

Buford Mountain Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2015-2024



Jessie B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

10-20-15

Date

Buford Mountain Conservation Area Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Matthew E. Jones, Resource Forester

Mark McLain, Wildlife Management Biologist

Paul Cieslewicz, Fisheries Management Biologist

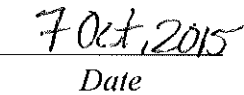
William Barton, Conservation Agent

Pat Holloway, Education Consultant

SOUTHEAST REGION

RCT Chair

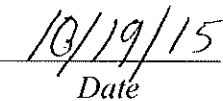

Signature


Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Unit Chief


Signature


Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Buford Mountain Conservation Area, #7727
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1977
- **Acreage:** 3,824 acres
- **County:** Iron and Washington
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry

Statements of Purpose:

A. Strategic Purpose

The purpose of Buford Mountain Conservation Area (CA) is to provide the public with appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities; protect natural features; ensure healthy, sustainable forests; and enhance wildlife habitat diversity.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of Buford Mountain CA is a healthy ecosystem that provides a variety of forest and woodland habitats, complimented by quality glade habitat.

C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

- A. **Priority Areas:** Buford Conservation Opportunity Area, Priority Forest Landscape, Big River Fisheries Priority Watershed
- 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.
- D. **Other:** Bald Knob Glade (10 acres)

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 2 parking areas
- 8 fishless ponds/wildlife watering holes (about 0.25 acre each)
- 10.5 miles hiking trail (non-interpretive)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Subject to a one-third interest in all minerals, as reserved by Lola E. Laramore for the term of her natural life ([Deed of trust], 1965).
- 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:** An electrical service line crosses the conservation area in Section 3, T34N, R3E. There are no records showing formal easement for this service line. A perpetual 30-foot easement to Alfred Fleishman ([Deed of trust], 1969). Records are kept with the Department Environmental Compliance Specialist.
- D. Cultural Resource Findings:** Yes, records kept with the Department Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.
- E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** None observed.
- F. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- G. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

Improve the woodland/glade complex.

Management Objective 1: Protect and enhance igneous glade/woodland complexes.

Strategy 1: Reduce woody vegetation and increase the abundance and diversity of herbaceous vegetation, using prescribed fire (Figure 3), mechanical and or chemical methods.

Strategy 2: Monitor and evaluate results of management to determine fire frequency.

Strategy 3: Develop additional burn units based on the evaluation of prior burns.

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

Manage steep drainages that produce high flow rates and carry high sediment loads during precipitation events.

Management Objective 1: Conduct upland management activities in a way that minimizes any negative impacts on downslope areas (e.g., steep drainage areas).

Strategy 1: Where feasible, use drainages as burn unit boundaries and keep burn lines a safe distance upslope of the center of the drainage.

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

Increase public access to the area.

Management Objective 1: Increase vehicle access to the area.

Strategy 1: Study the possibility of developing additional parking lots on the area.

Management Objective 2: Improve hiking opportunities on the area.

Strategy 2: Design and construct an additional hiking trail.

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

Ensure that boundary lines are easily identifiable.

Management Objective 1: Keep boundary lines in a condition that makes them easy to locate.

Strategy 1: Maintain signs and repaint the boundary lines every five years or sooner, if the paint begins to fade.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Terrestrial Resource Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1	X		X		X		X		X	
Strategy 2		X		X		X		X		X
Strategy 3						X				
Public Use Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1										
Strategy 2			X							
Administrative Consideration										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1	X					X				

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Buford Mountain CA is located in the Belleview Valley area of northern Iron County, approximately 10 miles north of Ironton, Missouri. The conservation area totals 3,824 acres, with 2,786 acres in Iron County and 498 acres in Washington County. The Department purchased the area from The Nature Conservancy in 1979. The area was named after its settlement in 1812 by William Buford, who acquired the land through a Spanish Land Grant. No federal funds were used to purchase the land.

Buford Mountain is the dominant landscape feature of the Belleview Valley. It stretches out in a southeast to northwest direction along its four-mile axis. The mountain is highly visible for miles around. The Missouri Department of Transportation constructed a scenic overlook on Highway 21 that looks out over the west face of the conservation area. Elevations range from 980 feet above sea level to 1,740 feet above sea level, making Buford Mountain the third highest peak in Missouri.

