

Bois D'Arc Conservation Area

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan FY 2019-2033



Michael A. Schwan

Wildlife Division Chief

7/30/18

Date

Bois D'Arc Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Kevin Hedgpeth, Wildlife Management Biologist

Kara Tvedt, Fisheries Management Biologist

Paul Johnson, Resource Forester

Rhonda Rimer, Natural History Biologist

Andrew Feistel, Conservation Agent

Mike Brooks, Dalton Range Manager

Matt Curry, Private Land Conservationist

Kevin Zielke, Conservation Agent

Shannon Ohrenberg, Conservation Agent

Linda Chorce, Springfield Conservation Nature Center Manager

Jay Barber, Conservation Education Consultant

SOUTHWEST REGION

RCT Chair



Signature

07-23-2018
Date

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief



Signature

7/30/2018
Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Bois D'Arc Conservation Area, #8517
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1985
- **Acreage:** 3,172 acres
- **County:** Greene
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for wildlife, woodland, grassland, glade, old field, and cropland resources with emphasis on quail and upland wildlife.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Bois D'Arc Conservation Area (CA) is an area that provides habitat to support a healthy Northern bobwhite quail population, upland wildlife, and species of concern.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

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 Considerations

- A. **Priority Areas:** Quail Emphasis 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's 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:** Yes, records kept with Department natural history biologist.

D. Other: Bois D'Arc CA is located in the Ozark Highlands Section, Springfield Plains Subsection, Upper Sac River Oak Savanna Woodland Low Hills Landtype Association and Springfield Karst Prairie Plain Landtype Association (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- Twenty-one gravel parking lots (two are American with Disabilities Act [ADA] accessible, with concrete pads)
- Osage Orange Hiking Trail (5 miles)
- Fourteen ponds (4.5 acres total), including 13 non-stocked ponds and one stocked educational fishing pond with pavilion
- Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center (ADA accessible)
- One dove hunting blind (ADA accessible)
- Field archery range (with two unmanned 14-point archery ranges)
- Two restrooms (ADA accessible)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations: None

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: Yes, powerline easement with City of Springfield; and telephone, electric, road utility, and gas pipeline easements exist with Missouri Gas Energy and Cherokee Gas Companies.

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: 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: None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Bois D'Arc CA contains approximately 695 acres of woodlands. Woodland management will be directed at maintaining a healthy natural community for wildlife habitat. There are approximately 62 acres of impounded water, wetlands, and moist soil units that will be managed for healthy natural communities. There are approximately 900 acres of old fields, 700 acres of grasslands, and 600 acres of open land that will be managed for healthy natural communities and wildlife benefit.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage woodland community.
- 2) Maintain healthy moist soil/wetland habitats.
- 3) Maintain grasslands, emphasizing native warm-season grasses and forbs.
- 4) Maintain open land with rotational cereal grain crops for quail, dove, and upland wildlife benefit.

Management Objective 1: Maintain healthy woodlands and forests.

Strategy 1: Monitor woodlands for invasive vegetation, diseases, and insects.

Suppress any infestations that may develop. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Retain and protect existing den trees. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Maintain and restore open woodlands to promote herbaceous groundcover based on a forest inventory. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain healthy wetland habitats.

Strategy 1: Monitor wetland areas for invasive species. Suppress any infestations that may develop. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Maintain native vegetation around the shoreline. Reduce woody encroachments around the shoreline as needed. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Maintain grasslands.

Strategy 1: Maintain grasslands and forbs by mechanical, biological, and chemical methods, as needed. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Control and set-back woody succession using appropriate methods, including prescribed burns. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Monitor the area for invasive species. Suppress any infestations that may develop using appropriate methods. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Maintain rotational open lands.

Strategy 1: Plant and maintain open land by utilizing Agricultural Crop permits and Department planted materials. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Monitor open lands for invasive species. Suppress any infestations that may develop using appropriate methods. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 5: Maintain old fields.

Strategy 1: Disturb early successional old fields, as needed, to maintain wildlife habitats using appropriate methods. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Monitor old fields for invasive species. Suppress any infestations that may develop using the appropriate methods. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 6: Monitor quail populations.

Strategy 1: Annually monitor quail populations by fall covey counts and summer songbird counts, and evaluate appropriate management techniques. (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Aquatic features on the area consist of several headwater streams, small ponds, and karst features, such as springs, caves, and sinkholes. First- and second-order streams on the area total over 11 miles in length. Most of these are ephemeral with flows dependent on surface runoff. The third-order streams on the area, Sawdey Branch, and one of its tributaries provide an additional 1.6 miles of stream habitat. These streams are more intermittent with some permanent reaches. The area itself also borders 0.2 miles of Clear Creek (a fourth-order stream). Due to the limited size of these streams, angling opportunities are limited.

The area also contains 14 ponds (4.5 acres total), including one educational fishing pond and 13 non-stocked ponds. The educational pond is periodically stocked with channel catfish and hybrid sunfish. Fishing is for educational groups by reservation only, through the Southwest Regional Office. The non-stocked ponds are not managed for fishing. Many of the non-stocked ponds are shallow and are primarily used as wildlife watering holes and amphibian habitat. Those that hold water year-round may provide the opportunity for anglers to opportunistically catch a few sunfish.

Karst features are found throughout the area. Currently, there are 12 known sinkholes on the area and they provide direct connectivity to groundwater resources. The area also has three springs; two of them contribute water to Sawdey Branch. Another spring contributes flow to a tributary of Clear Creek. The area also has documented caves, but

they are closed to public access due to concerns of transmission of White-Nose Syndrome to cave wildlife.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Many impoundments have poor water holding ability due to soil constraints.
- 2) Protect several miles of stream frontage and spring features.
- 3) Protect karst features, such as sinkholes, springs, and caves that are found on the area.

Management Objective 1: Maintain and/or enhance functionality and quality of streams on the area.

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

Strategy 2: Address channel and streambank instability, as needed. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 2: Protect groundwater quality.

Strategy 1: Establish/maintain vegetative buffer zones at least 100 feet wide around all known karst features. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Limit application of herbicides within karst buffer zones to spot treatments of non-restricted use products. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Avoid the application of fertilizer or other nutrients within karst buffer zones. (Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- 2) Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.
- 3) Build relationships with neighboring landowners.

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting and wildlife 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 on Bois D'Arc CA.

