

LAND USE

Recent Land Use

In 1974, approximately 63 percent of the Blue River watershed was urbanized (USACOE 1974, Figure 1u). At that time most of the upper watershed was rural while the middle and lower portions had undergone extensive residential, commercial, and industrial development. The Missouri portion of the watershed is estimated to be 90 percent urban (Kansas City, MO and suburbs) and 10 percent agricultural (MDNR 1984). Since 1974, urban development has expanded into the upper watershed and will continue to do so. Residential and commercial development in Johnson County, Kansas is expanding rapidly. The long range population forecast estimates that the population of Johnson County will increase from 270,269 in 1980 to 400,474 (48% increase) by the year 2000 (Mid-America Regional Council [MARC] 1988). Jackson County, Missouri will increase from 629,266 in 1980 to an estimated 650,663 (3% increase) by 2000.

Cropland acreage has been declining in the Blue River watershed 3-county region which includes all of Jackson and Cass counties in Missouri and Johnson County, Kansas (USACOE 1974). Agriculture is changing from intensive cropping to greater use of land for pasture and livestock grazing. Approximately 14 percent (130,000 acres) of the agricultural land is forest. The forested areas within the Blue River watershed are found primarily along the slopes and bottom lands of the streams, particularly along Mill, Wolf, and Coffee creeks.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 1986) calculated the land use for the Blue River and its major tributaries. The following is a summary of that report:

Blue River: In the late 1970s, the surrounding land use in the upper and middle portions of the Blue River was 40% grassland, 35% cultivated, 15% housing, and 10% industrial. This land is rapidly being converted to residential areas. The lower reach is largely industrial.

Brush Creek: This stream flows through almost 100% suburban housing from 79th and Lamar to the state line. The lower portion flows through the Brush Creek Parkway in Kansas City, Missouri. Land use along this stretch is a mixture of park, residential, and commercial land.

Indian Creek: The surrounding land is composed of approximately 50% urban development, 24% cultivated farm land, 14% grassland, 8% timber, and 4% industrial land.

Tomahawk Creek: In 1977 the land use in this watershed was approximately 50% pasture, 33% timber, 13% urban development, and 5% cultivated land. Since then, a great deal of residential and commercial development has taken place.

Negro Creek: Housing developments make up 60% of the surrounding land. The remainder is 30% pasture and 10% timber.

Wolf Creek: In 1977, approximately 70% of the ground cover was grass. The remaining land was made up of 20% cultivated and 10% timber with scattered small cultivated plots.

Coffee Creek: The majority of the land is pasture or has been subdivided into private and commercial housing developments.

Soil Conservation Projects

The Blue River watershed has no completed, ongoing or planned soil conservation projects. This category includes both Public Law 566 (PL-566) watershed projects and Special Area Land Treatment (SALT) projects (MDNR 1986 and Don Baker, Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS], personal communication).

Public Areas

Parks along portions of Brush, Indian, Tomahawk, Coffee, and Wolf creeks, and especially the Blue River provide important habitat for fish and wildlife and many opportunities for outdoor recreation (Figure pa). At least one bank of the Blue River is in public ownership for approximately 15.2 of the 17.6 miles from the Missouri/Kansas state line downstream to 63rd Street. Both banks of this stream reach are publicly owned for a distance of 11.9 miles. These public lands are owned by Jackson County Parks and Recreation (JCPR) and Kansas City Parks, Recreation and Boulevards (KCPRB).

Corps of Engineers 404 Jurisdiction

The entire Blue River watershed is under the jurisdiction of the Kansas City District USACOE. Even though some minor in-stream activities are permitted under Nationwide Permit, applicants should always contact the USACOE office to inquire about proposed projects. Applications for and information about 404 permits should be directed to the Kansas City Office: Regulatory Branch, Kansas City District Corps of Engineers, 700 Federal Building, 601 East 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. General regulatory information can also be found at the USACOE Regulatory Program web site.

