

# Sandy Island Conservation Area

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan  
FY 2018-2032



  
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Wildlife Division Chief

*20 APRIL 2018*  
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Date

## Sandy Island Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

### PLANNING TEAM

Gary L. Calvert, Wildlife Management Biologist

Steven Juhlin, Conservation Education Consultant

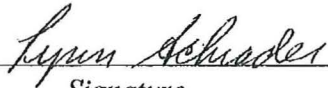
Jeff Bakameyer, Resource Forester

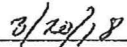
Sarah Peper, Fisheries Management Biologist

Kevin Eulinger, Conservation Agent

### ST. LOUIS REGION

RCT Chair

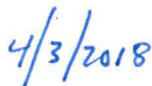
  
Signature

  
Date

### WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief

  
Signature

  
Date

## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Sandy Island Conservation Area, # 8027
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1980
- **Acreage:** 308 acres
- **County:** Lincoln
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - A. **Strategic Direction** The area was purchased to provide riparian forested bottomland habitat for wildlife along the Mississippi River and compatible public recreational uses.
  - B. **Desired Future Condition**  
The desired future condition of Sandy Island Conservation Area (CA) is a healthy maple/willow dominated bottomland forest and natural river slough wetland system for the public to use and enjoy.
  - C. **Federal Aid Statement**  
N/A

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. **Special Considerations**
  - A. **Priority Areas:** Missouri/Mississippi River Confluence Wetlands Conservation Opportunity Area, Mississippi River Stream Reach Conservation Opportunity Area
  - B. **Natural Areas:** None
  
- II. **Important Natural Features and Resources**
  - A. **Species of Conservation Concern:** Species of conservation concern are 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
  
- III. **Existing Infrastructure**

There are no developed facilities at Sandy Island CA.
  
- IV. **Area Restrictions or Limitations**
  - A. **Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Sandy Island CA frequently floods. The public can only access the area through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) property north of Lock and Dam 25. The Missouri Department

- of Conservation (the Department) has entered into a verbal agreement allowing the public to access the area, but all firearms must be cased while on USACE property.
- 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:** None
  - D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
  - E. Endangered Species:** Endangered species are known from this area. Area managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the natural history biologist.
  - F. Boundary Issues:** None

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

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

- 1) Manage the area to maintain healthy forests and wetlands.

#### **Management Objective 1:** Maintain healthy forests and wetlands.

**Strategy 1:** Monitor forests and wetlands for invasive species and implement control measures if they threaten forest sustainability. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Visually monitor forests on the area for signs of forest health issues, such as higher than average amounts of death or dieback. If issues such as this are observed, develop a strategy to deal with or manage the problem. Conduct a forest inventory before any intensive or widespread forest management activities are undertaken. (Forestry)

### VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

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

- 1) Manage the area to maintain connectivity with the large river ecosystem.

#### **Management Objective 1:** Maintain connectivity with the large river ecosystem.

**Strategy 1:** As opportunities arise, coordinate with the USACE and other agencies on projects that will maintain or enhance river and floodplain habitat at Sandy Island CA. (Fisheries)

**VII. Public Use Management Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Provide hunting and compatible recreational opportunities.

**Management Objective 1:** Provide hunting and compatible recreational opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain standard Department signs pertaining to hunting and public use regulations. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Conduct patrols to enforce area regulations. (Protection)

**VIII. Administrative Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Maintain area boundary signage at current levels.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain area boundary signage at current levels.

**Strategy 1:** Sign the area boundary on a rotating five-year schedule. (Wildlife)

**MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE**

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

Sandy Island Conservation Area (CA) is located in Lincoln County, approximately 3 miles east of Winfield. Sandy Island CA was purchased by the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) in 1980 through the estate of the L. J. Grigsby Trust. The Department purchased an adjacent property in 1982 bringing the area to its current size of 308 acres.

Sandy Island CA is nearly 75 percent forested, consisting mainly of bottomland forest types. The area is open to the public from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily and provides opportunities for hunting waterfowl, deer, and turkey; bird watching; and fishing.

### Current Land and Water Types:

| Land/Water Type                     | Acres      | Miles | % of Area  |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|
| Forest                              | 233        |       | 76         |
| Wetland                             | 75         |       | 24         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>308</b> |       | <b>100</b> |
| Stream Frontage – Mississippi River |            | 2.0   |            |

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Sandy Island Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period Oct. 1–31, 2017. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 14 respondents (Appendix A). The Sandy Island 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.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through the Sandy Island Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

### *Terrestrial Resource Considerations*

**Values how the terrestrial areas are managed at this area. Supports maintaining healthy bottomland forest communities, wetlands, and river slough; and controlling invasive species.**

We are glad you use and enjoy the area.