Strategy 1: Communicate recreational opportunities to the public (e.g., using brochures, Atlas database). (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Communicate the uniqueness of the area to teachers, students, scout groups, and youth groups to facilitate as a possible destination for ecology classes, school programs, and workshops. (Outreach and Education)

Management Objective 3: Facilitate a good working relationship with neighboring landowners.

Strategy 1: Continue to work with neighbors to minimize any boundary, trespass, or other issues affecting Bois D'Arc CA or private property. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties. (Private Land Services)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.
- 2) Consider acquisition of land, when available.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

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

Strategy 2: Maintain the soft safety perimeter and coordinate all wildlife habitat management inside the hard safety perimeter of the Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center Complex. (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.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Bois D'Arc Conservation Area (CA) is located in western Greene County. The area is mainly open fields (pasture and cropland) with several small ponds and drainages. The area shares its name with the town of Bois D'Arc, which is located 1 mile south of the area. The actual name, Bois D'Arc comes from the French language, meaning "arc of wood." Osage Indians used the sturdy limbs of the Osage orange trees, which are a dominate tree species on the area, to make their bows.

The Osage, Sac, Kickapoo, Delaware, and other Native American tribes hunted and fished parts of Greene County. The first permanent settlement in Greene County was in 1818. At the time of settlement, approximately 60 percent of the area was prairie. Most of the rest of the area was glade and woodland. By 1830, Springfield had become an established trading center, and many settlers were coming to the area. Farming was the principal industry for the area, and farmers outside the immediate Springfield area lived by subsistence cropping and raising livestock. By the 1870s, a network of railroads had been established, and agriculture in Greene County exploded.

When the Department purchased the initial tracts of land that became Bois D'Arc CA in the mid-1980s, over 83 percent of the area was in fescue pasture or legume hay. The east side of the area was historically glade and savanna habitats, while the west side of the area was predominantly prairie. A portion of the Leeper prairie extended onto the western portion of the area.

There have been eight land purchases to acquire the Bois D'Arc CA. The first, from Ed and Ted Richter in 1985 totaled 1,812 acres. There were five purchases in 1986, totaling 1,055 acres; 160 acres from Joe Coppage, 435 acres from Lee McClean, and 460 acres from three other families. In 1988 the Department purchased 25 acres from Alma Appleby, and in 2001, 280 acres were purchased from T. B. Coppage.

Bois D'Arc CA was purchased as a bobwhite quail emphasis area. Bobwhite quail emphasis areas were designated in the 1980s to improve populations. The primary justification for bobwhite quail emphasis areas included recreation and demonstration of suitable bobwhite quail habitat and harvest management.

Since its purchase in 1985, contour strip farming, food plots, and plantings were established along with a prescribed burn schedule to encourage early successional habitats and native plant species. Primary woodland cover types consist of oak, hickory, ash, and eastern redcedar,

associated with shallow soils and rocky outcroppings. Abundant understory species include flowering dogwood, wild plum, persimmon, wild grape, hawthorn, and greenbrier. Native plants within the unit consist of many species of asters, big and little bluestem, broomsedge, sideoats grama, and partridge pea. The old fields are typically invaded with honey locust, black locust, wild plum, and sumac.

The Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center is situated on 65 acres within the Bois D’Arc CA. The entire Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center facility, the hard safety perimeter, and all of the acreage within the hard safety perimeter is operated, managed, and maintained by staff from the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Old Fields/Upland Fields	900		28
Open Lands	700		22
Upland Forest/Woodland	652		21
Warm-Season Grass Fields	600		19
WSG Contour Strips	100		3
Shooting Ranges	65		2
Ephemeral Wetlands	52		2
Glade	43		1
Bottomland/Riparian Forest	25		1
Sinkholes	25		1
Impounded Water	10		<1
Total	3,172		100
Stream Frontage		12.3	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Bois D’Arc Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period Nov. 1–30, 2017. The Missouri Department of Conservation received 20 comments from 19 respondents (Appendix A). The Bois D’Arc 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 (Bois D’Arc Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage) from Jan. 1-31, 2017. During this

“idea gathering” stage, the Department received input from 34 respondents (see “Bois D’Arc Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary” at short.mdc.mo.gov/Z5Z). The area planning team took comments into consideration as they drafted this 15-year management plan for Bois D’Arc Conservation Area. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they will be incorporated or why they will not be included, can be found in Appendix B.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through the Bois D’Arc Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

Terrestrial Resource Management

Suggests planting a perennial food source for ducks.

Because of a lack of hydric soil types, this area is not conducive to developing suitable habitat for waterfowl. Purchased in the 1980s, this area has an upland landscape focus and was acquired primarily for restoration and management of that habitat type.

Suggests liming the fields and hedge rows.

Fields are limed and fertilized periodically based on soil test results.

Aquatic Resource Management

Suggests managing more of the area ponds for fishing.

Most ponds on the area are small and shallow which limits fishing potential. Their primary purpose is for wildlife watering. Staff has conducted area inspections and reviewed alternatives to improve the fisheries potential at these sites. However, in most cases, the area soils are not conducive to constructing larger ponds as they have limited water holding potential. More suitable fishing ponds and impoundments are available at nearby Talbot Conservation Area. The area does have one educational-only pond which allows schools and other educational groups to schedule the pond for use. Educational groups wishing to reserve this pond must do so through the Southwest Regional Office during regular business hours. All fishing that takes place at this special use pond is catch and release only. This practice allows hundreds of students each year the opportunity to fish and enjoy a positive fishing experience.

Public Use Management

Hunting

Appreciates the Department managing for quail and upland game habitat at Bois D’Arc CA.

We appreciate your support for management of upland game habitat. We plan to continue to use multiple management techniques to manage the habitat on the area for upland game.

Supports banning lead shot at the area.

The Department continues to evaluate the use of lead shot on conservation areas. We have offered public shooting classes at the Andy Dalton Range, highlighting the benefits of nontoxic shot which includes a hands-on component to help shooters become more efficient shooting nontoxic shot. A shotgun patterning range has also been constructed at this range to help shooters better determine which nontoxic shot patterns best from their shotguns.

Trails

Suggests adding 10 to 12 miles of multi-use (hike/bike/horse) trails to Bois D'Arc CA to accommodate the large population of horse riders in Green County.

