

Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Plan
FY 2017-2026



[Signature]

Wildlife Division Chief

15 FEB 2017

Date

Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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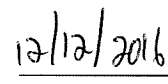
Dennis Keller, Lead Equipment Operator

CENTRAL REGION

Central RCT Chair



Signature



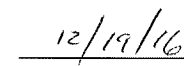
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WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief



Signature



Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, #8931
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1989
- **Acreage:** 4,429 acres
- **County:** Boone
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**

A. Strategic Direction

The primary purpose of Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area (CA) is to restore and manage a dynamic wetland system; provide food and sanctuary to migratory water birds and resident wildlife; and furnish the public with a diversity of enjoyable outdoor recreational opportunities, with an emphasis on providing quality waterfowl hunting, superior wildlife viewing, and educational programs that promote conservation of dynamic wetland systems.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of Eagle Bluffs CA is a diverse wetland habitat for resident wildlife and migratory waterbirds and an area that provides a variety of recreational opportunities.

C. Federal Aid Statement

This area, or a portion thereof, was acquired or developed with North American Wetlands Conservation Act funds to conserve and restore wetland habitats.

This area, or a portion thereof, was acquired with Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funds to restore and manage wildlife, conserve and restore suitable wildlife habitat and provide public access for hunting or other wildlife-oriented recreation.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Consideration

A. Priority Areas: Mid Missouri Riverlands Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area, Manitou Bluffs Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area, Priority Forest Landscape, Audubon Missouri Important Bird Area

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

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 26 parking lots (three Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] accessible)
- Gravel roads open to public vehicles, 9.6 miles
- One office building
- One barn
- One grain bin
- One junction box building
- One river pump station
- Two ADA-accessible waterfowl hunting/wildlife viewing blinds
- Hiking trails, 3.2 miles
- Levees, 30 miles
- 43 water control structures
- Two privies (ADA accessible)
- One observation/ viewing deck on top of bluff

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:

- Since 1990, 30 acres have been leased to the City of Columbia for wetland cell number two through a 99-year lease agreement.

B. Federal Interest:

- Uses of land acquired with federal funds may not interfere with the purpose for which it was acquired. Federal funds may also 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.
- This land must be used to conserve and restore wetlands. The federal funds made available under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) may not be used for fish and wildlife mitigation purposes under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act or the Water Resources Development Act of 1986. Federal funds may also 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:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Fish and Wildlife Missouri River Recovery Program easement, McBaine Wetlands.
- Smith, Lillie Beatrice - waterline easement
- Davidson, Allene V., Trustee, Roberts, Nellie R., Smith, Robert G. Jr. – electric, pipeline, county road, waterline, Fish and Wildlife Missouri River Recovery Program easement
- Sapp Trust – Fish and Wildlife Missouri River Recovery Program easement
- Holiman, Bud - sewer easement. This easement was transferred in 1991 with the stipulation that it was only in effect until sewage facilities are available.
- Holiman Trust - fiber optic communications system easement
- Holiman Trust - waterline (City of Columbia, expires Feb. 21, 2082)
- McBaine Levee District – levee easement
- Williams Gas Pipelines Central, Inc. – pipeline easement
- Ralph and Dick Johnson – roadway easement

D. Cultural Resources Findings: Yes, records kept with Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) environmental compliance specialist. Managers should follow best management practices for cultural resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.

E. Endangered Species: Endangered species are known from this area. Area managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the natural history biologist.

F. 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) Manage for diverse wetland habitats to meet the life history needs of resident and migratory wildlife.
- 2) Manage the forest communities.
- 3) Manage upland open lands for diverse grassland/forb plant species.
- 4) Control invasive plant species (e.g., sericea lespedeza, reed canary grass, Japanese hops, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, and Johnson grass).

Management Objective 1: Manage diverse wetland habitats to meet the life history needs of resident and migratory wildlife.

Strategy 1: Manipulate water levels to alter plant composition and structure, create dynamic littoral zones, and provide food resources for wildlife. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Use permittee farmers, disking, mowing, and other treatments to manipulate fields to set back woody encroachment and provide food for wintering waterfowl. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Seasonally provide shallow water and mudflats for migrating shorebirds. (Wildlife)

Strategy 4: Manage moist soil vegetation to maximize plant growth and seed production. (Wildlife)

Strategy 5: Provide emergent marsh habitat for secretive marsh birds. (Wildlife)

Strategy 6: Provide open water for wading birds. (Wildlife)

Strategy 7: Implement techniques that enhance the abundance of swamp milkweed. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Manage forest communities.

Strategy 1: Use mechanical, prescribed fire, or other techniques to manage bluff top woodland complexes. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Plant tree seedlings, where needed, to maintain riparian corridors that are at least 100 feet in width. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Conduct upland forest inventory in FY2017. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Manage the open lands that are not impacted by moist soil management for a diverse grassland/forb plant species.

Strategy 1: Use disturbance factors (prescribed fire, soil disturbance, herbicide applications, mechanical woody vegetation control or other techniques) to maintain desired early successional habitat. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Enhance crop field borders with native forbs and grasses. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Control invasive plant species (e.g., sericea lespedeza, reed canary grass, Japanese hops, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, and Johnson grass).

Strategy 1: Reduce invasive plant species to levels that will have minimal impacts to terrestrial habitats. (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Restore and manage a diverse wetland ecosystem for multiple resources and public benefits, utilizing City of Columbia effluent as a partial water source.
- 2) Provide connectivity between the Missouri River and the floodplain.
- 3) Prevent excessive stream bank erosion along Perche Creek.

Management Objective 1: Restore and manage a diverse wetland ecosystem for multiple resources and public benefits, utilizing the City of Columbia's effluent as a partial water source.

Strategy 1: Use effluent to provide year-round habitat for aquatic species. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Provide connectivity between the river and the floodplain.

Strategy 1: Allow water to flow through fish-friendly structures and reconnect the Missouri River to the floodplain to enhance fish reproduction and foraging opportunities. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Prevent excessive stream bank erosion along Perche Creek.

Strategy 1: Evaluate riparian corridors and widen them with tree plantings, when necessary. All work will be in accordance with the *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Monitor condition of stream banks and consult with Fisheries and Design and Development staffs for solutions to bank erosion issues. (Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide area users with varied recreational opportunities (e.g., hunting, fishing, hiking, photography, and nature viewing).
- 2) During waterfowl season, people without Daily Waterfowl Hunt Tags trespass and enter areas closed to them, which disturbs waterfowl refuge areas or interferes with waterfowl hunting.
- 3) The area includes considerable infrastructure (roads, trails, buildings) for public enjoyment, which requires significant maintenance.
- 4) Provide a quality managed hunt program for area users.
- 5) Work with partner groups to provide outreach and education events.

