

Long Ridge Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2026



Lisa B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

1-31-17

Date

Long Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Jordan Beshears, Wildlife Biologist

Jeff Dierking, Private Land Conservationist

Jen Girondo, Fisheries Management Biologist

Mark Johanson, Resource Forester

Conrad Mallady, Outdoor Skills Specialist

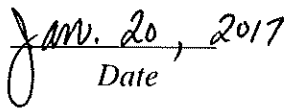
Ben Pursley, Conservation Agent

ST. LOUIS REGION

RCT Chair



Signature



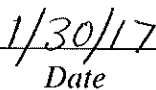
Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief



Signature



Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Long Ridge Conservation Area, # 9503
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1995
- **Acreage:** 1,813 acres
- **County:** Franklin
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for wildlife and woodland resources with emphasis on woodland species and compatible recreational opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Long Ridge Conservation Area (CA) is a healthy open woodland system for people to use and enjoy.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

- A. Priority Areas:** Meramec River Hills Priority Forest Landscape, Middle Bourbeuse River Fisheries Priority Watershed, Meramec River Watershed 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:** Yes, records kept with Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) natural history biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the Department Resource Policy Manual. All caves on this and other conservation areas are closed or restricted to public access. The fungus that causes White-nose Syndrome in bats has been documented in Missouri, resulting in the Department's White-nose Syndrome Action Plan that limits public access to protect bats.
- C. Springs:** None

III. Existing Infrastructure

- Five parking lots
- Green Trail (multi-use hike/horse trail, 1.9 miles)
- Blue Trail (multi-use hike/horse trail, 2.4 miles)
- Yellow Trail (multi-use hike/horse trail, 2.4 miles)
- Red Trail (multi-use hike/horse trail, 1.9 miles)
- Five wildlife watering holes (0.1 acres total)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Mineral rights (SE1/4 NW1/4 and SW1/4 NE1/4, Section 9, Township 41 North, Range 2 West)
- 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:** One ingress/egress easement
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Invasive species such as bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, sericea lespedeza, and spotted knapweed occur on the area.
- 2) This area provides excellent opportunities to restore and manage open oak woodland natural communities; however the proximity to subdivisions and other dwellings provide challenges when conducting land management activities such as prescribed fire.

Management Objective 1: Identify and reduce the abundance of invasive plant species.

Strategy 1: Monitor the multi-use trails, parking lots, county road frontage, and bottomland wooded areas for the presence of invasive plants. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Use chemical and mechanical methods to treat and reduce invasive plant species. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Enhance and restore open woodland communities. Current open and future woodland management units are shown on Figure 5.

Strategy 1: Conduct a forest inventory to obtain forest stand data prior to making management decisions within the current and future woodland management units. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Utilize commercial tree thinning, non-commercial tree thinning, and/or controlled burning to enhance and restore open woodland management units, as time and resources permit. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Conduct evaluations after open woodland management activities to determine the effectiveness of treatments. Treatments include, but are not limited to prescribed burning, non-commercial tree thinning, commercial timber sales, and invasive species control. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Enhance and maintain wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain existing wildlife food plots. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Increase the brushy cover on the field edges by edge feather or hinge cutting trees. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Maintain snag and den trees throughout the area as specified in the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice Recommended Practices for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

Management Objective 4: Protect soil during management activities.

Strategy 1: During timber harvesting activities install best management practices to prevent soil erosion. In addition, follow all suggested management practices according to the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice Recommended Practices for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Install water bars, water turnouts, and other best management practices on the multi-use trails to minimize soil erosion and runoff. (Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Sensitive karst features exist on the area.

Management Objective 1: Maintain and manage the vegetation on the area in ways that promote healthy streams and karst communities.

Strategy 1: Maintain appropriate native vegetation around streams and karst features. (Forestry)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Conflicting public use is a challenge on this area. The proximity to Interstate 44 and to the town of Sullivan makes this area popular for deer and turkey hunting, as well as horseback riding on the multi-use trail. Conflicts between archery deer hunters and multi-use trail users exist primarily between Oct. 15 and the beginning of the November portion of firearms deer season.

Management Objective 1: Maintain the area in a way that invites the public to use the property.

Strategy 1: Mark and maintain boundary lines every seven years. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Keep area regulations posted on sign boards. Regularly pick up trash and keep the grass on the edge of the parking lots mowed. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Conduct periodic enforcement patrols. (Protection)

Management Objective 2: Proactively work with area users to minimize conflict during high use times.