This urban conservation area receives high public use due to the high population density in surrounding area of Greene County. To minimize conflict among all area users as well as reduce negative impacts to the area's limited resources, horseback riding is not recommended for this area. Adding multi-use trails for horseback riding would increase interference with existing area users and could negatively impact crucial habitats. Safety is a concern as the Bois D'Arc CA is dissected by numerous paved county and state roads. Connecting any horse trail from one management zone to another on the area would create hazardous crossings for horseback riders and drivers over these busy roads. In addition, the current parking lots and their county road approaches are not designed to accommodate horse trailers and trucks to unload/load horses.

Suggests better maintenance and signage of trails. Trails are difficult to hike in summer months due to overgrown plants. It is difficult to distinguish between designated trails and undesignated mowed paths, and signage is largely nonexistent.

Experience has demonstrated that even when the trails were more intensively mowed during the summer months, there was little to no increased use of the designated trail system. Except for the shooting range area which is signed and fenced off, current regulations allow users to walk or hike on undesignated paths or management access trails. Maps are available to help visitors navigate on the conservation area.

Suggests updating the area map. The map of the trails has many errors.

The trails designated on the area map are current and accurate.

Suggests allowing bicycle riding on the area.

Adding multi-use trails for bicycle riding would increase interference with existing area users and could negatively impact habitats.

The draft Bois D'Arc CA plan incorrectly states that there are extensive horse-riding trails at Little Sac Woods CA. The Department's website only lists hiking trails at Little Sac Woods CA.

You are correct that Little Sac Woods CA offers hiking trails only. Horseback riders do have other options in the proximity and can pursue this recreational opportunity at many nearby areas including the Missouri Department of Conservation's Pleasant Hope CA, Robert E. Talbot CA, and U.S. National Park Service's, Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. Altogether, within a 50-mile radius of Springfield, there are more than 84 miles of equestrian trails on other Department areas including Lead Mine CA, Compton Hollow CA, Stockton Lake Management Lands, Pomme de Terre Management Lands, Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Area, and Wire Road CA.

In addition, there are extensive horse trails already available on the U.S. Forest Service Mark Twain National Forest near Chadwick. The Swan Creek unit on the Mark Twain National Forest is an 8,488-acre area that provides for year-round nonmotorized dispersed recreation use as it is a designated Semi-Primitive Nonmotorized Area. There are approximately 20 miles of moderately used riding, hiking, and mountain biking trails available on the Swan Creek Unit. Next to this area sets the Bar-K Wrangler Camp, a primitive horse camp with limited picnic tables, fire rings, one vault toilet, and parking to accommodate stock trailers and towing vehicles. Bar-K is located on the west bank of Swan Creek and serves as a trailhead for the Swan Creek Trail. It is open year-round.

Shooting Range and Education Center

Suggests better cooperation with the 4-H Club by area management. Suggests making the shooting range more accessible for 4-H clubs.

Missouri Department of Conservation has worked well with the local 4-H clubs in the past, providing many opportunities to utilize the facilities at the Andy Dalton Shooting Range. We look forward to working with 4-H and youth clubs in the future to provide educational and shooting sport opportunities for the many clubs using the facilities.

Area Maintenance

Suggests maintaining/replacing benches. Many benches are in disrepair.

Benches along the hiking trail and the educational pond are maintained periodically.

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.

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

Maps:

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

Figure 2: Area Map

Figure 3: Aerial Map

Figure 4: Easement Map

Figure 5: Land Cover Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Bois D'Arc Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