Management Objective 1: Provide area users with varied recreational opportunities (e.g., hunting, fishing, hiking, photography, and nature viewing).

Strategy 1: Provide current habitat information and wildlife hunting and viewing opportunities via the internet, hotline, and personal communication. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Mow along roadways at key locations so that wildlife is easily visible from a vehicle. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Provide diverse habitats near roads that attract a variety of wildlife for viewing. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Educate visitors about area regulations and accessibility.

Strategy 1: Maintain and update proper signage to ensure that all area users fully understand the area regulations. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Enforce area rules and regulations. (Protection)

Strategy 3: Utilize each opportunity to inform the public of the area regulations via personal communication. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: The area includes considerable infrastructure (roads, trails, buildings), which require significant maintenance.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure so that it is inviting to the public. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Provide a quality managed hunt program for area users.

Strategy 1: Conduct managed hunts for dove, waterfowl or other species as appropriate to allocate hunting opportunities that promote safe and quality hunting. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Provide rail hunting opportunities by flooding moist soil vegetation in September and October. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Provide fall snipe hunting opportunities in harvested crop fields by creating edge habitats as water levels increase. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Provide information at the waterfowl draws that emphasize hunter safety and ethics. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 5: Work with partner groups to provide outreach and education events.

Strategy 1: Work with volunteer groups to provide special events. (e.g., waterfowl banding, youth clinics and educational habitat programs). (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Provide educational programs for conservation partner organizations, university, and school groups. (Outreach and Education)

Strategy 3: Utilize opportunities for volunteers to be involved with area management (as per policy) and wildlife population surveys. (Wildlife)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Enforce area and statewide regulations to ensure protection for area users and resources.
- 2) Cooperate with the City of Columbia and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to maintain water quality.
- 3) Partner with the McBaine Levee District to maintain the flood protection levee.
- 4) Maintain water delivery infrastructure to ensure that water management strategies can be implemented.
- 5) The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funded the development of 775 wetland acres through a mitigation partnership and continues to provide funds for operation and maintenance.

Management Objective 1: Enforce area and statewide regulations to ensure protection for area users and wildlife resources.

Strategy 1: Work in cooperation with Department conservation agents and other law enforcement to enforce and investigate violations of the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* and other state laws. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Work with the City of Columbia and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to ensure water quality.

Strategy 1: Attend an annual meeting with City of Columbia staff who represent the Water and Light and the Public Works Divisions to ensure that procedures are being followed. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Provide water flow records to the City of Columbia and its contractors when requested. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Use the Flow Management Plan (a working document between the City and Eagle Bluffs managers) to manage effluent flows so that the City of Columbia is not in violation of their waste water treatment permit. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Partner with the McBaine Levee District to maintain the flood protection levee.

Strategy 1: Follow U.S. Army Corps of Engineers standards for maintenance of the flood protection levee. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Maintain water delivery infrastructure to ensure management strategies can be implemented.

Strategy 1: Follow manufacturers’ recommendations for maintenance of pumps and water control structures and repair as needed. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

Strategy 2: Keep channels clear of silt, debris, and blockages so water flows freely. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

Management Objective 5: Cooperate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage the mitigation acres.

Strategy 1: Provide annual management plan and report management activities to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as required. (Wildlife)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, inholdings and/or 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.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations										
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 3	X									
Public Use Management Considerations										
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1	X			X			X			

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area (CA) is in Boone County at the southwest edge of Columbia, near McBaine. The Missouri River and Perche Creek provide over 10 miles of stream frontage on Eagle Bluffs. Through the years, the Missouri River has changed its course many times. The town of Providence, across Perche Creek from Eagle Bluffs, was once on the bank of the Missouri before the river changed its course in the late 1800s. Providence is now almost a mile north of the river.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) purchased and developed this 4,431-acre area to help offset the loss of nearly 90 percent of Missouri's historical wetlands. The area's wetlands have been restored by creating 17 shallow pools. The wetland management infrastructure includes 30 miles of levees, 43 water control structures, river water supply pumps, a water supply junction box, pump-out facilities, and a pipeline linking the area to the City of Columbia's wastewater treatment wetlands. The City of Columbia and the Department entered into a cooperative agreement that allows the Department to use treated wastewater from the city as a primary water source for the wetlands. The City of Columbia's "recycled" wastewater provides a near constant source of water, but river pumps can supplement the water supply when the area's needs exceed the flow from the city.

The area's 17 wetland pools allow the flooding of 1,100 acres of moist soil marshes, emergent marshes, and crop fields. These marshes provide year-round habitat for migrating and wintering birds and permanent wildlife and excellent wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities.

In the fall, the area's beauty is enhanced by colorful foliage along the bordering limestone bluffs. The Katy Trail State Park passes through a portion of the area and adds to the public's use and enjoyment of Eagle Bluffs CA. The parking lot located on Warren School Road provides walking access to the area's scenic overlook.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Wetland	1,390		31
Forest	1,344		30
Open Land	755		17
Old Field	428		10
Open Water	367		8
Grassland	140		3
Infrastructure	5		<1
Total	4,429		100
River Frontage (Missouri River)		6.6	
Stream Frontage (Perche Creek)		6.5	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period Aug. 1–31, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received 23 comments from 21 respondents (Appendix A). The Eagle Bluffs 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.

Prior to writing this draft area management plan, the Department conducted a public input process (the Eagle Bluffs CA Idea Gathering Stage) from May 1-31, 2015. During this “idea gathering” stage, the Department received input from 23 respondents (see *Eagle Bluffs Conservation Areas Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary* at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZJP). The area planning team took comments into consideration as they drafted this 10-year management plan. Department responses to comments received during the May 2015 idea gathering stage can be found in the report, *Missouri Department of Conservation Responses to Public Comments–Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage*. This report is available upon request by contacting Amy Buechler (amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov).

Department responses to themes and issues identified through the Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period (Aug. 1-31, 2016).

Terrestrial Resource Management

Suggests attracting bobolinks to the area by planting alfalfa.

The alfalfa field was re-established in the fall of 2015.

Suggests building eagle perching structures since several large trees have fallen over the years.

Many cottonwood trees germinated in 1995 after the last major flood event and are beginning to reach a size that eagles perch in.

Appreciates waterfowl and dove hunting management on the area.

Thank you.

Suggests planting native plants instead of corn and soybeans.

Row crops are an important high energy food for migrating waterfowl. While most of the available wildlife food on Eagle Bluffs CA is through moist soil vegetation, a balance is sought between moist soil vegetation and row crops to meet the energy needs of waterfowl.

Public Use Management

Hunting

Appreciates ADA-accessible hunting blinds. Concerned with location of blind. Suggests moving blind or pumping more water to allow waterfowl to be in range.

Management efforts are conducted each year to provide food and water at the ADA blinds to attract waterfowl and provide a quality hunting experience.

Suggests removing draw system for waterfowl hunting. Opposes Every Member Draws system.

The statewide waterfowl hunt program undergoes periodic evaluation.

Suggests placing a greater emphasis on improving waterfowl hunting.

Providing quality waterfowl hunting opportunities is a priority for this area.

Would like to see waterfowl hunting move toward lead-free shot.

Lead shot is not allowed on Eagle Bluffs CA.

Concerned about “sky busting.” Suggests limiting the amount of shot a hunter may carry onto Eagle Bluffs CA. Educate hunters about the realistic capabilities of guns and ammo for waterfowl hunting.

Young or inexperienced hunters are attracted to conservation areas like Eagle Bluffs CA, where they have ample chances to learn how to hunt and what their capabilities are. As they gain experience and knowledge, their mistakes on judging distance should decrease and reduce the amount of sky-busting. Limiting the numbers of shells is not in the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* and therefore unenforceable.

Suggests expanding “no hunting” area due to increased housing development in overlook trail area.

All of the conservation area in the overlook area is designated as a No Hunting Zone.

Birding/Wildlife Watching

Suggests allowing more access for bird watching during the waterfowl hunting season.

Non-hunters have access daily between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. during waterfowl season. The No Hunting Zone in Pool 1 and the River Supply Channel provide a refuge that is heavily used by waterfowl and easily viewed from the road. Waterfowl species that are on Eagle Bluffs CA during the hunting season will also be present and viewable in these pools.

Concerned about harassment of nesting eagles on the area. Suggests signage and gate to prevent visitors from getting too close. Suggests adding a nest camera for viewing eagle nests.

The eagle nests in question each produced three eaglets in 2016, which indicates that the birds did not feel overly harassed. They were “celebrity birds” and drew much attention from area visitors. Installing a video camera has been explored, but the disturbances to the birds to get a camera in a location and maintaining it were not workable.

Suggests having a wildlife-viewing blind available for birders during the waterfowl hunting season. Consider using a draw system for access with a fee.

The No Hunting Zone in Pool 1 and the River Supply Channel provide a refuge that is heavily used by waterfowl and easily viewed from the road. Waterfowl species that are on Eagle Bluffs CA during the hunting season will also be present and viewable in these pools. Fees are not charged to area visitors.

Appreciates ability for birders to access area from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. during waterfowl hunting season.

We are pleased to be able to provide viewing opportunities to the birding community.

Suggests mowing roadside to water in several areas to allow for better viewing opportunities of shorebirds.

Gaps were mowed at key locations in 2016 for improved wildlife viewing.

Roads/Parking

Supports additional road access beyond Pool 14 to loop back to Pool 11 or Pool 12.

This was considered in 2001 when Pools 14 and 15 were developed but the cost was prohibitive to improve the levees to be wide enough to support a safe traffic flow.

Suggests providing better road access to Perche Creek for fishing opportunities. Concerned with road condition and width to reach Providence Access.

Additional maintenance could improve parking at the Perche Creek access point. Old Plank Road which leads to Providence Access is a county road maintained by Boone County Public Works.

Suggests building a road next to Perche Creek or the Missouri River to reduce vehicular harassment of waterfowl.

The exterior levees are not designed or built to support vehicular traffic. Moving the road would only shift vehicular disturbance and reduce wildlife viewing opportunities that the current road system provides.

Suggests better informing area users about the parking lot on Warren School Road.

The parking lot and road system to get there is marked on the area brochure.

Suggests adding parking east of the pump house.

There are five parking lots east of the pump house.

Trails

Suggests more frequent maintenance on the river hiking trail.

Maintenance of the river trail has proven to be difficult with flooding and windblown trees.

Suggests adding an ADA-accessible boardwalk.

There are no plans for a boardwalk.

Suggests adding stairs to overlook platform to prevent erosion.

Stairs will soon be added as an Eagle Scout project.

Suggests providing more access to Eagle Bluffs CA from adjacent Katy Trail State Park.

Bicycles are allowed only on roads that are open to vehicular traffic so building a bridge over Perche Creek is not feasible.

Boats

Suggests adding a kayak/canoe launch other than the rocked bank that is difficult to use.
Gravel is sometimes placed in the rip-rap to improve river access but flood events wash it away.

Suggests adding boat launches on large pools.
The back slopes of the parking lots are graveled for boat launching and loading.

Signage/Communication

Supports adding interpretive signage to the area. Suggests adding signage at overlook platform.
Interpretive signs installed in the past were quickly vandalized. There are no plans to install more.

Suggests a website dedicated to Eagle Bluffs CA news, events, sightings, etc.
This was considered but shown not to be feasible. Bird sightings can be found on sites dedicated to birding such as e-bird.org and the Audubon Society of Missouri's Mo-birds.

Suggests adding signs about activities allowed and not allowed during waterfowl season.
Area rules and regulations are available at the area office and are posted on the bulletin boards in the parking lots.

Other

Appreciates area for recreational opportunities such as wildlife viewing and hunting.
Thank you.

Appreciates moveable blind for bird watching and waterfowl hunts.
Thank you.

Wonders how to get to new blind toward south of property.
The blind is movable and is relocated seasonally to sites with favorable habitat for hunting or wildlife viewing.

Wonders if projects could be accomplished with volunteer assistance.
There are some opportunities available. Contact the area office at 573-445-3882 for information.

Suggests adding a pavilion for visiting groups.
There are no plans for a pavilion.

Suggests increasing staff presence on the area to better enforce area regulations.

Enforcing the *Wildlife Code* and area regulations is a priority for this area.

Administrative Considerations

Thanks Department staff for their upkeep of Eagle Bluffs CA.

Thank you.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (n.d.). *Natural heritage database*. Jefferson City, MO:
Missouri Department of Conservation.

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

Nelson, P. W. (2010). *The terrestrial natural communities of Missouri*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Natural Areas Committee.

Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City: MO Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Existing Cover Types

Figure 4: Topographic Map

Figure 5: Easements Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

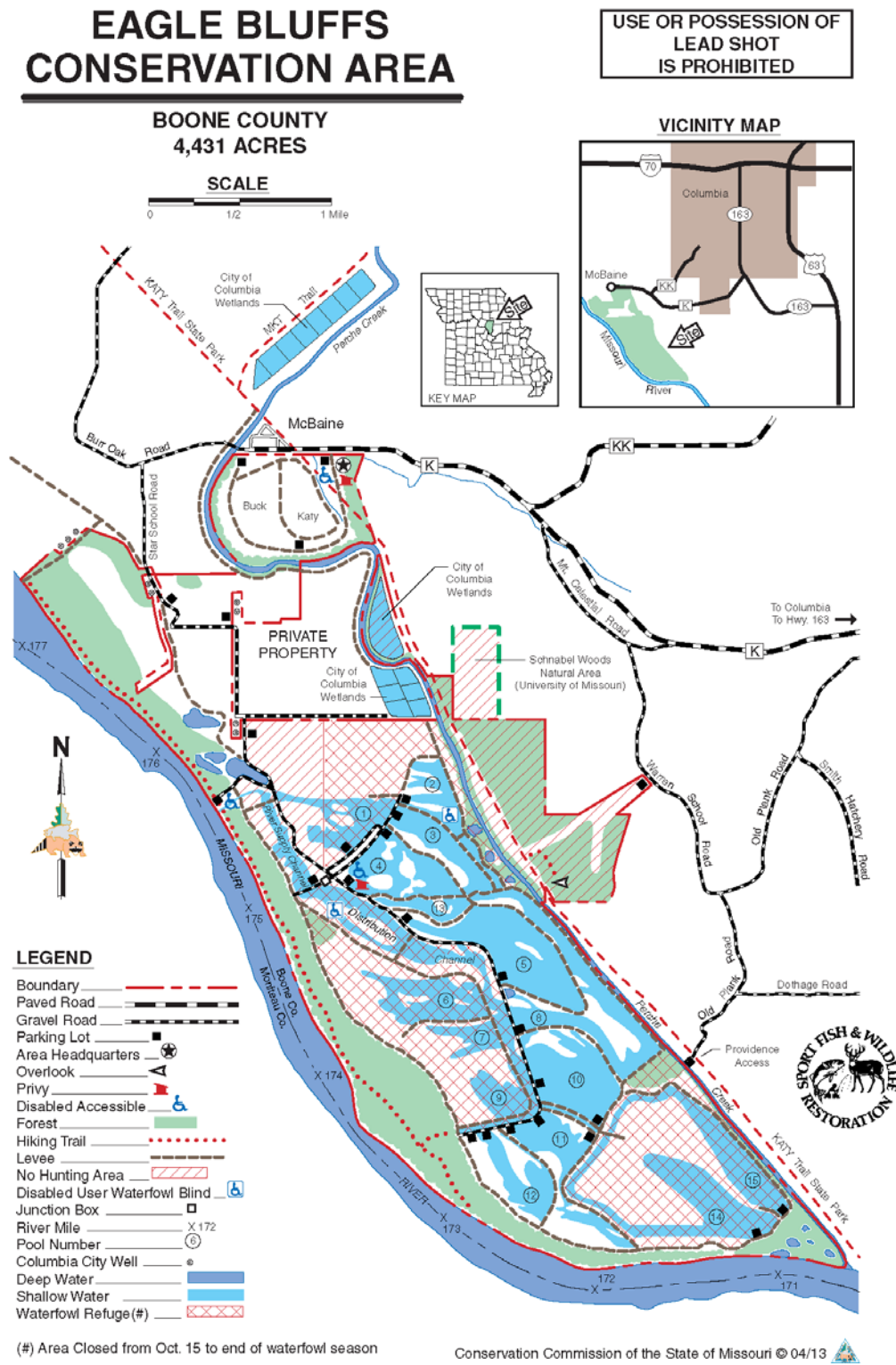


Figure 2: Aerial Map

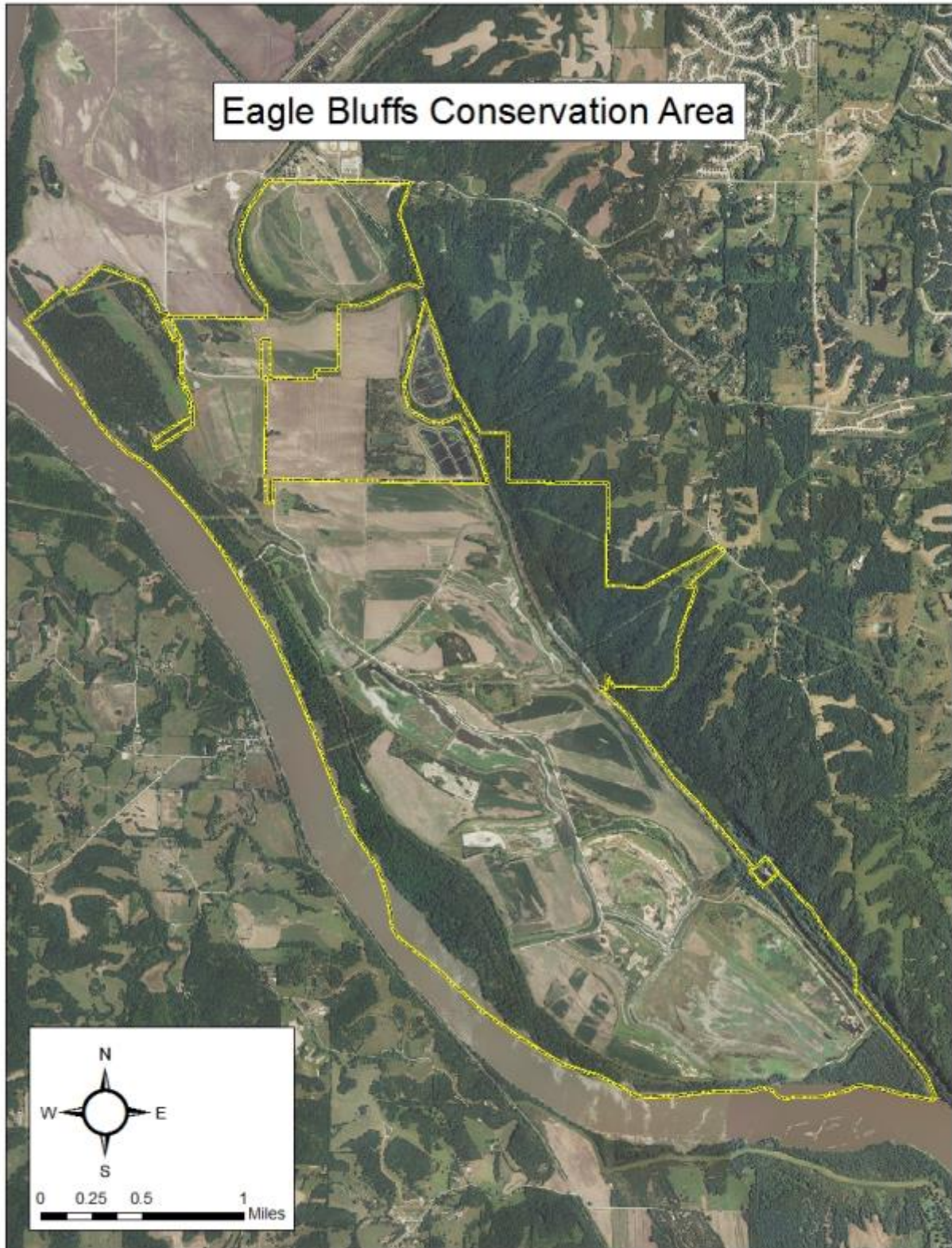


Figure 3: Existing Cover Types

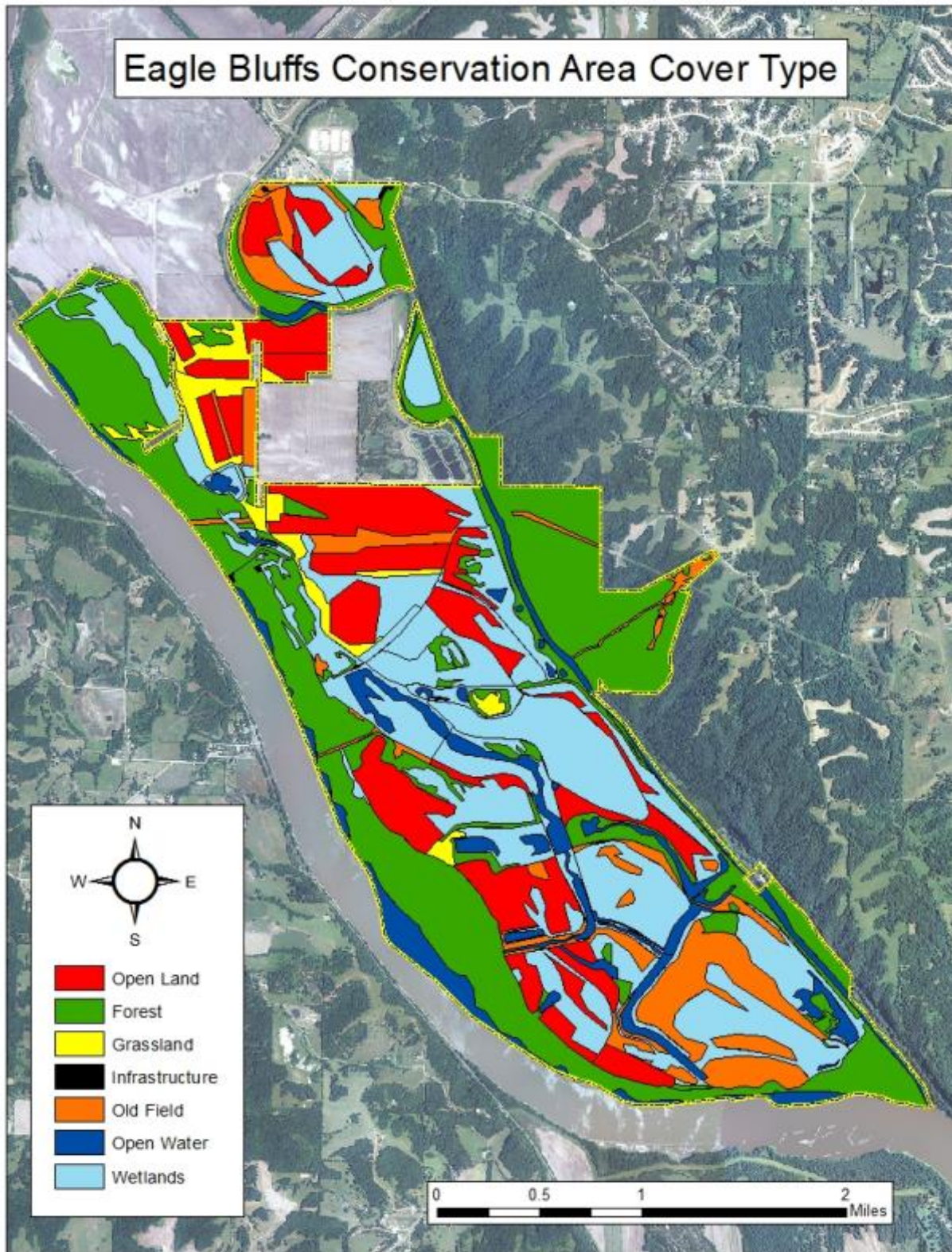


Figure 4: Topographic Map

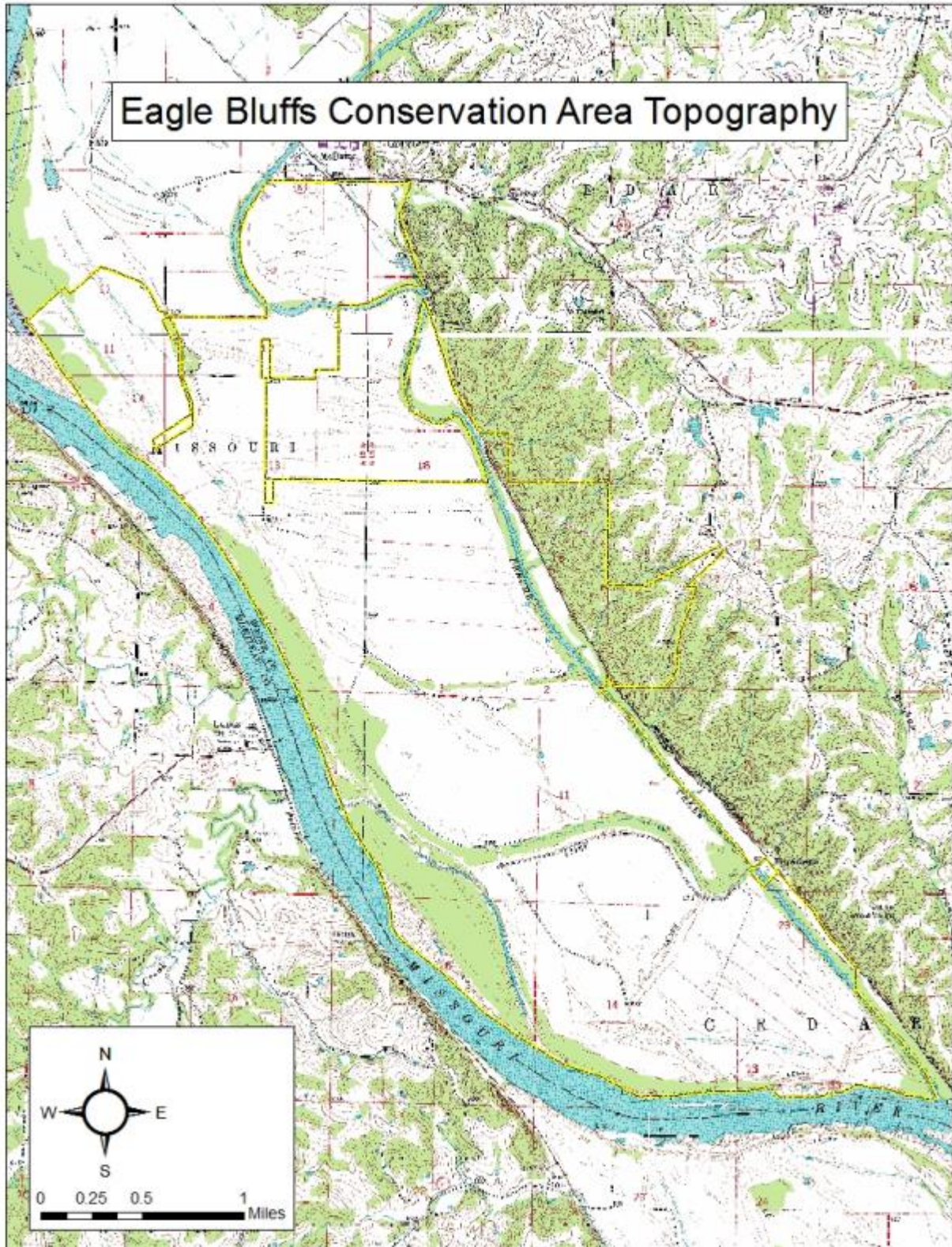
