

Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary



Runge Conservation Nature Center

Missouri Department of Conservation
September 2015



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Demographic Summary of Respondents	6
Themes and Issues Identified	9
Appendix 1 – Runge Conservation Nature Center Area Open House Flyer	11
Appendix 2 – Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage Press Release	12
Appendix 3 – Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage Comment Card	14
Appendix 4 – Runge Conservation Nature Center Hard Copy Comment Form	16
Appendix 5 – Habitat Happenings Newsletter Notice	18
Appendix 6 – Displays for the comment period at Runge Conservation Nature Center	19
Appendix 7 – Comments received during Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Phase	22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is seeking public input as we develop and revise conservation area management plans.
- Runge Conservation Nature Center is a 100 acre area in Cole County located in Jefferson City. It is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Conservation areas support the Department's mission by offering places to restore and conserve fish, forest and wildlife resources, and providing opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Conservation areas are different from state or local parks that may place a greater emphasis on team sports, recreational activities or social gatherings.
- MDC conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (July 1-31, 2015) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 10-year management plan for Runge Conservation Nature Center.
- During this time period, we received comments from 28 respondents.
- Common themes heard during this idea gathering stage included concern about too many deer near Runge, concern with invasive plants, and appreciation for Runge Nature Center staff and volunteers.
- The Runge planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year area management plan. The draft plan will be available online (likely winter 2015) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

INTRODUCTION

Public Comment on Conservation Area Management Plans

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. MDC is in the multi-year process of updating management plans for conservation areas and invites public comments. To preview draft management plans and share comments online, visit mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

MDC conservation areas cover almost 1 million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Most Missourians are within a 30-minute drive of an MDC conservation area.

Missourians care about conservation and use conservation areas for many different reasons. These areas help people discover nature through various activities, and help make Missouri a great place to hunt, fish and enjoy other outdoor activities. We want to know how conservation areas are important to Missourians. Encouraging public comments on Conservation Area Management Plans is part of MDC's ongoing efforts of working for and with Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish and wildlife.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the Wildlife Code of Missouri. MDC will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and statewide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.

Questions? Please contact MDC Public Involvement Coordinator Amy Buechler at 573-522-4115 x3252, or amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov.

Runge Conservation Nature Center

This 100-acre area in Jefferson City features a visitor center with exhibits and live-animal displays, special events, trails, demonstrations, and diverse natural habitats.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (July 1-31, 2015) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 10-year management plan for Runge Conservation Nature Center. The plan, once drafted, will be posted online (mdc.mo.gov/areaplans) for further public comment.

Public Involvement

The idea gathering phase for development of the Runge Conservation Nature Center Management Plan ran from July 1-31, 2015. The objective of this phase was to inform stakeholders about the area planning process and ask them to share their ideas. To communicate about this comment period, staff:

- Posted online comment form available at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans;
- Sent news release to local media outlets in early July and posted to Missouri Department of Conservation Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- Sent announcement to area plan email list (4,000+ recipients);
- Included information in the nature center newsletter, *Habitat Happenings* (6,000+ mailed and ~5,000 digitally);
- Posted notices on bulletin boards in and around Runge Conservation Nature Center;
- Personal visits, mail, and email to: neighboring landowners, NGOs and local government offices;
- Comment table with the opportunity to write hard copy comments;
- Made personal contacts with visitors to the nature center.

Next steps

The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Runge Conservation Nature Center. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely winter 2015) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

Who responded?

From July 1-31, 2015, we received comments from 28 respondents for the Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage.

Table 1. Total number of respondents commenting during the idea gathering phase (July 1-31st, 2015) by respondent category

Organization Type	Respondents
Individual citizens	28
Non-governmental Organizations	0*
TOTAL	28

*No comments received represented the views of an organization. Several respondents mentioned affiliation with an organization or institution.

How they responded

Table 2. Total number of each response type received

Response Type	Comments
Web Comment Form	5
Hard Copy Comment Form	23
TOTAL	28

Where respondents are from

Table 3. Total number of responses categorized by each respondent's location

State	Respondents	Percent
Missouri	25	89%
Texas	1	4%
Not Identified	2	7%
TOTAL	28	100%

Map of all respondent locations by ZIP code.