(Figure 1)
Bois D'Arc Conservation Area (3172 Acres)
Vicinity Map

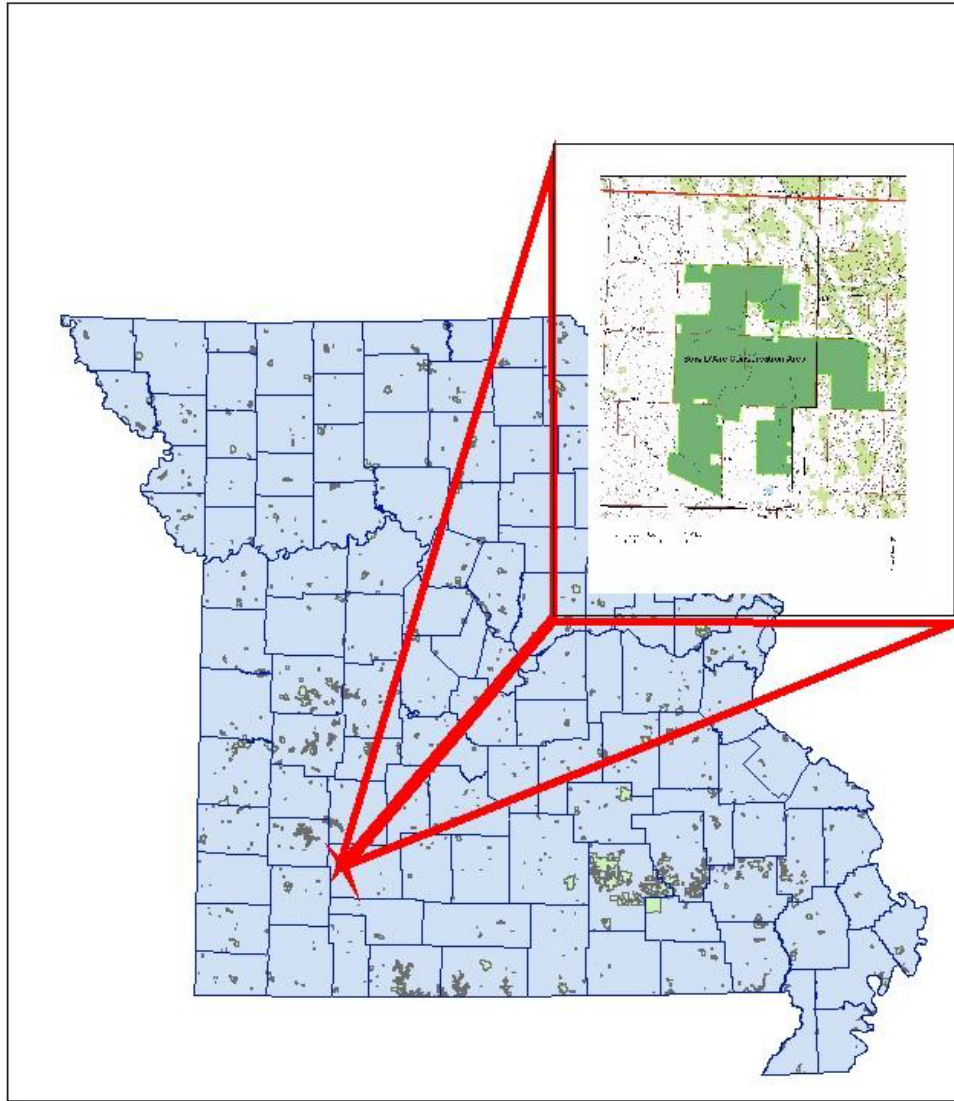


Figure 2: Area Map

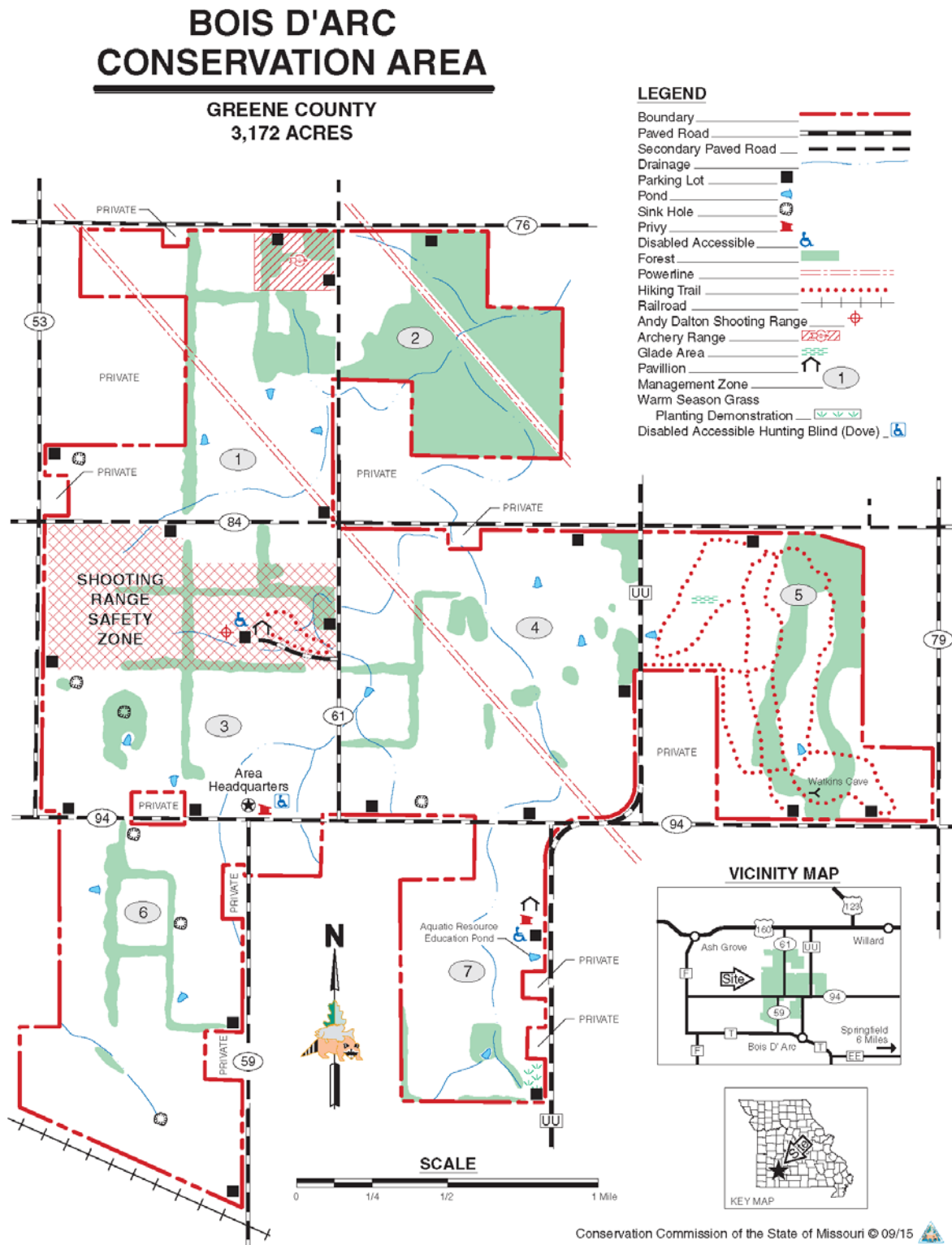
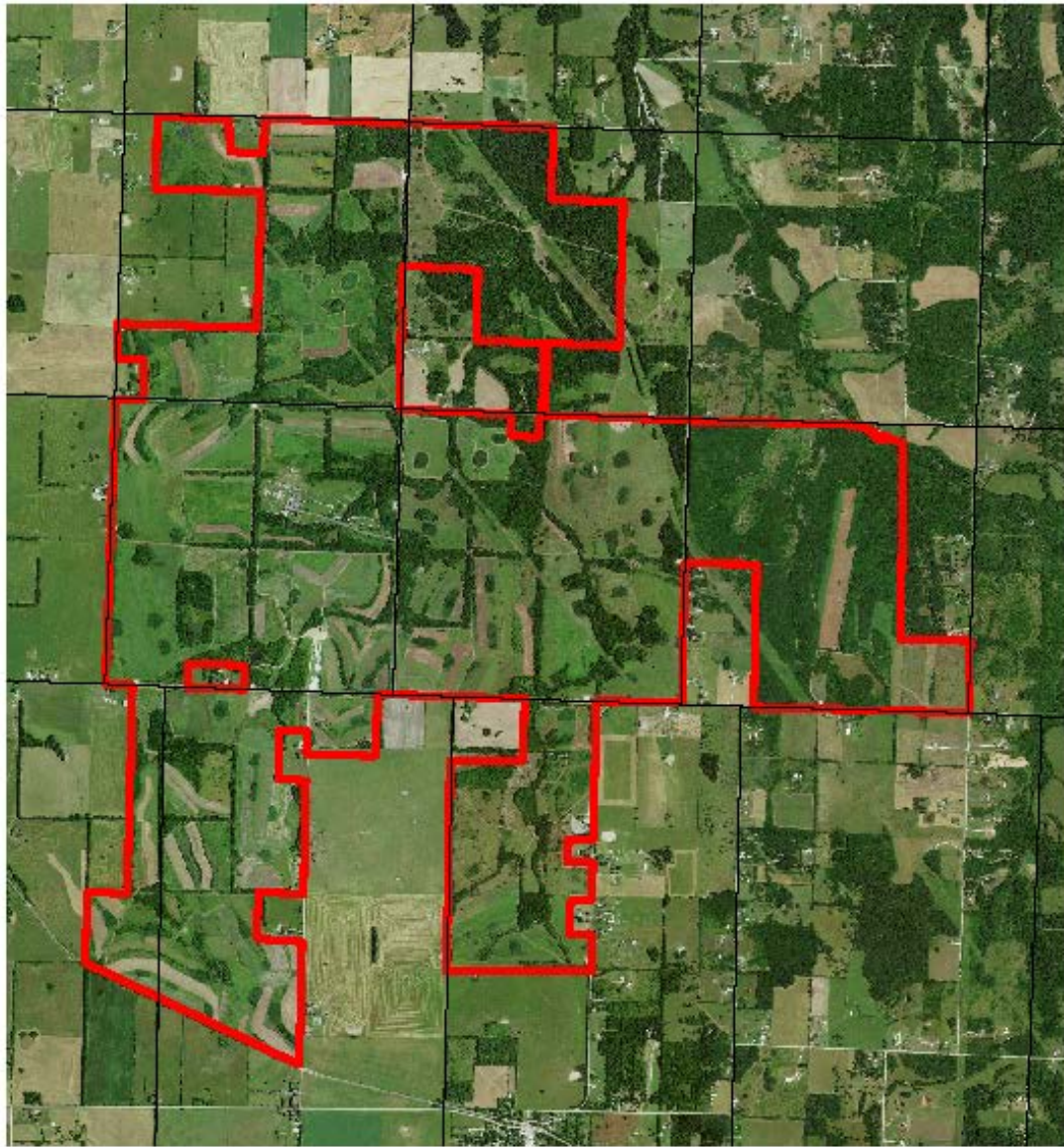


