

Rocky Barrens Conservation Area

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2019-2033



Joel W. Porath

Wildlife Division Chief

10/2/2018

Date

Rocky Barrens Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Rocky Barrens Conservation Area, #8916
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1988
- **Acreage:** 280 acres (190 acres are owned by the Missouri Department of Conservation [the Department]; 90 acres are leased from The Nature Conservancy)
- **County:** Greene
- **Region:** Southwest
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. **Strategic Direction**

Manage for high quality limestone glade and woodland natural communities with emphasis on glade species.
 - B. **Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Rocky Barrens Conservation Area (CA) is a landscape of open limestone glade and woodland natural communities.
 - C. **Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

- A. **Priority Areas:** Little Sac River Fisheries Priority Watershed, Sac River Stream Reach Conservation Opportunity Area, Rocky Barren Limestone Glade Conservation Opportunity 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:** Yes, records kept with Department natural history biologist.
- D. **Other:** Occurs in the Little Sac River Oak Savanna/Woodland Low Hills Landtype Association. This landtype association consists of broad uplands associated mainly with limestones that give way to moderately steep and dissected hills cut into a series of limestones (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- One parking lot
- One storage shed

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** The Nature Conservancy owns and leases 90 acres to the Department.
- 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:** Yes, gas pipeline easements exist with Spire Gas Energy.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records kept with Department environmental compliance coordinators. 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

Rocky Barrens CA contains approximately 160 acres of woodlands. Woodland management is focused on maintaining a healthy forested natural community for wildlife habitat, including chinquapin oak management.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage woodland community.
- 2) Maintain healthy grassland habitats.
- 3) Maintain 90 acres of glade.

Management Objective 1: Maintain healthy woodlands with management emphasis on wildlife habitat.

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

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

Strategy 2: Use prescribed fire to maintain open and healthy woodlands.

(Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain healthy grassland habitats.

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

Strategy 2: Maintain native vegetation and add forbs when invasive species are controlled. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Manage for pollinator species and plant native milkweeds as appropriate. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Maintain 90 acres of limestone glades.

Strategy 1: Reopen existing glades using mechanical means. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Control and setback woody succession using appropriate methods, including, but not limited to, prescribed fire and appropriate herbicides. (Wildlife)

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

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Rocky Barrens CA borders 0.4 miles of the Little Sac River and is within the Little Sac River Fisheries Priority Watershed. The Little Sac River is large enough at this location to provide some fishing opportunities for sport fish, but access is limited. The river itself is approximately 0.9 miles from the parking lot and must be reached on foot. The area (Department and The Nature Conservancy lands combined) also contains two first-order tributaries. No fishing impoundments exist on the area. Poor soil and site limitations preclude the development of fishing impoundments.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The area has 0.4 miles of stream frontage and riparian corridor along the Little Sac River.
- 2) The area has two first-order streams that flow from upland/glade sites on the area.
- 3) There are limited fishing opportunities for area anglers.

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 (2009). (Wildlife, Fisheries, Forestry)

Strategy 2: Continue to implement appropriate best management practices regarding access trails/roads to minimize runoff and sedimentation into stream resources. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Address channel and streambank instability as needed. (Fisheries, Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide the public with hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- 2) Increase educational and interpretive opportunities.
- 3) Continue to build relationships with neighboring landowners.

Management Objective 1: Provide the public with 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 Rocky Barrens CA.

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

Strategy 2: Communicate to teachers, students, Boy Scout groups, and youth groups the uniqueness of the area to facilitate as a possible destination for ecology classes, school programs, Discover Nature Schools field trips, and workshops. (Outreach and Education)

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

Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize any boundary, trespass, or any other issues affecting Rocky Barrens CA or private property. (Wildlife, Protection)

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

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)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

| | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 | FY25 | FY26 | FY27 | FY28 | FY29 | FY30 | FY31 | FY32 | FY33 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Terrestrial Resource Management | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Objective 1</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 2 | | X | | | | | X | | | | | X | | | |
| Strategy 3 | | X | | | | | X | | | | | X | | | |
| <i>Objective 3</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 2 | | | X | | | X | | | X | | | X | | | X |

APPENDICES

Area Background:

On Aug. 24, 1988, the Commission approved acquisition of 25 acres from Larry and Barbara Cloyd of Willard, Missouri. Additional purchases by the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department), brought the Department’s total ownership to 190 acres. The property was purchased with Department funds. An additional 90 acres is leased from The Nature Conservancy, which are covered by signed management agreements. Total acreage under Department management is 280 acres.