Strategy 1: Post the dates of deer and turkey hunting seasons so that multi-use trail users are aware that hunters may be in the area. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Avoid issuing special use permits that conflict with deer and turkey hunting seasons. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Monitor the hunting pressure during deer and turkey hunting seasons and recommend area specific regulation changes when appropriate. (Forestry and Protection)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure according to Department guidelines. (Forestry)

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.

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 1	X			X			X			X
<i>Objective 4</i>										
Strategy 2	X	X	X	X	X					
Public Use Management Considerations										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1					X					

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Long Ridge Conservation Area is located in Franklin County, 6 miles north of Sullivan on Ridge Road. The Department purchased the property for the 1,813 acre area in 1995. The area includes 9 miles of developed multi-use trails and five parking areas. Parking lots near the Green and Blue multi-use trails are large enough to accommodate horse trailers.

The area is open from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	1,758		97
Old Field and Cedar Thickets	45		2
Fields	10		<1
Wildlife Watering Holes	<1		<1
Total	1,813		100
Stream Frontage – Intermittent Streams		5	
Stream Frontage – Permanent Streams		0.5	

Public Input Summary:

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

Requests information on “tree thinning.” Wonders if this is accomplished by Department staff or by timber companies. Wonders where proceeds go from timber harvests and if timber harvests are being handled responsibly.

Tree thinning refers to cutting or deadening trees in a forest to reduce the tree density. Tree thinning is typically done to promote the growth of the remaining trees, to address forest health concerns, or to improve wildlife habitat. Tree thinning can be accomplished commercially through a timber sale, or non-commercially through timber stand improvement (TSI). In both cases, the Department utilizes a comprehensive inventory of the forest and woodland resources

to make decisions on how and when to apply the thinning. Trees are marked to be removed by trained Department employees.

The Department adheres to the recommendations in the Missouri Forest Management Guidelines (<https://mdc.mo.gov/trees-plants/forest-care/missouri-forest-management-guidelines>) and utilizes best management practices to minimize soil erosion (https://mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/resources/2010/07/mdc_mo_watershed.pdf).

The Department routinely contracts out TSI projects through a competitive, detailed bidding process. The Department bids out timber sales through a detailed bid process to professionally trained loggers. Contracts are written by resource foresters (area managers) and then reviewed by district and regional foresters. While under contract, all work done by contractors and loggers is checked often for contract compliance by trained Department staff.

The Department leaves many den trees per acre for cavity dwelling wildlife. Timber cutting is handled responsibly and supports the Department's mission to protect and manage the fish, forests, and wildlife resources in the state of Missouri.

All proceeds received from the sale of forest products are retained by the Department.

Suggests adding 1-3 miles to the existing multi-use trails on Long Ridge CA.

There are no plans to add additional multi-use trails on this area. Hikers and horseback riders looking for a 10-12 mile trail opportunity can achieve this using the current trail configuration. There are two loops at the southern end of the area and one loop at the northern end of the area with a 2.4-mile connector trail linking the two ends of the area. When hikers and riders use both ends of the area on the same trip, they will travel the connector trail twice. This configuration provides trail users with up to an 11.3 mile loop option.

Suggests adding a privy to the area.

There are no plans to add additional infrastructure to this area.

Wonders how to get to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible parking/hunting area?

The accessible parking/hunting area is located in the middle of the area and behind a locked gate. Provisions are made to allow access through the use of a Special Use Permit that can be requested by contacting the area manager.

Supports the Long Ridge CA management plan.

We appreciate your support for this plan and the Department.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2012). Geographic Information System layer. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri forest management guidelines: Voluntary recommendations for well-managed forests*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri watershed protection practices recommended for Missouri forests: 2014 management guidelines for maintaining forested watersheds to protect streams*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Location Map

Figure 2: Area Map

Figure 3: Current Land Cover

Figure 4: Infrastructure

Figure 5: Woodland Management Units

Figure 6: Easement Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Long Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Location Map

