

# Castor River Conservation Area

## Ten-Year Area Plan

FY 2018-2027



*José M. Allen*  
Forestry Division Chief

*9-17-18*  
Date

## Castor River Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

### PLANNING TEAM

Nathan Greffe, Resource Forester

Bruce Henry, Natural History Biologist

Bridget Jackson, Education Consultant

Marcus Janzow, Private Land Conservationist

Mike Reed, Fisheries Management Biologist

Jeff Scott, Conservation Agent

Ryan Dirnberger, Wildlife Management Biologist

### SOUTHEAST REGION

RCT Chair



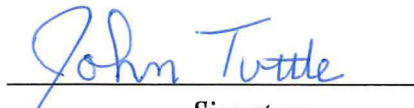
*Signature*

09/07/18

*Date*

### FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief



*Signature*

9/17/18

*Date*

## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Castor River Conservation Area, #7842
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1978
- **Acreage:** 9,578 acres
- **County:** Bollinger
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**

### A. Strategic Direction

Manage the Castor River Conservation Area (CA) to protect natural features, ensure healthy and sustainable forests and woodlands, enhance wildlife habitat diversity, and provide the public with compatible outdoor recreational opportunities.

### B. Desired Future Condition:

The desired future condition of Castor River CA is an uneven-aged forested landscape with multiple structured layers of tree species by age and size class; and open lands in a rotation of early successional habitats using old field, grasses, and row crops. Together this will provide an ecological system that will provide renewable natural resources and sustainable opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts.

### C. Federal Aid Statement

This area, or a portion thereof, was acquired with federal funds and donated to the State to provide fish and wildlife benefits and land conservation.

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

### I. Special Considerations

**A. Priority Areas:** Castor River Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area, Sweetgum Aquatic Conservation Opportunity Area, Castor/White Water Watershed Important Bird Area, Priority Forest Landscape

**B. Natural Areas:** Blue Pond Natural Area (15 acres) is a sinkhole pond that is over 65 feet deep and is believed to have formed from a cavern collapse during the New Madrid earthquake in 1811. The pond apparently does not drain internally. The water temperature at the base of the pond has been measured to be 41°F in May. A wide variety of floating and emergent aquatic plants line the picturesque banks of the pond.

## 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:**
- Devil's Kettle sink hole is located in the western side of Compartment 5.
  - A second much smaller sink hole is located on the eastern side of Compartment 5.
  - Two small (twin) sinkhole ponds are located a half mile southeast of Blue Pond in Compartment 6.
  - A small sinkhole pond, sometimes called Fillmore Sink, is located in the western parcel of Compartment 4.
  - A portion of a large fen is located on the northeastern edge of Compartment 2, just south of Bollinger County Road 822.
  - Two small seeps/fens are on the area; one is west of the horse campground, and the other is located on the western side of Compartment 1.

## III. Existing Infrastructure

- An A-frame style house is used periodically as a training facility for Department staff and partner organizations; and to house research staff or AmeriCorps crews.
- One unstaffed shooting range (with 25-, 50- and 100-yard back stops), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible
- One privy at shooting range (ADA accessible)
- 18 gravel parking lots; one ADA-accessible concrete parking area at shooting range
- Six defined camp sites with fire rings; one campground offers amenities for equestrian use
- 19.5 miles of multiuse (hike/bike/horse) trails
- 63 wildlife watering holes (fishless)
- One pond dam (Ivey Lake, 9 acres)

## IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Mineral rights reserved by Koppers Company, Inc. at a depth greater than 300 feet.

**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.

**C. Easements:**

- Easement to Ozark Border Electric Cooperative, 25 feet wide and approximately 3,500 feet long; south of CR 708.
- Easement to Black River Electric Cooperative, four rights of way 25 feet wide and totaling approximately 4,600 feet long; various locations.
- Easement to Rick Roark; approx. 30-50 feet wide and approximately 550 Feet long; Compartment 4; T30N, R8E, Sec. 29. Bk. 503, Pg. 825
- Right of way deeded to the State of Missouri, Department of Transportation for State Highways 34, and Y.
- Right of way deeded to Bollinger County for County Roads 702, 706, 708, 736, 738, 820, and 822

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

**E. Endangered Species:** None observed.

**F. Boundary Issues:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

**G. Other:** There are two “No Hunting Zones.” One is located around private residences off County Road 822, and the other is the Safety Zone around the shooting range.

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

#### Challenges and Opportunities

- 1) Control invasive species including autumn olive, sericea lespedeza, tall fescue, Johnson grass, and feral hogs.
- 2) There are non-contiguous public land parcels separated by private land.

**Management Objective 1:** Enhance, restore, and protect forest and woodland communities.

**Strategy 1:** Tract inventories will be completed every year on a 15-year rotation. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Use mainly uneven-aged forestry practices, but also even-aged practices to correct deficiencies in forest composition and/or forest stand structure, according to current tree structure, tree age, site index, and tree species composition. Forestry practices should enhance forest and woodland health and ensure long-term sustainability. These practices may be commercial or non-commercial. (Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Suppress all wildfires on the area through direct and/or indirect control. (Forestry)

**Strategy 4:** Utilize best management practices to maintain soil, water, and visual integrity. Refer to the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practices* manual while installing best management practices to prevent soil erosion (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014b). (Forestry)

**Strategy 5:** Conduct prescribed burns (most often low intensity burns) in woodland habitats to stimulate oak regeneration. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Identify and control invasive species.

**Strategy 1:** Identify invasive species sites through forest or natural community inventories and by casual observations. (Forestry, Wildlife,)

**Strategy 2:** Use biological, mechanical, and chemical management techniques, as needed, to control invasive species. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 3:** Enhance and protect amphibian and reptile habitat.

