

# Pleasant Hope Conservation Area

## 25-Year Area Management Plan FY 2020-2044



Justine Gartner

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**Forestry Division Chief**

8/21/2019

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**Date**

## Pleasant Hope Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

### PLANNING TEAM

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8/13/2019

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## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Pleasant Hope Conservation Area, #6121
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1961
- **Acreage:** 1,106 acres
- **County:** Polk
- **Region:** Southwest
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - A. Strategic Direction**

The primary purpose of this area is to restore and manage the woodland natural communities and fields on the area and to provide the public with multiple outdoor recreational and educational opportunities.
  - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Pleasant Hope Conservation Area (CA) is a landscape mosaic of oak hickory woodlands and native warm-season grass fields.
  - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
  - A. Priority Areas:** Little Sac River Fisheries Priority Watershed
  - B. Natural Areas:** None
  
- II. Important Natural Features and Resources**
  - A. Species of Conservation Concern:** None observed.
  - B. High Quality Natural Communities:** Yes, records kept with Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) natural history biologist.
  - C. Caves:** Yes, records kept with MDC natural history biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the MDC 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 MDC's White-nose Syndrome Action Plan that limits public access to protect bats.
  - D. Springs:** Yes, records kept with MDC natural history biologist.
  - E. Other:** The area is located in the Ozark Highlands Section, Springfield Plateau Subsection, Little Sac River Oak Savanna/Woodland Low Hills Landtype Association (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

### III. Existing Infrastructure

- An existing unmanned shooting range is on the area. The range is accessible from the southern portion of the area and features a 25-yard and 100-yard rifle/pistol range and a trap-shooting range. Each range has both a cautionary or “soft” perimeter as well as “hard” Surface Danger Zone.
- Five parking lots
- Little Pond (0.28 acres)
- Five wildlife watering holes (totaling 1.25 acres)
- One non-stocked pond (0.7 acres)
- Service roads and 7.7 miles of multi-use hike/bike/horse trails provide interior access to the area, but no public vehicle access is permitted.

### IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** None
- 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:** Polk County and the Empire District Electric Company have right of way easements on the area.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Pleasant Hope CA is mostly forested with upland woodland, forest, and glade communities. Upland forest covers 86 percent of the area. The majority of this area is oak-hickory forest. Due to high-grading operations in the 1950s, the forest is of fair to good quality, pole- and sawtimber-sized trees. The species variety is good with post oak, black oak, white oak, northern red oak, chinkapin oak, and a variety of hickories growing in the area.

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

- 1) Natural events, such as ice damage, and historical forest management have influenced the health and function of the natural communities on the area.

- 2) Infestations of invasive species, including sericea lespedeza, tall fescue, Johnson grass, and Eastern red cedar, are found within the area as well as on neighboring properties.

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

Strategy 1: Use even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural practices guided by 2009 forest inventory to correct deficiencies in composition and/or stand structure, according to current structure, age, site index, and species composition. The next inventory will be completed in 2029. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Restore and maintain glades and woodlands identified in the 2008 inventory by removing Eastern red cedar and performing prescribed burns. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 2: Manage appropriate ecological disturbances on the area.**

Strategy 1: Suppress all wildfires on the area and maintain existing firebreaks. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Perform prescribed burns that will help maintain and restore glades and woodlands. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Maintain old field habitat through the use of appropriate mechanical and chemical disturbances. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Management Objective 3: Identify and reduce invasive species on the area.**

Strategy 1: Identify invasive species problem sites through forest inventories, natural community assessments (as deemed necessary by the natural history biologist or area manager), and by casual observations. (Forestry, Wildlife, Private Lands)

Strategy 2: Use biological, mechanical, and chemical treatments as needed to reduce selected invasive species. (Forestry, Wildlife, Private Lands)

**VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Bear Creek and its tributaries run through the area, providing increased habitat diversity as well as aesthetics for recreation. The presence of waterways within the area requires increased vigilance for erosion as well as runoff potential from recreational and management activities.
- 2) There are seven small ponds or wildlife watering holes located on the area. Estimated total surface area of these ponds is approximately 1 acre, and most ponds/watering holes do not exceed 0.25 acres. Although limited in depth, excessive aquatic vegetative growth is not a problem in these impoundments.

**Management Objective 1: Maintain and improve the natural stream function and riparian areas of Bear Creek and its tributaries.**

Strategy 1: Identify and take corrective action on stream reaches with active or potential erosion problems. Fisheries Division personnel will conduct further on-site surveys of the major drainages and recommend appropriate treatment measures. (Forestry, Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Maintain and improve a 100-foot wide riparian corridor along both sides of Bear Creek and its tributaries. (Forestry, Fisheries)

Strategy 3: Monitor and mitigate current trail and road use within 100 feet of streams to identify areas of concern and minimize disturbance of natural stream function using trail maintenance best management practices. (Forestry, Fisheries)

Strategy 4: Prevent and reduce litter from shooting range and shotgun trap areas from entering streams. (Forestry, Fisheries)

**Management Objective 2: Maintain existing ponds to sustain maximum pond life and wildlife usability.**

Strategy 1: Remove all trees less than 4 inches in diameter from dam and spillway areas. Where feasible, mow these areas to prevent new growth. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Maintain dam and spillway integrity by preventing and correcting any erosion problems and by encouraging dense grass growth. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Control burrowing animals near pond dams as necessary. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 3: Ensure all management on the area reflects current best management practices.**

Strategy 1: Employ appropriate best management practices associated with management and enhancement projects. These are outlined in MDC's *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by Missouri Department of Conservation* (MDC, 2009). (Forestry, Fisheries)

**VII. Public Use Management Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Provide the public with a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking/biking/horse-riding, nature viewing, and limited fishing. Maintain area infrastructure, including trails, roads, and parking lots for public use; and maintain service roads for management activities.
- 2) Continue building relationships with neighboring landowners.
- 3) Continually maintain and manage the shooting range facilities.