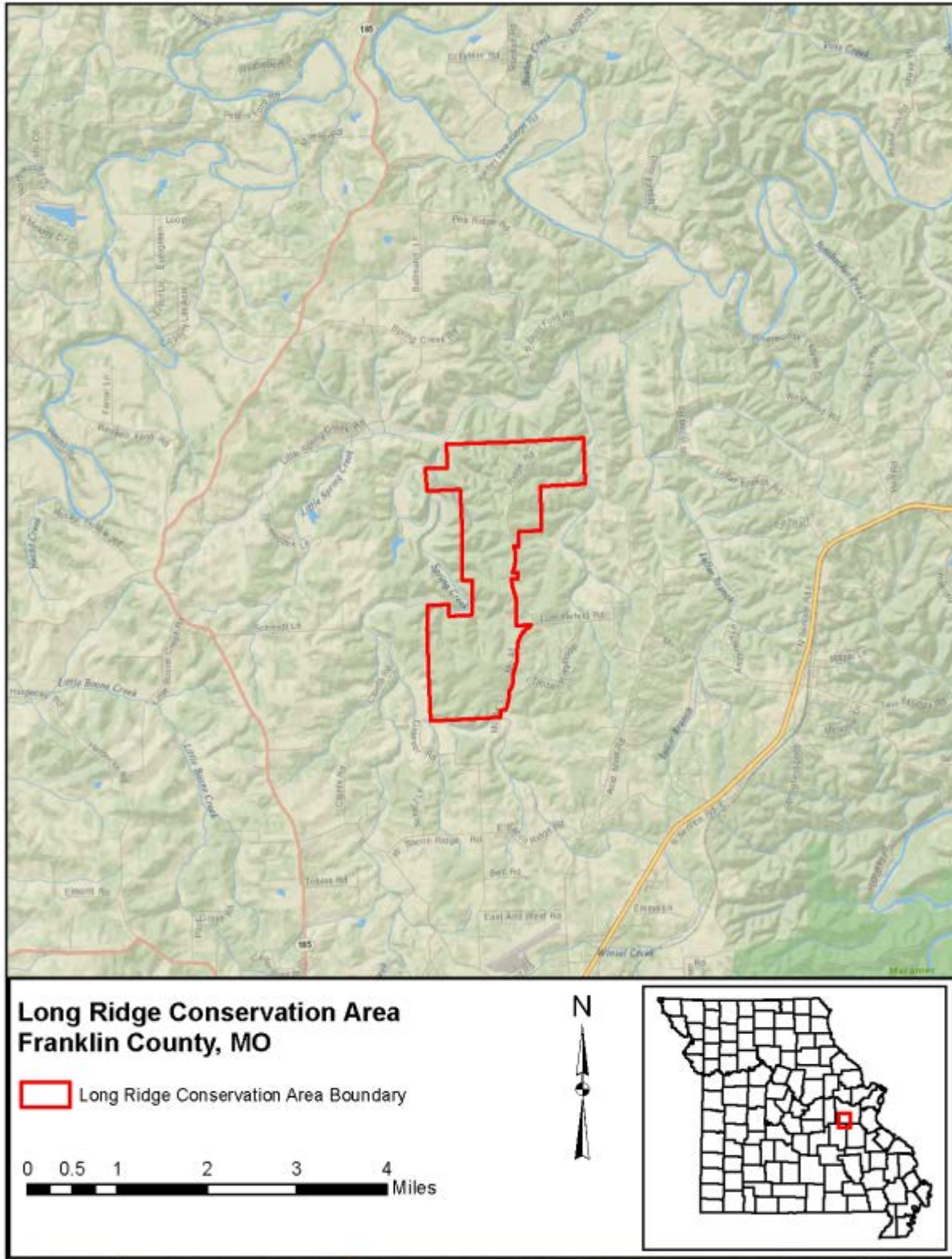


Figure 2: Area Map

