

# Bryant Creek

## Conservation Opportunity Area



Ozark  
Highlands



*Bryant Creek's clear waters harbor 15 Ozark endemic fish and crayfish – species found only in the Ozarks.*

Catherine Hopkins, Ozark Regional Land Trust

Bryant Creek runs through 39 miles of hilly, rocky, oak-pine forests in a remote and sparsely populated area of the Ozarks. These large tracts of forest contain streams, springs, caves, fens, sinkhole ponds and cliffs, providing habitat important to a variety of plants and animals. Historically, pine-oak woodland dominated higher elevations, grading into mixed-oak forests with areas of cane thickets along the lower slopes and bottomlands. Bryant Creek is one of the few remaining places in Missouri where native cane thickets can still be found. Some of Bryant Creek's valley bottoms and broad ridges have been cleared and converted to fescue pasture. Land which has undergone this conversion no longer

provides the same benefits to wildlife and water quality.

There is significant interest in conservation and a commitment by many individual private landowners along Bryant Creek to protect the stream and wildlife living here. The nonprofit Ozark Botanical Garden, Inc. conducts educational workshops to raise awareness of the botanical diversity of this area. Alford Forest, Inc. is managed in a sustainable manner to improve forest health while gaining economic benefit. By setting aside reserve areas, Alford Forest helps conserve sensitive ravines and bottomlands along Bryant Creek. These and other local efforts for conservation benefit the Bryant Creek Conservation Opportunity Area (COA).

## Bryant Creek Conservation Strategies

- Restore forest cover along stream banks.
- Establish forested buffers around caves and springs.
- Increase “connectivity” in forested lands.
- Increase the use of voluntary permanent long-term conservation easements.
- Implement recovery actions for hellbender conservation.
- Improve quality, productivity and sustainable economic returns of upland woodlands.
- Reduce erosion, sedimentation and water pollution in Bryant Creek.



Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

*The **Ozark hellbender** is an aquatic salamander found in only a few Missouri and Arkansas streams – including Bryant Creek. A candidate for the federal Endangered Species list, hellbender numbers are rapidly declining. They require cool, clean, well-oxygenated waters to survive.*