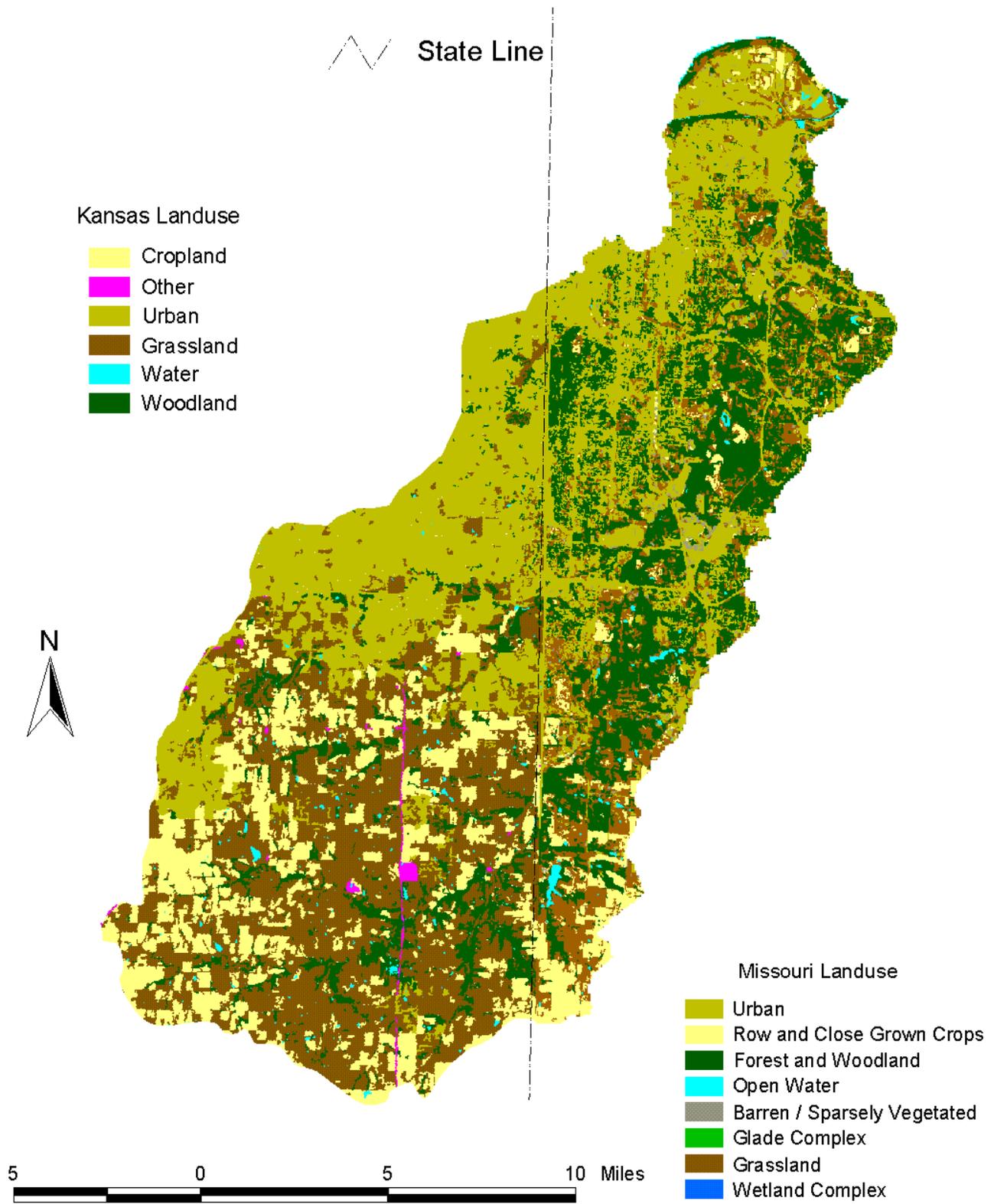


Figure 1u. Land use in the Blue River Basin, in Missouri and Kansas