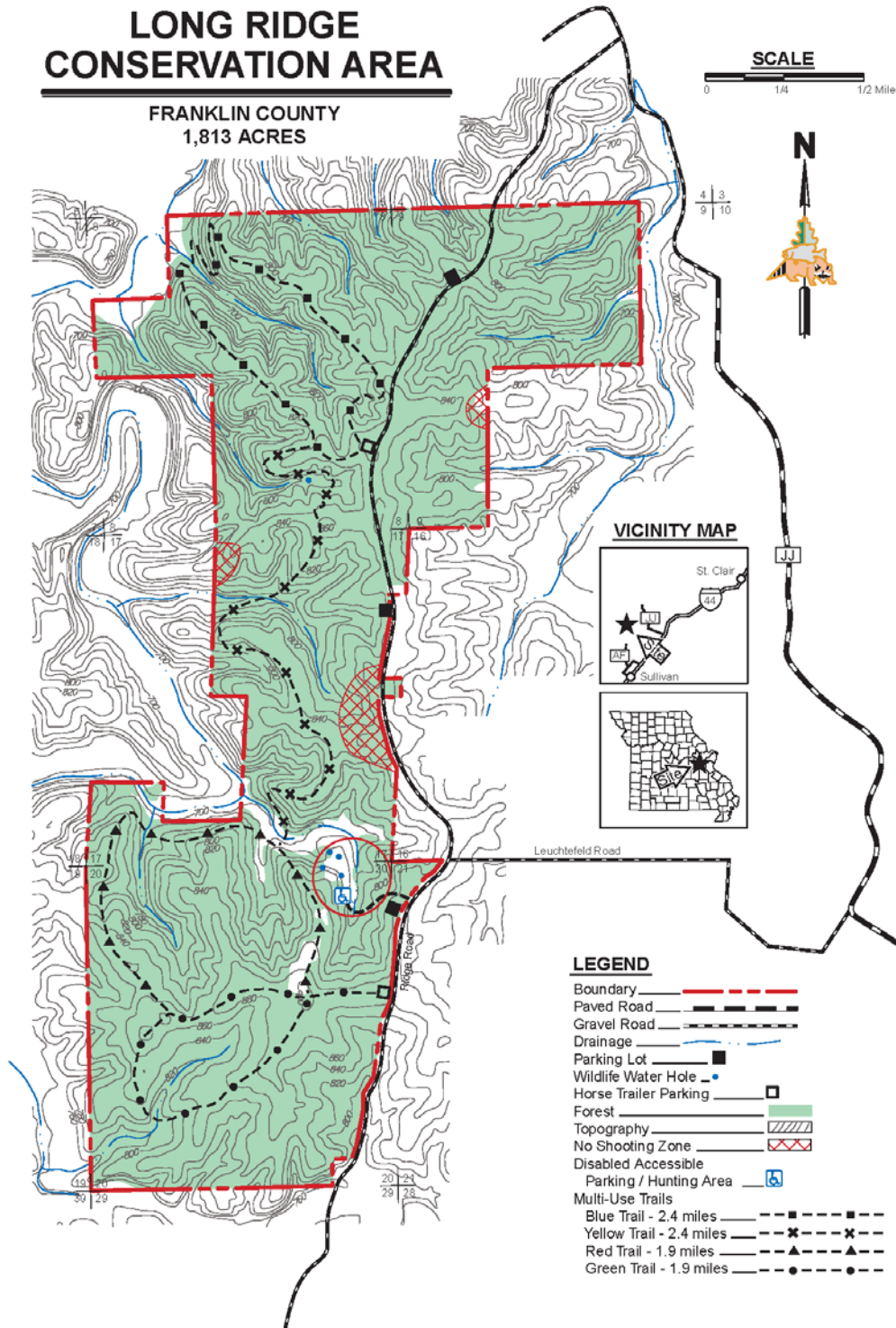


Figure 3: Current Land Cover