**Suggests clearing all trees (except nut trees) on the area or planting more trees to expand duck, deer, and turkey habitat.**

Due to the low elevation of the island and the frequent flooding a large mast tree planting would not likely be successful, and at this point we do not plan to attempt a tree planting operation such as this.

*Aquatic Resource Considerations*

**Supports maintaining connectivity between the conservation area and the Mississippi River floodplain/ecosystem.**

Thank you for the support of the plan.

**Supports enhancing river and floodplain habitat to benefit the reestablishment of endangered fishes.**

Thank you for the support of the plan.

*Public Use Considerations*

**Suggests allowing archery and muzzleloader deer hunting only.**

The Department strives to allow as many opportunities on an area as possible. Allowing hunters to use firearm methods increases hunting opportunity.

**Suggests allowing all types of hunting, including an unrestricted deer rifle season.**

The current regulations allow hunting all species under statewide regulations.

**Suggests maintaining antler point restrictions.**

Currently, there are no plans to change the antler point restriction on Sandy Island Conservation Area.

**Suggests allowing only minimal hunting (or none) to support wetland wildlife.**

**Rifles should not be allowed on the area (particularly, near the levee) due to high usage by walkers, joggers, and bicyclists. Does not feel safe walking along the levee because of this.**

Given the lack of public areas in Lincoln County that allow firearms hunting, restricting deer hunting to archery and muzzleloader would further lessen firearm hunting opportunities on public land in Lincoln County. Currently, there are no plans to change the firearms hunting regulations on Sandy Island Conservation Area

**Suggests expanding waterfowl hunting opportunities by improving access to wetlands (especially the southern wetlands) and providing “first come, first serve” blinds.**

There are several waterfowl blinds available on Pools 24, 25, and 26 on the Mississippi River. Also, it is permissible to build temporary waterfowl blinds on Sandy Island Conservation Area provided they are removed daily.

**Would like to see managed youth hunts for waterfowl, deer, and turkey at the area.**

Due to the small size of the area, managed youth hunts are not feasible, but there are several other managed youth hunt opportunities in the St. Louis Region.

**Appreciates waterfowl hunting opportunities provided at this area.**

We are glad you use and enjoy the area.

**Values the conservation of wetlands at Sandy Island CA, which lies within an important migratory bird flyway (the Mississippi Flyway). Loves to come here to watch birds.**

We are glad you use and enjoy the area.

**Suggests better litter cleanup at the area, particularly along the path from the lock and dam up to the property.**

The levee on the east side of Sandy Island Conservation Area is owned and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**Suggests adding better lighting to the parking lot.**

The parking lot is not Department of Conservation property. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns and manages the parking lot and allow the Sandy Island Conservation Area visitors to use their parking facility.