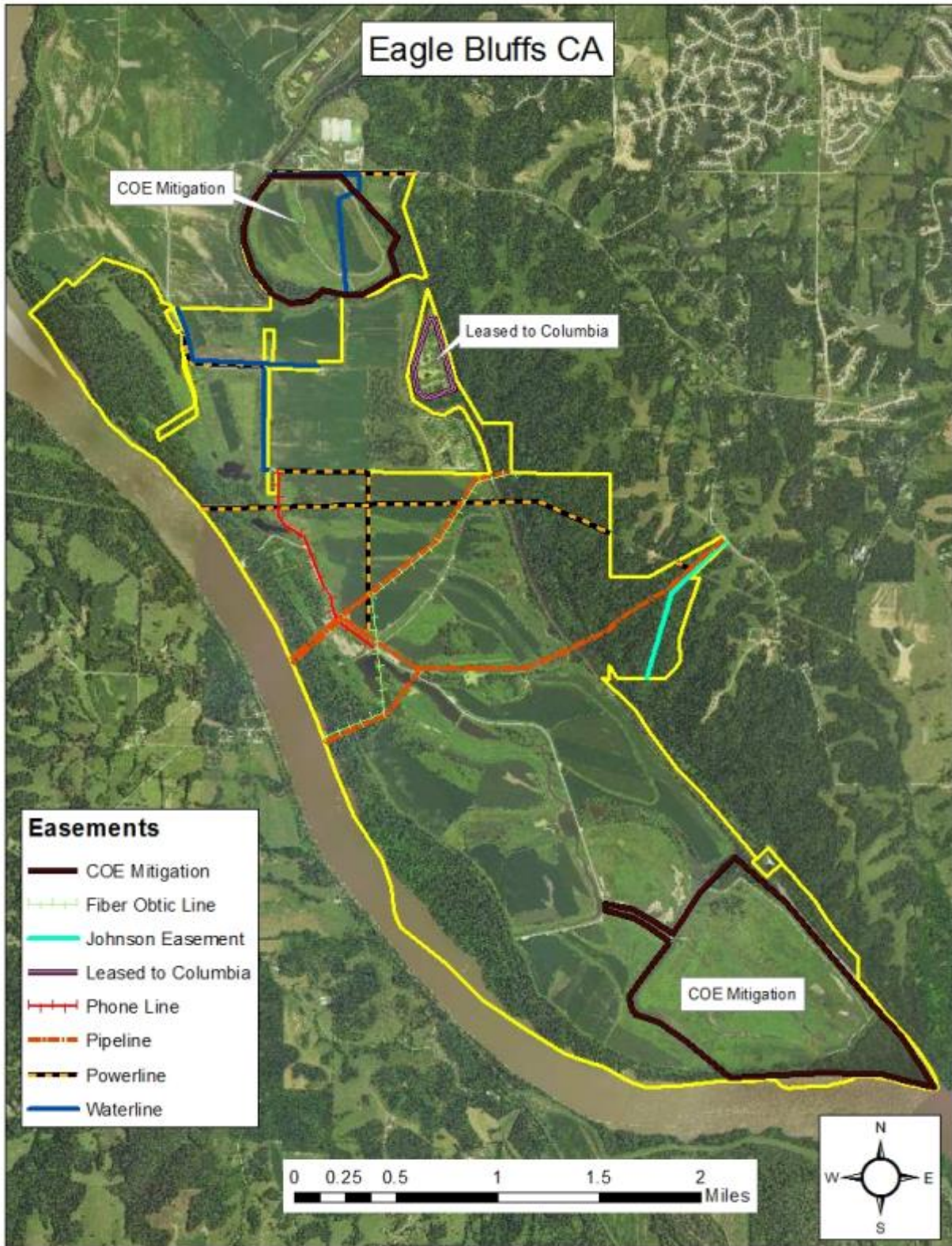


Figure 5: Easements Map



Appendix A. Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

Yes, birding can take place any day of the year. However, spring and fall migration are the very best times to spot uncommon or unusual migrants, as well as large numbers of birds of all sorts. I don't see why killing birds should take precedence over viewing and photographing them and educating others about the importance of birds in our lives.

I appreciate the department's commitment to reducing or eliminating the use of herbicides and other chemicals and exploring the use of non-GMO seeds for wildlife food and cover.

Get rid of the draw system for waterfowl.

Under Public Use Management Considerations, management objective #4, I would suggest a greater emphasis on improving the quality of the managed waterfowl hunts - in terms of hunter success, waterfowl population and the number of hunters able to access the area. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this comment.