Figure 3: Aerial Map

Aerial Map



0 0.375 0.75 1.5 Miles



Legend

 Bois D'Arc CA

Figure 4: Easement Map

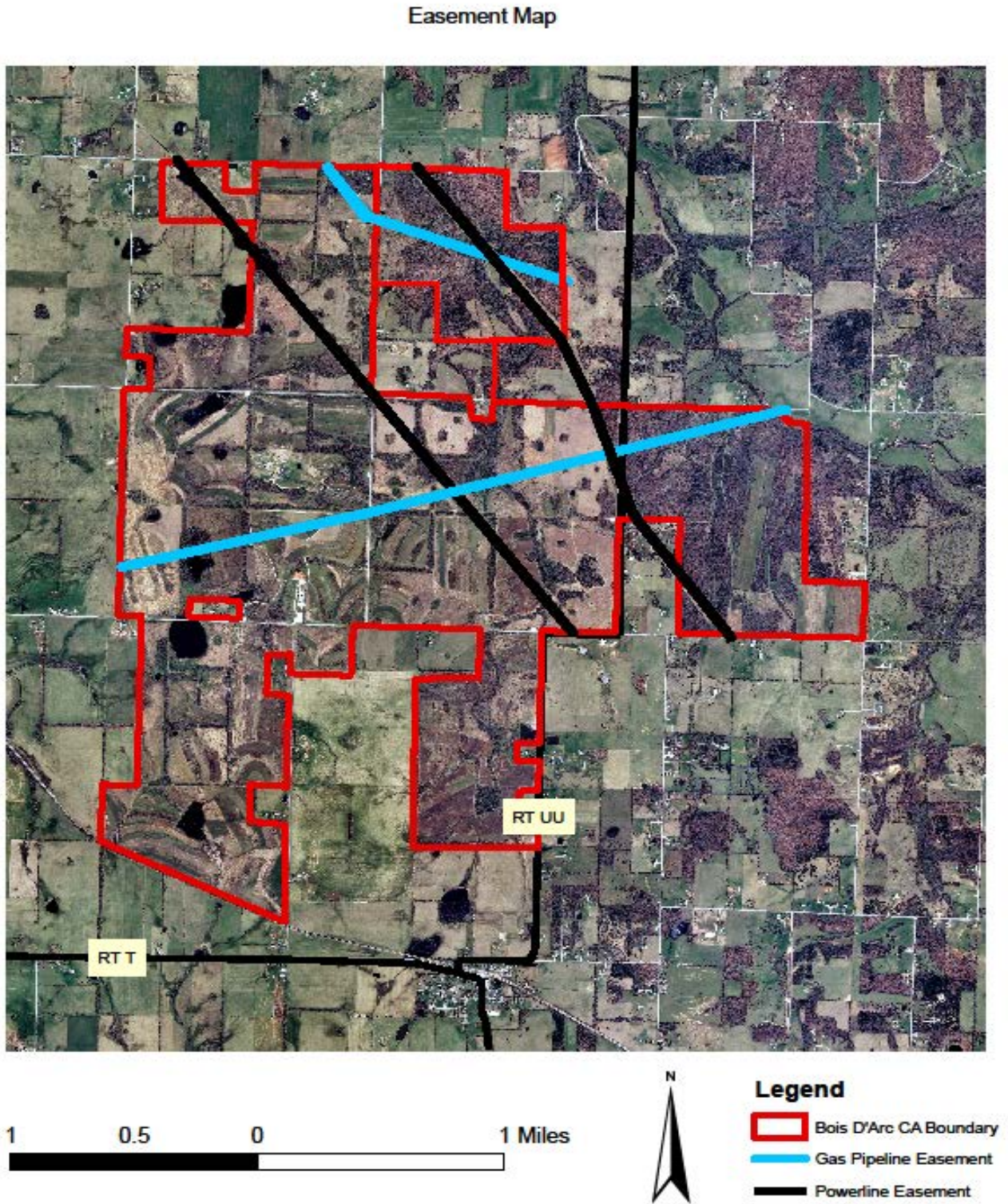
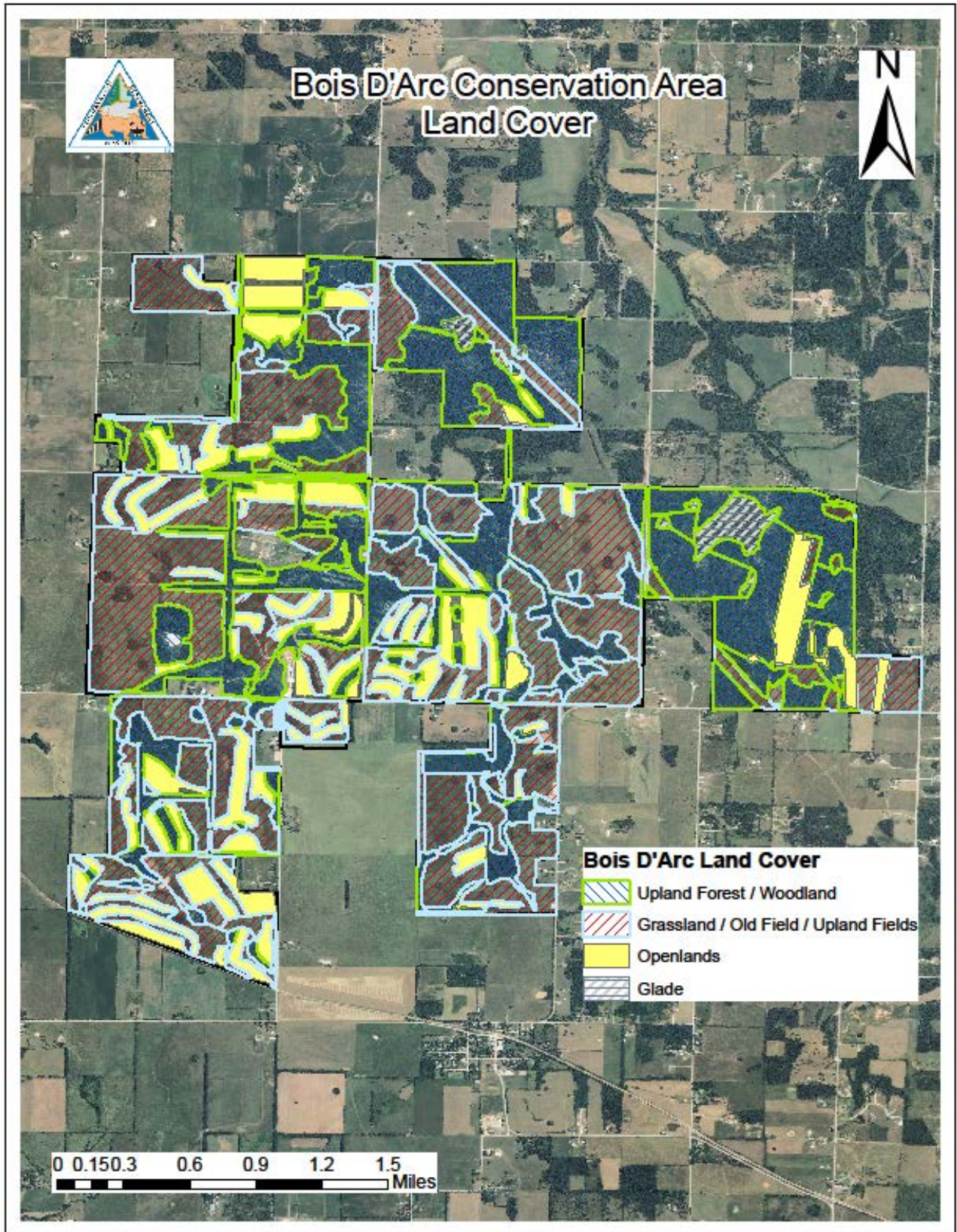