**Maps:**

Figure 1: Area Map

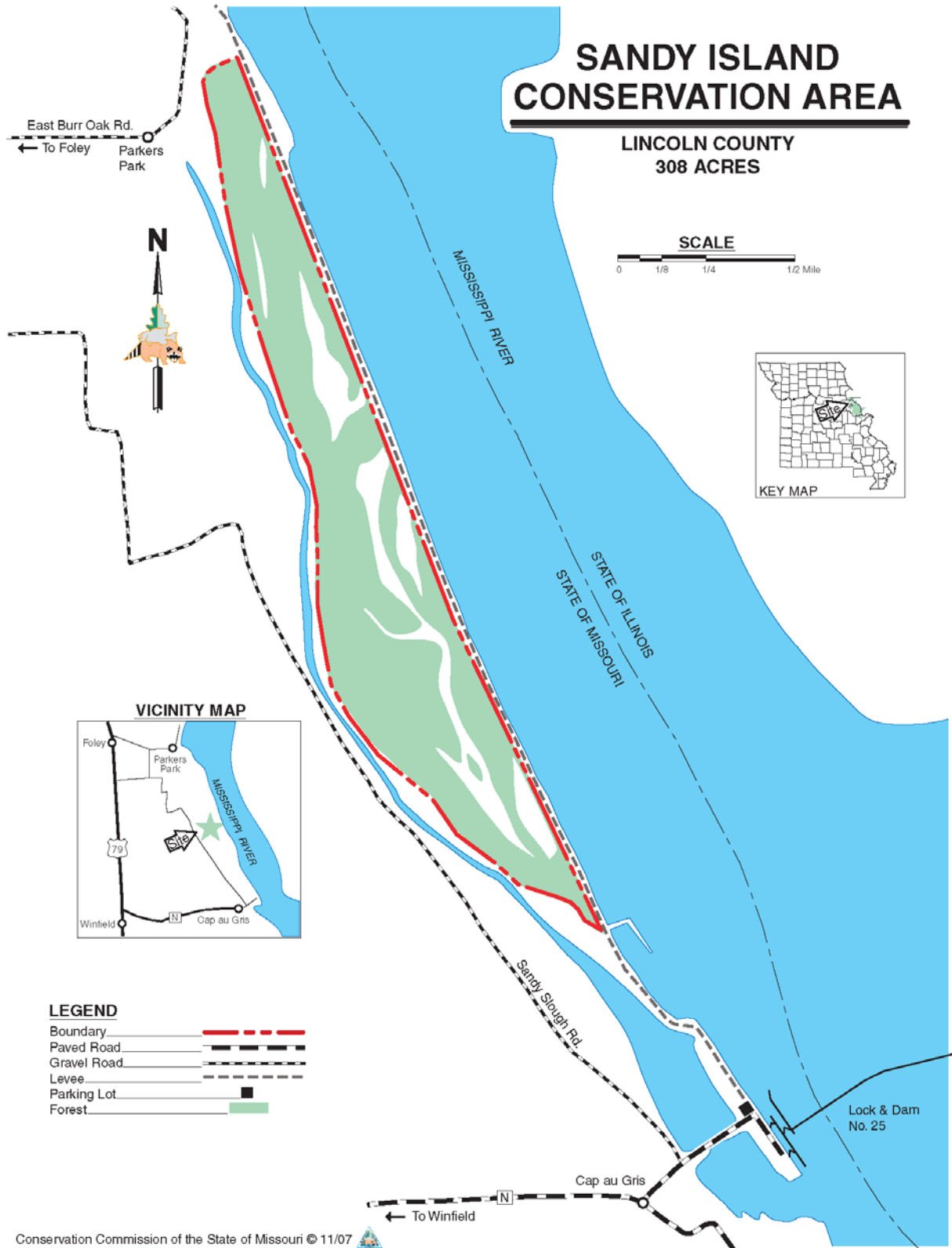
Figure 2: Current Land Cover Map

**Additional Appendices:**

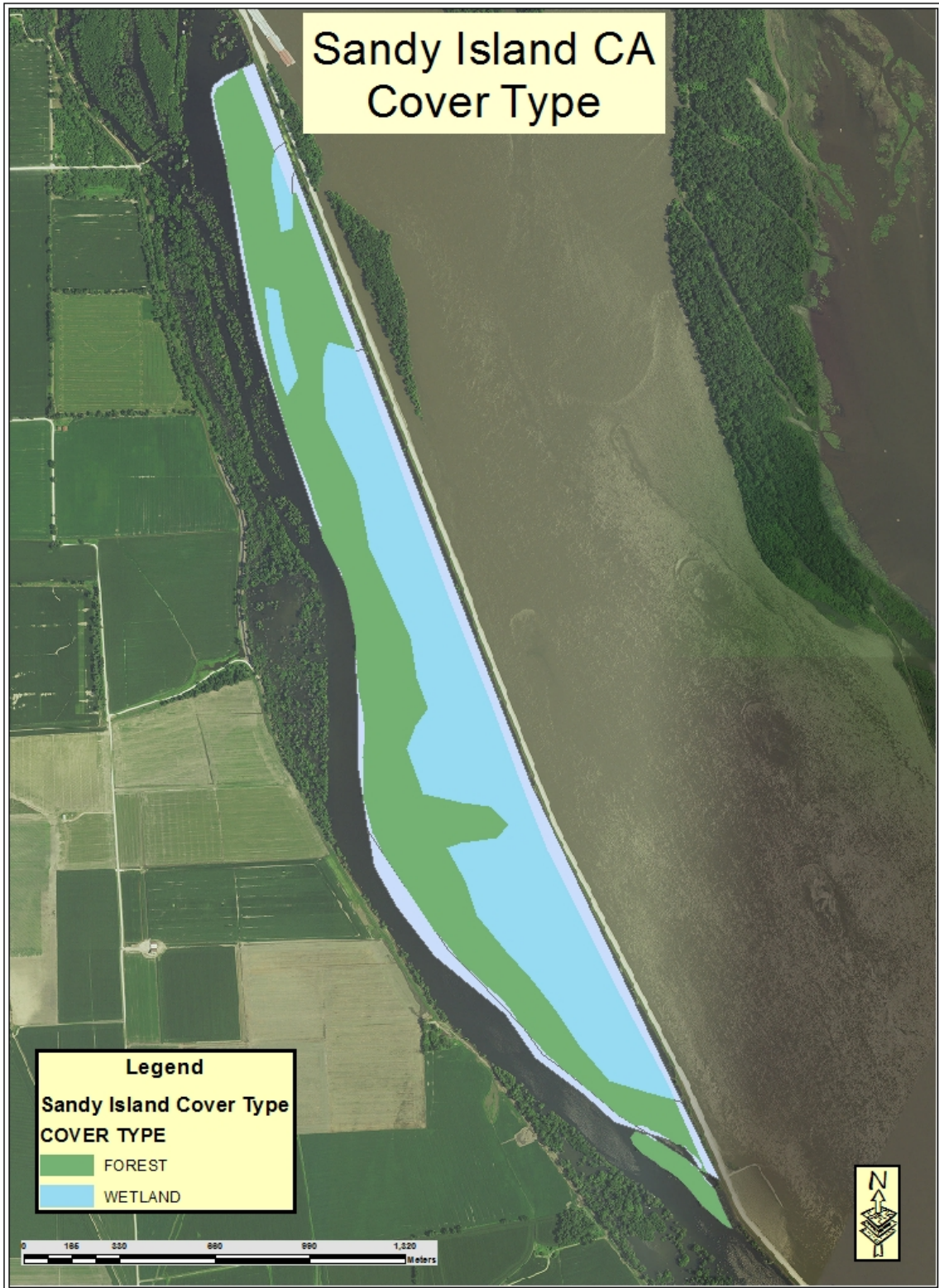
Appendix A: Draft Sandy Island Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments



**Figure 1: Area Map**



**Figure 2: Current Land Cover Map**



**Appendix A: Draft Sandy Island Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments**

Received during public comment period (Oct. 1–31, 2017):

|  |
|--|
| <p>Please do as little as possible to the Sandy Island Conservation Area with minimal (or none!) hunting allowed. The percentage of wetlands conserved are so minimal and necessary if we are to have any of the wildlife who need this environment survive. thank you for this opportunity to express my hopes for continued conservation of Sandy Island.</p>  |
| <p>Please provide more waterfowl hunting opportunities. I also think providing more organized hunting solutions for the area would be ideal. Erecting concrete blinds to facilitate hunters would be an added benefit. Areas such as Columbia Bottoms and Marais Temps Clair would greatly benefit from concrete blinds as well. It allows better use of the property and would allow more hunting opportunities if properly organized. These locations really only have certain areas of the pools that are ideal for waterfowl, making concrete blinds a great addition.</p> |
| <p>I enjoy this area to waterfowl hunt. I would like to see the parking situation improved with some lighting. I also would like to see more access to the wetlands for hunting. Its very hard to access the southern part of the wetlands to hunt due to the thick cover and lack of parking</p>  |