### Priority Research and Inventory Needs

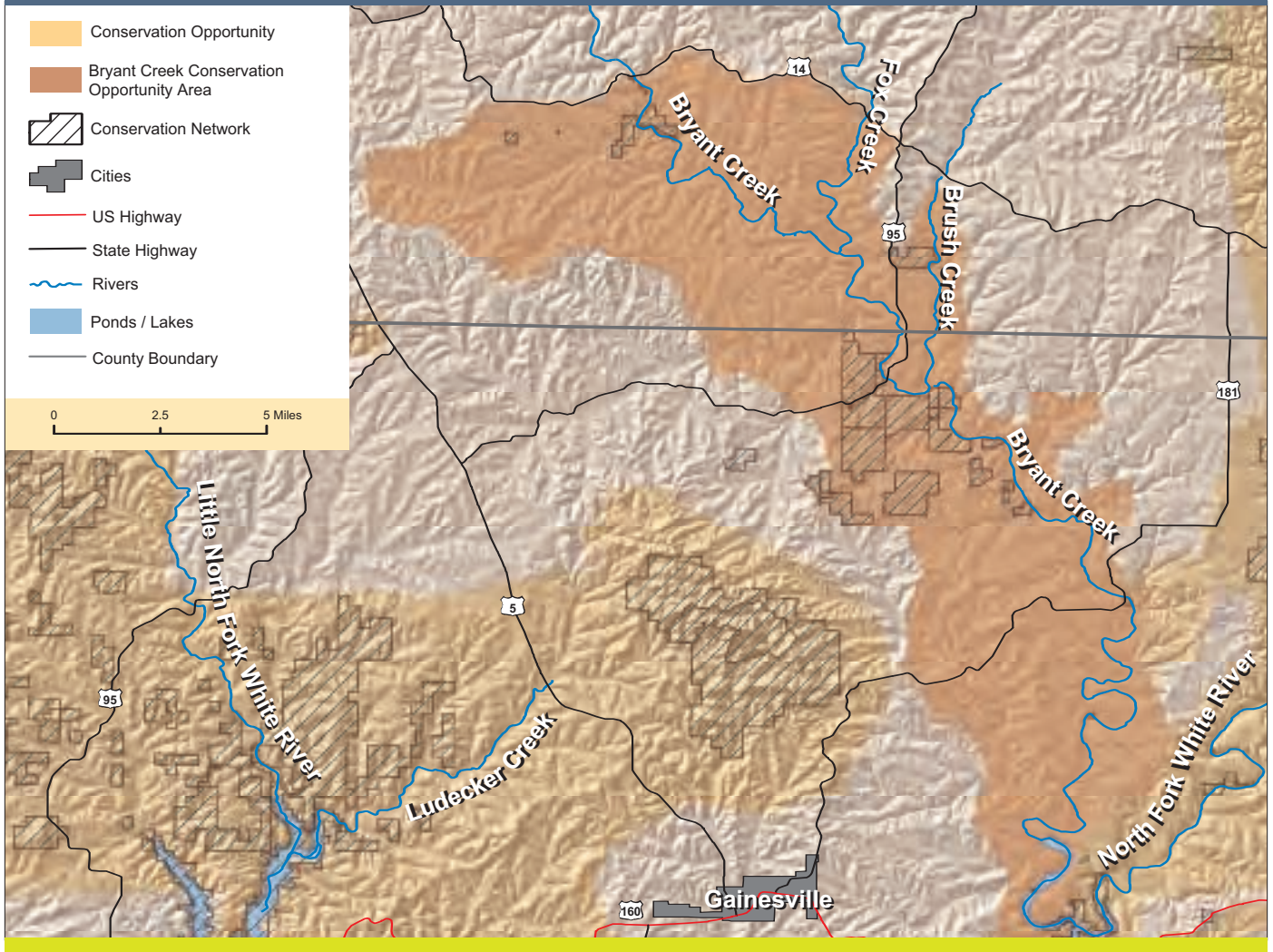
- Conduct a biological inventory of the Bryant Creek COA.
- Use satellite and aerial imagery to review forest cover.
- Establish a baseline for water quality.
- Establish a baseline for measuring sedimentation of streams; determine the impacts of sedimentation on stream health.
- Locate sinkholes, losing streams and other natural features that impact Bryant Creek’s water quality.

### Conservation Partners

**Existing:** Ozark Regional Land Trust; Missouri Stream Team #191; Ozark Botanical Garden, Inc.; The Nature Conservancy – Missouri Chapter (TNC); private landowners; Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

**Potential:** Audubon Missouri; Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (MCHF); private landowners; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

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## Funding Sources

**Existing:** TNC annual budget; MDC annual budget

**Promising Future Sources:** MDC Landowner Incentive Programs; MDC Forest Legacy Program; MDC State Wildlife Grants; MDC Wildlife Diversity Funds; MDC Private Lands Cost Share Program; MCHF Stream Stewardship Trust Fund; MCHF grants; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

## Existing Conservation Network

Alma Peterson Azalea Memorial Preserve; Williams Memorial Woods Preserve; Rippee Conservation Area (Bryant Creek Natural Area); Cook Access; Sycamore Access; Warren Bridge Access; Norfork Lake; Alford Forest Preserve; Hawk Hill Community Land Trust; Elixer Conservation Lands; Ozark Regional Land Trust easements totaling 1,121 acres



Catherine Hopkins, Ozark Regional Land Trust

*Forested stream banks prevent excess soil from muddying Bryant Creek. Many Ozark fish and crayfish require clear streams with little sedimentation to live in and reproduce.*

## Missouri Stream Teams



*Missouri Stream Team #191 is comprised of several area residents who volunteer their time to monitor water quality and stream invertebrates of Bryant Creek. In partnership with the Missouri Stream Team program, an annual clean-up of Bryant Creek was initiated in 2003. In 2004, 35 volunteers collected trash along 27 miles of the creek in the day-long event.*

Catherine Hopkins, Ozark Regional Land Trust

### Conservation Challenges

The Bryant Creek Conservation Opportunity Area provides extensive forest cover, significant wildlife habitat and relatively good water quality. Obstacles to keeping it that way include insufficient landowner outreach and

incentives, fragmentation of the landscape, regional economic challenges, water quality issues outside the Conservation Opportunity Area that affect Bryant Creek, introduced species and insufficient staff time.

To learn more about the Bryant Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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