**Strategy 1:** Identify and enhance existing ephemeral pools and permanent wildlife watering ponds. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Place woody debris in existing pools and ponds to provide cover. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Explore the feasibility of constructing additional wildlife watering ponds on dry ridges greater than a quarter mile from an existing water source; construct two each in Compartments 1, 8 and 9; pending Department approval. (Design and Development, Forestry, Wildlife)

**Management Objective 4:** Enhance upland wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain the two ADA-accessible hunting areas (Compartments 1 and 5); and continue to issue special use permits for all-terrain-vehicle use by disabled hunters possessing special hunting exception permits (e.g., stationary vehicle permits). (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain bush-hogged paths in the old field across from the shooting range. (Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Maintain snag and den trees, as specified in current state land forest management guidelines (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014a). (Forestry)

**Strategy 4:** Maintain approximately 30 acres of old field habitat in warm-season grass mixtures and in desirable cool-season grass mixtures, through prescribed burning, and periodic disking to control woody vegetation. (Forestry)

**Strategy 5:** Establish 30 to 40 acres of small grain food plots annually using conventional farming practices. (Forestry)

**Strategy 6:** Maintain all service roads by mowing once per year after ground nesting birds have fledged (generally after July 1). (Forestry)

**Management Objective 5:** Identify, enhance, restore, and protect fens, sinkholes and springs.

**Strategy 1:** Identify additional fens. Verify individual boundaries and elevations of all known fens on the area and inventory plant and animal species within these sites. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Favor native vegetation and prevent woody encroachment by using chain saws or periodic prescribed burning, and/or approved aquatic herbicide within fens. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Maintain a 150-foot buffer of native vegetation around all sinkholes, springs, fens, and spring branches to protect them from disturbance. (Forestry, Wildlife)

## **VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations**

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Manage stable stream banks and gravel bars where disturbance of stream channels commonly occurs on private land.
- 2) Demonstrate the value of proper riparian corridor management by developing a stable stream channel.
- 3) Provide quality fishing opportunities under heavy fishing pressure.

**Management Objective 1:** Protect and enhance the water quality of Trace Creek, Grassy Creek, area intermittent streams, and surrounding groundwater.

**Strategy 1:** Identify stream bank erosion sites and restore to stable conditions, where practicable. (Fisheries, Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Establish or maintain a 100-foot riparian corridor on Trace Creek and 50 feet on all other tributaries, by planting trees and native shrubs. All stream corridors will be managed following the recommendations in the *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009) and *Missouri Watershed Protection Practices* manual (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014b). (Fisheries, Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Minimize sedimentation by using best management practices to streams and tributaries from land management practices, multiple-use trails, and roads. (Fisheries, Forestry)

**Management Objective 2:** Establish and maintain a desirable fish population in Ivey Lake (fishing lake on area map).

**Strategy 1:** Stock Ivey Lake as necessary with appropriate fish species. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Manage aquatic vegetation for optimum fish habitat and angler access. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 3:** Sample Ivey Lake every three to five years to monitor fish population. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 4:** Maintain the dam, principle inlet, and emergency spillway. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 5:** Periodically evaluate fishing regulations to determine if they are providing adequate protection of fish population. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 6:** Maintain shoreline fishing access trail. (Fisheries)

## VII. Public Use Management Considerations

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Heavy hunting pressure during the opening weekend of firearms deer season.
- 2) Provide opportunities for the public to use this area for a variety of compatible recreational activities.

**Management Objective 1:** Provide opportunities for the public to use and enjoy natural resources.

**Strategy 1:** Issue trapping permits through the Special Use Permitting process. (Forestry, Wildlife, Protection)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain approximately 19.5 miles of multiple-use trails. (Forestry, Wildlife, Protection).



**Management Objective 2:** Develop and maintain facilities for public use.

**Strategy 1:** Explore the feasibility of developing additional parking opportunities in high-use areas and eliminate underutilized parking areas as approved. (Forestry, Design and Development)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain privy, as needed, to provide safe access and a clean environment for public use. (Forestry, Design and Development)

### **VIII. Administrative Considerations**

#### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) There are non-contiguous parcels separated by private land.
- 2) Establish accurate and identifiable boundary markers to prevent encroachment.
- 3) Consider acquisition of land, when available.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain boundary lines.

**Strategy 1:** Continue boundary line repainting schedule. A database has been created to document and monitor all known inline and corner markers.

Boundary lines are repainted, on a rotational basis of five years, approximately 20 miles per year. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Submit boundary survey requests, as needed. (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**

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

A large portion of the area was acquired by the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) in 1978. The land was first purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1977 from the Koppers Company who had title to the land from the early 1940s. In the 1960s, the Nature Conservancy held the land in trust until it could be purchased by the Department.

The Koppers Company was primarily a railroad tie manufacturer and the forest was a source of raw materials. They conducted periodic harvests, but did not make extensive cuts. The forest was classified as Forest Cropland in 1948 and declassified in 1973.

The purpose of the acquisition by the Department was to establish a State Forest and provide multiple-use opportunities to the public.

It is nearly all forest and is home to Blue Pond Natural Area. Blue Pond is the deepest natural pond in Missouri. Facilities/features include primitive camping, multiuse hike/bike/horse trail, numerous intermittent streams and one permanent stream.

There are several small springs scattered in Castor River CA. All are considered having low flow rates, except for possibly Blue Pond. There are at least two springs within the banks of Pond Creek. Several other small springs have been observed while conducting annual forest inventories.

### Current Land and Water Types:

Land Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	9,246		96
Old Field	260		3
Crop Land	64		<1
Lakes/Ponds	8		<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,578</b>		<b>100</b>
Stream Frontage		30	

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Castor River Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period Feb. 1–28, 2017. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 14 respondents (Appendix A). The Castor River 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 Castor River Conservation Areas Management Plan public comment period.

**Supports the eradication of feral hogs from Castor River CA.**

Department staff is actively trapping feral hogs on Castor River CA and the goal of the Department is to eliminate feral hogs from Missouri.

**Enjoys hunting opportunities at Castor River CA. Suggests adding late-season food plots.**

A variety of food plots are planted every year on Castor River CA, including late-season types such as winter wheat and ladino clover. These food plots are rotated annually both in location and food type to provide a food source for a wide range of wildlife species.