| <p>From a safety perspective and for the management of trophy white-tailed deer, MDC should consider making this area an archery only area or a muzzleloader and archery only. Larger, similar conservation areas with less pressure have muzzleloader and archery only areas (e.g., Lower Hamburg and Derion Bend).</p> <p>Also, as MDC expands its CWD counties, I would recommend that if Lincoln County does become a CWD county, Sandy Island should maintain its antler restriction.</p> <p>I appreciate the opportunity to be able comment.</p>                         |
| <p>Create a youth-only area with managed youth hunting for waterfowl, deer and turkey. We need more youth programming and broader participation.</p>   |
| <p>Allow all kinds of hunting including unrestricted deer rifle season.</p>  |
| <p>I walk the levee every Tue. &amp; Thru. at 7:00 am from Winfield gate to Foley gate, I would like to see no high power rifles used for hunting, there are a lot of family's walking &amp; riding bike down there. it's not safe with rifles and the unsafe hunters, I've seen there. I'm a Vietnam Veteran &amp; hunter I didn't get shot in Nam I don't want to get shot in Foley! Thank you for listening.</p>  |
| <p>Place "first come, first serve duck blinds along the Slough, river, river and in the lakes within the island to make it easier to hunt. It's almost impossible to stand/walk through that river mud. People would use that island far more if it were easier to hunt.</p>   |
| <p>need-to-stop-rifle-deer-hunting-let-bowhunting-ONLY-their-is-to-many-GUNHUNTERS-douing-gunseason.let-duckhunting-need-to-clear-all-the-trees-off-an-let-it-grow-up-again-or-plant-new-trees-andpromote-it-for-DUCKS/DEER/TURKEYS-leave-all-nut-trees</p>  |