The forest type is typical of the Ozarks and is comprised primarily of oak, hickory and shortleaf pine on the uplands. The hollow bottoms exhibit an abundance of maple and black gum. The understory species are typically dogwood, sassafras and assorted shrubs. A floristic survey of one of the glades on the conservation area identified 132 vascular plant species. One species of conservation concern was collected, and found to be abundant in the wooded areas surrounding the glades (Weaver & Bornstein, 2012).

Approximately 60 percent of the intermittent headwater tributaries on Buford Mountain CA drain into the St. Francis River basin. The remainder of the intermediate headwater tributaries drain into the Big River basin. The steep wet weather stream channels on Buford Mountain support few, if any, fish communities. The high gradient streams do, however, generate enough energy to transport heavy sediment loads during periods of wet weather. The stream resources on the area do not provide significant angling opportunities. Scattered small wildlife watering holes do not provide angling opportunities, but will continue to be managed for reptile and amphibian use.

The area gets moderate use for hunting. Turkey hunters especially enjoy the area. The area is negatively impacted by the use of unauthorized all-terrain-vehicles and periodic vandalism.

There is only one public access point to Buford Mountain CA, which is at the extreme southern end of the area. The entrance road leads a short distance to a parking lot and locked gate. Beyond the locked gate, the service road extends uphill for approximately 1 mile to another parking lot.

That parking lot connects to the hiking trail. Due to vandalism concerns, the gate is only open during deer and turkey hunting seasons.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	3,698	97
Glade	126	3
Total	3,824	100

Public Input Summary:

The draft Buford Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period May 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 3 respondents (Appendix A). The Buford Mountain 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 Buford Mountain Conservation Area public comment period

Suggests allowing horseback riding on trails.

Between the Mark Twain National Forest and Missouri Department of Natural Resources, there are approximately 72 miles of trails open to horseback riding in the vicinity. At the present time the planning team believes there are ample horseback riding opportunities in Iron, Reynolds, Washington, and St. Francois counties.

Glade habitat is scattered throughout Buford Mountain especially along the top of the mountain. The Area Plan calls for increased efforts to reclaim and enhance these glade communities. Glades are a very sensitive habitat and would be negatively affected by horse traffic.

For these reasons, the Planning Team believes that horseback riding should not be allowed on Buford Mountain Conservation Area.

Suggests improving parking area.

The Planning Team will study the possibility of increasing the size of the parking area, without having a negative impact on the surrounding habitat.

Opposes allowing hunters to drive farther into area during hunting season.

The lower parking lot is the only public access to the conservation area. The service road at the parking lot leads up the hill to another parking lot. This road is usually closed due to past incidents of illegal activities. The distance between the two parking lots is approximately one-half mile. During hunting seasons, the area receives more public use than the small lower parking lot can accommodate. The road is open during hunting seasons so that hunters can be dispersed along the road between the two parking lots. The Planning Team believes that the road should continue to be open during hunting seasons.

References:

[Deed of trust, Book 168, Page 268]. (1965). Recorder of Deed's Office, Iron County, Missouri.

[Deed of trust, Book 205, Page 268]. (1969). Recorder of Deed's Office, Iron County, Missouri.

Weaver, J. L., & Bornstein, A. J. (2012). A survey of vascular flora of some igneous glades at Buford Mountain Conservation Area, Missouri. *Castanea*, 77(3), 245-256.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2179/12-002>.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Road/Trail Map

Figure 3: Burn Units Map

Figure 4: Conservation Opportunity Areas Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Buford Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