**Suggests adding food plots for upland and migratory birds. Suggests planting sunflowers and milo on the edges of all food plots.**

Castor River CA is primarily a forested area and forest wildlife species such as deer, turkey, and squirrel are the main emphasis species. Castor River CA also has a healthy deer population and growing milo and sunflowers in these small food plots is a challenge.

**Suggests more management geared toward nongame species.**

We strive to provide healthy and diverse natural communities to support the needs of a broad array of wildlife species native to Missouri.

**Suggests using a “hands off” approach to managing Castor River CA.**

Forest management activities, such as thinning and commercial harvests, are essential to maintaining a healthy and thriving forest. Most of the forested acres will continue to be managed for healthy stands of native trees that will continue to provide ample food and cover for wildlife species, including deer and turkeys.

**Concerned about trees blocking fishing and wildlife access on the Castor River.**

Castor River CA has less than a quarter mile of Castor River stream frontage, but we will check that portion for trees blocking the river. Trees and logs in the river provide beneficial and necessary fish habitat; so, we do not advocate removing all this structure from the stream. The vast majority of Castor River runs through private land and the Department does not control trees blocking the stream on those stretches.

**Concerned watering holes have grown up and are no longer of value to wildlife. Supports additional wildlife watering areas on ridgetops.**

Many different wildlife species, both game and nongame, use the watering holes. The thick growth around some of the watering holes provides additional habitat for a wider variety of wildlife species allowing for a more diverse ecosystem, but still allows larger animals like deer and turkey access.

**Enjoys horseback riding opportunities at Castor River CA.**

We appreciate your comment. The Department strives to provide a multitude of opportunities for the public to enjoy the natural beauty of Missouri on its conservation areas.

**Suggests additional multi-use (hiking and horseback riding) trails.**

Currently 19.5 miles of multi-use trails already exist on Castor River CA, offering excellent hiking and horseback riding opportunities. Although the Department understands your desire for more trails, building and maintaining additional multi-use trails is not feasible with current staffing because of the increased maintenance requirements for this type of trail.

**Suggests adding electric service at campground.**

The Department only offers primitive camping opportunities. If individuals are looking for a camping experience that provides electricity and water, they might consider one of the nearby private campgrounds.

**Appreciates new additional walk-in only hunting area (Compartment 6). Suggests this area also change to archery hunting only to further deter trespassing onto neighboring property.**

The Department strives to offer a wide variety of hunting opportunities and experiences on its conservation areas through different hunting methods and different levels of accessibility. Walk-in only hunting is one way of offering a different level of hunting experience. Designating a walk-in only archery area and dividing Castor River CA into different hunting method zones would create confusion and complication for many area users; plus, it would increase area maintenance by adding more signs. For these reasons, we have decided not to create different hunting method zones. Also, as stated in Section VIII (Management Objective 1 Strategy 1) there is a schedule to repaint sections of the boundary line each year to clearly show the property line.

**Suggests allowing archery-only hunting on a portion of Compartment 4 (157-acre tract) due to safety concerns.**

The Department strives to offer a wide variety of hunting opportunities and experiences on its conservation areas through different hunting methods and different levels of accessibility. Walk-in only hunting is one way of offering a different level of hunting experience. Designating a

walk-in only archery area and dividing Castor River CA into different hunting method zones would create confusion and complication for many area users; plus, it would increase area maintenance by adding more signs. For these reasons, we have decided not to create different hunting method zones. Also, as stated in Section VIII (Management Objective 1 Strategy 1) there is a schedule to repaint sections of the boundary line each year to clearly show the property line.

**Suggests allowing all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use to retrieve game.**

ATVs can be used on Castor River CA only by special use permit. If a user has a mobility disability, they can apply for a special use permit at the Marble Hill office (RR5 Box 129, Marble Hill, MO 63764 or 573-238-2321).

**Concerned that ATVs are being used illegally on new logging roads. Concerned that there are ATV paths from adjacent private property.**

We rely on users reporting illegal activities on conservation areas. If users see illegal activities report them to the Department. ATVs can be used on Castor River CA only by special use permit. If a user has a mobility disability, they can apply for a special use permit at the Marble Hill office (RR5 Box 129, Marble Hill, MO 63764 or 573-238-2321).

**Concerned about litter found at Castor River CA. Suggests enforcing littering fines and picking up litter more frequently.**

Conservation agents visit all conservation areas, but due to timing, job responsibilities, and number of conservation areas, catching vandals can be very challenging. We rely on users reporting illegal activities on conservation areas. If users see illegal activities report them to the Department. Castor River CA encompasses a large area and we try to promote leave-no-trace practices on all conservation areas.

**Suggests adding more agents to patrol Bollinger County conservation areas. Suggests controlling ATVs and better enforcing campground rules.**

The number of conservation agents likely will not change. We rely on users reporting illegal activities on conservation areas. If users see illegal activities report them to the Department. Please continue to contact our agents for wildlife violations. Castor River CA is open for public use from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. Camping is allowed in designated camping areas and is limited to a period of 14 consecutive days in any 30-day period. Groups of more than 10 people must obtain a special use permit before camping. Only two camping units are permitted in each site in areas with established campsites. Quiet hours are in effect from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily. ATVs can be used on Castor River CA only by special use permit. If a user has a mobility disability, they can apply for a special use permit at the Marble Hill office (RR5 Box 129, Marble Hill, MO 63764 or 573-238-2321).

**Supports acquiring additional land.**

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.

**Appreciates the efforts made by the Department to conserve natural spaces.**

Thank you, we appreciate your support.

**References:**

Missouri Department of Conservation. (1981). *Castor River State Forest management plan*.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (1998). *Castor River Conservation Area management plan*.

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.