**Management Objective 1: Manage for a variety of public recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking/biking/horse-riding, nature viewing, and limited fishing.**

Strategy 1: Maintain all open fields greater than 2 acres in an open state through prescribed fire, herbicide treatments, and/or discing to provide nesting and brood rearing habitat for ground-nesting birds. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Maintain current level of food plots in a crop rotation to provide a high-energy food source for a variety of upland game species for hunting and non-game species. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Maintain savannah communities with prescribed fire to provide nesting and brood-rearing habitat for turkey and a variety of non-game species. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 4: Consider the option of longer-term stocking possibilities for recreational fishing. (Forestry, Fisheries)

Strategy 5: Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with MDC guidelines. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 2: Facilitate a good working relationship with the local community.**

Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize boundary, trespass or any other issues. (Forestry, Protection)

Strategy 2: Foster good working relationships between user groups such as hunters, horseback riders, and shooting range enthusiasts. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties. (Forestry, Private Lands)

**Management Objective 3: Maintain the shooting range for cleanliness and public safety.**

Strategy 1: Area staff is responsible for the maintenance of each range. Maintenance includes trash removal, maintenance and repair, maintaining signage and perimeter fencing, and contracting for the daily opening and closing of the gate at the range entrance. However, some maintenance and repair may require the assistance from Design and Development Division staff. (Forestry, Design and Development)

Strategy 2: Continue monitoring for safe use of the facilities. The outdoor skills specialist will conduct annual range inspections of each range. Resources serving as guidelines for range management include MDC's *2013 Shooting Range Facility Program Manual* (MDC, 2013), Environmental Stewardship Plan, and Standard Operation Procedures. (Forestry, Protection)

**VIII. Administrative Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Consider land acquisition, when available.

**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 MDC priorities, as identified in the annual MDC land acquisition priorities, may be considered.





## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

Pleasant Hope CA is located in Polk County, approximately 18.5 miles north of Springfield and 3.5 miles southwest of Pleasant Hope for which the conservation area is named. Pleasant Hope CA features 1,106 acres of upland forest, woodland, savanna, glade, and ponds. The topography of the area is characterized by broad flat ridges and moderate to steep sloping hills. Several small drainages on the area empty into Bear Creek which flows through the middle of the area.

In addition to the natural resources of Pleasant Hope CA, there are numerous recreational opportunities. Hiking in the area is available on the 9.4 miles of multi-use trails, and 7.7 miles of trail are available to horseback riders. An unmanned shooting range has two shooting benches for the 25-yard and 100-yard ranges along with an improved shotgun field.

### Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area	Miles
Upland forest	963	87	
Old fields/upland savanna	91	8	
Woodland/savanna	50	4	
Impounded water	2	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>100</b>	
Stream frontage			2.26

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Pleasant Hope Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period Sept. 1–30, 2018. MDC received comments from 24 respondents (Appendix A). The Pleasant Hope 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.

MDC responses to themes and issues identified through the Pleasant Hope Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

### Terrestrial Resource Management

#### **Would like to know about MDC programs that assist landowners in growing native plants that attract bees and pollinators.**

MDC offers technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in managing their property to attract bees and other pollinators. Inquiring landowners living next to Pleasant Hope

CA can contact the private lands conservationist working out of the Bolivar MDC office at 417-326-5189.

**Appreciates MDC's work on the area. Wildlife appear to be abundant on the area, except for quail and whip-poor-will.**

The Area Planning Team appreciates the public's support of management throughout the Pleasant Hope CA. Area staff will continue to manage for diverse wildlife habitat. No management efforts specific to increasing quail and whip-poor-will are planned at this time. Other MDC areas such as Bois d'Arc CA and Stony Point CA can provide recreational opportunities related to these two species.

**Aquatic Resource Management**

**Suggests surveying the pond and stocking the pond to promote a healthy balance of fish species.**

We cannot survey the pond with electrofishing equipment due to limited accessibility. The pond is under the statewide regulation for MDC-managed areas which is the following: 12'-15" slot length limit on black bass with a daily limit of six per day, daily limit of four catfish, 30 crappie and 20 other fish in the aggregate, pole and line fishing only. This is a proven management approach for promoting a balanced fish population in small ponds.

**Suggests labeling the pond on the area map.**

The pond is labeled as a pond on the area map.

**Public Use Considerations**

***Shooting Range***

**Has observed shooters going off the range and shooting (unaware) toward houses, particularly when the range is overcrowded. Does not feel safe going to the conservation area because shooters go off-range. Is concerned for the safety of adjacent landowners who backup to the shooting range. Landowners who backup to the shooting range report having bullets fly into their property. Residents report bullets in their houses, trees, and out-buildings.**

MDC encourages area visitors and neighbors to report any unsafe range use by calling 911 and the county conservation agent. Local law enforcement and conservation agents monitor and patrol the area, issue citations for unsafe use, and follow-up with any reports of misuse. MDC staff assigned to the area also monitor the range for safe use, proper signage, and perform regular range maintenance. Reports of unsafe range usage or damage to private property are taken seriously and investigated when reported.

**Suggestions to improve safety near the shooting range include:**

- **Staff the range to increase enforcement presence at the range.**  
MDC has no plans to increase staffing at the range. The conservation area (including the range) is staffed with supervisors, an area manager, work team, outdoor skills specialist, and two conservation agents.
- **Relocate the range so that it is not within shooting proximity of houses.**  
MDC has no plans to relocate the range due to a combination of factors. There are no alternative locations determined to be suitable for the range on the area at this time, and creating an alternate location would be cost-prohibitive. In addition to infrastructure related difficulties to relocating the range, it would be difficult to change the use patterns of current and former visitors and range users.
- **Have MDC staff regularly communicate shooting range safety concerns with adjacent landowners.**  
MDC encourages adjacent landowners to communicate any safety concerns to the area manager, conservation agents, or outdoor skills specialist.
- **Post maps and signs at the shooting range that inform/warn shooters of the proximity of houses to the range. Many shooters are not aware that there are houses close to the shooting range.**  
Area maps are available at most bulletin boards on the area, local conservation offices, and online at <https://mdc.mo.gov>. These maps indicate area boundaries, location of the range within the area, and contact information for the Regional Office. In addition, numerous signs on the area are used to communicate to visitors the range boundaries, range rules, and area regulations.
- **Update area brochure maps to show where houses are adjacent to the area. Maps used in the brochure are outdated and do not show any houses near the area.**  
Area maps are designed to show only MDC owned or leased property. Area maps are reviewed and updated as part of the area plan.
- **Suggests installing cameras at the range to see who is causing damage to the range.**  
MDC has no plans to install security cameras due to potential vandalism. However, MDC encourages area users to report activities that are not consistent with shooting range rules.

**Suggests expanding the shooting range.**

MDC has no plans to expand the range.

**Opposes having a gun range at the area. Does not like hearing the noise of guns while at the area and does not feel safe at the area due to the shooting range.**

One of the goals for MDC's *Design for the Future* is expanding outdoor recreational opportunities on MDC and partner lands and facilities. The shooting range helps MDC meet the goal of providing an expanded set of opportunities through recreational activities, including hunting and recreational shooting. Safe operation of the range occurs Tuesday through Sunday.

