St. Mary Access

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2017-2031

Lisa H. Allen
Forestry Division Chief

8-8-16
Date

St. Mary Access Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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SOUTHEAST REGION

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Signature 7-25-16 *Date*

FORESTRY DIVISION

Management Chief

John Tuttle *Signature* 8/5/16 *Date*

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** St. Mary Access, # 8519
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1985; owned by City of St. Mary and leased by Missouri Department of Conservation since 1985
- **Acreage:** 5 acres
- **County:** Sainte Genevieve
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** City of St. Mary
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - **A. Strategic Direction**
    Maintain requirements of the lease agreement with the City of St. Mary.
  - **B. Desired Future Condition**
    Provide a consistent access to old river channel of the Mississippi River.
  - **C. Federal Aid Statement**
    N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. <u>Special Considerations</u>

A. Priority Areas: Priority Forest Landscape

B. Natural Areas: None

II. <u>Important Natural Features and Resources</u>

A. Species of Conservation Concern: Species of conservation concern are not known from this area. Area managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the natural history biologist.

B. Caves: None

C. Springs: None

D. Other: Occurs in the Bois Brule Alluvial Plain Landtype Association. This landtype occupies a large, continuous tract of alluvial plain, the Bois Brule Bottom, with highly variable soils. At the base of the bluff was a former linear lake and marsh, now drained and converted to crops. Elsewhere the surface was a series of swales and ridges with alternating wet and dry soils, prairie and timber, now also converted to crops. The Great Flood of 1993 altered the surface considerably. Several spring-fed Ozark creeks empty onto this bottomland (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- Two parking lots
- One concrete boat ramp

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations: The Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) has a 25-year lease agreement with the property owner, the City of St. Mary. The current agreement is from 2010 to 2035.

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: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad

D. Cultural Resources Findings: None observed.

E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials: None observed.

F. Endangered Species: None observed.

G. Boundary Issues: None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

St. Mary Access is along the old river channel where the Mississippi used to flow. The area includes large scattered bottomland trees with young trees and shrubs.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Provide stable riparian habitat.

Management Objective 1: Provide stable riparian habitat

Strategy 1: Allow for natural regeneration to stabilize banks and protect the boat ramp (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Work with the City of St. Mary and Burlington Northern Railroad to minimize disturbance (Forestry).

VI. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Provide public access to the old river channel.

Management Objective 1: Provide safe public access to the old river channel.

Strategy 1: Ensure sedimentation and flood debris is cleared promptly to maximize safe river access (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Post proper signage that informs users of rules and regulations (Forestry).

VII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Maintain area lease agreement with the City of St. Mary.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area lease agreement with the City of St. Mary.

Strategy 1: Ensure compliance of the lease agreement is upheld by the City of St. Mary and the Department.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

APPENDICES

Area Background:
The Department entered into a lease agreement with the City of St. Mary in 1985 to provide the public with access to the old river channel. The Department built the ramp and parking lot; the City of St. Mary, the property owner, maintains the site.

Backwater flooding from the Mississippi River is an annual issue and limits access in the original lower parking lot. After the 1993 and 1995 floods, much of the riverfront buildings were bought out and removed. In 1999, the Department agreed to install a second parking lot on a higher elevation to provide access at high water levels and overflow parking on busy days.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Riverfront Forest/Meadow	4.5		90
Parking Lot Infrastructure	0.5		10
Total	**5.0**		**100**
Stream Frontage		1,030	

Public Input Summary:
The draft St. Mary Access Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period December 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from one respondent (Appendix A). The St. Mary Access 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.

<u>Department responses to themes and issues identified through St. Mary Access Area public comment period</u>

Suggests increasing safety and access during high water events by raising the roadbed east of the railroad tracks and adding a raised roadbed entry extension.
We will take the request under consideration; however there would be a significant cost and upkeep to the additional surface area of gravel. Furthermore, the Department does not want to promote backing a boat trailer across the railroad track because of the safety concerns.

References:

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

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map
Figure 2: Aerial Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: St. Mary Access Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