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

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

**Maps:**

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Trail Map of Castor River

Figure 3: Easement Map

Figure 4: Aerial Photo with Compartment Numbers

Figure 5: Land Cover Map

Figure 6: Compartment & Inventory Map

**Additional Appendices:**

Appendix A: Castor River Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

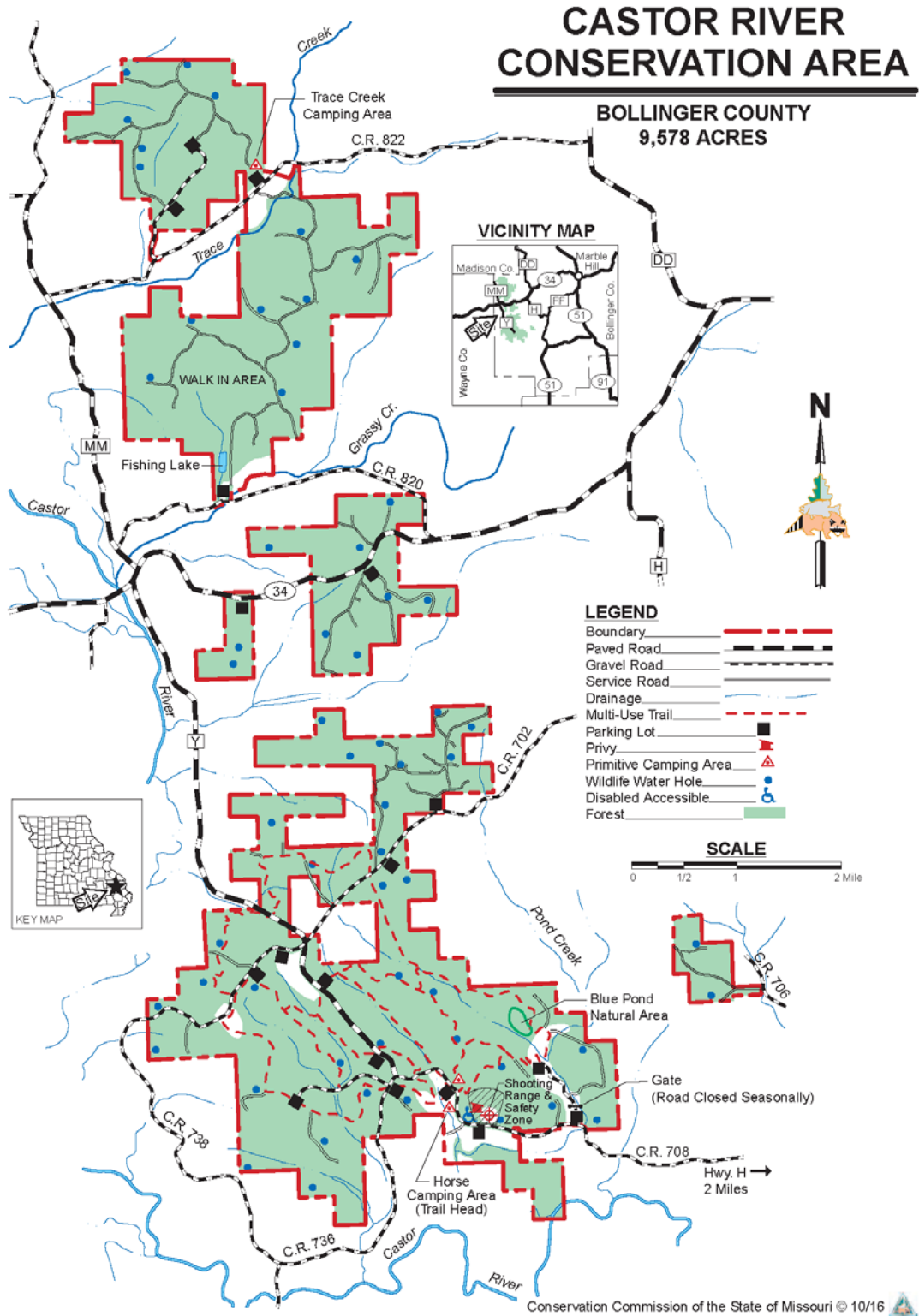


Figure 2: Trail Map of Castor River CA

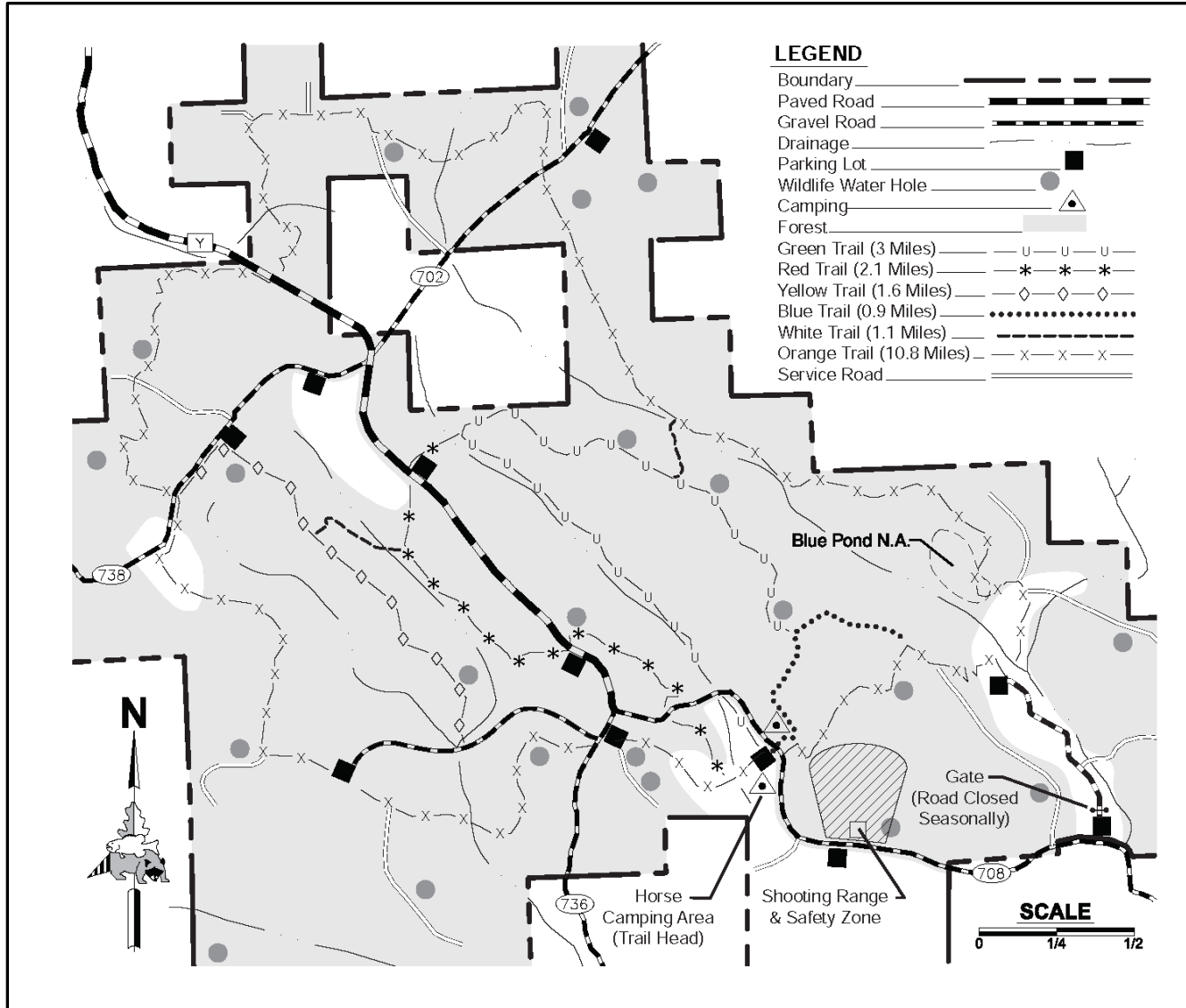
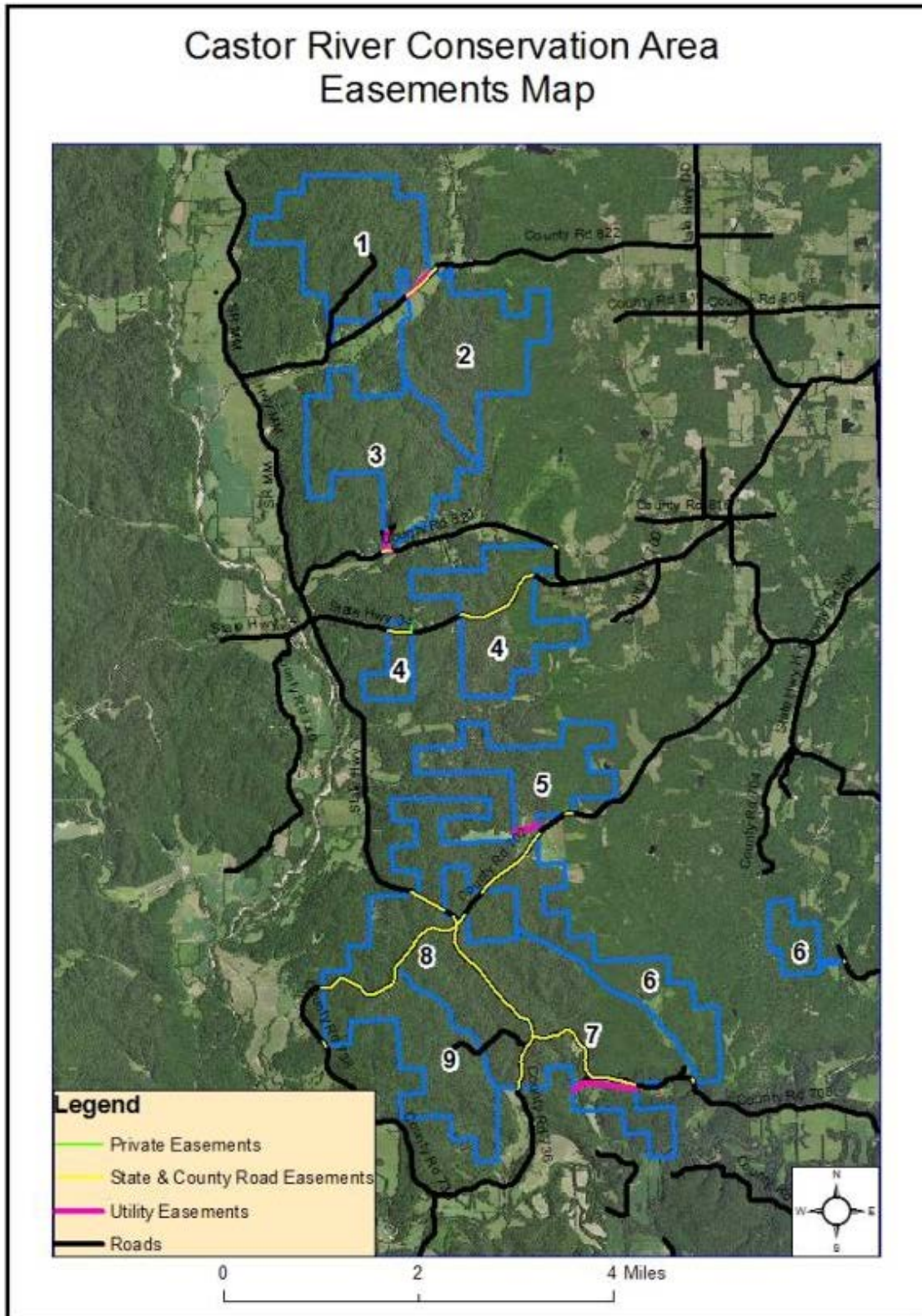