Figure 5: Land Cover Map



Appendix A: Bois D'Arc Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (Nov. 1–30, 2017):

<p>We would love another riding area close by. Wilson creek is the only one in Greene county. We love nature and would be good stewards of the land as well as good watchdogs for unwanted activity. Thank you!</p>
<p>We can help monitor the land use and in trail management techniques.</p>
<p>I would support maintaining and doing upgrades to the Bois D'Arc Conservation Area if some changes were made. I would like to see more cooperation between the Bois D'Arc Conservation director/administrator and the 4-H organization. 4-H is a youth organization (non-profit) that works to improve kids lives. The management at Bois D'Arc has been consistent in its pressure to push 4-H kids off the shooting range by making it nearly impossible for kids to access the range for practice and learning. Until something can change in this respect, I don't support any changes or funding of this conservation area.</p>
<p>I would like to see some of the ponds managed for fishing. The gun range is very nice and well managed.</p>
<p>Hello, many people in the area would love to see BoisD'Arc Conservation area allow horseback riding. Greene County is one of the largest horse populations in the United States. An annual pass similar to Wilsons Creek Battlefield would generate a great deal of revenue for the park. Please consider adding horseback riding trails to the Bois D' Arc Conservation area. Thank you.</p>
<p>plant food for ducks that will grow year after year in all the ponds lime the fields and hedge rows no lead shot</p>
<p>once again I am going to comment on the unavailability of horse traffic on bdca. It appears that the only reason that it is not allowed per your appendices is that there are other trails available near by. and conflict with hunters. I will agree that there are some other areas to ride but why not open the trails to horse traffic in the off months to avoid hunter conflict as is the practice in other areas.or at the very least if it is just a traffic problem let local traffic use it in the off season. We have many youth in the area that are to young to drive to other areas, that could use a safe place to ride .off the highways here. There has been a marked increase in vehicle traffic in the past years due to the gun range, pond and seasonally the hunting. There is no side of the road to ride on due to the steep bar ditches on the edges and asphalt is slick. Horse traffic would help with the maintenance of the existing trails in section 5. Though occasionally mown in the summer months the growth rate of grasses covering trails due to lack of traffic makes hiking very difficult. Not to mention that some of those trails were disked also making it hard to hike. As for maintaining benches, they have not been cared for in a long time as many are falling apart and because trails are not routinely maintained , inaccessible. Some of the trails that the benches are on, have been abandoned and no longer on the map. other trails moved . ex. being the eastern most trail on the map that does not run east of the pond as show but through the valley further east. Both were were impassable most of</p>

the year until recently , the valley one that has just recently been mown in order to access the old overgrown food plots that have been overtaken by brambles. The original trail the one on the map, is also blocked by brambles though it appears to be flagged and a vehicle driven through it. The fall months are slightly more accessible due to die off.

With the exception of the gun range and fish pond (both confined areas) and hunting season bdca goes virtually unused by the recreational public. from feb. though august. Horseback riding would perhaps keep more trails open for hiking. Section 5 with its existing hiking trails and section 4 with the many mown pathways which leads to section one which would lead to section 2. This leaves section 3 with the gun range out of the picture and the archery range would be avoided. . section 7 is also available thorough section 4 with the exception of the pond in the area.