Historically, the area landtype was dominated by oak savanna and woodland with occasional glades and prairie openings (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002). The tract has been grazed in the recent past by horses. This grazing kept the tract mostly open by limiting invasion by woody species. It also allowed a number of invasive species to take advantage of the soil disturbance and become established. Some grading has also occurred prior to Department acquisition, probably as a means of pasture-improvement and sub-dividing for housing development.

Current Land and Water Types:

| Land/Water Types | Acres | Miles | % of Area |
|---|------------|-------|------------|
| Upland Forest/Woodland | 164 | | 58 |
| Glade | 90 | | 32 |
| Old Fields/Upland Fields | 18 | | 7 |
| Bottomland/Riparian Forest | 8 | | 3 |
| Total | 280 | | 100 |
| Stream Frontage (first-order and above) | | 1.4 | |

Public Input Summary:

The draft Rocky Barrens Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period May 1–31, 2018. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The Rocky Barrens 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 Rocky Barrens Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

Supports how Rocky Barrens CA is managed.

Thank you for supporting the management of this area.

Suggests improving access to the river by removing overgrown vegetation at the access.

The trails are rotary mowed one to two times per year and the sericea lespedeza is treated periodically.

Suggests removing cedar stumps on the area. The stumps present a hazard and make traversing the area difficult.

Continued cedar removal is ongoing, and stumps are breaking down over time and with prescribed burning.

Is concerned about restricted/illegal activities observed at area parking lots. Suggests better enforcement of area rules and regulations at the parking lots, particularly after dusk.

Suggests changing area regulations to prevent loitering in the parking lot.

The Department is also concerned about these activities, and the conservation agents and Greene County Sheriff's Office are aware of the ongoing challenges and will take appropriate law enforcement actions as needed. Larger gravel has been added to the parking lot to alleviate some of the tire spin.

Suggests adding more prominent signage that states when the area closes.

Additional signage will be placed at the parking area.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by the 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: Area Map

Figure 2: Land Cover Map

Figure 3: Aerial Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Rocky Barrens Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