Figure 3: Easements Map



**Figure 4: Aerial Photo with Compartment Numbers**

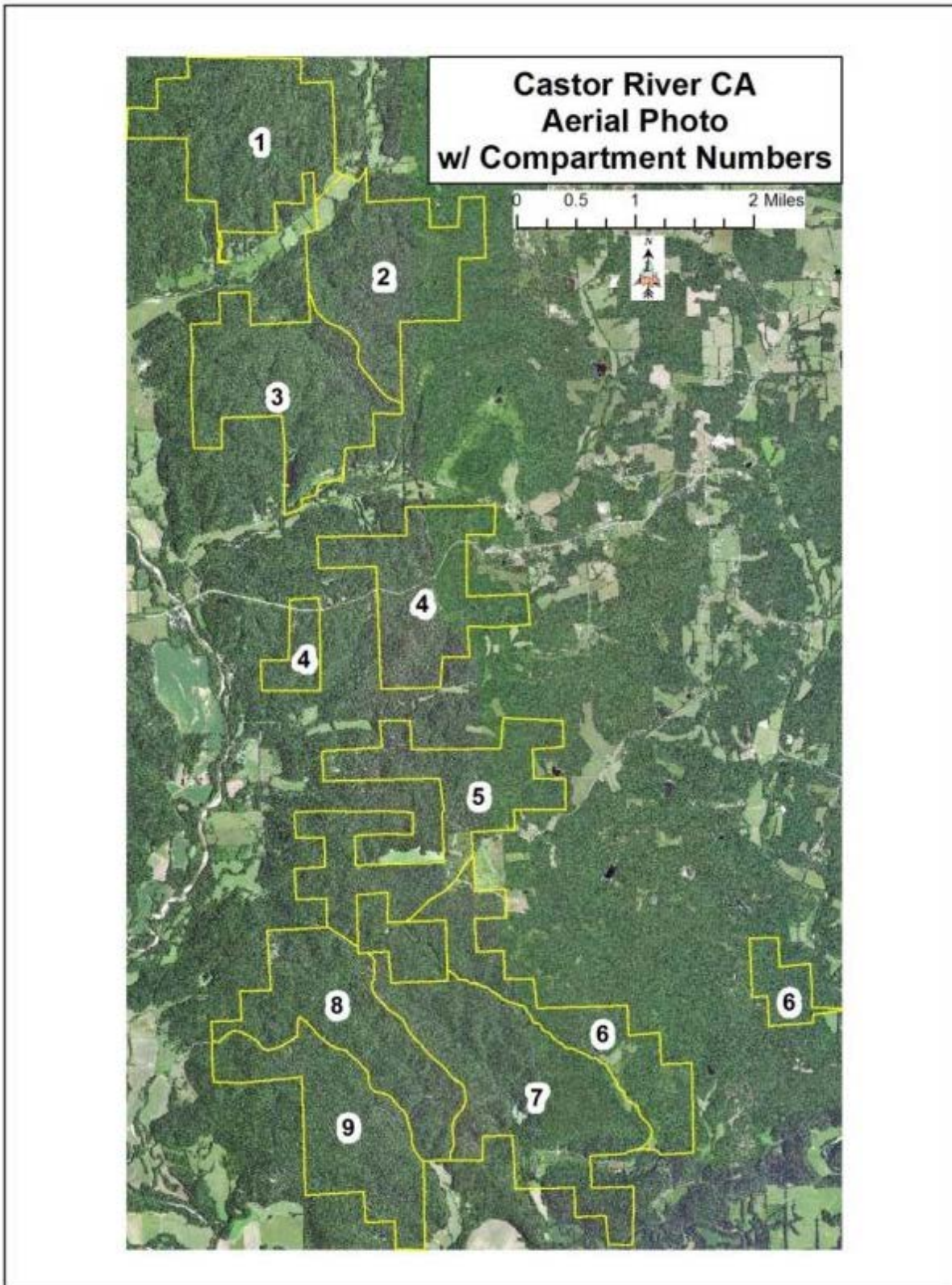




Figure 5: Land Cover Map

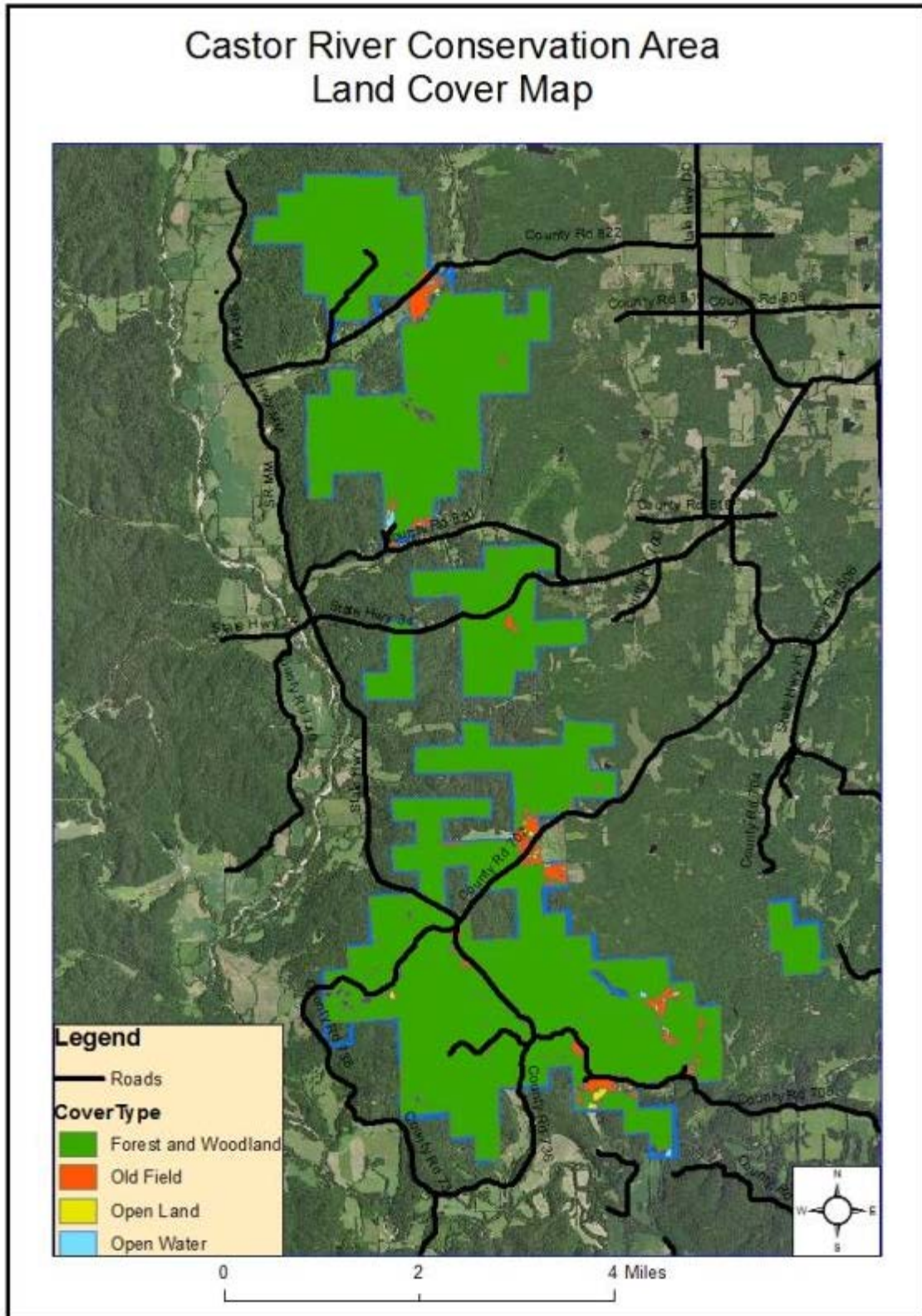
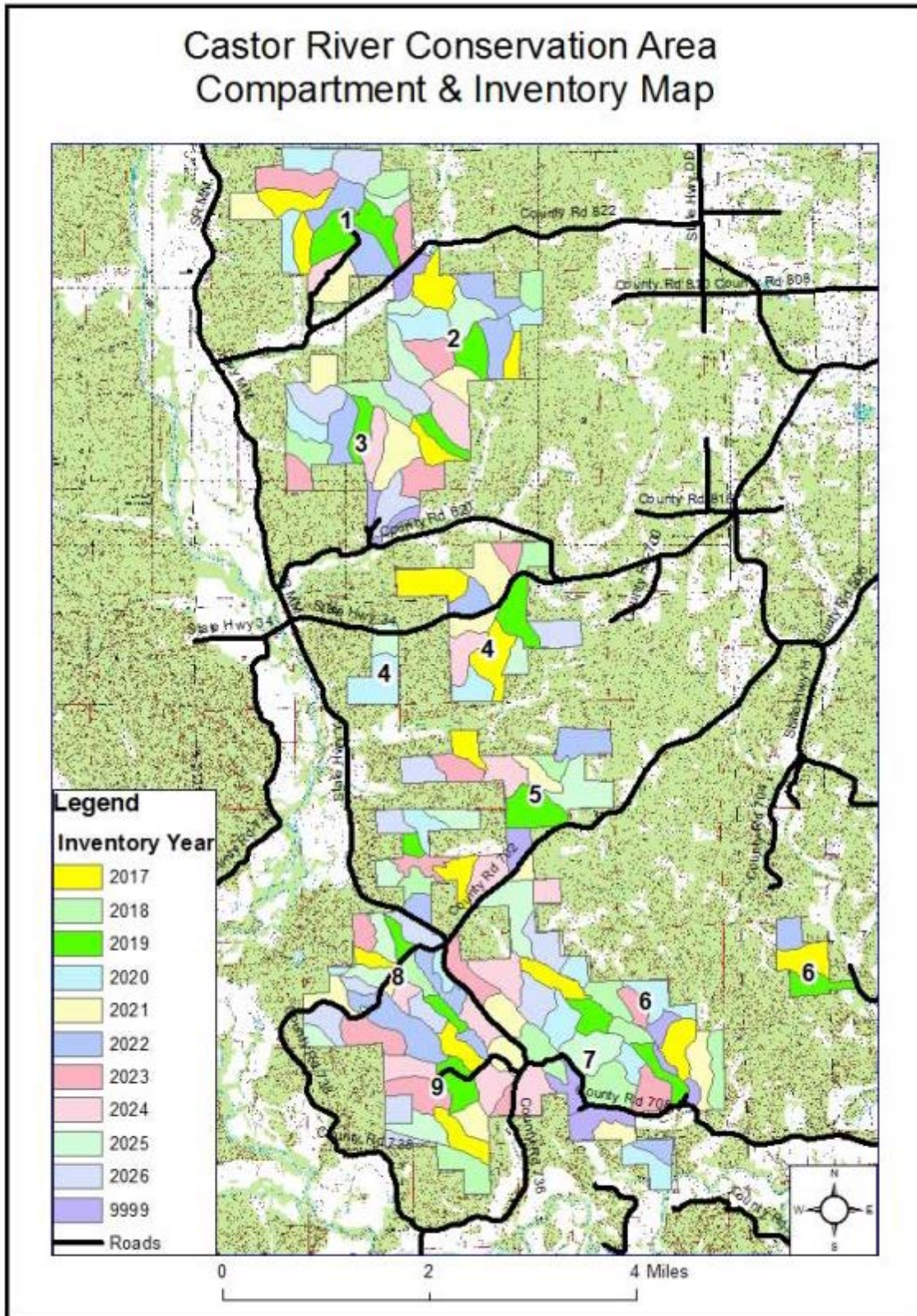




Figure 6: Compartment and Inventory Map



## Appendix A: Castor River Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (Feb. 1-28, 2017):

This is great, as a lifelong Missouri resident I've always appreciated the care and planning that goes in to making our natural spaces last forever. Thank you for continuing your efforts on behalf of mine and future generations. Cheers.