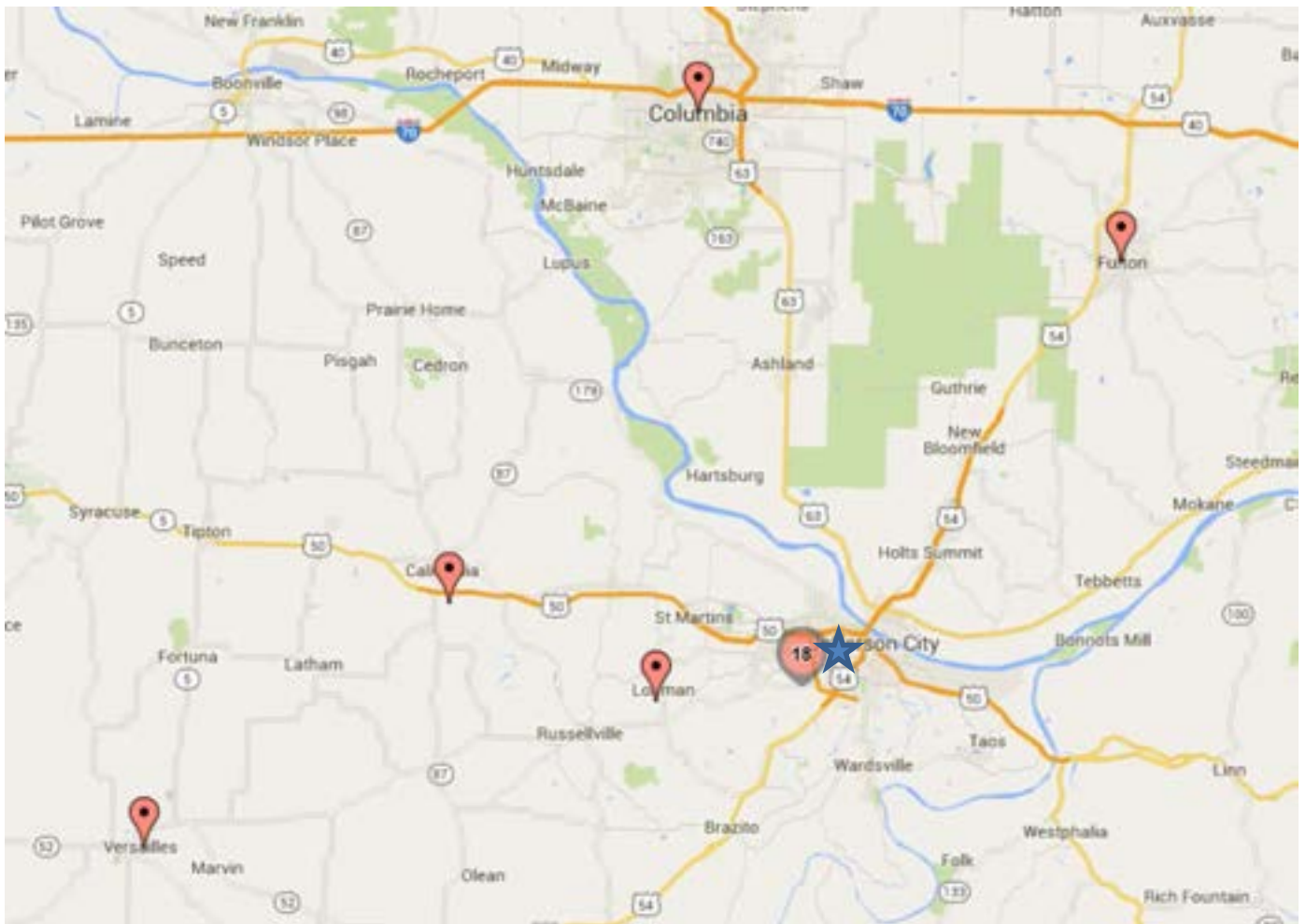
★ = Runge Conservation Nature Center

The pinpoints below represent the central point of ZIP codes from which a public comment was received (they do not represent actual street addresses). Shaded circles with numbers show multiple responses from a geographic area.



Map of Missouri respondent locations by ZIP code.★ = Runge Conservation Nature Center

The pinpoints below represent the central point of ZIP codes from which a public comment was received (they do not represent actual street addresses). Shaded circles with numbers show multiple responses from a geographic area.



THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH RUNGE CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER IDEA GATHERING PHASE (JULY 1-31, 2015)

The Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage was available for a public idea gathering period July 1-31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 28 respondents. A brief summary of public input themes can be found below. The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Runge Conservation Nature Center. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely winter 2015) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

Terrestrial Resource Management

- Concern with abundance of invasive plant species (winter creeper, shrub honeysuckle, Japanese honeysuckle, garlic mustard). Suggests eradicating exotics from a small area near trails at first so progress can be noticed.

Public Use Management

Birding/Wildlife Watching

- Enjoys wildlife on and around the area.

