

Catawissa Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2026



Joia B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

12-30-16

Date

Catawissa Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Jen Girondo, Fisheries Management Biologist

Lia Heppermann, Private Land Conservationist

Tony Legg, Outdoor Education Center Supervisor

Kyle Lorenz, Wildlife Resource Technician

Benjamin Pursley, Conservation Agent

Jason Villwock, Resource Forester

ST. LOUIS REGION


RCT Chair


Signature

Dec. 12, 2016
Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief


Signature

12-22-16
Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Catawissa Conservation Area, # 7853
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1978
- **Acreage:** 199.3 acres
- **County:** Franklin
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Primary Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for wildlife, aquatic resources, and compatible recreational opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Catawissa Conservation Area (CA) is forested river access with small man-made lakes and a wooded riparian buffer of the Meramec River.
 - 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:** 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:** None
 - D. Other:** Occurs in the Pacific Alluvial Plain landtype association. This landtype association consists of flat alluvial plains of the Meramec River and its tributaries before entering the Burlington Escarpment. Historically, this landtype association was timbered in bottomland forest. (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).
- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - Two parking lots
 - One concrete boat ramp

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:** None
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** Endangered Species are not known from this site, but are found in the surrounding area. Area Managers should consult annually with the Natural History Biologist.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Catawissa CA contains about 120 acres of bottomland forest and about 25 acres of upland oak woodland. The bottomland forest was once cleared for sand and gravel mining. Since then the forest has grown up over the last 35 years into an early successional mix of species such as sycamore, elm, ash, and other light-seeded species. The upland woodland is dominated by an oak overstory.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The Meramec River regularly floods this area influencing the vegetation.
- 2) Invasive species are found on the area (e.g., bush honeysuckle, tree of heaven, etc.). There is a threat of future invasive species infestations.

Management Objective 1: Maintain flood adapted forested cover on the area to minimize soil erosion and provide wildlife habitat.

Strategy 1: Monitor post-flood events and other disturbances to ensure trees remain established on the area. If there is significant tree mortality on the area, natural seeding or hand planting of seedlings will be used to re-establish forest on the area. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Sustain wildlife habitat and watershed protection by ensuring that native species dominate the landscape.

Strategy 1: Annually monitor for invasive species that are threatening the forest or displacing native species on the area. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: If invasive species threaten native overstory species, cut, pull, and/or utilize herbicides to control invasive plant species. (Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The area provides protection to the Meramec River.
- 2) Non-native species currently are found on the area (e.g., Asian carp, Asian clams, etc.). There is a threat of future non-native species invasions.

Management Objective 1: Maintain riparian corridor for protection to the Meramec River.

Strategy 1: Maintain forested riparian corridors according to Missouri Department of Conservation 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watershed to Protect Streams (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Minimize impacts from non-native aquatic plant and animal species on the area to maintain aquatic habitat and allow for a functional native aquatic community.

Strategy 1: Monitor for non-native species, and implement appropriate control measures. (Fisheries)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage area to limit trash, property damage, and to avoid user conflicts.
- 2) Maintain good relationships with neighboring landowners.
- 3) The area provides recreational hunting, fishing and boating opportunities.
- 4) Catawissa CA offers year-round boat access to a gravel pit lake, but only seasonal boat access the Meramec River due to sedimentation from the river into gravel pit lakes that limits boat traffic during low-water periods.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area in a manner which promotes the area's aesthetics and utility for the public.

Strategy 1: Perform routine trash pickup, paint or replace area signs, and conduct other maintenance activities. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Clear sediment and debris off boat ramp and parking lots after flood events. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Paint boundary trees and maintain signs along boundary lines every five years. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Provide public hunting and fishing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Ensure that public hunting and fishing opportunities are listed in the annual regulation booklets and signs on area. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Explore opportunities to improve boat access to the Meramec River.

Strategy 1: Assess feasibility of improving the connection of the channel pit lake to the Meramec River to increase number of days that boats can travel through the channel. (Fisheries, Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Vandalism, littering, and illegal activities occur on area.

Management Objective 1: Reduce vandalism, regulation violations, and littering.