The range is closed on Mondays for maintenance, which may be the best time for area users wishing to have a visit free of sounds from the range. There are also other conservation areas such as Little Sac Woods CA nearby that offer an outdoor experience without a shooting range.

### ***Enforcement***

#### **Suggests increasing patrol of the area at night by conservation agents to prohibit poaching or drug manufacturing on the area.**

The area is currently patrolled by local law enforcement and conservation agents daily. Those witnessing illegal activities on the area are encouraged to contact local law enforcement, conservation agents, and/or the area manager.

#### **Suggests providing nearby landowners with the contact information of conservation agents to report any illegal or suspicious activity.**

All MDC contact information is available online at <https://mdc.mo.gov/> under the *Contact & Engage* tab or at your local MDC office. Conservation Agent Susan Swem can be reached at 417-326-9539, and Conservation Agent Keith Wollard can be reached at 417-895-6880.

### ***Trails***

#### **Suggests providing more multi-use/equestrian trails on the area, including re-opening equestrian trails that have been closed, keeping the remaining equestrian trails open, and adding equestrian (multi-use) trails to the area. Suggests opening the boundary area as a multi-use trail. Would like to know what areas will be open to horse-riding in the future. The Back Country Horsemen of Missouri offer to help with any trail maintenance required.**

Pleasant Hope CA has 7.7 miles of trails open to equestrian/multi-use trails. At this time, topography, maintenance, and space do not support the addition of new trails. Additional opportunities related to equestrian/multi-use trails can be found at Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Area and Mule Shoe CA. The Area Planning Team appreciates the support of the Tri-Lakes Back Country Horsemen of Missouri to complete trail maintenance.

#### **Suggests allowing all-terrain vehicles and utility-task vehicles on the trails.**

The current MDC regulations do not permit ATV/UTV access to the trails at Pleasant Hope CA, and the Area Planning Team does not plan to change the access policy. The use of ATVs/UTVs on trails poses a potential safety hazard for hikers and horseback riders in addition to increasing trail maintenance.

**Suggests creating more looped trails.**

At this time, the Area Planning Team does not plan to add more looped trails to the area due to topographic, maintenance, and space requirements necessary for more trails.

*Education*

**Suggests teaching youth hunter safety at Pleasant Hope CA.**

Hunter Education training and certification is available online to Missouri residents 16 years of age and older. Hunter education sessions are available to the public at the Andy Dalton Shooting Range (located 18 miles northwest of Springfield), as well as at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center. Both the nature center and the Andy Dalton Shooting Range are staffed and have buildings and accommodations for our guests. MDC has no plans to offer hunter education at Pleasant Hope CA.

*Community Relationships*

**Supports having MDC private land conservationists approach adjacent landowners to assist them in managing their land and implementing conservation practices.**

The private lands conservationist assigned to Polk County can be contacted at the Bolivar MDC office at 417-326-5189.

*Maintenance*

**Suggests mowing area paths more frequently. Enjoys walking on the paths when they are mowed.**

The Area Planning Team supports the mowing of trails as frequently as time, resources, and equipment are available.

**Appreciates work done to keep the area mowed and brush-hogged.**

The Area Planning Team appreciates public support in the maintenance of the area to be accessible for recreational use.

*Camping*

**Opposes overnight camping at the conservation area.**

Primitive camping is permitted at the conservation area, and this recreational activity will continue to be allowed in the future.

**Suggests permitting recreational vehicles to park overnight at the area.**

The current policy for camping at Pleasant Hope CA states that camping must be done away from view of roads and parking lots. The lack of facilities for recreational vehicles and requirement for primitive camping away from view does not make the area conducive to recreational vehicles. Nearby private recreational vehicle campsites include Red Cedar RV park, 15 miles northwest of Pleasant Hope CA, and Tri-Lakes RV, 14 miles northwest of Pleasant Hope CA.

**Administrative Considerations**

**Suggests retopping E. 564<sup>th</sup> Road, the road in front of the conservation area.**

This section of road is not owned or maintained by MDC. E 564<sup>th</sup> Road, passing through Pleasant Hope CA, is owned by Polk County.

**Suggests acquiring more adjoining land when possible.**

The Area Planning Team and MDC is open to the acquisition of adjoining lands, provided the land and funds are available.

**Suggests renaming Pleasant Hope CA in honor of Ross Allen, a former MDC education consultant.**

The Area Planning Team supports the remembrance of important environmental educators, but there is no plan to change the name of the conservation area.

**Other Considerations**

**Suggests contacting adjacent landowners about future public comment periods by means other than mail.**

The Area Planning Team will work on additional outreach methods for the next area plan comment period.

**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.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2013). *2013 Shooting range facility program manual*. 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: Aerial Satellite Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Easements Map