Trails

- Suggests allowing pets on trails.
- Concern that some trails are deteriorating and should be more even.
- Suggests adding mileage markers along trails for walkers.
- Appreciates paved trails.

Deer

- Concern with too many deer in neighborhoods near Runge. Deer are destroying plantings. Concern about hitting deer with cars.
- Suggests allowing archery hunting.
- Suggests moving deer and other wildlife to other conservation areas.
- Concern for safety of pets with coyotes, foxes and other wildlife in nearby neighborhoods.
- Suggests sharing information on plants that deer will not eat.

Programs

- Suggests more programs for teens.
- Suggests bringing back Haunted Habitats.

- Suggests guided hikes to identify plants and animals on the area.
- Supports continued focus on programs from babies to seniors.

Other

- Suggests developing outdoor play area for children.

Exhibits

- Suggests larger housing for snapping turtle.
- Suggests replacing camera and monitor at fire tower.

Administrative Considerations

- Supports undeveloped area east of Highway 179 to remain undeveloped.
- Suggests raising funds to allow access and development of property east of Highway 179.
- Appreciates Runge Nature Center and area staff and volunteers.
- Suggests having building open seven days a week.
- Suggests large sign by road so don't miss entrance.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Runge Conservation Nature Center Open House Flyer



**Comment
period
closes
on
July 31, 2015.**

Share Your COMMENTS

How are conservation areas important to you?

The Missouri department of Conservation is updating management plans for our almost 1,000 conservation areas and we want your comments.

*Staff at the **Runge Conservation Nature Center** are beginning to develop an area management plan for the next 10 years. This plan is a tool for our natural resource management and public use. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management at Runge!*

*This summer, we are working to gather ideas to help inform us when developing our draft area management plan. The **DRAFT Runge Area Management Plan** will be available for an additional public comment period in coming months.*

Runge Conservation Nature Center
573-526-5544

You can comment online at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.



Appendix 2. Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage Press Release



JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.— The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. Runge Conservation Nature Center in Jefferson City is among the areas under review.

MDC is inviting the public to provide comments about the [Runge Nature Center](#) to aid staff in developing a 10-year management plan for the nature center grounds. Interested persons or groups— including recreational users, neighboring landowners, conservation groups, elected officials and government agencies—can share ideas online July 1-31 at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. People can also stop by Runge in July to pick up a comment card.

“No matter your age or ability, Runge is a great place to explore and discover nature,” said MDC Runge Nature Center Manager Kathy Cavender. “The public input and planning process we have underway will help ensure that Runge will continue to meet the diverse interests of Missouri citizens who utilize the area today and in the future. Although we won’t be able to advance all ideas, we greatly appreciate feedback and will give all comments careful consideration.”

MDC staff will review comments as they develop a draft Runge Nature Center management plan for the nature center's grounds later this summer. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property’s purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.

The plan will be posted online this fall for an additional comment period and will be available for viewing at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After considering all public comments, the final plan will be drafted, approved, and posted online.

Runge Nature Center occupies 112 acres and includes a 27,000 square-foot nature center building. Visitors can explore more than 3,000 square feet of exhibits that lead a person through an assortment of Missouri’s natural habitats and learn about how MDC manages them for forest, fish and wildlife resources. Venture outside to explore the five different hiking trails that wind through savanna, prairie, marsh, wetland, and woodland habitats.

Runge Nature Center is located on Hwy 179 in Jefferson City approximately .5 mile north of Hwy 50. Building hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday with extended hours until 8 p.m. on Thursdays. The building is closed on Sunday and Monday. The outdoor trails are open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.



A family walks one of the five trails located at Runge Conservation Nature Center.

Appendix 3. Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage Comment Card (Page 1)



Share Your COMMENTS

Staff at the Runge Conservation Nature Center are beginning to develop an area management plan for the next 10 years. This plan is a tool for our natural resource management and public use. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management at Runge!

Comment period closes on July 31, 2015.

Write your comment(s) on the back of this card.



Share Your COMMENTS

Staff at the Runge Conservation Nature Center are beginning to develop an area management plan for the next 10 years. This plan is a tool for our natural resource management and public use. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management at Runge!

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Comment period closes on July 31, 2015.

Write your comment(s) on the back of this card.

**Appendix 3. Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Stage Comment Card
(Page 2)**

STATE COMMENT

STATE COMMENT

STATE COMMENT

STATE COMMENT

Appendix 4. Runge Conservation Nature Center Hard Copy Comment Form



How is Runge Conservation Nature Center important to you?

Personal Information

Name: _____

Organization (if any): _____

E-mail: _____

Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about the Runge Nature Center Area Plan.

Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about other conservation area plans.

Zip code: _____



Serving nature and you[®]

Your ideas

Staff at the Runge Conservation Nature Center are beginning to develop an area management plan for the next 10 years. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management of Runge Nature Center!

(Continued on back)

Appendix 5. Habitat Happenings Newsletter Notice

Runge Calendar of Events - July

Get outdoors and experience what nature has provided for you.



Registration begins July 1st.

Programs are free. Call 573-526-5544 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Aquarium Feeding

July 10 • Friday • 3 PM
No registration required (all ages)
The fish and snapping turtles are hungry. Join us by the aquariums and watch them eat.

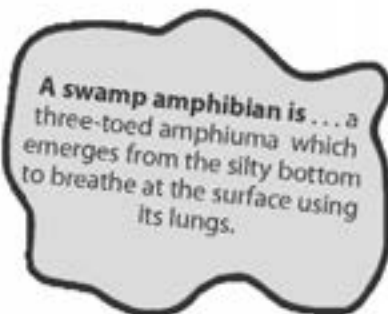
What's Going On?

True/False Snake Fest

July 11 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required (all ages)
Stop by and learn, understand, and appreciate the truth about Missouri snakes while eliminating falsehoods. The festivities will include live snakes, activities, and crafts.

Teen Club: Primitive Skills

July 14 • Tuesday • 1–4 PM
Registration required (ages 12–18 years)
Get back to the basics and try your hand at flint knapping and Atlatl throwing. Activities will take place at Runge.



Nature's Needlers

July 16 • Thursday •
10:30 AM–Noon **OR** 6–7:30 PM
Registration required (ages 18 and older)
The lacy fronds of ferns decorating the forest floor will be the subject of our seventh block in the "Woodland Tapestry" series.

Puppet Show:

The Big-Mouthed Frog

July 18 • Saturday • 1–1:30 PM
No registration required (all ages)
Skunk, Mole, and Snake are hungry after winter. Like all real animals, these puppets are finding many different things to eat. Join Runge's puppeteers to see if any of Missouri's animals can help the hungry big-mouthed frog find something to eat.

Down and Dirty

July 23 • Thursday • 5:30–7:30 PM
Registration required (ages 3–6 years)
Remember the old days of mud pits and mud pies? How many times do you find yourself asking your child not to get dirty? Here is the chance to relive some of the joys of your childhood with your own children. We'll provide the dirt; you bring the clean clothes for the ride home!

Adults, separate from the children, will learn about the importance of unstructured play and nature exploration for the healthy development of young children. At the same time, children will be supervised by our naturalists as they use their imaginations to get down and dirty in our big pile of dirt!

Down and Dirty

July 24 • Friday • 10 AM–Noon
Registration required (ages 3–6 years)
Refer to July 23 for program description.

What's Going On?

Dirt Day Fun

July 25 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required (all ages)
Dirt sure is dirty...but "WOW" is it fun! Outside, our giant dirt pile is awaiting you. Come and create, slide, build, dig, and PLAY! Inside, explore tabletop displays featuring animals that use dirt in other ways.

Aquarium and Snake Feeding

July 31 • Friday • 1:30 PM
No registration required (all ages)
The animals are hungry. Join us and watch as we feed the aquarium fish, snapping turtles, and snakes.

Runge Would Like Your Input...

It's time for Runge Conservation Nature Center to update our area management plan and we are interested in your thoughts. We are seeking comments during the month of July and welcome you to submit comments at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans or by picking up a comment form at the nature center. All comments will be reviewed and considered as staff draft the plan. The draft plan (focusing on land management and public use) will be available for public comment in coming months.

Thank you for your support of Runge Conservation Nature Center.

Appendix 6. Displays for the comment period at Runge Conservation Nature Center



Comment table inside Runge Conservation Nature Center





Appendix 7. Comments received during Runge Conservation Nature Center Idea Gathering Phase (July 1-31, 2015).

I use the trails at Runge at least weekly, typically more often in the winter. I love the wildlife and peacefulness of the area. My backyard is an undeveloped portion of Runge (Valley Park West), which I love. Wildlife is always around and has a nice undisturbed habitat. I would prefer to see this side of Runge left undeveloped at this time.

I would like to see more programs for teens. My daughter was in Little Acorns and Conservation Kids Club, but has not been involved since then. I know part of it is being a teenager, but I don't see many activities for her. A lot of the activities that we could do together require someone over 18. It would be great for area families to bring back Haunted Habitats, too!!!!