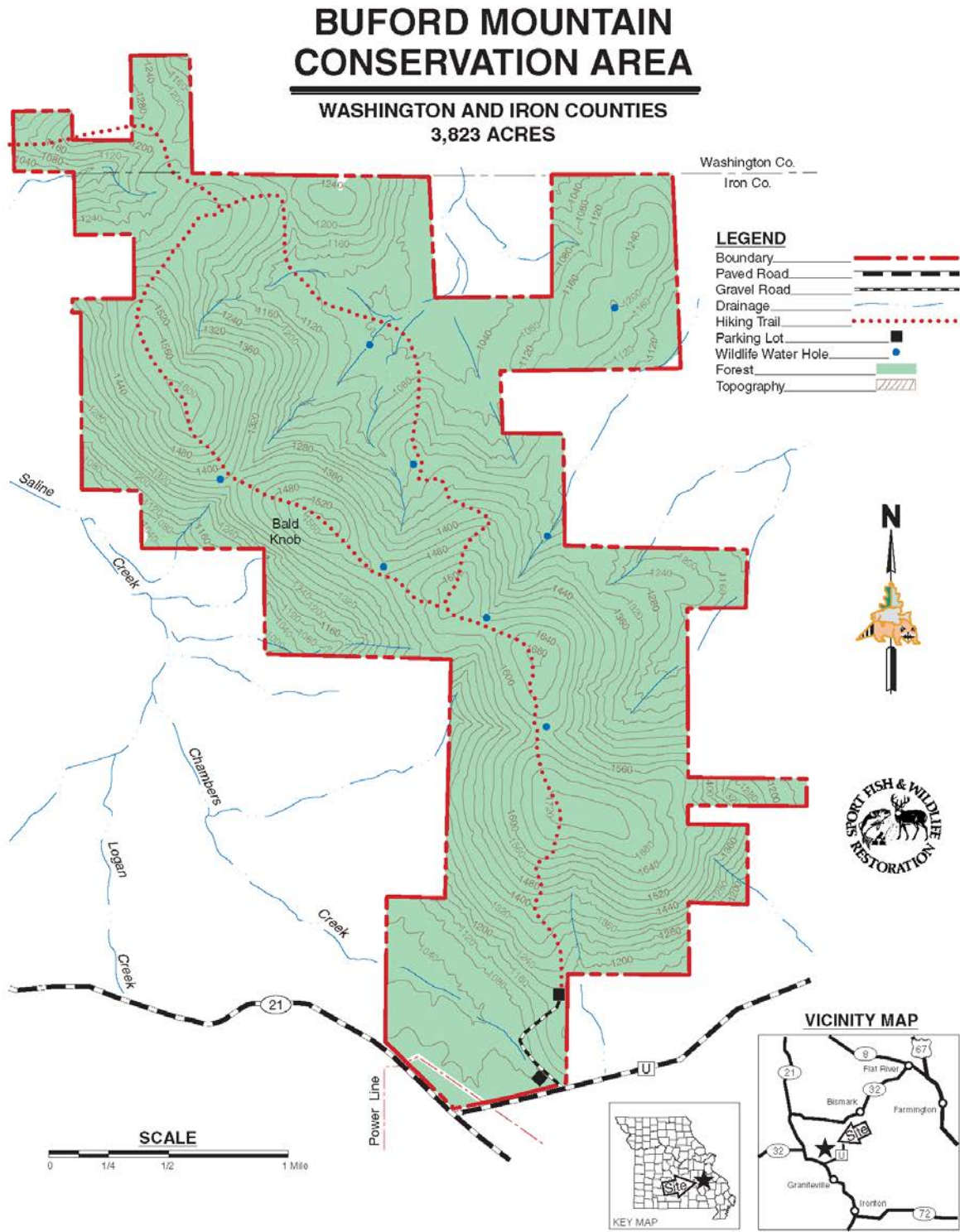


Figure 2: Road/Trail Map

