

Davis (Lester R.) Memorial Forest

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan FY 2018-2032





Wildlife Division Chief

12 Oct 2017
Date

Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Nick Burrell, Wildlife Management Biologist

Scott Brown, Conservation Agent

Kevin Badgley, Interpretive Center Manager

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Rhonda L. Rimer, Natural History Biologist

SOUTHWEST REGION

RCT Chair


Signature

8/30/17
Date

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief


Signature

09/08/2017
Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** The Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest, #6821
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1968
- **Acreage:** 85 acres
- **County:** Barton
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for wildlife associated with old field and forest resources, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of the Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest is a healthy forest/old field complex with a developed interpretive trail.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** Western Cherokee Grasslands Prairie Chicken Focus Area, The Nature Conservancy Liberal Landscape Conservation 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
 - D. Other:** Occurs in the Cherokee Plains Subsection of the Osage Plains Landtype Association. It is described as one continuous plain of very low relief (usually less than 80 feet) mostly on Pennsylvanian sandstones and shales, but with associated thin-bedded limestone and coal (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - One parking lot
 - Hike/bike multi-use trail (3 miles, north portion is graveled)
 - One cable gate
 - Approximately 0.5 miles of five-strand barbed wire boundary fence

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Listed on the deed is the following: “Grantees by acceptance of the conveyance herein warrant that the lands hereby conveyed shall forever be known as – The Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest.”
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** None
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

This entire area was strip mined for coal deposits in the mid-1920s. Since the early 1950s the previous owner planted over 350 species of trees and shrubs on the site’s spoil mounds. Many of these species were not native to this state or area. This area is not a typical woodland or forest habitat due to its mining history and non-native plantings.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Control invasive species.
- 2) Maintain an aesthetically pleasing non-native forest habitat on mine spoil.

Management Objective 1: Maintain existing open area, increase vegetative diversity, and provide bare ground and grassland structure suitable for grassland birds and wildlife.

Strategy 1: Annually inspect old field site for invasive vegetation. Treat invasive species with appropriate control methods. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Disturb old field/prairie reconstruction routinely using fire and mechanical disturbance, as needed, to provide appropriate vegetative structure for early succession/grassland wildlife. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain a healthy forest habitat.

Strategy 1: Monitor the forested areas for invasive species. Suppress infestations that are problematic and prevent such populations from spreading off the area. (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Aquatic features on this area consist of a flooded strip pit along the west property line. This strip pit primarily lies on neighboring property, but the north end of the pit (near West Central Road) provides some opportunistic bank fishing for the public using the area. This pit is not actively managed for fishing. No streams are present on the area.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The area's landscape has been highly altered by past mining activities and natural drainages have been altered.
- 2) Surface run-off from the area flows to streams on Prairie State Park.

Management Objective 1: Maintain quality surface runoff.

Strategy 1: Continue to implement best management practices as outlined in the Missouri Department of Conservation's (the Department's) *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by Missouri Department of Conservation* (2009). (Wildlife, Fisheries)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide for recreational hunting and viewing opportunities.
- 2) Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting and viewing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.

Strategy 1: Write brochures and install signage to communicate to the public information about the history of this area, Lester R. Davis, and the mine reclamation project that was done. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Identify 25-plus species of unique trees and shrubs along the hiking trail and install signs that identify the species, their origin (native or non-native to Missouri), and a brief description of their value to wildlife. (Wildlife)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with Department guidelines. (Wildlife)

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.

APPENDICES

Area Background:

The Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest was strip-mined in approximately 1926 for its coal deposits. The coal was extracted and the spoil mounds were left as they were without any rehabilitation, leaving open linear strip pits and spoil mounds across the entire area. In 1951 this site was purchased by Lester R. Davis. Mr. Davis spent approximately 17 years planting over 100,000 trees and shrubs on this site. Approximately 350-plus different trees and shrubs were planted. In 1968, Lester Davis donated this site to the Department. Approximately 78 acres of this site is forested strip pits, with many native and non-native trees and shrubs.

In 2013 the northern portion of the area was involved in a mine reclamation project that addressed strip pit issues. Approximately 7 acres of the area were cleared of trees, leveled, pits along the road were filled. The objective of the reclamation project was to prevent the deep strip pits adjacent to the roads from undermining the roads and preventing possible serious injury from vehicles going off the road and into the deep pits. This open land was planted to a cool season grass and clover mix and also a small 1-acre site was planted with a diverse prairie grass and forb mix.

The area is open to the public from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Special facilities include a parking lot and a 3-mile looped footpath that traverses throughout the strip pit ridges.

Current Land Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Forest	76		89
Old Field	8		9
Prairie Reconstruction	1		1
Total	85		100
Stream Frontage		0	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest Management Plan was available for a public comment period Feb. 1–28, 2017. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from three respondents (Appendix A). The Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest 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 Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest Management Plan public comment period.

Concerned that the Department harvested walnut trees on area.