Strategy 1: Maintain infrastructure to encourage good public stewardship. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Ensure area regulations and policies are clearly posted. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Perform regular area inspections and patrols. (Forestry, Protection)

Strategy 4: Utilize open communication with Conservation Agents about activities on the area and address issues as they are reported. (Forestry, Protection)

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Public Use Management Considerations										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 3			X					X		

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Catawissa Conservation Area (CA) is in eastern Franklin County between Pacific and Catawissa. The area was originally acquired in 1978 and was an old gravel mining operation in the floodplain of the Meramec River. The goal of the area was originally to provide year-round access to the Meramec River. Due to sediment deposition by Meramec River flooding, the access has since changed to a seasonal access that is accessible when the river is high enough to connect the gravel pit lake where the boat ramp is located with the river.

The area is mostly forested with early successional bottomland species that have grown up since the area was initially acquired and also has about 53 acres of man-made lakes that used to be gravel mining pits in which the water level is controlled by the Meramec River.

This property provides boat- and bank-fishing access to the several small man-made lakes as well as seasonal boat access to the Meramec River during periods of elevated water levels on the river.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Bottomland forest	120.3		60
Man-made lakes	53.0		27
Woodland	25.2		13
Other – parking lot and boat ramp	0.8		<1
Total	199.3		100
Frontage on the Meramec River		2,180	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Catawissa Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period April 1–30, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from seven respondents (Appendix A). The Catawissa 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 Catawissa Conservation Area public comment period

Suggests managing area for waterfowl. Suggests allowing waterfowl hunting.

Current regulations allow waterfowl hunting on the area with temporary blinds that have to be built and removed daily. It would be very difficult to intensely manage the area for waterfowl due to its small size and because of the gravel pits, frequent flooding, gravel substrate, and lack of water control.

Suggests maintaining year-round access to the Meramec River.

The area planning team agreed that it would be ideal to have year-round access to the Meramec River and have addressed the desire in Public Use Management Objective 3 – Strategy 1. We are unsure of the cost in terms of constructing and maintaining the infrastructure to allow year round access in an area that often undergoes drastic flooding. We plan to assess the feasibility of such a project, and if approved as a budget and staff time priority, we would implement such a project.

Suggests adding canals to connect all of the area lakes for boating and fishing.

This area is subject to frequent and substantial flooding. We prefer to invest limited time and money in other waterbodies that are better suited to provide reliable, quality fishing and boating at lower costs.

Suggests adding trails to access other lakes.

Clearing and maintaining trails in a flood prone area can be a costly challenge, but staff will look into providing more access trails, if feasible, for access to more bank fishing opportunities.

Concern about amount of vandalism on area. Suggests adding a gate that would be locked after hours to prevent partying and vandalism.

Conservation agents visit all conservation areas, but due to timing, job responsibilities, and number of conservation areas, catching vandals can be very challenging. Catawissa CA is open from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. (hunting, fishing, trapping, and boat launching are allowed 24 hours a day). We do not have employees who work regular hours to secure gates, and we have very few locking gates on conservation areas. Calling the Regional Office or your local conservation agent to report vandalism is appreciated. All agents are listed on the Department's website at mdc.mo.gov.

References:

- Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.
- Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Current Vegetation Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Catawissa Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