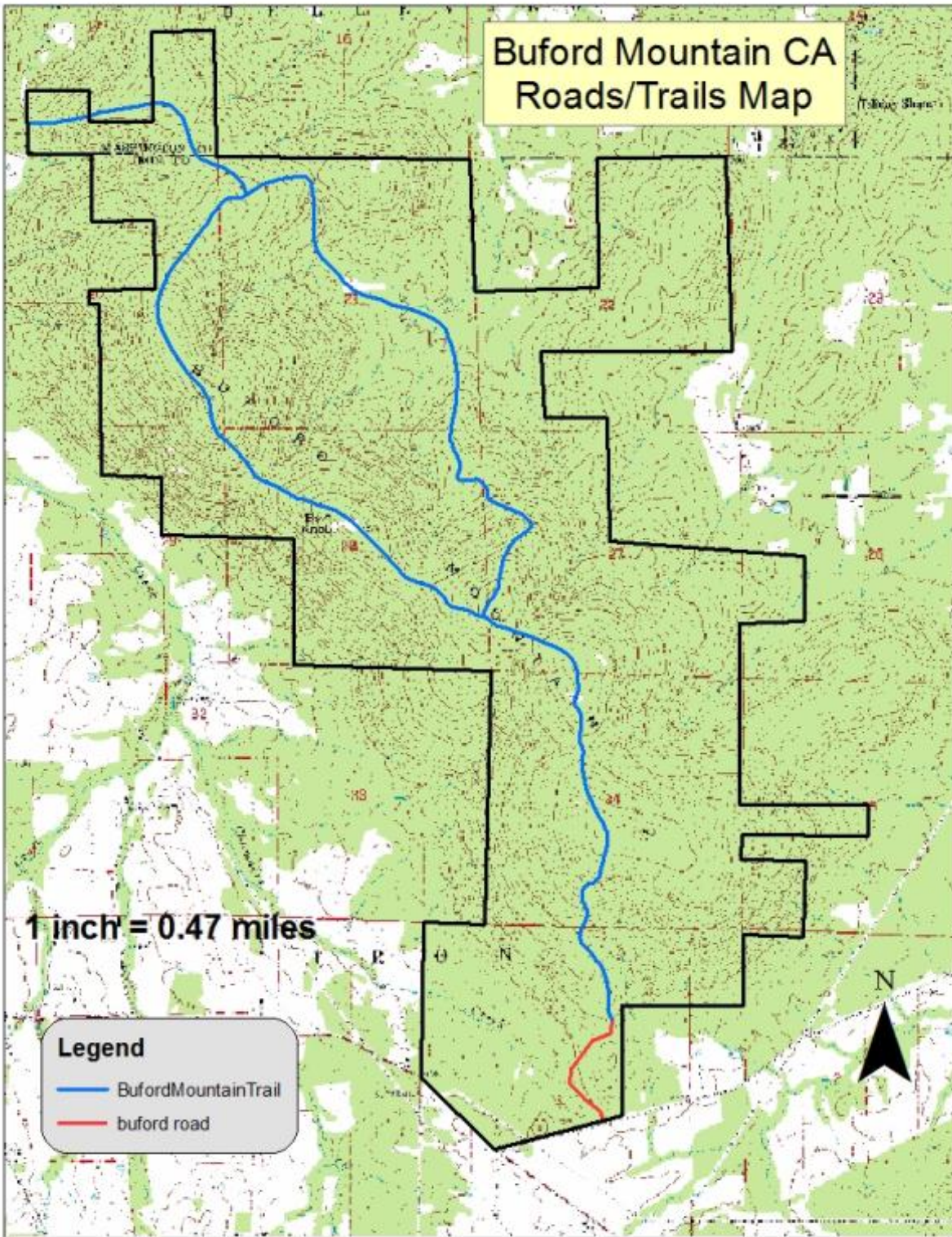


Figure 3: Burn Units Map

