most desirable characteristics for development of a multi-use trail system. Strong points in favor of trail development are size of the CA(adequate for a minimum of 10-12 miles of trails), topography and landscape (upland), a variety of cover types (forest, glade, grassland, and savanna), and a minimum of conflicting uses. The geographic location south of Mountain Grove (in the north part of Douglas county would provide convenient access for trail users from underserved Texas and Wright Counties, and (last but not least) access to the CA via very good roads.

SMMBCH offers our services (availability of volunteers permitting) to help decide on the best location and then clear and mark the trails. We further offer to assist the Area Manager to develop a partnership with local trail users to assist with development and maintenance with the trails and associated infrastructure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.