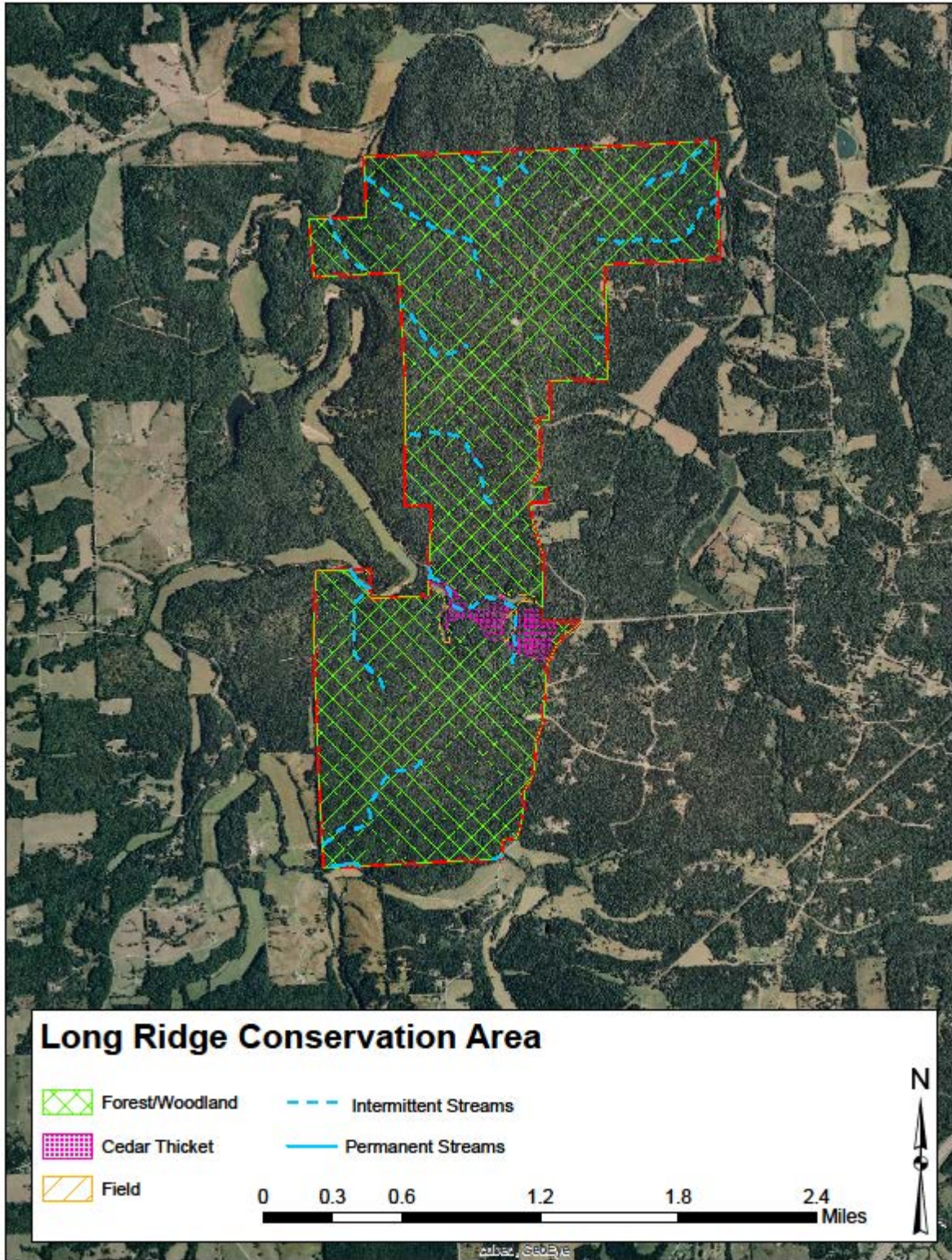


Figure 4: Infrastructure