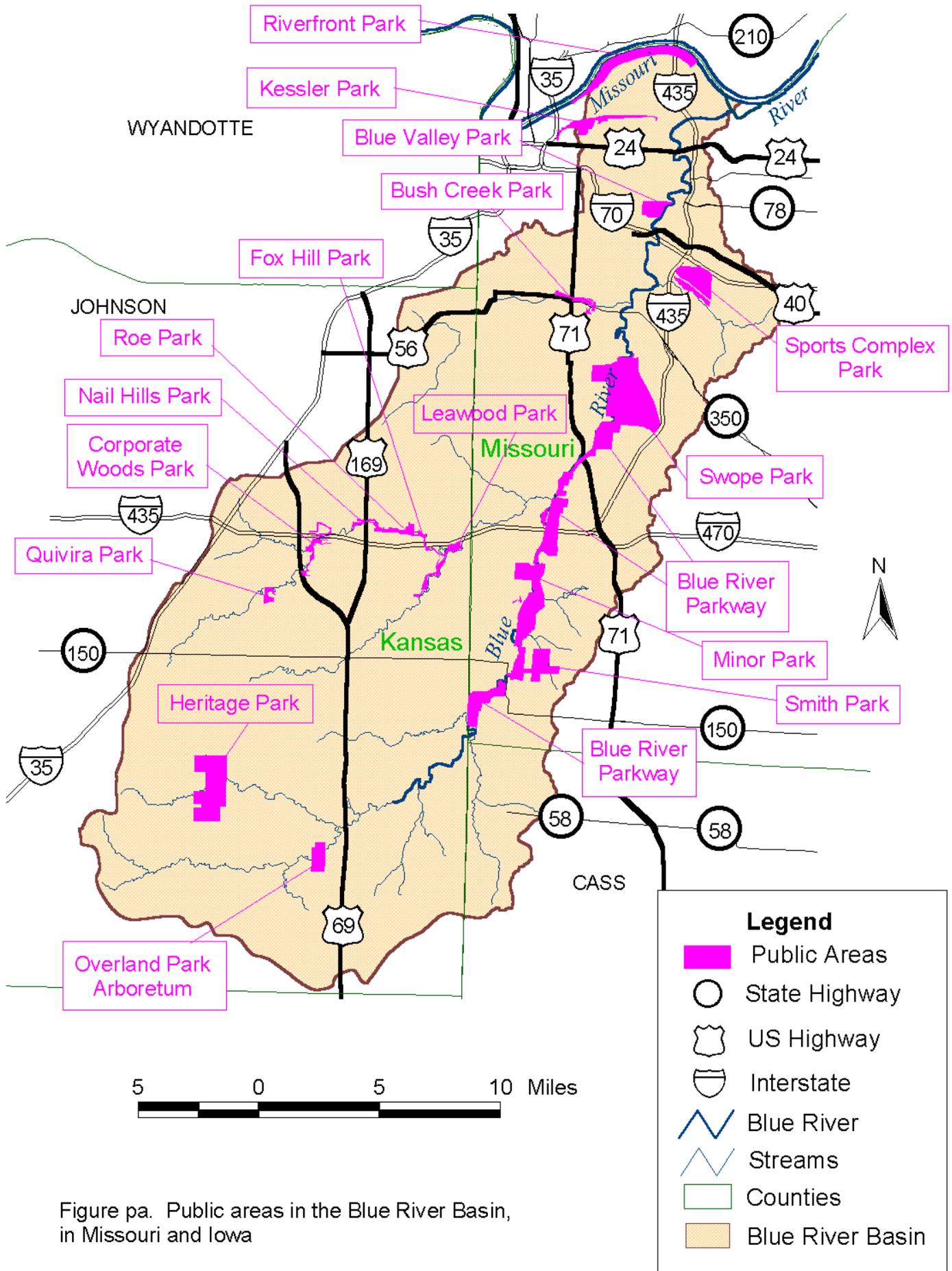


Figure pa. Public areas in the Blue River Basin, in Missouri and Iowa