As far as damage to karst areas, cave areas those that have been found are fenced with orange perimeter fencing or blocked off entirely. Those that are near trails. or in fields in order to keep the heavy tractors and their equipment from falling in .

As for the glades and the odd food plots that are being created they are great and for a year or two look pretty good , unfortunately because they have not been maintained in the past as is said, they have grown back thicker and more impassable. I truly hope with the deforestation going on now that upkeep will be able to be maintained but history has proven otherwise.

Regarding cattle in the area, a few years back cattle were introduced into section 4 , while they were there the area was more accessible. quail and rabbit population up. ,,The only bad issue it seemed was that the owner did not keep fences maintained and cattle were always getting out. Once cattle were removed grasses came back, the area was sprayed to kill the grasses to let the natural foliage come back. Due to natural plant regeneration what came back was the sumac and brambles which the current admin . has been battling. ever since.

The bois D'arc area is a great area but with the exception of the gun range, restricted pond and hunting season is just not used as recreationally as it could be. even the out door days (not talking about the special needs days)was canceled do to lack of interest. This was a great community activity.

I have tried to address other issue I saw in your appendices but mainly please reconsider horse back riding in the off season.

once again I would like to see this area opened up to horseback riding ,if not year round then at least on a seasonal basis. There are adequate trails to support this with many that would benefit from horse use do to overgrowth of forest. Once the hunting seasons end in feb. the area is used very little for recreational purposes with the exception of the range and stocked pond. Please consider this option as I do believe there is enough interest to help maintain trails.

As a new neighbor to the Conservation area and to the state I am excited to get to know this conservation area. My wife and I were very surprised to see that not only are there no horses allowed but also no bicycling. I understand the concern during the hunting season as this could pose a great risk and I also understand from reading the plan that there are other areas that you can bike and ride. I am asking if the question has been raised to allow horseback riding and mountain biking during those times outside the hunting season. Or allowing horseback riding/mountain biking in the off season to those people who have purchased a permit to do so. It stands to reason that those people that would be required to pay money for a permit to have access to these grounds would use them in the correct manner and stand behind your mission

to keep this land in good shape. Plus there would be the added bonus of creating an income stream for the area to funnel right back into improvements.

I would like to meet or talk to the people that make these decisions and even the people that maintain the area. As a new resident of this state and really having no neighbors its nice to meet the people that are consistently in the area. We are happy to help in any way and look forward to being advocates for the conservation area in the future.

Please get me a answer.

Management plan under trails states that horse trails are available at the Little Sac Woods Conservation Area. Is this a misleading statement because MDC web site for Little Sac Woods Conservation area shows only 7.3 miles of hiking trail. Nothing about horseback riding.

Thanks

We feel that there is a need for additional horse trails in the Greene County area. Greene County has the least amount of horse trails per ca pita in the State of Missouri. Horse people need at least a minimum of 10 miles of trail per area in order for it to be feasible to drive to that area. Back Country Horseman will partner to help maintain the trails.

The Bois D Arc Conservation Area Management Plan states that there are horse trails at Little Sac Woods Conservation Area but when going to that site, it doesn't show any horse trail designation. Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Conservation Area horse trails are over used and because of this over use the horse trails are in bad shape. This is why more horse/multi use trails are needed.

Thank you for your consideration.

I was disheartened by the response in the plan to horseback riding and especially the use of the wording extensive horse trails availability. Greene Co. is severely under served for the equine user and I believe the plan was based on misinformation. Summary of Little Sac Woods lists hiking only trails thus, Wilson Creek National Park at 12 miles is in Greene Co. This leaves the local resident to drive to the next available location listed in this plan at Compton Hollow, Webster Co., 20 miles with a 5.5 mile trail, which pending traffic would take longer to get there than ride. Busick is the last closest area at 30 miles. Talbot, Lawrence Co. is 52 miles thus making a round trip of 104 miles and with today's fuel market and expense one just doesn't run over so to speak for a quick local ride. The US Forest Lands Ava/Cassville/Willow Springs- Hercules Glade, Taney Co. is 60 miles and the next closest forest area Huston/Rolla is 108 miles. The horseback rider shouldn't be viewed as a singular individual not to be bothered with, as within our community he or she can also be hunter who provides support to the conservation department. The Conservation areas: Pleasant Hope, Lead Mine, and Talbot are a wonderful example as a multi use area and appreciated by myself as I have ridden each one over the years and the improvements made with the help of

volunteers will provide continued support and involvement of the local residents for the Conservation Programs in the future. I sincerely hope you will review the horseback usage and provide Greene county with a multi use conservation area supported by the multi use individual.

Bois D'Arc Conservation Area has abundant acreage and located in a county that rates very high in the underserved category for equestrian trails and opportunities. I would like for you to consider allowing horseback riding for those living in Greene County and surrounding counties giving all an opportunity to enjoy this conservation area. Yes, there is a shooting range and other activities but with the number of acres all citizens can be served. There are shooting ranges in many of the conservation areas where horseback riding is permitted. As a member of the Tri-Lakes Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Missouri (BCHMO), I have been involved in volunteering hours of maintenance to the trails at Lead Mine C.A., Pleasant Hope C.A., Busiek State Forest, and Compton Hollow C.A. The Tri-Lakes Chapter BCHMO can do the same at Bois D'Arc. C.A. When you have willing volunteers that are dedicated to being of service to the Missouri Department of Conservation, it would seem a win-win for both your department as well as the citizens of Greene County and other counties that have few trails to enjoy. BCHMO advocates for multi-use trails so not only would equestrians be served but the hiking and biking communities would also gain advocates for safe and well maintained trails. Again, I would ask that you consider allowing equestrian access to Bois D'Arc Conservation Area to show inclusion for all citizens of Missouri.

I would like to encourage you to include horse back riding trails in the final Area Management Plan. It is very important to include equestrians and trail riding on the Bois D'Arc Conservation Area as riders make up a large portion of the individuals who enjoy MDC trails. There would be no conflict with hunters because seasonal use of trails can be easily arranged. In addition, there are private individuals, such as myself, and the Back Country Horsemen of Missouri organization that can assist with planning, developing, and maintaining equestrian trails so that MDC does not have to divert limited monetary resources to trail maintenance. Just talking to my friends, there would be many equestrians who would appreciate, use, and enjoy trails at Bos D'Arc. Equestrian trails allow adults to expose children and young adults to wildlife conservation and trail management creating even more individuals who will support MDC in the future. Respectfully, *****

Would love to be able to go horseback riding there.