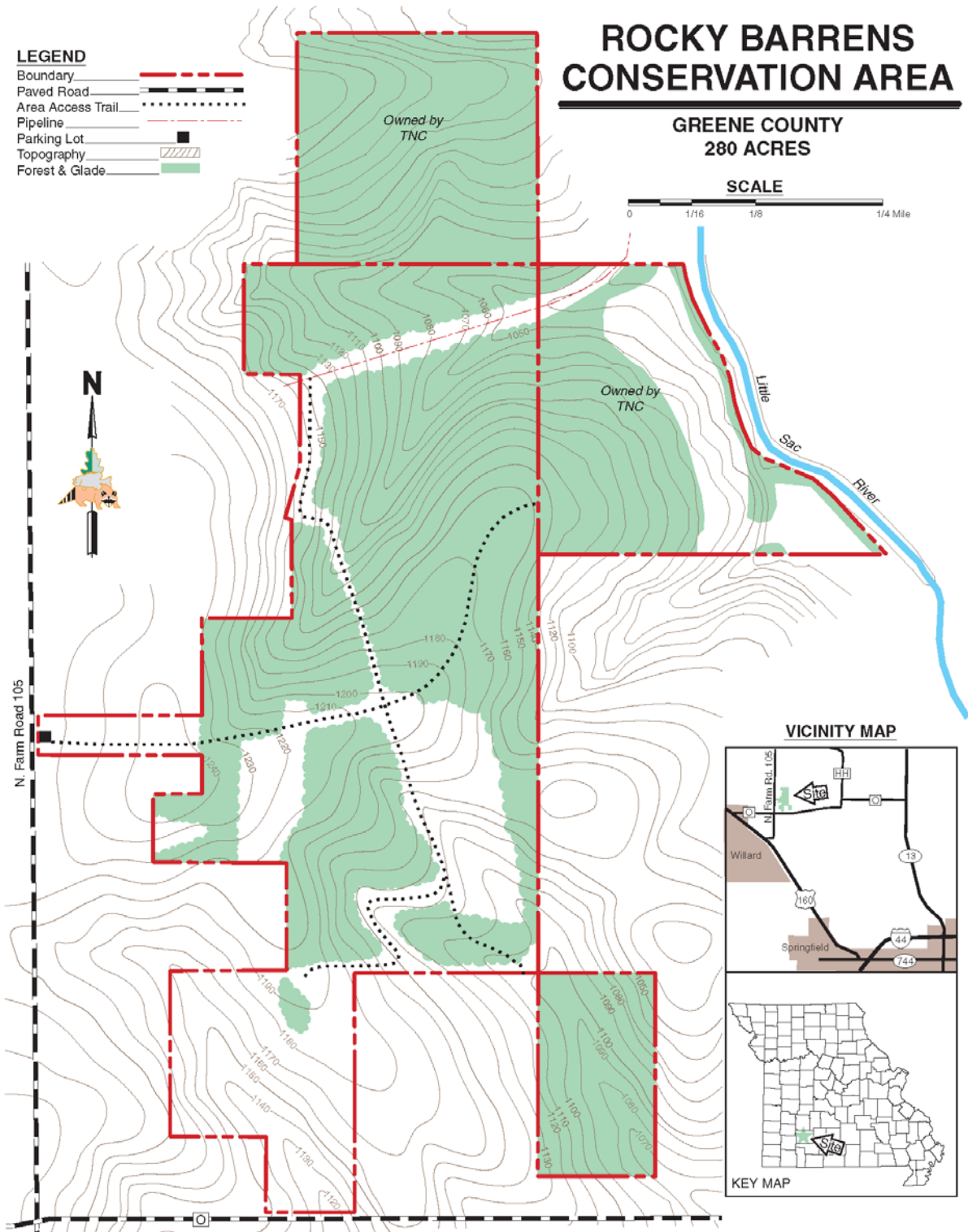


Figure 2: Land Cover Map