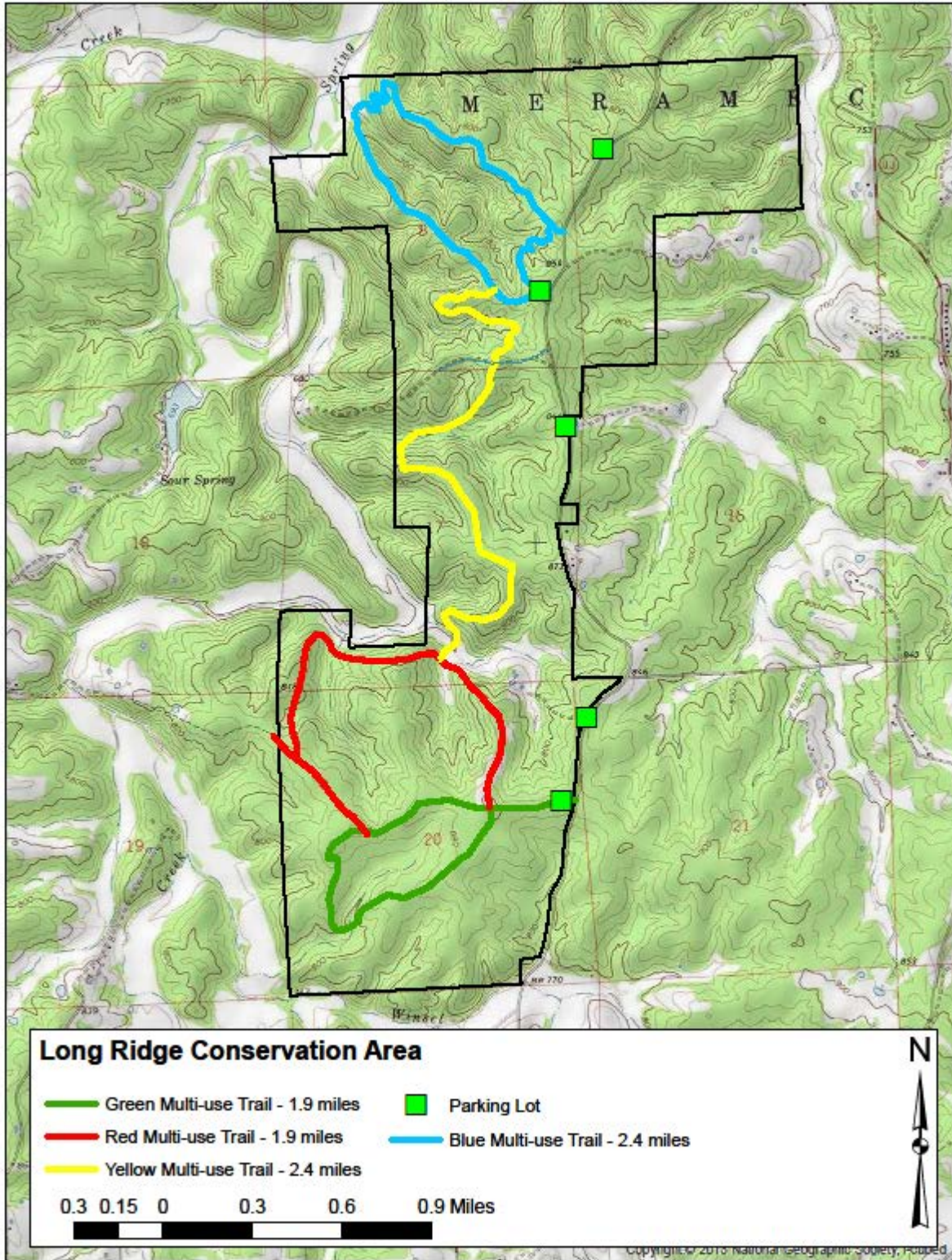


Figure 5: Woodland Management Units