There has never been any kind of timber harvest on the Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest Area. The area has a vast diversity of tree species to observe and the recreational trail on the area provides a route to view these features.

Concerned that reclaimed strip pits have no topsoil and no plant growth.

As part of the mine reclamation project, the thin layer of topsoil that developed since the area was mined was saved and spread back over the area once the pits were filled and graded. The site was limed and fertilized and seeded heavily to various grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs, including an area seeded with diverse native prairie seed. Since this site will not be disturbed, roots from the existing grasses and broadleaf plants will continue to build top soil on this site. These pictures were taken in mid-April 2017, showing that revegetation has taken place.



Wonders where the pond is located on the area.

The pond shown on the area map (northeast corner) was part of the mine reclamation done in the past. The map is in the process of being updated at this time. The pond no longer exists.

Suggests adding a picnic area by the parking lot.

Adding infrastructure and increasing maintenance needs are not in the budget for this area. Mowed areas with latrines can be found on nearby Bushwhacker Lake and Shawnee Trail conservation areas.

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

The Department's mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state; to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. Thank you for your support!

References:

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

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Land Cover and Hiking Trail Map

Figure 3: Contour Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

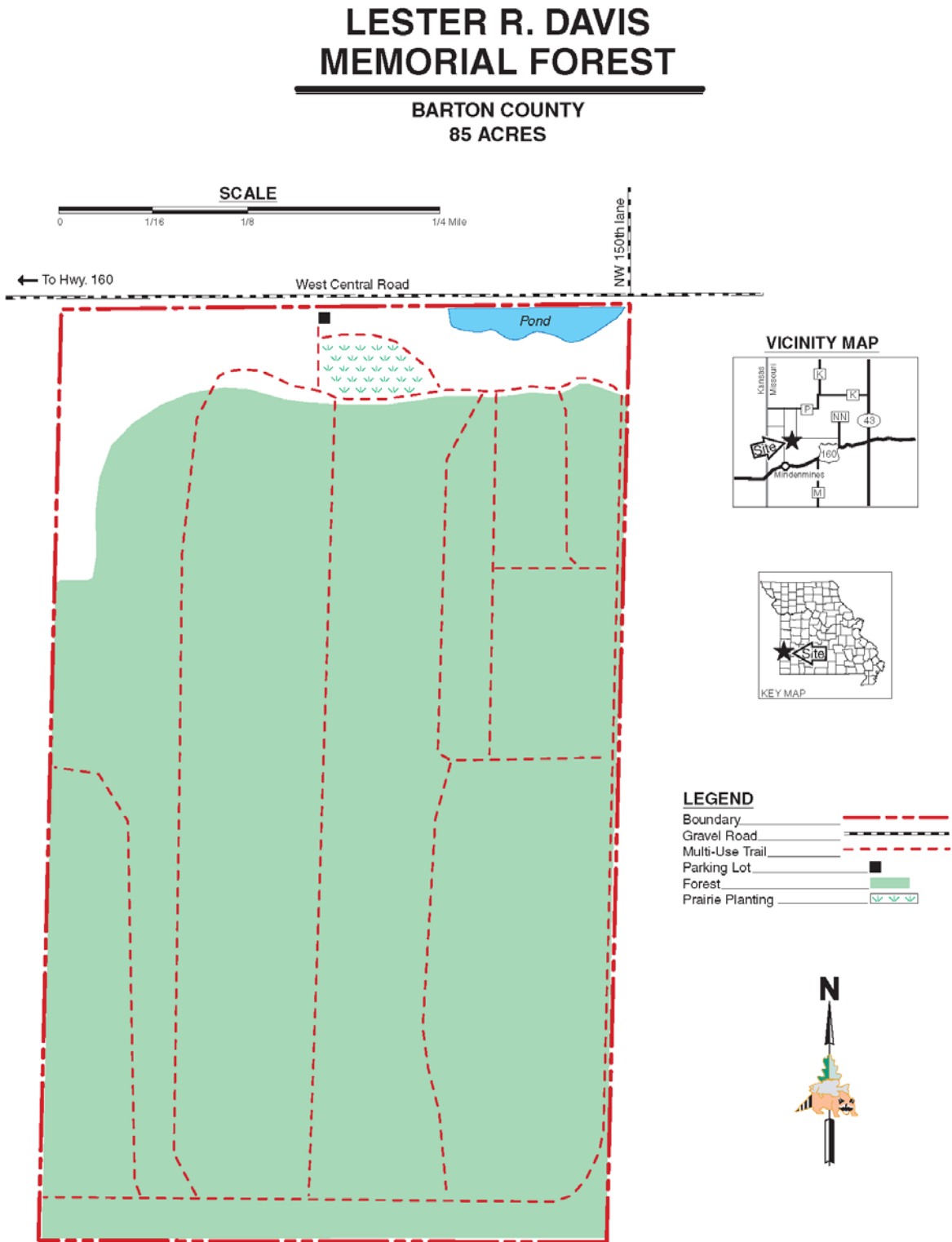


Figure 2: Land Cover and Hiking Trail Map

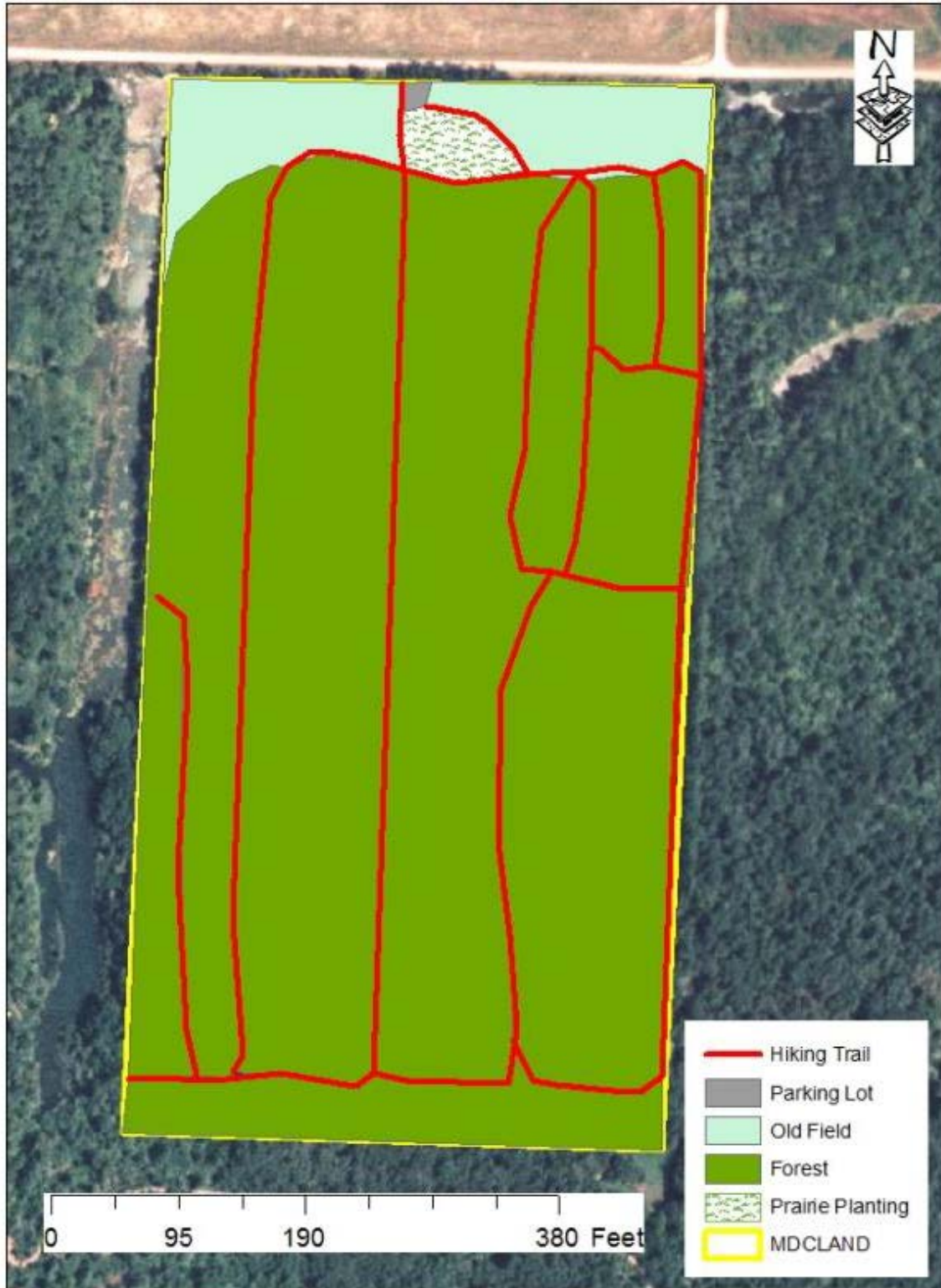


Figure 3: Contour Map



Appendix A. Lester R. Davis Memorial Forest 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.

Where is the pond I don't see it on Google Earth? I think you should add a small picnic area by the parking lot. It should be shaded by some trees.
Thanks

Keep government workers off of the property. My property borders conservation property on Stockton lake. First they came in and destroyed the quail and rabbit habitat and then they came in and cut down a walnut tree grove then two years ago they cut down three of the oldest walnut trees in Dade county believe it or not sometimes Mother Nature knows more than someone that thinks they know better!

upon reclaiming the north end where strip pits presented a hazard to the adjacent road, the state did not apply any kind of top soil that would accommodate planted grasses. Therefore, the whole road frontage is clay and grows nothing of value and appears as poor as it really is.

I understand a similar project is planned on Shawnee Trail, and again, there is no plan to apply any type top soil to the reclaimed area. This is a bad mistake by the state and before the project starts, the plan should be altered.