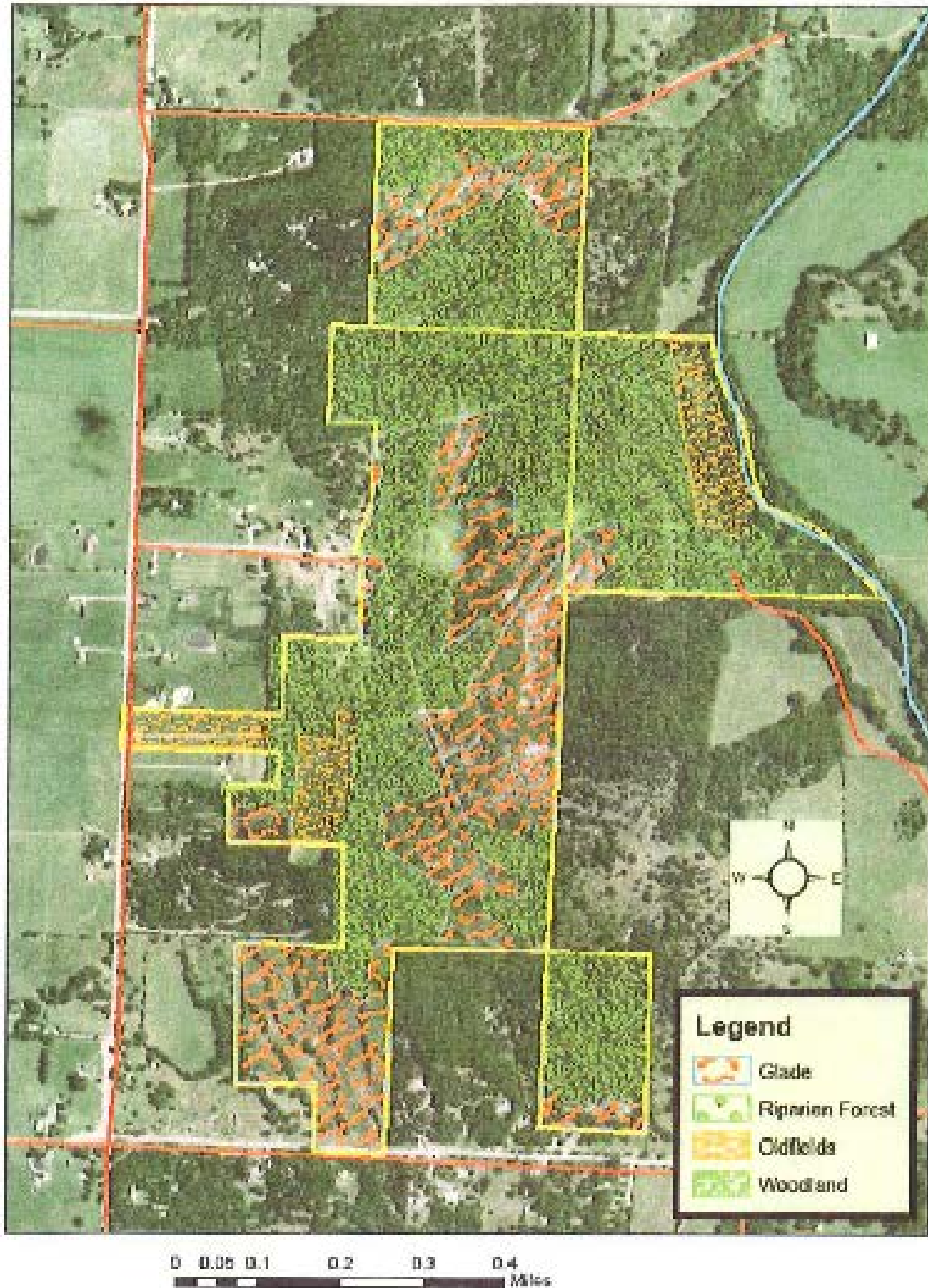
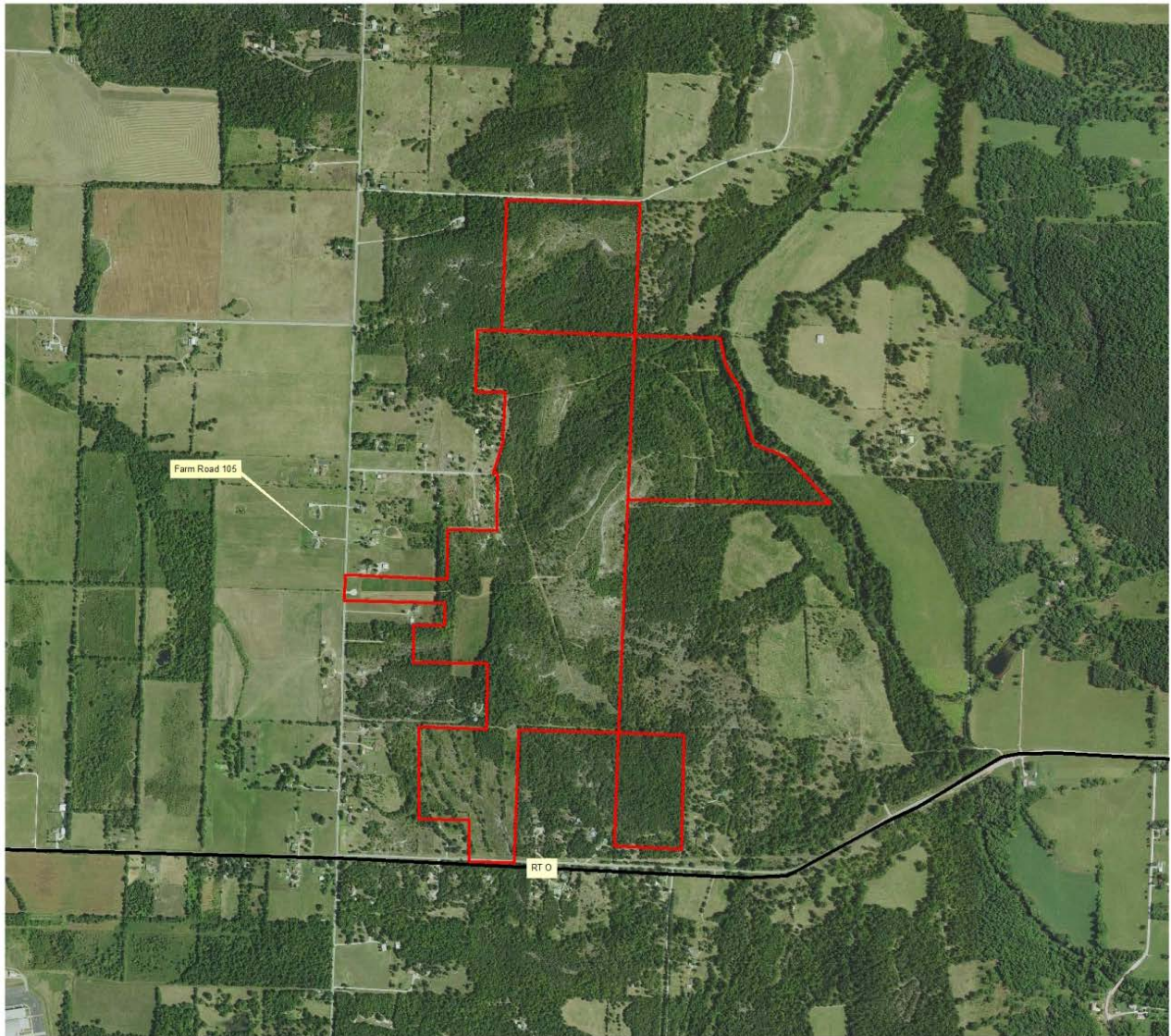