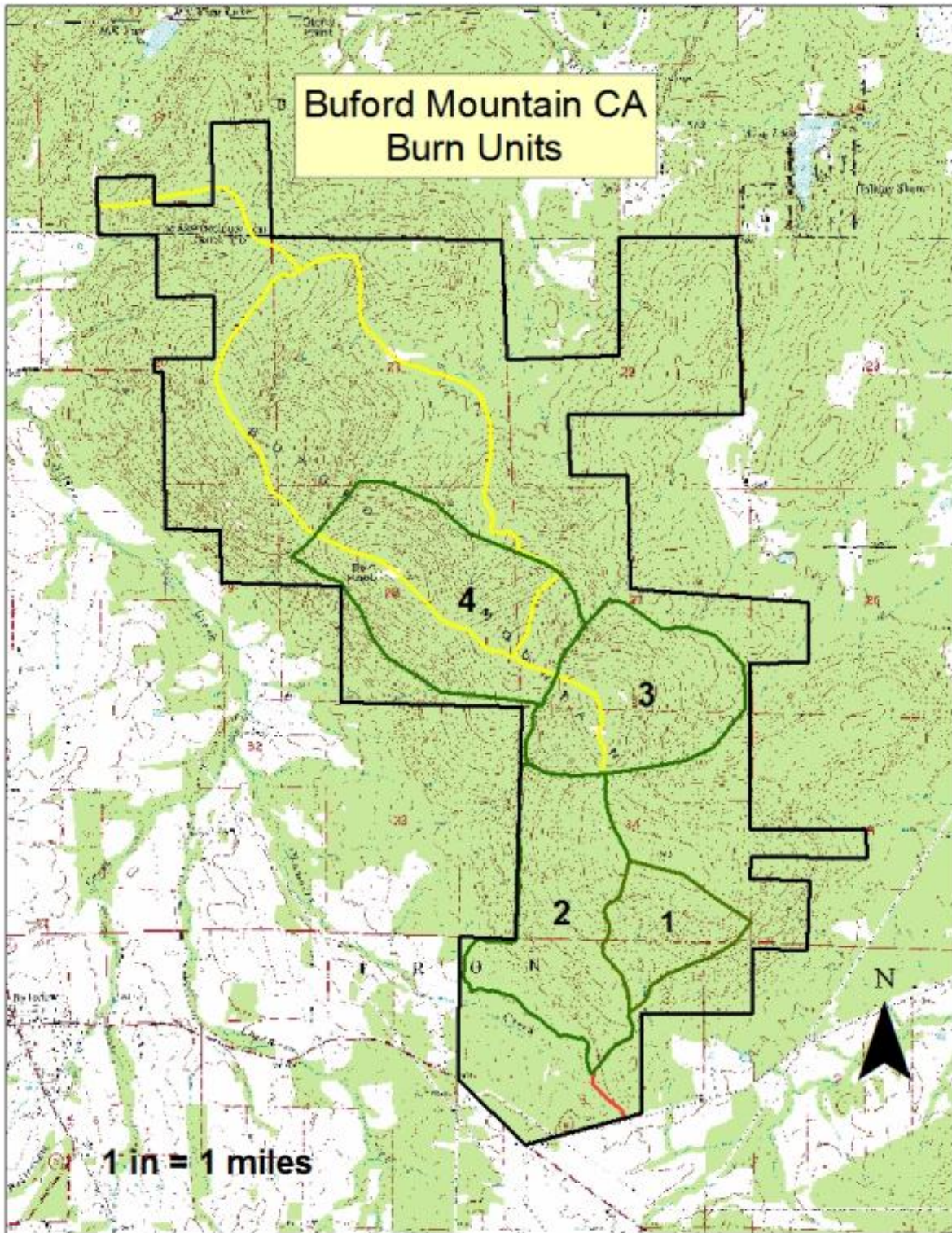
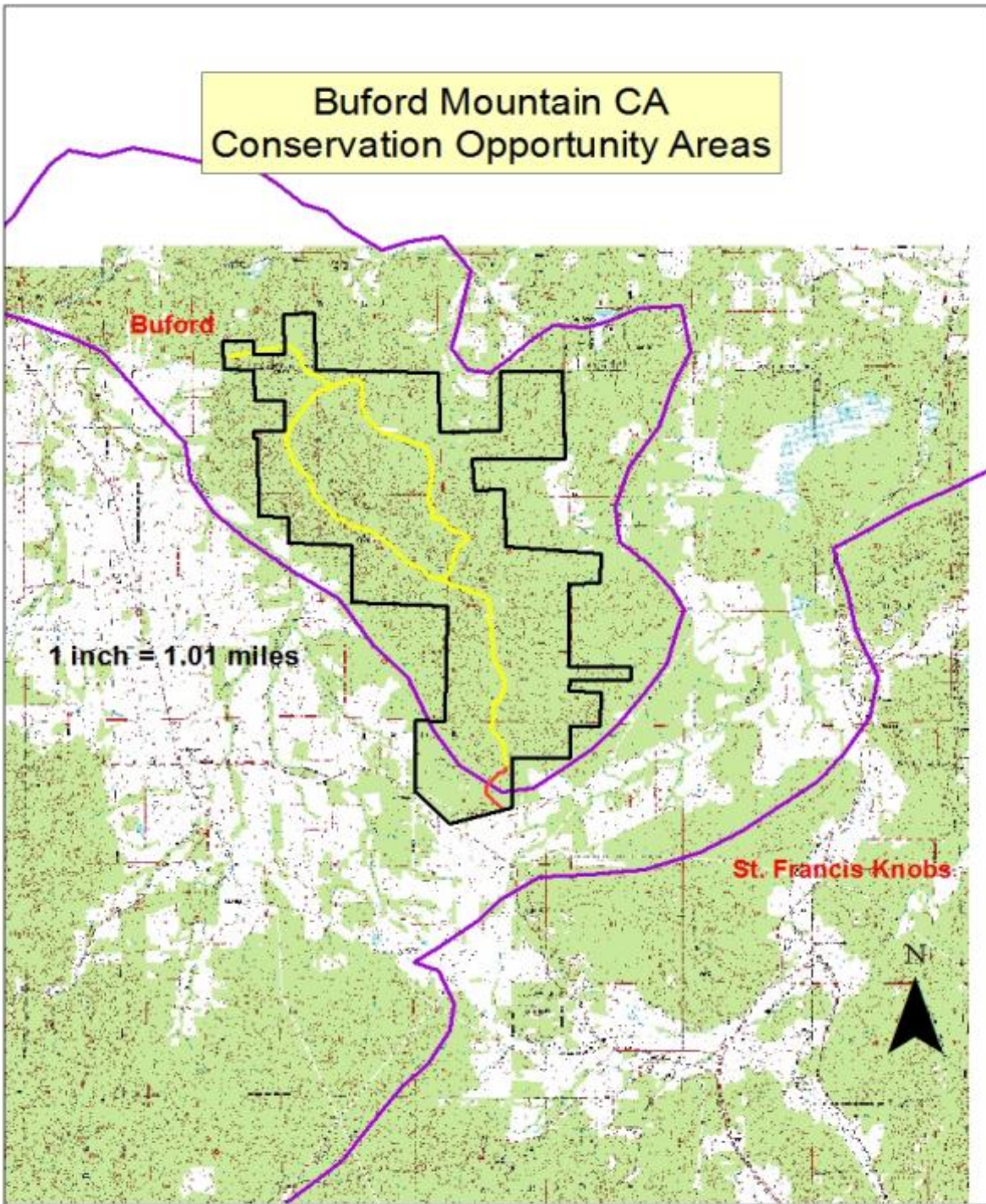