Thank you for committing lands for quail and upland game habitat. Native grasses and upland game habitat is a disappearing eco-type and the commitment to sustain it is exact what the department of conversation should be focusing on.

With the number of horses in Southwest Missouri, having multi-use trails at Bois D'Arc conservation area would help to keep some of the other trails from being over used. Thanks for the trails we do have and for all the outstanding work the MDC does.

First, thank you for the opportunity to the Bois d' Arc Conservation Area Draft Management Plan.

There were 34 responses to the Idea Gathering Phase that preceded development of the Draft Management Plan. Eleven of those responses favored allowing equestrian access on Bois d' Arc CA. One of the 11 included a petition with 30 names, addresses and signatures; that's another 29 persons favoring equestrian access. Forty persons are in favor of horseback riding out of 63 respondents—over 63 percent, which far exceeded any other single issue. Only one respondent was opposed to horseback riding “due to sensitive karst terrain;” surely no one seriously believes that equestrian trails cannot be located in such a way as to protect sinkholes and cave entrances!

The response of the planning team to this overwhelming recommendation is, “Horse trails are available within 30 miles at Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Area, Robert E. Talbot Conservation Area, Compton Hollow Conservation Area, and on U.S. Forest Service Lands.” None of this is true—distances to the named public areas range from 31.6 miles to Robert E. Talbot CA to 54 miles to the Piney Creek Wilderness trail on USFS. Two trail systems that are nearer to Bois d' Arc are Pleasant Hope CA at 23.5 miles and Wilson's Creek National Battlefield at 16.2 miles. These areas have trail lengths of 8 and 7 miles respectively; such short trails provide two hours of riding or less, insufficient for a quality experience. Riders will rarely haul any distance to an area that only offers two hours of riding. At any rate the distance to some other riding location should not be a criterion; the need/demand for equestrian trail access is a more relevant and appropriate question. The aforementioned Idea Gathering response makes that quite clear.

Let's review:

1. Equestrian trail riders in Greene and Lawrence Counties are greatly underserved with respect to public land riding opportunities. There are over 3,200 horses and mules in Greene County. The only place to ride in Greene County is Wilson's Creek National Park, which charges a significant admission fee and only offers seven miles of trails. Trails on Busiek State Forest in Christian County are overused, and user conflict is an issue; this is due in no small part to the fact that there aren't enough public land trails in the region to serve the need. Pleasant Hope CA in Polk County, with only eight miles, does not have sufficient trails to provide an attractive experience.

2. Bois d' Arc CA, at 3,172 acres, has ample area to accommodate those activities currently allowed plus a minimum of 10-12 miles of multi-use (hike, bike, horse) trails. The upland landscape, varied land use and cover, and excellent accessibility via good roads are favorable features. Multi-use trails on Bois d' Arc would offer much needed outdoor recreation to Greene and Lawrence County and the Springfield Metropolitan Area. These trails would provide some relief to the overuse of other trail networks on the area's public lands.

3. The mission of MDC 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.” No part of this mission statement takes priority over any other. The information campaign leading up to the vote on the “Design for Conservation” in 1976 promised that the “opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources” would be delivered.

4. Wildlife viewing (whether afoot, on horseback, or via some other means of transportation) is a wildlife-oriented recreation activity specifically permitted under rules governing use of Pittman-Robertson funds, coequal with hunting. Such wildlife viewing will not conflict with the “Strategic Direction” or the “Desired Future Condition” stated under “Statements of Purpose” in the draft plan.

5. Many equestrians are very young children, elderly, or persons with compromised mobility. The only acceptable way they have to enjoy the natural resources, scenic vistas, and wildlife is on the back of a horse or mule. MDC, appropriately, spends millions of dollars providing access for the disabled to hunting blinds, fishing docks, and scenic views. The department should also give trail access to these citizens.

6. Four of the 34 respondents during the Idea Gathering Phase recommended better trail maintenance. I have personally hiked the trails and agree with their recommendations. In October most of the trails had recently been mowed with a rotary mower (possibly in response to those inputs). In some places larger trees had been cut with a chainsaw to open up the trails. It was apparent from the size of the material mowed and cut that this activity was overdue. The map of the trails has many errors, and signage is largely nonexistent. One cannot distinguish between the designated trails and some other mowed path. Several respondents during Idea Gathering offered to assist with trail maintenance.

7. The trails do not see much use by hikers. I did not walk every foot of every trail, but I covered most of them. In those several miles I saw only two separate shoe prints.

I suggest a “trial.” Open up the existing hiking trails on Management Zone 5 to multi-use. Partner with willing trail riders from the neighborhood to restore and improve the trails under a Cooperative Agreement. Let the partners install needed signage. Work together and see how it goes. Close the trails as necessary, for legitimate resource-related or safety reasons; post the reason for closure and expected duration at the three trailhead parking areas. If/when the trial proves successful consideration should be given to increasing total multi-use trail mileage to 10-12 miles to offer a quality experience, protect from overuse, and mitigate off-trail problems.

Back Country Horsemen of Missouri (BCHMO) offers our services to assist the Area Manager to develop a partnership with local trail users to assist with development and maintenance of the trails and associated infrastructure; a number of riders in the area have already expressed a commitment to be part of this partnership.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

As one of many horse owners and avid riders in Greene County I fervently ask that the trails be opened for equestrian use. I would also encourage the use of trail markers for two reasons. First and foremost it aids in navigation. Second, and of importance to you, is that it would ensure only authorized trails would be traveled. Today when we ride we have no idea which

trails are part of the plan and which trails have been blazed by people who don't understand how incorrect trails lead to erosion. Thank you for your consideration.

Our group would be thrilled to have a riding area close to home. We are committed to the up-keep and cleaning of the trails we ride. Horseback riding is becoming a lost art, so to speak, and we would like to see more trails open up and continue with this plan for good, clean living. Horseback riding teaches responsibility, respect and caring. We raised two children to show respect to the woods, earth and animals, along with the responsibility of caring for their animal. We are now doing the same with our 4 grandchildren. They love to ride and we would hate to lose this opportunity to spend quality time with them.