Figure 3: Aerial Map



0.45 0.225 0 0.45 Miles



Legend

 Rocky Barrens CA Boundary

Appendix A: Rocky Barrens Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (May 1–31, 2018):

I have read the draft document and find nothing in it that I disagree with. My property borders Rocky Barrens on the east and I definitely want that to remain Conservation property. I have had no problem with trespassing issues. The threatened species Missouri Bladderpod also grows on my property. I watch for it to bloom every year and note whether it's more or less than the previous year. Twice in the past 18 years, someone from the Conservation Department has walked across my property to observe how the Bladderpod is doing, but to my knowledge, no one has come in the past few years.

For the most part, our family enjoys the conservation area. It is beautiful, especially up on the ridge road and the Little Sac River. As far as the property itself, I have a couple of related comments; first, access to the river is somewhat limited, especially in the summer when the nettles and ticks are in season. It would be nice for this to be opened up somewhat. In a broader sense, it appears that many years ago a large number of cedars were cut and left on the ground. The problem with this is cedar takes decades to break down and in many places they make traversing the property impossible. It would be nice if at least some of them were removed.

My biggest area of concern is the parking area. Most people that use it are fine but it is also a favorite hangout for teenagers and people loitering about at all hours of the day and night. I have observed some drinking alcohol / using drugs, and having heated altercations. Often, people will dump garbage out and it finds its way into my yard for me to clean up. Worse, I have had my property vandalized on several occasions as well as has the parking area itself, notably destruction of the large wooden sign which soon after led to its removal. The large concrete blocks have mostly kept people from cutting donuts w/ their vehicles in the grass, but now they just do it on the gravel. A couple of suggestions I would have is change the rules to allow people 15 minutes to be in the parking area for loading/unloading whatever they are taking into the area. After that they need to either be walking on the trail or leave the area. There is no good reason for anyone to loiter in & around their vehicle longer than that. The other is post prominent signage that the park closes at dark. I believe the current rule is 10 PM but in the winter it gets dark much earlier, and again, there is no good reason for anyone to be hanging out in their cars well into the night and too many times this coincides with a trash can or mailbox being vandalized in the immediate area. I know there is no way to police everything at all times but anything that can be done would be an improvement, as well as give LEO's justification to kick people out that are clearly not there to enjoy nature. Thanks for considering these concerns.