157 acre tract in area 4 on Hwy 34 that just recently has been TSI. This section really needs to become a Bow Only area - A car window with kid and adult was hit by a bullet two years ago on 34 and because is such a small area on the with hwy thru it. Second the 157 acre area new logging roads are not block off and ATV are going in and out they are doing target shooting during deer season ATV from campground along castor I coming up running into the area from 34 parking lot. Also adjacent landowner are leaving stands up all year and have ATV paths coming in from the East Side of property. One watering hole is so grown up it barely has any benefit for wildlife. The second on is in better condition on top of the ridge. The old growth oaks on the back or south side has never had a prescribed fire in over 10 years has little to no cover for wildlife other than open timber. This 157 acre is being ignored until the TSI took place. Management of this area needs to really improve.

I am a heavy user of the conservation areas in Madison/Bollinger county, and the Castor River. One thing I believe is very concerning is the amount of trash I see when I am out in one of these areas, and most particular Amidon Conservation Area. The trash is unbelievable, and last summer was the first time I'd ever seen anyone picking up trash out there. I don't know how to solve the problem, because frankly people just don't care, and a lot of people go out there in the summer. It would be nice to see the littering fines actually being pushed on people, and more people cleaning regularly. I can't remember for sure, but I don't think there is a trash can at the entrance of Amidon, and maybe that would help some. A lot of times people just leave full trash bag, cans, diapers, etc. at the entrance for someone to pick up. I care about these places a lot, and honestly Amidon is a party spot for drunks in the summer and the place gets trashed. The pink rocks are unique and I think more should be done to keep the place taken care of.

Castor River Conservation Area is absolutely my favorite place to hunt. I have been hunting there for ten years now and have had much success with great quality of deer and turkey. It would be nice to have late season food plots to increase my odds of harvesting a deer in late season. Maybe this would result in too many deer taken off the area I don't know but late archery season seems to be difficult. Thanks for all you do to make this a great hunting area for us.

My family and friends use and thoroughly enjoy the horse trails throughout the year at this CA. We have used the equestrian campground as well, but it is primitive, so therefore is not conducive to stays longer than 1-2 nights. It would be nice to eventually have electric service. I liked that adding wildlife watering areas along some ridges are being considered. I would like to see more along the horse trails as well.

<p>I like the plan, need to get rid of the hogs, they have taken it over!! We need to allow four wheelers to retrieve game. You can't expect hunters some older hunters to drag a deer a mile or more,I understand we need to protect our forrests. Surely we can come up with a compromise or a special permit.</p>
<p>Thank you for making this information public. My family uses Castor River Conservation Area frequently for horseback riding &amp; we love it! The trails are well maintained &amp; offer numerous choices for riding. We have been riding at Castor River for over ten years &amp; it is still our favorite Conservation Area for horseback riding. Thank you for maintaining &amp; allowing horseback riders this area to enjoy.</p>
<p>The Caster river has been ignored for years from Salma down stream. Trees block the channel and make it almost impossible to enjoy fishing and wildlife.</p>
<p>The local MDC crew do a outstanding job in this area and my hat off to them. Many here in this area (Bollinger County) would like to see more food plots for upland and migratory birds. 99% if not 100% of all food plots are for deer and possible turkey. The local crew have in the past set aside 5-10 acres around the Blue Pond area for planting sunflowers, Milo not just corn. If possible we would like to work with the local office and maybe we supply the seed if they provide the area and planting tools. We know the MDC have dove fields in other areas of the SE area but the crowds and restrictions on some of these are not worth the drive even if its 20-30 miles. Idea recommendation would be to plant one to two acres of sunflowers/ milo on the edges of all food plots, opening up more areas to hunt for more people. Thank you</p>
<p>Please continue to maintain and UPGRADE / expand the current equestrian trails within this CA. Additional trails for horses / hikers only should be considered. Bikes and horses do not always mix well. Thank you.</p>
<p>I would love to have some new horse trails added. Especially in the northern part of the area.</p>
<p>Area #6 is closet to our private ground. Recently MDC designated it to be walk in only access which was much appreciated on our part. It has kept traffic low and kept out "unethical" hunters. We would like to see it taken a step further and be designated for bow hunting only. This particular tract is separate from most of the other parts of castor river area. During firearms season there are still many trespassers we have to deal with and it seems to be the same issues every year. Designating this area for bow hunting only we think would help resolve the issues. Thank you for this consideration.</p>
<p>Glad to have mdc as a neighbor but I have the following comments. Our conservation agents are really good but we need more agents to patrol mdc and private lands. The forest has good rules but more enforcement is needed. One agent can not handle a whole county. Atv`s need more control and camping rules enforced. Increase walk in hunting only areas. Enforcement of the</p>

new hog regulations on killing hogs on mdc property is very important but increased hog trapping efforts on public land needs to go along with it. There needs to be no shortage of traps available either for mdc employees or private landowners to slow the spread of these nuisance hogs. I would like to see more emphasis on nongame species. All wildlife is important to the balance of nature and our environment. All species are important just not the deer and turkey. I have been on Castor River all my life and I have seen dramatic changes. A severe decline in bullfrogs, mussels, muskrats, mink, quail, weasels, snakes, turtles, foxes. and on and on. Some of these were very plentiful but now my grandkids will be lucky to see one. I am a very avid outdoors person. I enjoy hunting and fishing but want the opportunity for generations to enjoy all aspects of the environment. As a public agency, mdc needs to set the example on their lands that will help guide the private landowner to do the right thing on their land. I also believe that wildlife management is very important but the management of people is what is needed more. Control of peoples abuse of the laws and the environment will allow wildlife to take care of themselves. Nature is good of taking care of herself if left alone. Over management by man in the long run can be the wrong thing. I recommend a simple plan with letting mother nature be the main influence on the operation of Castor River Forest.

You guys are the best in the business at planning and preparing for the future. I'd love to see you guys take some of the parcels close to the Castor River such as opposite side of the road from the gun range to make this area(s) archery only like the Sweetgum Access. Just think what this would do for this area over a ten year period. Keep up the great work!