

HABITAT CONDITIONS

Channel Alterations

The original length of the Blue River was approximately 43.3 miles. This was based on inspection of 7.5 minute USGS topographic maps, and estimating stream channel loss due to meander cutoffs. Channelization has eliminated 2.6 miles (6.0%) of stream. A project is currently underway that includes extensive channel widening and some channelization from the vicinity of the Armco Steel Company upstream to 59th Street. This will result in the loss of at least 1.6 more miles of stream (3.9% of the current length). Approximately half of this distance will be lost by channelization of the Centropolis meander (river mile 5). Planning is underway to mitigate this loss, and the old stream channel may be managed as a wetland area. Indian Creek and Brush Creek have also experienced extensive channelization, widening, and encasement with concrete.

Unique Habitats

Much of the stream between the Kansas/Missouri state line and Red Bridge Road is considered unique in this highly urbanized area because the channel has not been altered significantly and the corridor is in fairly good condition. Most of the corridor is owned by JCPR and KCPRB (Kansas City Parks, Recreation and Boulevards). The stream bed is mostly bedrock and gravel and this reach of the stream contains a good network of riffles and pools. The gradient of this reach is moderate (approximately 9 feet/mile) and the stream water is usually clear during normal to low flow periods.

Blue River Glades is located in Swope Park and has been included in the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) directory of Natural Areas (Thom and Iffrig 1985). There is also a small wetland area located in Swope Park directly behind the old Lakeside Nature Center.

Improvement Projects

Trees were planted along 480 feet of eroding bank at Minor Park (river mile 25) by one of the Blue River stream teams in 1990. Stream teams have been actively planting trees along the Blue River since that time. Riparian corridor improvement efforts will be directed primarily upstream of 63rd Street. Improvement of riparian habitat along the mainstem of the Blue River from the Kansas/Missouri state line to 63rd Street will be possible since most of this land is in public ownership. However, efforts to retard streambank erosion will probably be difficult since much of the upper watershed is still undergoing urban development. Over time, larger and more frequent runoff events will accelerate bank erosion. This will be a problem especially in reaches with rocky streambeds where the channel will erode laterally.

Stream habitat was inventoried at five Blue River sites (Figure hb) using the Stream Habitat Assessment Device (SHAD II). The segments were selected by dividing the Missouri portion of the river above 63rd Street into four equal sections. No sites were chosen downstream from 63rd Street because of channel widening planned for this reach of the stream. The Red Bridge sites was chosen because of the tree planting project along this segment of the stream corridor.

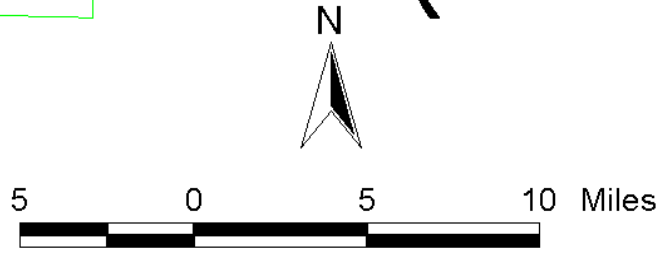
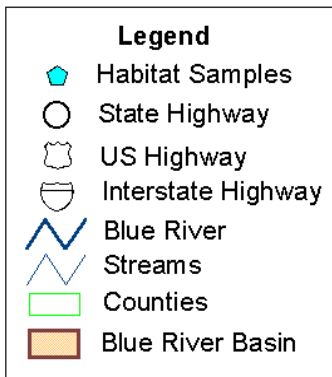
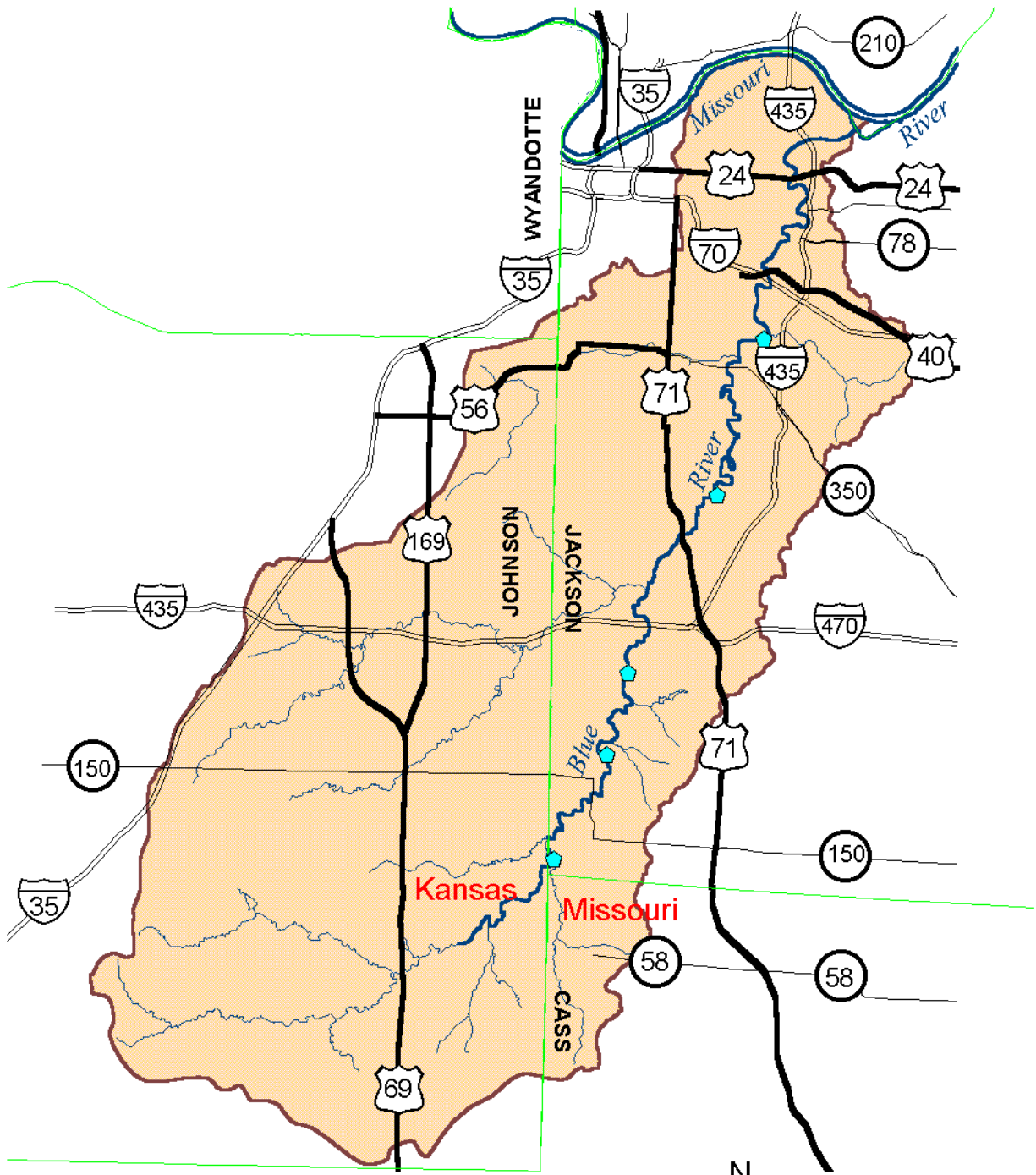


Figure hb. Habitat sampling sites within the Blue River Basin, in Missouri