Thanks for providing one of the best multi-use public access wildlife viewing/use area in the region! I am an ecologist working for a bird conservation organization and frequently share the great balance of consumptive/non-consumptive uses supported by Eagle Bluffs all combined with water treatment. The most common issue I hear is from the birding community to have more access during waterfowl hunting season, which is a very popular time to bird. I know birding is possible year round, but that time of year is a spectacular time to bird for the same reason it is a great time to hunt. As waterfowl hunters are supporting MDC and habitat conservation by purchasing hunting licenses there is a cost to reducing hunter access to increase access. Would it be possible to offer the same kind of draw system for a blind/area only open for birding at the same time the hunting is going on? It would be a fee system as well. I do believe it is time for birders to be willing to financially support the habitats they use and appreciate and believe many would. I honestly don't know what the birding would be like during active hunting. If a refuge area would be full of birds because it is safer or if the birds would just be gone. I think offering the option to the large birding community would open a dialog as to why hunters have more access during that period. There is a large community of them willing to pay for it, and pay for just the chance at a blind spot, not a guarantee. If birders could fill a blind with the same financial input would it be feasible?

I have been a frequent user of Eagle Bluffs CA since its opening. Overall, especially in the last 15-20 years, MDC has done a very good job of balancing access for hunters and wildlife viewers. The 1-3 p.m. opening for viewing is especially appreciated, and I wish this approach would be actively considered for other MDC properties.

The issue of eagle harassment is a serious one to me. Yes, staff "monitors" visitor activity, but those efforts are inadequate. I've often seen photographers walking to a point nearly under a nest.

Signage would keep some at bay; closer monitoring and actively discouraging close approaches (even gate closing) would also help.

Maintenance on the River Trail is greatly appreciated, and the difficulty is understood. Still, a more frequent maintenance routine would be appreciated.

I would strongly support additional road access. Continuing the levee road beyond Pool 14 to loop back to the main road near Pool 11 or Pool 12 seems feasible. Opening the road to through traffic to make a loop going past Pool 7 would also be appreciated by wildlife viewers.

I've heard of a suggestion to construct a boardwalk. This is probably not the best use of funds, given the major flood events likely at Eagle Bluffs. The same or lower expenditure devoted to road continuation/opening would be a better use of funds.

Bobolinks would be easy to attract with a little effort. They were frequent spring visitors near the electrical transmission right-of-way before the area was disturbed and replanted. Alfalfa seed is cheap.

The moveable blind is a great addition.

My sincerest thanks to Tim James and the many other MDC employees for keeping Eagle Bluffs CA one of the gems in the system, for hunters and non-hunters, alike.

I applaud the efforts to maintain the hunting recreational opportunities at Eagle Bluffs. However, I would like to see the morning waterfowl drawing procedure changed to be fair for each hunting party. If the every-member draw continues, I will not likely ever introduce my two boys to waterfowling. I will not bring my son to the drawing to draw two pills when the party ahead of us may draw three or four. If you want today's teens be tomorrow's hunters, a discriminatory draw approach is not the right way to get them involved.

Suggests constructing an elevated viewing platform near mudflat areas: Adding to this, making this a boardwalk accessible to disabled folks would negate the need/worry of having motorized vehicles on the trails as people with disabilities would have the same access with new boardwalks/paths from parking areas out to wetlands and mudflats.

Suggests allowing rifle hunting: rifle hunting would require shutting the area entirely to non-hunters for safety reasons. I would see this as undesirable.

Suggests interpretive signage about the area: I would fully support this idea for people not too aware of nature and wanting to learn.

I'm a disabled military veteran who uses the ADA blinds. I want to thank you for the goals, objectives you have listed for the Eagle Bluff Conservation area, it's impressive. The only thing I have a problem with is of course with the ADA blinds. First off they are nice, don't get me wrong about that and it sure is GREAT for me and easier for my hunting partner(my youngest son),he along with his dog gets my birds for me. The main problem I see is the shooting distance from the blind to the area of ducks landing. 30-35 yards. Now that's a for way to shoot. I think it would be great if more water was pumped to the areas were land in front of the blinds was under water or move the blinds out more away from the bank. It's pretty upsetting to have to set in the blind watch the ducks land out of "range" and if you do shoot hope you get a killing shot in. I personally HATE to lose any game,rabbit,dove,quail,(in my non-disabled days)etc. I consider that a waste of time and resources. Anyway if this area of my concern could be addressed I would appreciate it. Thanks

Eagle Bluffs is an outstanding example of the Missouri Department of Conservation's management of our wetland resources. Our family has enjoyed the area for many years, mostly as waterfowl hunters, but also to watch the varied species of wetland wildlife. As the years pass, the careful management of the area has resulted in a truly unique place for outdoor enthusiasts to pursue their individual outdoor interests. Eagle Bluff's central location is especially important, as are the long-lasting partnerships with the University of Missouri, City of Columbia, and others. Please keep up the good work as I intend to take my granddaughter to Eagle Bluffs when she's old enough.

I discovered Eagles Bluffs this year, & have absolutely loved going out there & watching the Eagles & other wildlife. It is like a free therapy for me. We have also taken friends & family out there, even from other states & they have loved it. Thank you.

I fully support a primitive kayak/canoe launch as suggested on page 22. The rocky area below the parking lot next to the Missouri River is difficult for some to use. The proposed location allows access to the Missouri River at a spot popular to kayakers and canoeists, as this is near a big sandbar located upriver about a mile. This sandbar is popular for destination boating, fishing, camping, birding, and enjoying the natural area. Improvement at this area would allow those unable to navigate the large rocks access to the river and the sandbar.

Concerning this info

The Katy Trail State Park passes through a portion of the area and adds to the public's use and enjoyment of Eagle Bluffs CA. The parking lot located on Warren School Road provides walking access to the area's scenic overlook

I lived on Route K from 1979 to 2015. I am aware of when Eagle Bluffs CA was put into place. Where is this parking lot on Warren School Road? It needs to be more 'advertised' so visitors can have walking access to the scenery.

Also, you need to build some concrete and pipe trees or something, for eagles to sit in. All the

trees that used to be in the McBaine Bottoms have died and fallen over because they do not do well sitting in water 365 days a year. A lot of eagles seem to like the area between Star School Road and Huntsdale - they sit in the tops of the big LIVE trees.

I am at eagle bluffs almost every day enjoying the area in some capacity sometimes it is bow fishing, sometime catfishing, sometime just walking and other bird watching or hunting. I would like to see boat launches on the bigger pools nothing fancy just a gravel launch that way I can take my jon boat out by myself or my wife. Right now I have to go with someone that can help lift it and carry it to the water, I think with launches in the bigger polls more people would be able to bow fish in to the night and help clean up the silver carp problem there. I would also like to see more parking and more access to some of the pools east of the pump house on the levy. I would also think more river and creek access would be awesome, right now there is really only the one spot for the river and the creek to fish and the river access it to rocky and you just loose any tackle you throw out. On perche if there is already someone fishing that spot then you have wasted a lot of time and gas to drive all the way to the back because there is nowhere for more than 2 vehicles to park and not really room for more than 2-3 people to fish. It would also be nice to have a website or even a map at the station that shows what gates are open and how much for bow fishing and bait gathering purposes. The thing that NEEDs to be done the most with that area is the road to Providence access needs to be widened and repaired. It is getting bad and someone is going to get hurt, there are more and more big boat going down there that are as wide at the drive able part of the road in some spots, and when you meet them at the spots someone has to back up around the turns of the road with a boat.