Figure 4: Conservation Opportunity Areas Map



Appendix A: Buford Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (May 1-31, 2015):

Would like equestrian trails included in this area.

Response:

At the present time the Planning Team believes there is ample horseback riding opportunities in Iron, Reynolds, Washington, and St. Francois counties. Between the Mark Twain National Forest and Missouri Department of Natural Resources, there are approximately 72 of trails open to horseback riding.

Glade habitat is scattered throughout Buford Mountain especially along the top of the mountain. The Area Plan calls for increased efforts to reclaim and enhance these glade communities. Glades are a very sensitive habitat and would be negatively affected by horse traffic.

For these reasons the Planning Team believes that horseback riding should not be allowed on Buford Mountain Conservation Area.

I advocate allowing equine use of the trail. If parking can be improved it would allow for enough parking for shared equine and hiker use.

Response:

See the response to the comment above.

I am against opening the gate and allowing hunters to drive deeper into the conservation area. If they want to hunt in a conservation area they should walk in.

Response:

The lower parking lot is the only public access to the conservation area. The service road at the parking lot leads up hill to another parking lot. This road is usually locked closed due to past incidents of illegal activities. The distance between the two parking lots is approximately one-half mile. During hunting seasons the area receives more public use the small lower parking lot can accommodate. The road is open during hunting seasons so that hunters can be dispersed along the road between the two parking lots. The Planning Team believes that the road should continue to be open during hunting seasons.

I contacted Matt Jones and was pleased with our discussion. He was professional and sensitive to landowners. He represented MDC well. I look forward to interacting with him in the future.

First, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Buford Mountain CA Draft Management Plan. Equestrian trail riders in Iron and Washington Counties are fortunate to be well served by trails on the Mark Twain National Forest. Buford Mountain CA is not listed as a high priority candidate for multi-use trail installation in "Expanding Public Land Multi-use Trails in Missouri," a 2015 proposal by Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen. That being said, Buford Mountain CA could provide a high quality outdoor experience opportunity for multi-use trail users and help to meet perceived demand for equestrian trails by riders in nearby Crawford County which is underserved.

Buford Mountain CA offers nearly ideal characteristics for a multi-use trail network. The 3,823 acres of forested upland offers more than ample space for 10-12 (or more) miles of trails. The soils and geology are conducive to trails requiring a minimum of maintenance, providing the trails are properly installed. MO Rt. 21 and MO Rt. U offer safe access for large horse trailers. The absence of a shooting range, public fishing and camping facilities, or other amenities that might attract large numbers of users would minimize any opportunity for conflict between different user groups. No sensitive areas are listed unless one counts the glade on Bald Knob. Some parts of the existing hiking trail could be designated for multi-use, but some segments are too steep and prone to erosion. There is plenty of room on the CA to develop a wonderful trail network totally separate from the existing hiking trail. The only infrastructure needed is a large parking lot; it appears the relatively gently sloping land near Rt. U would permit such an installation. SMMBCH offers our services (availability of volunteers permitting) to help decide on the best location and then clear and mark the trails.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Response:

See the response to the first comment.