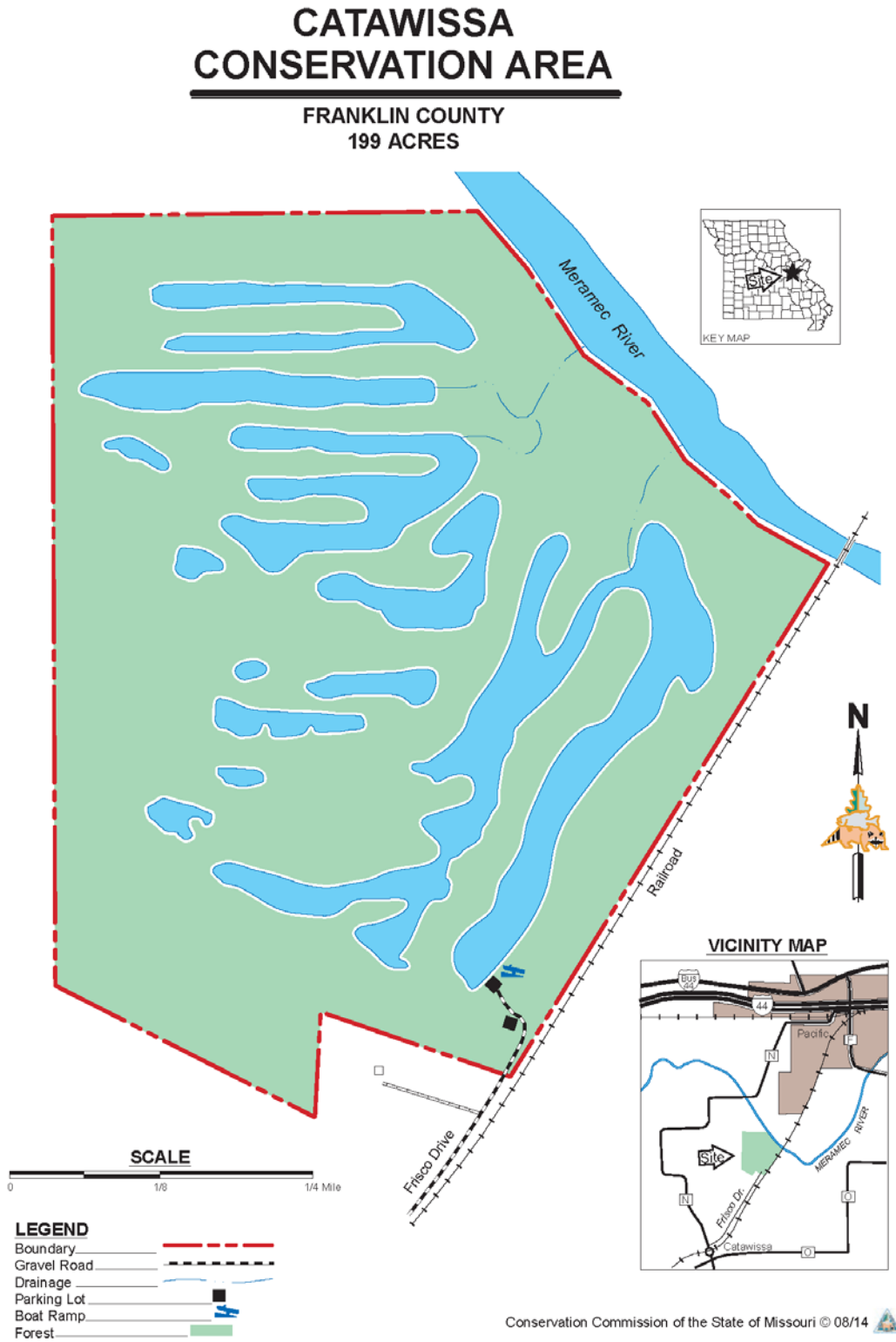


Figure 2: Aerial Map

Catawissa Conservation Area Aerial Map (2009)