I go down to the levee a few times a week to walk/run. I have never gone there and not come across others doing the same. Families go down to walk with their dogs, ride bikes or look at the wildlife. I would hate for everyone to stop going to the levee, myself included, all because of hunters. Being a hunter myself I understand the desire but please don't make us walkers and runner find someplace else. Their aren't many safe places close to home where we can go.

Guns, especially high powered rifles should not be allowed in the Sandy Island Conservation Area. This is a high hazard, lots of activity in this area now due to joggers, walkers and bike riders. Population around the area has grown quickly and this is now more of "Katy Trail" area.

Would like to see this area family friendly and stay rifle free. People use and enjoy the public access to the levee which would have to close when rifle season would be upon us. I do understand the need to "clean deer out" but there are many wonder places in close areas to hunt, but nice clean safe places to walk and enjoy the river access is few and far between. Thank you and God Bless.

I think the management plan looks good. I visit the area frequently, mostly birding, and I like the idea of maintaining a healthy bottomland forest community and the associated wetlands and river slough. I also think it's good that you will be checking for and controlling invasive exotic species which are such a major threat to our public lands.

Sandy Island Conservation Area is a beautiful and important location in the heart of the most heavily traveled migratory flyway in the United States. It deserves to be protected, as well as the areas around it. I recently made a trip to Sandy Island CA to prepare for this submission, and was struck by the amount of litter along the path from the Lock and Dam up to the property. We hope that additional litter clean-ups for the area can be arranged.

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance strongly supports the management objective to maintain connectivity between Sandy Island CA and the Mississippi River and its floodplain and ecosystem. Moving beyond just this one conservation area, we hope that the MDC will oppose efforts in the larger area to commercially develop the floodplain in ways that will inevitably harm Sandy Island CA and other protected areas, including Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Area and B.K. Leach Memorial Conservation Area. We believe that MDC should actively oppose the Port of Lincoln project just north of Sandy Island CA in Lincoln County.

North America has four main flyways for migratory birds. Of these, the Mississippi Flyway is the most heavily traveled. It is used by over 325 species of birds, with approximately 40% of all migratory birds and nearly 50% of waterfowl flying up and down the river's path on their annual treks. The diverse wetland habitats provided to these birds by farmers, duck clubs, and conservation partners is an invaluable resource during their long flights – some birds fly as far as from Northern Canada to Patagonia during their migrations!

Along with the migratory birds, this area is potentially important for helping to reestablish

populations of endangered fish. We strongly support the objective in the plan to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to enhance river and floodplain habitat related to fisheries when the opportunity arises.

With the support of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and other federal, state, and non-governmental conservation organizations, Ducks Unlimited (DU) and GRHA have used multiple programs to conserve over 1.9 million acres of land along the entire length of the flyway, including 111,721 acres in Missouri and 60,939 acres in Illinois. This work is key to preserving the floodplain, wetlands, and clean water habitats that are so important to the birds, fish, and other wildlife.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) with the US Department of Agriculture has protected another 157,355 acres via easements in Missouri. This includes seven easements in St. Charles County, six in Lincoln, twelve in Pike, and two more across the river in Calhoun County. These NRCS easements have been applied to everything from B.K. Leach Memorial Conservation Area to family farms Preserving Sandy Island going forward will match private efforts to conserve open spaces for generations.

Roughly 7,000 waterfowl hunters live in the greater Confluence region. The MDC estimates that those 7,000 Confluence-area duck hunters produce \$12,327,000 in total economic output through trip, equipment, and other expenditures each year. Those same hunters contribute approximately \$255,500 each year toward taxes and permit fees that help support waterfowl conservation efforts. Maintaining public access to various types of regulated hunting and fishing at Sandy Island is important.

MDC represents the best of government service. Sandy Island is a valuable oasis for birds, fish, and wildlife to exist within the larger river ecosystem. We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments to the fifteen-year management plan, and we are confident that MDC will continue to manage this and many other conservation areas in a professional manner.