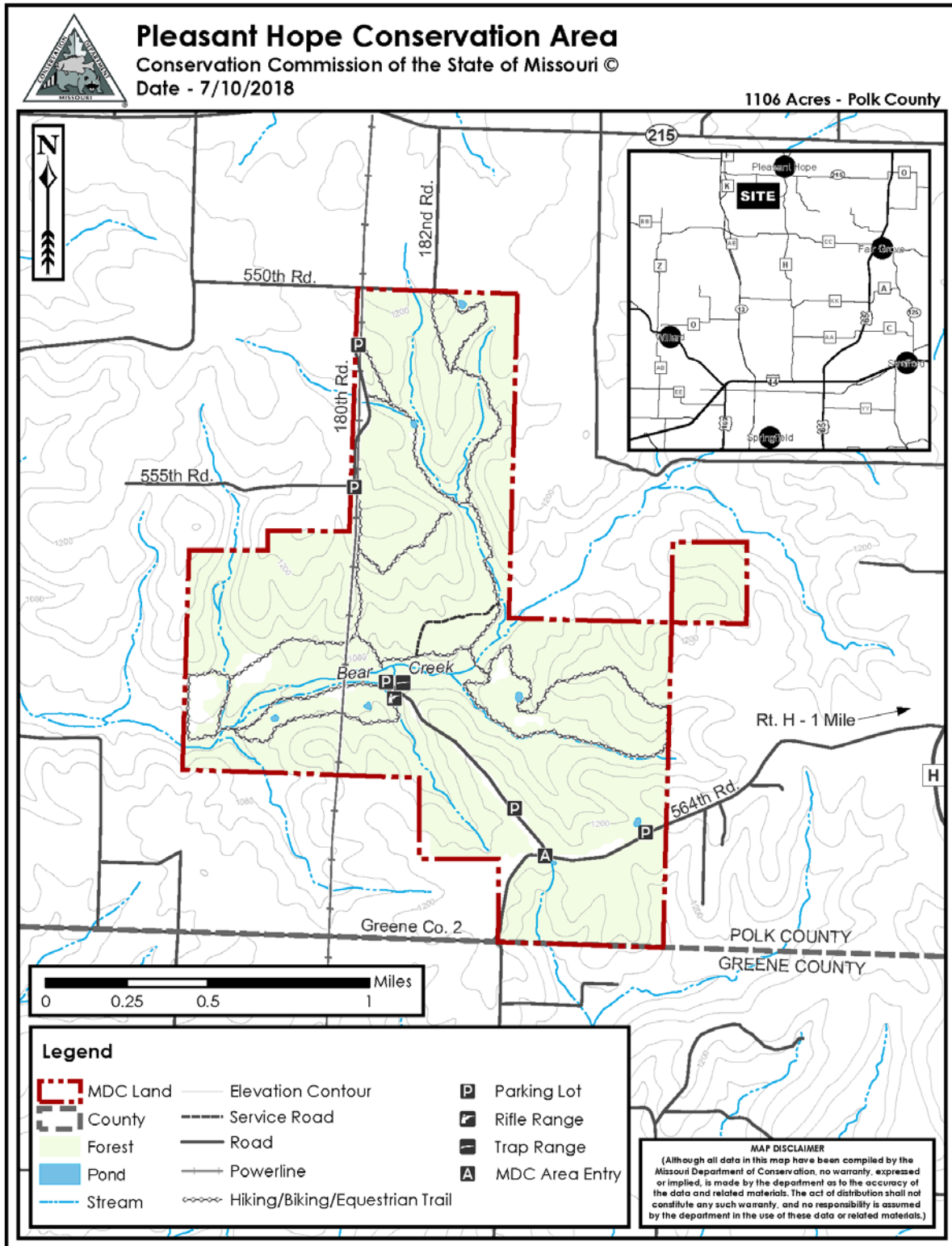
Figure 5: Land Cover Map

**Additional Appendices:**

Appendix A: Pleasant Hope Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments



Figure 1: Area Map



**Figure 2: Aerial Map**

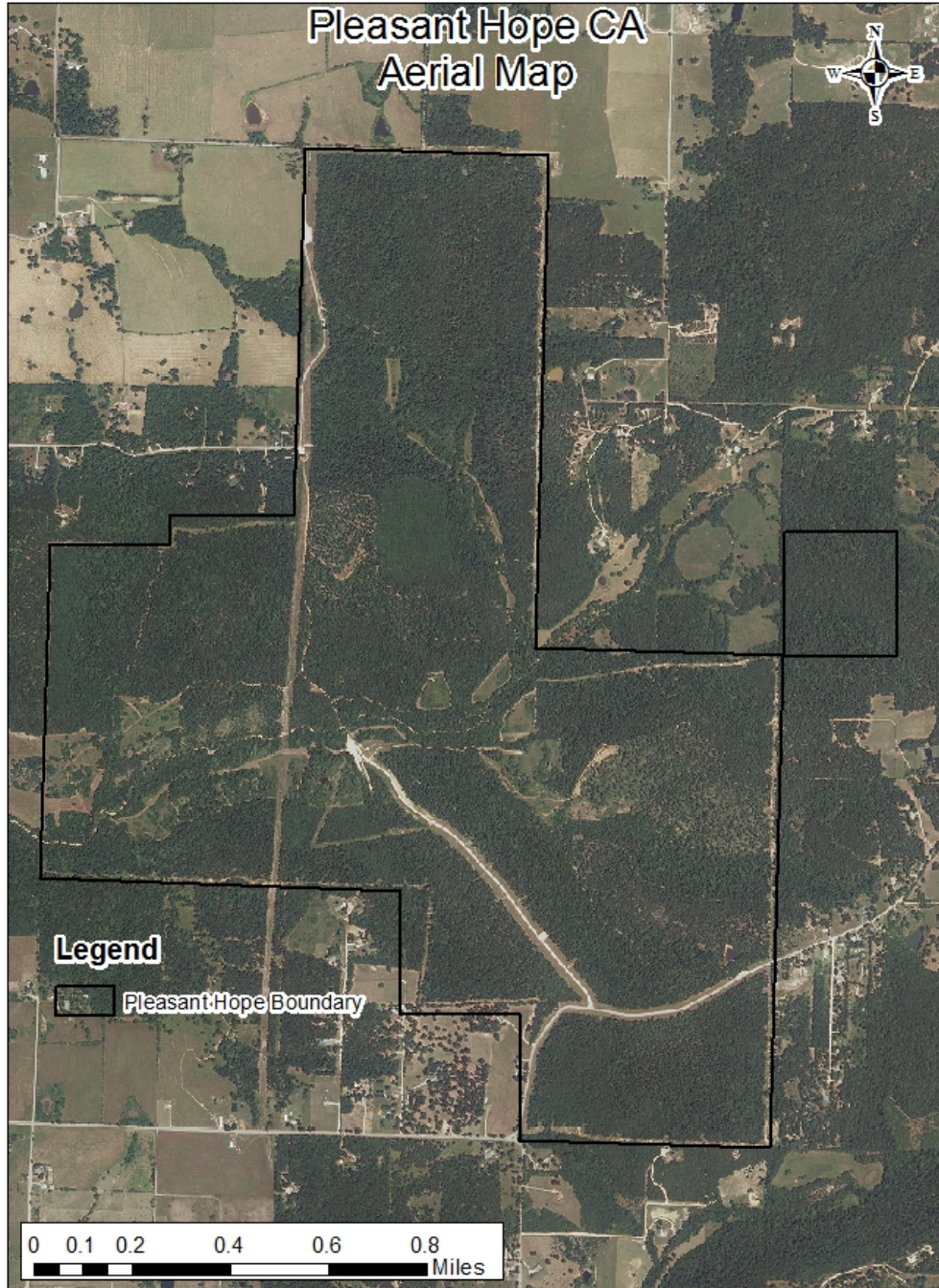
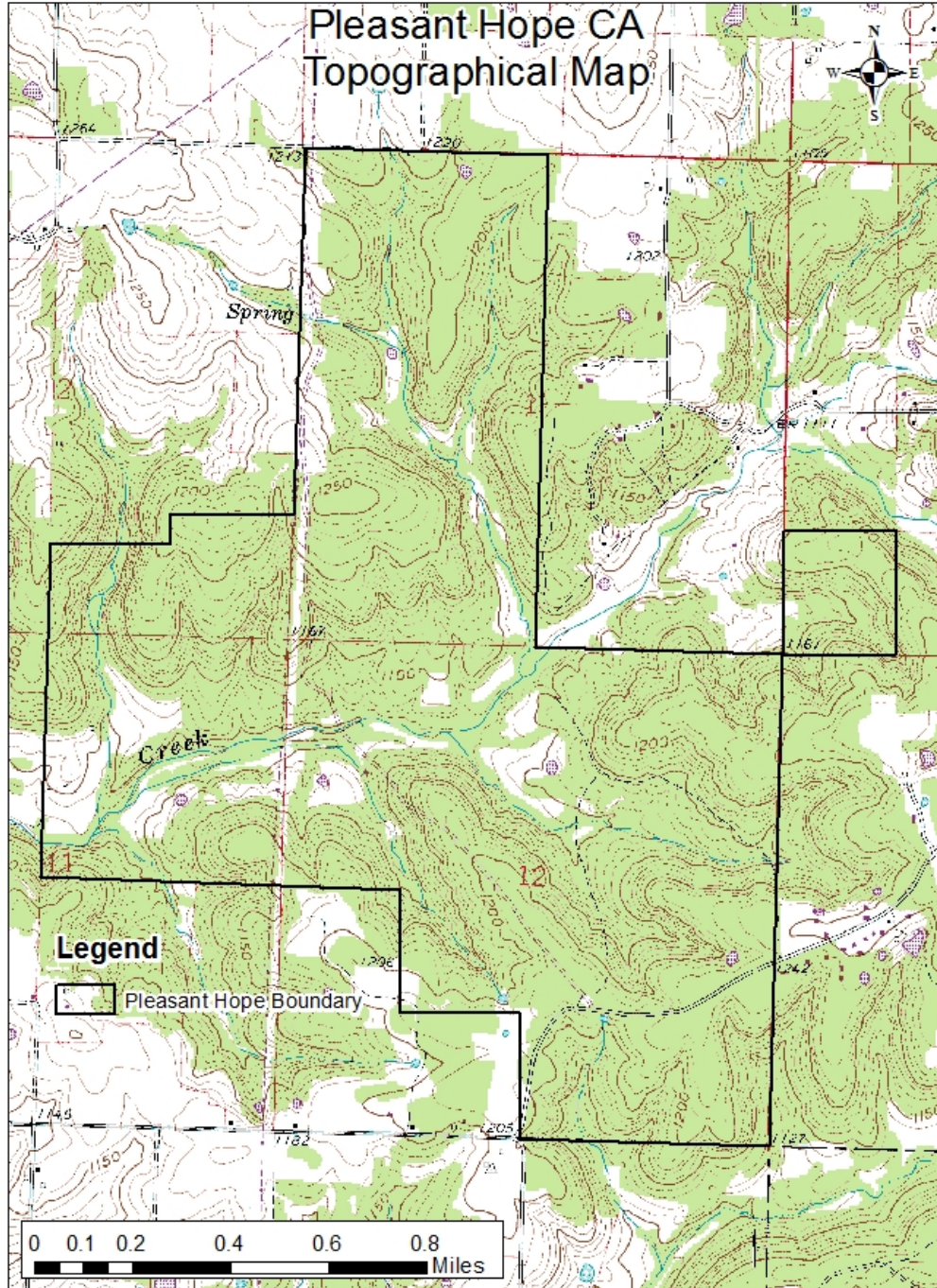