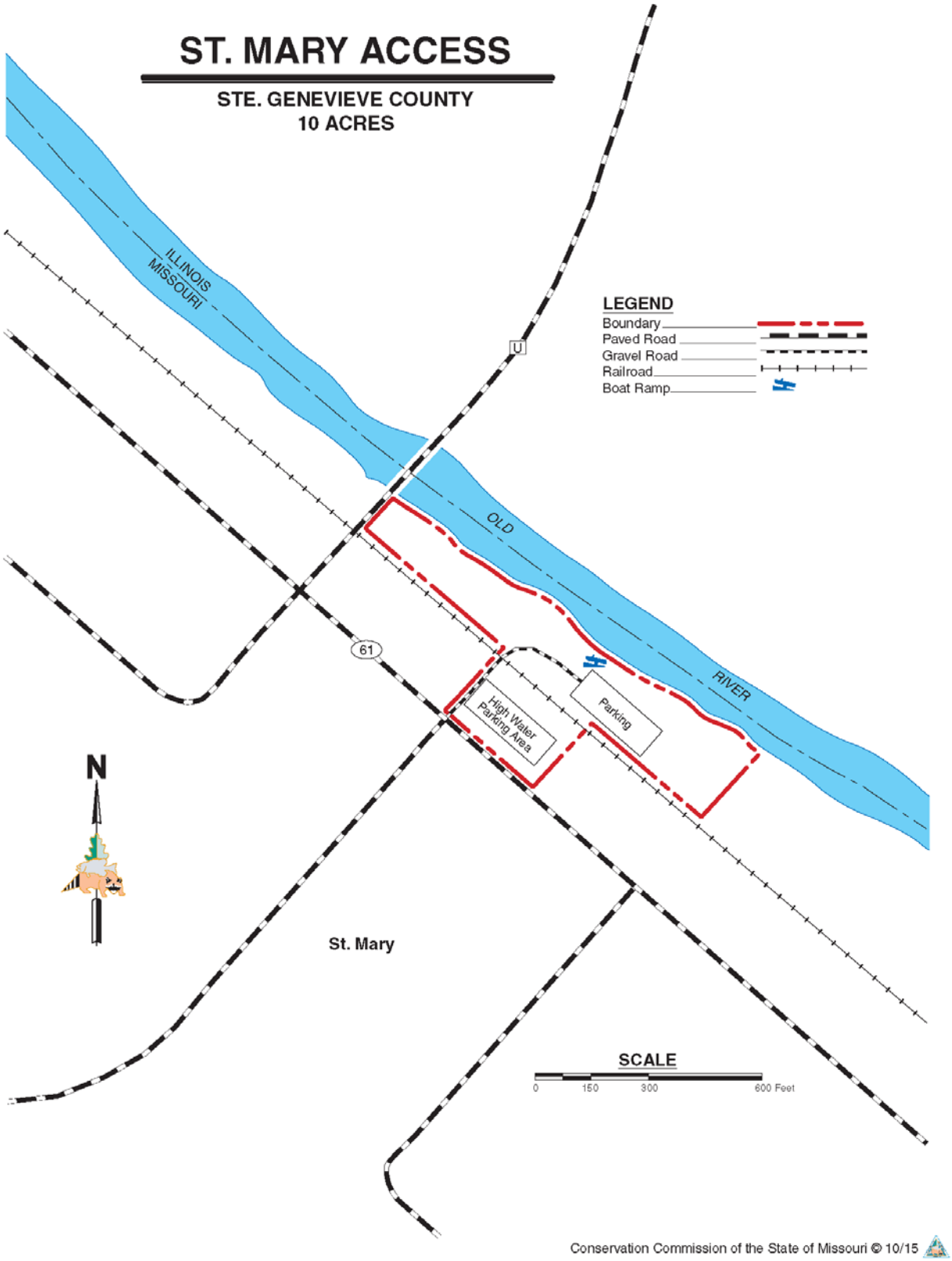

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Appendix A: St. Mary Access Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (December 1-31, 2015):

I certainly appreciate the up keep and use of the St. Marys landing. However, I do believe improvements could be made to improve safety and access during high water, which is now more than a yearly event.

Many people continue to access the old river channel (Saline Creek) during high water, rightly so. While the "high water parking lot" is a great addition, access to the water at high levels is a bit difficult and can be risky. Though I do not want to jeopardize the opportunity to access during high water, and will fight against any such action, people, including myself continue to launch off the gravel road directly over the railroad tracks and must back their boat trailer over the RR tracks to do so. While there is sufficient room to clear the RR tracks when launching, I believe the opportunity exists to improve launching during high water. I propose the following improvement option be considered:

1. Raise the road bed (east of the RR tracks) leading to the low water parking lot a hundred feet or so to near the level of the rail road tracks and incorporate a boat launch grade from there down to the low lever parking lot. Additionally, add a raised road bed entry extension that would angle Northeastward (away from low parking lot) or somewhat parallel to the river bed to allow boaters to cross over the RR tracks in a forward direction and then back onto the proposed raised road to the launch angle proposed above.

I believe the expenditure is highly justified given the resources of the MDC and the revenue generated in the area for fishing and hunting opportunities provided by the St. Marys access. As you know, this launch access provides access to the Saline Creek, Mississippi River and Middle Mississippi River Valley Refuge (Illinois). Now... if we just had access to the Mississippi for extreme low water level! (Little Rock Landing needs a boat ramp!)