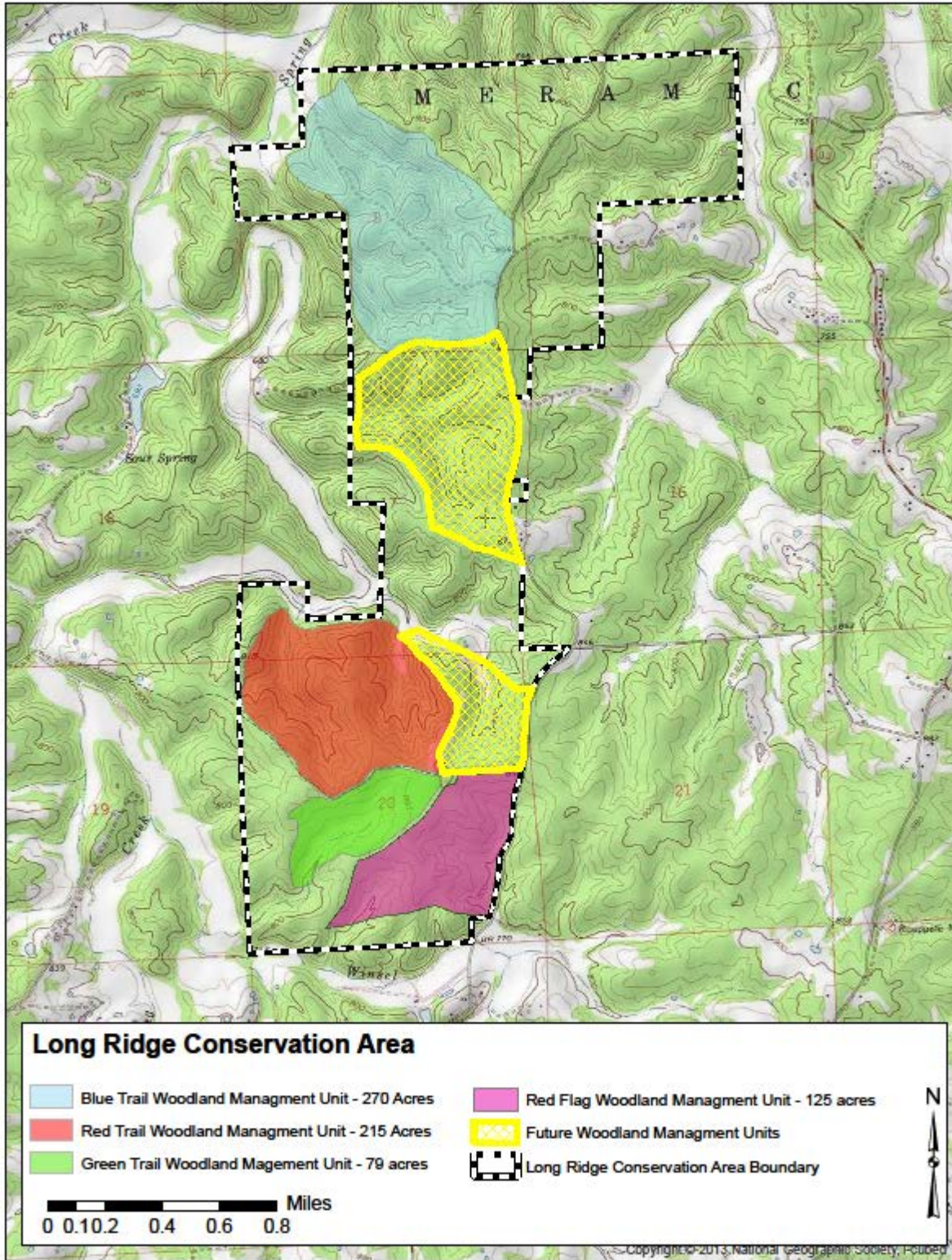
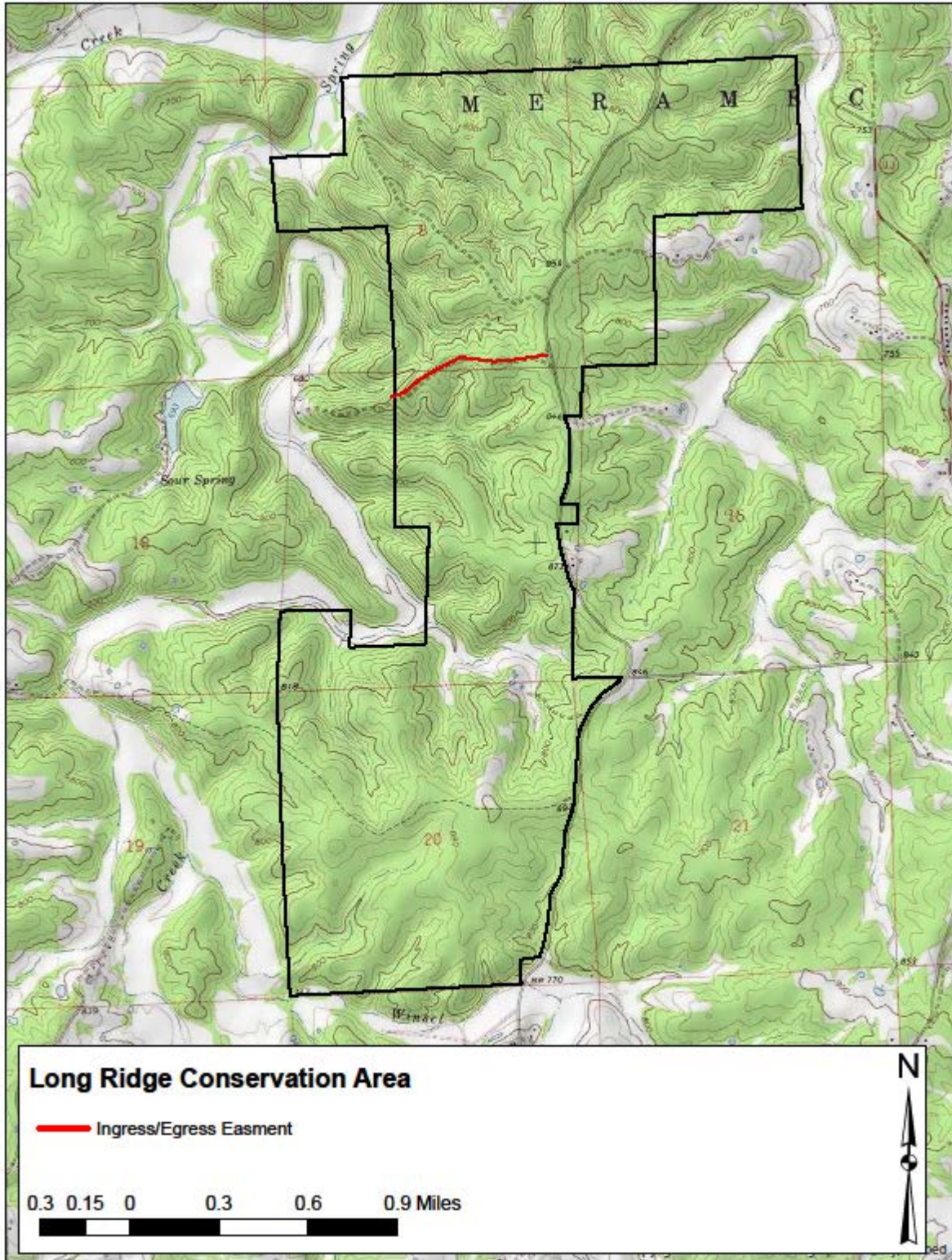