Figure 3: Topographic Map



**Figure 4: Easement Map**

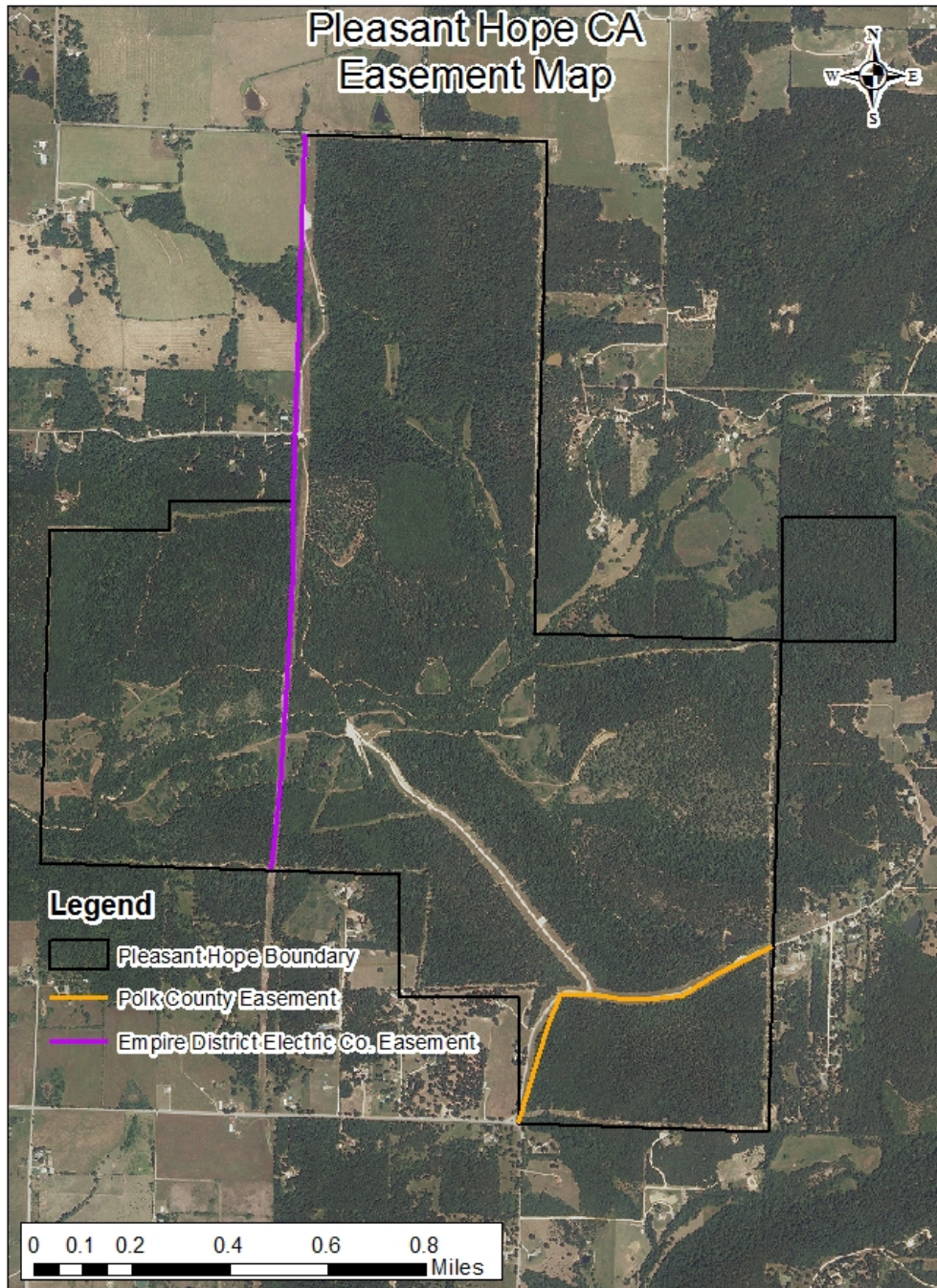
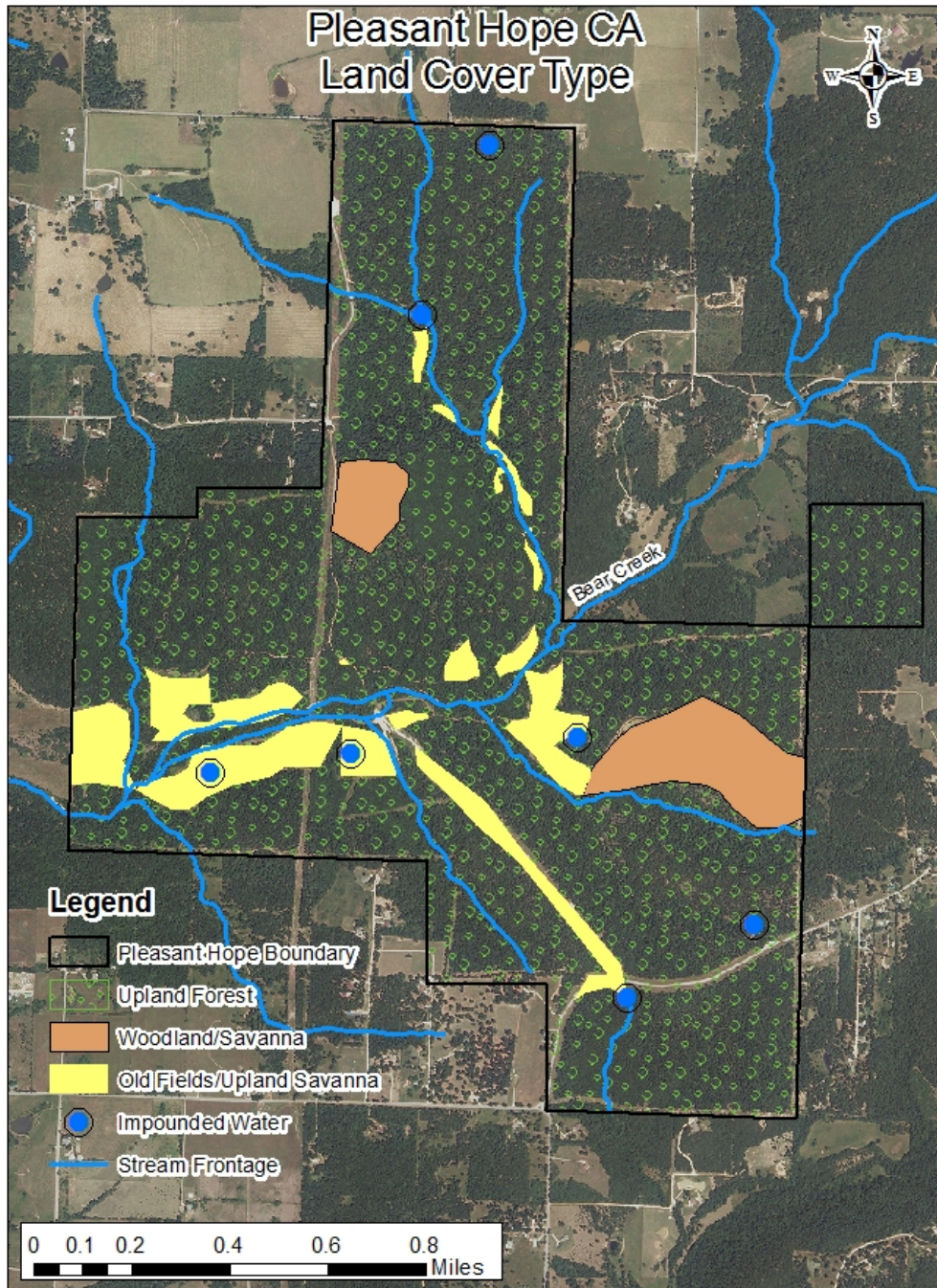


Figure 5: Land Cover Map



## Appendix A: Pleasant Hope Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (Sept. 1–30, 2018):

Emailed Comment: Thank you for providing adjacent landowners with the opportunity to comment on the Pleasant Hope Conservation Area Draft Management Plan. As a landowner adjacent to the Pleasant Hope CA for the past 20 years....this is the first time any outreach has been provided by the Missouri Department of Conservation...for which I am grateful.

I would recommend for any future outreach efforts, that a concerted effort be made to notify residents by other means besides mail (such as on-site temporary signage (yard signs) often used by municipalities for planning and zoning hearings/changes) at the gun range or in high visible areas of the conservation area next to roads/parking areas/gun range. I believe this would generate more response by not only adjacent landowners but by citizens who utilize MDC lands. Overall, I thought the management plan was good, although not specific. I understand that many of the specific planning initiatives are planned afterward and prior to implementation.

As for my comments, I would like to submit the following:

### VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Management Objective 2: Facilitate a good working relationship with the local community.

Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize boundary, trespass or any other issues. (Forestry, Protection)

Strategy 2: Foster good working relationships between user groups such as hunters, horseback riders, and shooting range enthusiasts. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties. (Forestry, Private Lands)

This is a good. I think having the Private Land Conservationists approach adjacent landowners is a good idea (either through mail or signage). Most neighbors don't understand beneficial conservation practices or can identify invasive/noxious weeds such as *Sericea Lespedeza*, Japanese Honeysuckle, etc. and its negative impacts upon habitat. Most importantly, if landowners are enlightened about the Private Lands Program...they would be more apt to work with MDC on implementing conservation practices that would provide a continuum with the Conservation Area's management plan. Most of my neighbors are unaware of the Private Lands Program and other services that MDC offers (such as the George O. White State Forest Nursery and the Seedling Order services). But I believe if they were aware of what voluntary landowner services MDC offers, they would be more than happy to utilize its programs.

Management Objective 3: Maintain the shooting range for cleanliness and public safety. Strategy

1: Area staff is responsible for the maintenance of each range. Maintenance includes trash removal, maintenance and repair, maintaining signage and perimeter fencing, and contracting for the daily opening and closing of the gate at the range entrance. However, some maintenance and repair may require the assistance from Design and Development Division staff. (Forestry, Design and Development)

Strategy 2: Continue monitoring for safe use of the facilities. The outdoor skills specialist will conduct annual range inspections of each range. Resources serving as guidelines for range management include MDC's 2013 Shooting Range Facility Program Manual (MDC, 2013), Environmental Stewardship Plan, and Standard Operation Procedures. (Forestry, Protection) Besides doing a biannual range inspection, It would be good if the Outdoor Skills Specialist could meet with adjacent landowners to discuss safety measures and concerns. Since the shooting range has been constructed.....numerous houses and residential dwellings (over 25) have existed or been constructed within a 1 mile range of this facility (all within the flight direction coming from the range). Looking at the Conservation Area property boundary and adjacent lands (as a whole on the satellite image), the residential area in question is the only densely populated section next to the MDC property and it is unfortunately located in the direction of the gun range.

Though the range has a hard surface protection zone and a soft perimeter zone....I have observed (over the 20 years I have lived at my current residence) that when the range is at maximum capacity (typically during weekends), that shooters who do not want to wait their turn (and who have driven many miles to shoot their new guns).....will go off the range and shoot in a south to southeasterly direction toward the housing units unaware that there are residential houses in the flight range.

Because of this, I have had bullets fly over with some striking my outbuildings and trees. In response to this I have called up the Polk County Sheriff's Department. This year alone I have had 3 instances (08/11/2018, 06/02/2018, and 04/01/2018) where I was in my yard and flyover bullets were emanating from the range. In talking with my neighbors, this has occurred with some of them...notably Linda Thompson who lives just north of me.

Another issue of concern is the illicit manufacturing of methamphetamines and other illegal drugs that occurs in isolated areas in the conservation area. Though this is not a prevalent problem.... I have stumbled upon the remnants of illegal operations (empty fluid canisters/spray cans, kitchenware, camping stoves, etc.) Though I have never encountered an active illegal operation, I can assume with some degree of confidence that this occurs late at night or in the early morning hours. Sometimes

In order to address this issue and to deter any friendly-fire incidents, unintentional accidents and/or potential legal/tort claims, I would encourage MDC to address this matter seriously. Some options would be to:

1. Have the shooting range attended by a Conservation Agent or Outdoor Skills Specialist. Understanding this is an economic uncertainty...increasing routine conservation agent patrol would help with off-range shooting.

2. Put a current aerial photographic map (poster format) up at the gun range kiosk stand that shows the range's proximity to the residential houses/developments located south of the range. Erect signage warning shooters that there are residential houses within a 1-mile flight of

the range. This signage might deter some shooters getting off the protected hard and soft range and thus shooting in the direction of the residential developments. Currently the only map available at the gun range is the general conservation area brochure whose topographic map shows no adjacent lands and their current land uses. It is imperative for shooters to realize there are houses within the proximity of the shooting range. A map and signage would certainly help.

3. Update the brochure copies (provided at the shooting range kiosk) that include aerial photographic or satellite imagery maps so hunters/target shooters are aware of where residential houses exist. The old USGS topographic maps that the current brochure utilizes is outdated and shows no offsite land uses.

4. Re-located the gun range to a more isolated area of the Conservation Area where no residential homes or dwellings exist within its shooting proximity. The northern areas of the Conservation Area are more isolated and do not have any residential developments. This is a logical place for safety reasons. Understanding that there is a large economic factor in relocating the gun range....it is something worth considering.

5. Increase routine patrol by Conservation Agents at night to surveil any illegal drug manufacturing operations and/or poaching activities.

6. Give landowners the proper contact (name/number) information of MDC Conservation Agent or related authority to whom we can contact in case of any suspicious or illegal activity that may be observed.

Again, I understand that the current shooting range is in a valley and has hard and soft protection zones....but because this is an Un-Attended and Un-Supervised range (with increasing usage)....shooters do go off range to shoot due to impatience and overcrowding at the shooting range. The following map shows areas that I have previously discussed.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this management plan. I have enjoyed living next to the Pleasant Hope Conservation Area and consider myself to be a landowner partner with MDC and its mission. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

I have lived in the Springfield area many years but have only gone to Pleasant Hope Conservation Area a couple of times. Frankly, I don't feel safe there because of the shooting range. I prefer to go to a conservation area where I can walk and quietly enjoy the sounds and sights of nature. I do not like the sounds of gunfire in the background and sometimes I wondered if the shooters were off the range.

Make the shooting range a staffed, pay range. I live in Brighton but I normal go to Andy Dalton range.

ATV & UTV trails.it would be nice to drive a UTV from my land to the gun range!