Legend

□ AreaBoundary



Figure 3: Topographic Map

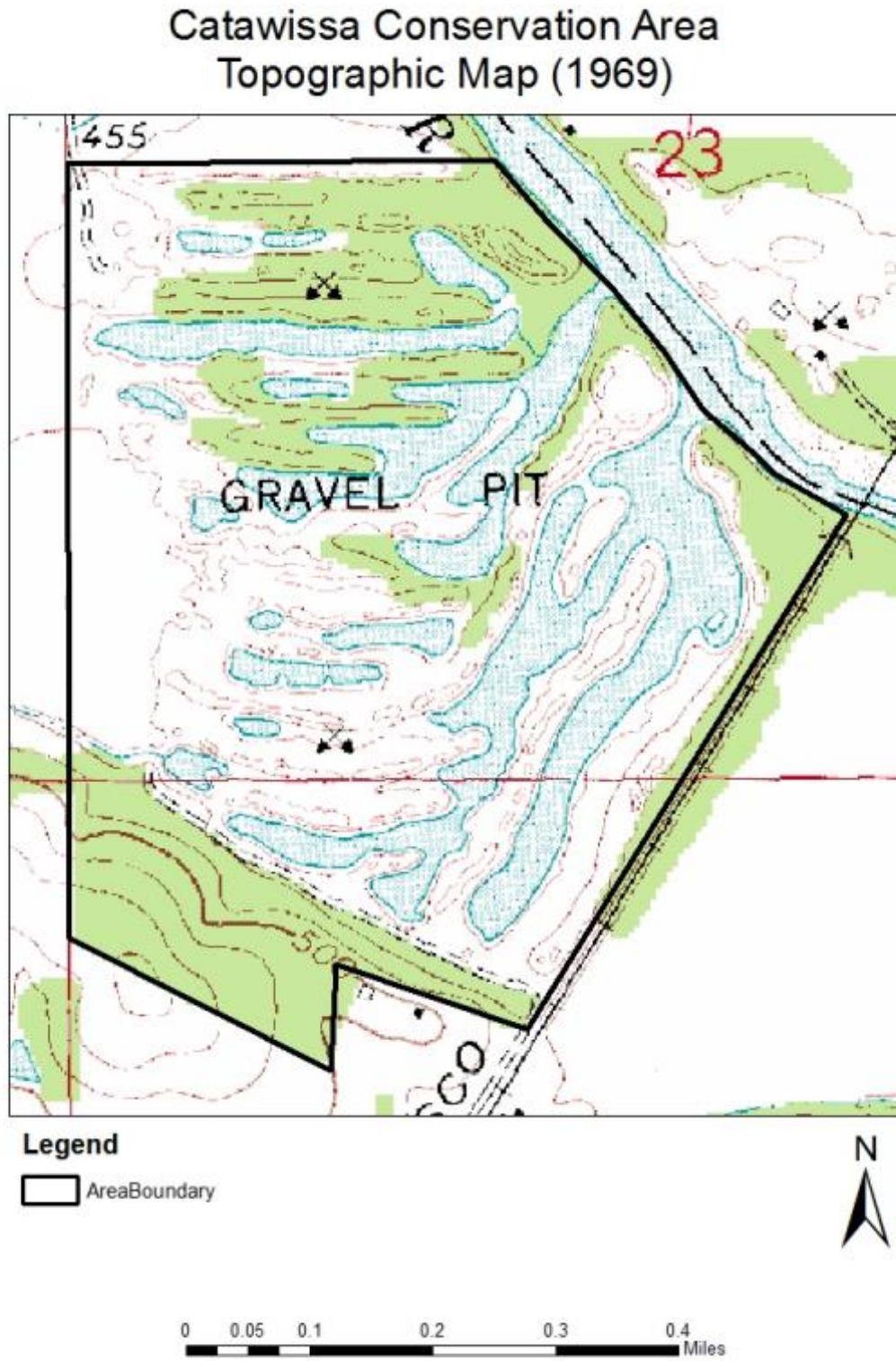


Figure 4: Current Vegetation Map



Appendix A: Catawissa Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (April 1-30, 2016):

I have kayaked in this area just once when the water level was high enough to access via the Meramec. The area has a great deal of potential for recreational small boats (canoe & kayak) if you can maintain year-round access via the Meramec. Canals connecting all of the lakes together would make this a terrific place for boating and fishing.

Can we start hunting, or at least start managing this are for waterfowl? There are few people in the area during waterfowl season but there is an abundance of waterfowl. There are also very few public waterfowl hunting areas in this part of the state.

MDC could turn this into a prime waterfowl habitat, if not for hunting it would make a great refuge.

I read over the projected 10 year management plan and think MDC is heading in the right direction with maintaining the Catawissa CA. I frequent the area periodically to fish and would like to see trails leading to other bodies of water across the CCA besides the first stretch. One of the best spots to fish is heading just west of the parking lot towards the backside of the large reservoir. Its about 100ft but depending on the season it is a hassle to hike. Thank You.

I think this conservation area has potential to be a phenomenal duck hunting area. I would like to see improved hunting and fishing opportunities. This however may be difficult due to the vandalism taking place on the area.

My property joins yours. For the most part it is used for fishing by day. At night , all hours it is cars doing dounuts in the parking lot loud music and who knows. I know you cannot be everywhere and I know if you came down tonight know one will be there. I have talked to our local agent he is here often. Wish you could close a gate after hours. I know these are useful areas . this is all the property is good for. thank you for lisening.

Since this area is close to St. Louis as well as other small communities, there should be hiking trails and/or bike trails. If this is a problem because of river flooding, I understand but if not there should be trails around or leading to the lakes. It would also make it easier for fishermen. I think that birders would also visit this area if it were more user friendly.

I would like to see access to the many lakes made easier via trails or something similar. This would benefit the bank fisherman and attract more people to the area. More people could discourage vandalism and other nuisance activities.