I would like to see a couple of access points between the Katy Trail and the roads within the conservation area. Especially if there was an easier way to access the overlook off the trail from the conservation area.

Also explore possibility of setting up online cameras to watch the eagle nests.

I would like to see areas brush hogged from the road to the waterline. It would basically consist of backing a brush hog from the road down to the water, say 30 to 40 feet at most and 15 to 20 feet wide and repeat every 1/4 mile or so. This would allow viewing from roadway or car.

Is there a plan to build a roadway to the new blind that is towards the rear (south) of the property, or at least designate how to get there?

What about an exclusive website that would have regular news updates, such as MDC plans for Eagle Bluffs, animal sightings, upcoming events, etc.

We enjoy visiting at least 2 or 3 times a month.

Thanks for doing a great job at Eagle Bluffs and all other areas!

Is there a MDC volunteer coordinator? I wonder if a number of projects could be accomplished with volunteers.

For multiple environmental and safety reasons, I would like to see the waterfowl hunting move to a lead free alternative. Potentially a very basic covered structure to serve as a meeting place for visiting school groups would be a nice addition. Thanks for you hard work on the CA. I enjoy it thoroughly.

Keep up the great work with the waterfowl hunting program and dove hunting management as well.

(comment received after comment period in an email sent to Amy Buechler): Amy, Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments in this manner. There seem to be two primary human recreational uses of the area; bird watching and waterfowl hunting. Frequently during the waterfowl hunting season these two primary uses conflict with each other. The birders get in the way of the hunters and I imagine the birders feel the hunters are in their way. There are area regulations in place intended to mitigate this situation but the birders are routinely ignoring those. Not only are driving past the signs which should have stopped them from proceeding further but I've seen some exit their vehicles in the refuge area and walk or let their dog run. I hunted waterfowl at Eagle Bluffs quite frequently during the past two seasons. I saw such acts almost every time I was there. The problem is significant. I've watched "sky busting" grow in frequency. The result is the birds are conditioned to be much more wary and less "workable" and more birds are wounded and not recovered, dying days later. Such activity greatly diminishes the quality of the experience for the other hunters on the area witnessing it as well as future visits where we find decoy shy, call shy and blind shy birds.

So my comments are:

1) there needs to be more prevalent signage very clearly stating who is and is not allowed onto the area during waterfowl season. That boundary needs to be much further out of the area than the junction box building.

2) There needs to be a much more frequent presence (daily) of MDC personnel to enforce the existing regulations.

3) Move the main road that bisects the area to the Perche Creek side or the Missouri River side which would significantly reduce the vehicular harassment of waterfowl using the area.

4) Workshops teaching the realistic capabilities of guns and ammo for waterfowl hunting should be offered and successful completion should be required of those hunting on all MDC waterfowl areas. In lieu of this a limit of 15 shells each hunter may bring onto the area should be adopted; with rigorous enforcement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer comments. I also want to state that the staff at Eagle Bluffs are dedicated, hard working individuals who want to provide a quality experience for the

wildlife and the people using the area. Implementation of the above would greatly assist them in achieving that.

Jim Belcher

(Comment moved to Eagle Bluffs CA plan from Long Ridge CA plan): I wrote comments about the Eagle Bluff Conservation Area. Either I missed it or it was excluded I don't know. My concern was the Handicap duck hunting areas there. Once again I showed up for the teal hunting and went to the Acuff Handicap blind and to shoot a duck out of that blind would require shooting at least 50 yards. This is unexceptionable. I noticed in the No Hunting Area weeds had by mowed down for the ducks habitat. The Acuff Blind was I believe financed privately. Well what happened? The blind is very nice but TOTALLY unusable. Plus it is so overgrown with vines I was afraid to enter it. I plan to hunt again 9/14/16 at Pool #2 tomorrow if someone wants to contact me directly, face to face. Plus I couldn't find Eagle Bluff Area listed here.

(Comment received after comment period): Would like to see native plants used instead of corn and soybeans in wetlands. If corn and soybeans are used, would like to see organic practices used to protect soil and water quality, and use of cover crops to reduce runoff and improve soil. At minimum, use non-GMO crops. Look at latest research to detrimental effects of GMO crops (overuse of pesticides and other issues.)

Add steps from the top of bluff (boardwalk) to overlook platform to prevent erosion. This area is steep and is eroding badly.

Report states there is signage at Overlook platform but there is no signage.

Take additional steps to notify neighbors about comment periods. We live on Warren School Rd but have never received notice of requests for input.

Improve education of public on how to behave in a conservation area. The parking lot at Eagle Bluff Overlook often contains trash left by visitors. We pick it up but people seem to have no sense of keeping the area clean. Monitor area more closely. People have cut lock to gate, and moved boulders ringing parking lot so they can drive into conservation area. Would like to make sure people aren't driving along overlook trail.

(Comment received after comment period): Hi again. We forgot to add one comment.

We would like to see the no hunting area expanded due to the tremendous amount of development occurring in the Overlook trail area. The habitat areas for wildlife are becoming more and more limited. In addition to several new developments, a 130+ house development was just approved in this area. I greatly appreciate that as birders we at least have 2 hours in the afternoon during waterfowl season to look for the migrating birds. To educate the person who

wrote the statement on page 20 regarding the time during waterfowl season for birdwatchers to view birds, waterfowl season is the peak migration time! These birds often cannot be viewed in other seasons or habitats in this area! I would appreciate not being treated as inferior to the hunters. I understand they have an important role in the conservation process, but so do birders!

(Comment moved from Long Ridge CA plan): I wrote comments about the Eagle Bluff Conservation Area. Either I missed it or it was excluded I don't know. My concern was the Handicap duck hunting areas there. Once again I showed up for the teal hunting and went to the Acuff Handicap blind and to shoot a duck out of that blind would require shooting at least 50 yards. This is unexceptionable. I noticed in the No Hunting Area weeds had by mowed down for the ducks habitat. The Acuff Blind was I believe financed privately. Well what happened? The blind is very nice but TOTALLY unusable. Plus it is so overgrown with vines I was afraid to enter it. I plan to hunt again 9/14/16 at Pool #2 tomorrow if someone wants to contact me directly, face to face. Plus I couldn't find Eagle Bluff Area listed here.