<p>I think for the most part this plan is fine but I think a fisheries survey should be conducted on the pond and if necessary additional bass if the pond is sunfish heavy or bluegill over 4 inches if it bass heavy should be stocked. Also please label the fishing pond on the area map, thanks</p>
<p>put game cams up so you can monitor the range and see whom is destroying the range</p>
<p>We have lived here since 2007 and have no real issues. The gun range can be a bit noisy, if it could relocate somewhere less populated that would be great. Also the road in front of the conservation area, E 564th Road, really needs to be re-topped. It only gets gravel fill on the pot holes. We would be interested in planting more bee, butterfly friendly native plants if the conservation has any programs to help with that. And lastly, there is a firebreak that gets mowed randomly. We enjoy walking on the approved provided paths on the conservation land if it was mowed, we could walk more. Thank you so much for everything you have done so far! We feel blessed and are supportive in all the Conservation efforts to date.</p>
<p>Regarding Section VII, Public Use Management Considerations, Management Objective 2: Facilitate a good working relationship with the local community- I would hope that this "objective" would be an objective of the Department in general for all areas. Please keep the existing equestrian designated trails open, and please return all recently closed trails previously used by equestrian users. This CA is very beautiful, please do not restrict equestrian use in the future at any of the MDC areas. Thank you!</p>
<p>This area of the state has a high number of people that own and ride horses. For years this was used by people near by for a place to take a short ride. Under the management the last few years the horse people have been run off. Maybe the management needs to remember who supports them.</p>
<p>I would like updates on the horseback riding trail. We are in the process of building our horse boarding facility which is at the corner of S. 188th Rd and 555th Rd. We are contemplating purchasing land that connects into the conservation area on the south side of 555th Rd (although it is not connected to the horse trails) and/or gain access to the properties via a connecting landowner's property. Thank you.</p>
<p>I am located in Fair Grove, not very far from the Pleasant Hope conservation area. In fact, it used to be one of our favorite places to ride our horses. We have noticed more recently that trails have been closed. I am asking for consideration to open the previously closed trail as well as the boundary area trails/clearings. These trails already exist and would not need any major clearing, so no added expense. Also, as a member of Back Country Horsemen Tri-Lakes chapter, I know the group would be happy to help with maintenance. I appreciate your consideration and time. I love enjoying our beautiful Ozarks on horseback.</p>
<p>I would like to have more miles of multi-use trails to be open. Old trails have been closed that were old road ways and there is a wide cleared area around the perimeter that could be used as trails at no cost to MDC. Back Country Horsemen of Missouri has offered to help maintain these trails as a volunteer service. We would appreciate your consideration on these requests.</p>

We think that the trails that have been closed should be reopened for multi-purpose trails. Where they have dozed the boundary areas should be open as multi-purpose trails. Back Country Horsemen, Tri-Lakes Chapter would be willing to help maintain the trails. Part of the purpose of Conservation Areas is to provide areas for recreation for the public. This would be a great opportunity for hikes and horseback rider alike.

In reading your draft proposal for Pleasant Hope CA, specifically Management Objectives #1,#2 - you state your interest in managing for a variety of recreational opportunities for the visitors of Pleasant Hope CA and working toward a good working relationship with local community. Again I would like to stress the ignoring of the equestrian community in requesting a reopening of trails that already exist withing the area for multi-use . Repeatly such organizations as Back Country Horsemen have offerred their service to help maintain opened trails. The area only recognizes 7.7 miles of trails when many more miles are already there and could be recognized and added and have been open in the past. Closing off the dozed boundry areas are evidence that the Department is not working to develop a good working relationship with the community. Not reopening the two trails that start at the pond on FR 564 that goes north to the creek is also evident of ignoring the community requests. Please consider working with individuals or organized groups who are interested in enjoying the area and willing to provide volunteer service to help maintain and keep trails in good order.

The only additions I wish to add to the MDC plan are expansion of the shooting range and to the area when adjoining land is available. I appreciate MDC. I believe that the wildlife population is at the highest level during my lifetime. However quail and whipper will numbers seem to be down. Thanks.

Please consider working with the Tri Lakes chapter of Back Country Horsemen to improve and, if possible, expand the trails for horseback riding and mixed use. I enjoy riding at the Pleasant Hope area and would hate to lose access to such a convenient place.

I have only visited this area once, to try trail running. It was a couple of years ago in late summer. Everything seemed in good shape. Maybe creating more loop trails in the savanna area would be good, but I would not favor any extensive clearing or road building.

I think they need to make the shooting range a manned area if possible a lot of people down in there with big guns. Also move it down further into the area away from traffic. My neighbors say they have had bullets hit their houses.

Friends and family of long serving MCD Educational Consultant, Ross Allen, have long lobbied to name a property in the Ozarks for Ross who passed away in 2011.

Ross was a native of the area, a beloved local educator in Wheatland, Weaubleau, and Springfield. And the department's first youth educational consultant in SW Missouri. He worked for MDC for more then 20 years in schools across the region.

Ross is still remembered for his character, dedication to youth conservation education and

renown story telling ability. Literally thousands of young people across the Ozarks came to respect our natural treasures and learn to rules of safe hunting from Ross.

The Pleasant Hope property would be a perfect place to teach youth hunter safety and education.

Please consider using the opportunity to carry on the passion and name of Ross Allen as you manage this property.

We are retired and enjoy seeing wildlife. Too old to climb in a tent. We have an RV and all we need is a fairly level spot where we can park overnight ie a gravel or dirt parking lot. That allows us to see wildlife early morning or in the evening. We don't drive after dark anymore. Most MDC areas are quite a drive and allowing overnight parking would allow RV users to enjoy what our beautiful state has to offer.

Please do not continue to allow over night camping of any kind. Allowing camping gives people who use this facility security fears when campers appear suddenly and they disrupt the wildlife.

There have been reports of stray bullets from the shooting range along residences on Rt.2 causing damage and alarm to those residents. I would request that either the Conservation Dept. provide a monitor for the gun range or that the gun range be moved.

9-26-2018

Missouri Department of Conservation  
Subject: Pleasant Hope 15 year plan

Thank you for the work that you have done this year in keeping the Pleasant Hope Conservation area mowed and brush hogged.

As a trail rider, I have several ideas that I feel would improve the usage of the area.

- 1) More multi-purpose trails would be appreciated. At the present time, there are only about 7.7 miles of trails. Most people would benefit from at least 12 to 15 miles of trails. That way their trip cost would be balanced out with the opportunity to ride for a longer distance.
- 2) The use of the dozed boundary areas would provide additional trails at no additional expense to the Conservation Department since these areas are already being brush hogged. They would make excellent trails for horseback riding.
- 3) The two trails that start at the pond on Farm Road 564 and go north to the creek to be reopened to horseback riding.

If you would like any assistance with the layout and/or building of new trails, there are groups that would be willing to provide a lot of the "man power" needed.

I appreciate the willingness of the Conservation Department to allow the citizens of Missouri the opportunity to express their ideas on the Pleasant Hope 15 Year Plan.

Thanks,

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It is my understanding that riding and hiking trails have been closed off from the public. Please consider reopening the trails that have been previously closed as these trails provided the opportunity for the public to enjoy the recreational time and the opportunity to form a good working relationship with the local community. I understand that the trails require maintenance and to that end BCH is a willing and hardworking group that would work toward that end.