Figure 6: Easement Map



Appendix A. Long Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

Please consider adding additional miles of equestrian trails on this property. Thank you.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) request for input from the public in the management of public owned lands is appreciated by me and the general public. One comment that seems to be in most of the surveys is the statement of “Tree Thinning”. Exactly what does this mean? Does the staff of MDC perform the thinning out of selected trees themselves (especially ones with disease) or does it auction off the cutting of the trees to a timber company?

When a timber company does perform the work how is the MDC and the citizen of Missouri compensated for the timber that is harvested? Does the money go just to the MDC or into the Missouri General Revenue fund?

Is there an arborist from the Forestry Division that works with the timber company in selecting what trees are to be harvested that would benefit the long term conservation stability of the area or does the timber company get to choose what they want, even clear cut a section of the forest?

Are hollow trees left in place for habitat for the many species of wildlife that use hollow trees for shelter and nesting?

The following statement appears on many of the MDC publications “MDC conservation areas cover almost one million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources.” Is the timber cutting handled responsibly and does it support MDC’s policy of conservation and protection first?

It would be extremely helpful to have some kind of restroom/facility as many of the other areas have available. Also, the handicap access listed in the area map doesn't seem to exist, as we have never been able to find it.

Thank you.

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.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Management Plan. I am interested in it, as it offers 8.6 miles of multi-use equestrian trails. It is commendable that horses are allowed on the trails, as equestrians are challenged to find enough riding without hauling a great distance in Long Ridge CA locale. Ideally, most of us need about 10-12 miles of trails for an afternoon of riding. Not only would additional trail mileage improve the sustainability of the trails, since the equestrian traffic would be more disbursed, it would improve the riding experience. For this added mileage, I would suggest a loop off an existing trail that could terminate at the truck and trailer parking lot. Realize that Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen (SMMBCH) is a service organization that works with several Conservation Area and other land managers and that the organization is a resource for assistance with trail and infrastructure maintenance, education, and advocacy involving equestrian trails. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to comment, and I do so as an individual and on behalf of SMMBCH.

***** ***, President, Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen

(an emailed comment to Mark Johanson received on 9/21/2016): Hi Mark, I have reviewed the plan you were kind enough to send.

I found it to be comprehensive but achievable.

Bravo to the agency for this important type of thing.

What is your availability in the next couple weeks?

Would you be able to go with me to see the land

On a nice cool day early in the week, any time between 10 and 2:00?

Thanks very much for everything,

Just wanting to stress the equine Multi use trail benefits and improvements like restrooms and water for horses would make this area a major equine Park

(Hardcopy comment received 9/27/2016): I have no complaints. You're using tax money wisely. The conservation tree program is the best. Using it over 40 years.

First, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Long Ridge CA Draft Management Plan. Equestrians commend MDC for the 8.6 miles of multi-use trails open to horses on Long Ridge CA. Indications are that the trails see a lot of use. The 8.6 miles falls short of the 10-12 miles of trails needed to provide the best experience and meet the demand of multi-use trail users in Franklin County and the surrounding area; a few additional miles are needed. A recommendation would be an additional loop that would connect to the Blue Trail near the north end of the area; the trail would go northeast (roughly parallel to and west of the gravel road), cross the gravel road and come back south east of the road following an approximate contour and terminating at the horse trailer parking lot.

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.