My family loves the Runge Nature Center and Grounds. Staff and volunteer staff are excellent. Programming is great. The grounds are beautiful and the popularity of the trails is evidenced by the high public they receive. There is one huge problem with the nature center land. That is the abundance of exotic, invasive plant species. And their density seems to be increasing. Plants such as wintercreeper, shrub honeysuckle, Japanese honeysuckle and garlic mustard take over habitat that should be occupied by native species. The abundance of these exotics will have detrimental effects on the native plants, birds, other wildlife, and general natural diversity of the area. It would be good to start eradicating the exotics from a small area, or within a certain distance of trails, so that the progress can be noticed. It is too big a task to take on all at once. But something needs to be done soon, because the problem will continue to worsen.

It would be wonderful to give tours at Runge and the adjacent MDC trails, identifying all the flora and fauna along the way, These look to be fabulous showcases of native Missouri wildlife. Adults would like to know how to transform their own gardens into native habitats. Children could be given flowers and leaves and seeds starting out and challenged to find them out on the trail.

Then maybe MDC could create an outdoor play area to tap into children's love of exploration, role playing, climbing, hopping from stone to stone,,,

Please continue focusing programming on a range of ages from babes to seniors. Encourage volunteers and staff to present programs at community organizations such as public library, learning in retirement, etc. Consider establishing fund raising campaign to allow access and development of property on other side of Hwy. 179 from nature center.

(Hard copy) I used the trail for years as a part of my exercise regimine, then you outlawed dogs. My dog was always on a leash and I picked up and feces produced. I wish you would reconsider

this rule. It has kept me off of the trail for a long time. Some of the trails are deteriorating especially in angles. They could be more even.

(Hard copy) We need the deer population in our neighborhood controlled. Our home sit on 4 acres and the deer jut seem to "hang out" in our yard and eat all plantings. We have seen up to 5 deer at one time. They are most destructive to vegetation. We need relief. Many thanks!

(Hard copy) Would like to see better mileage markers along trails for walkers.

(Hard copy) Babes in the Woods - very informative but so much fun. Can't wait to come to the next class.

(Hard copy) Awesome displays, kid friendly, clean. A very nice place for a summer trip.

(Hard copy) Larger housing for the snapping turtle please.

(Hard copy) Great current management. Paved walking trails most important to me personally. Wish list items would include building being open seven days a week again and replacement of camera and monitor at the fire tower. Fantastic, dedicated staff help make this a showcase of our great State!

(Hard copy) I love this place!

(Hard copy) Please help our neighborhood get rid of overpopulation of deer. They are destroying our properties! Thanks!

(Hard copy) The Runge Center is very nice as it is now and I enjoyed it a lot. I believe it is important to continue to emphasize how we have to be aware of habitat loss that may affect the natural environment and species.

(Hard copy) This is a really kid involving place! My children loved it! They want to come again soon.

(Hard copy) Please, please, please try and do something to contain the deer population on and around country club drive. The least that they do is destroy our yards. The worst that could happen is a car getting hit.

(Hard copy) Enjoyable as always. We are very lucky in J.C. to have the Runge. People here are great and add to the enjoyment of the place.

(Hard copy) Love Runge!! Needs a large sign out by the road. Have driven by 2 or 3 times and missed it on 1st trip. Have brought children! Grandchildren, nieces and nephews to center many times.

(Hard copy) Deer really are over the top in population on Hobbs Lane due to our connection with Runge Nature Center. Bow Hunter could safely cull the herd.

(Hard copy) The deer population has grown out of control. They eat plants and trees and create hazards on the trees.

(Hard copy) The deer, wolves, coyotes, foxes and all other wildlife is a nuisance here on Hobbs Lane and entire city. I do not like to see them killed either. They should be confined to Runge or otherwise taken to the wild (conservation land). Your dogs and cats are not same, especially small ones.

(Hard copy) We enjoy the deer and their babies-watching them play and bed down in the back yard is really something and our cats are fascinated. Although we spend quite a bit on "Deer Away" to keep them from eating everything, we do love them. We don't want them to be anymore populated. Thank you!

(Hard copy) Please develop an urban program around the Runge Center area. The deer are devastating our shrubbery and flowers. They disturb our dogs who run through their electric fence to chase the deer. One of these days my dogs will be hit chasing your deer.

(Hard copy) To the staff at Runge - Thank you for your awareness and attention to the explosive deer population problems in our area. Your management plan could be a "Godsend".

(Hard copy) There are so many deer in our neighborhood (Hobbs Lane). Fun to watch but destructive to gardens and a hazard to driving, especially on Country Club. Thanks!

(Hard copy) Control deer population! The destruction they cause to homes adjacent to Runge is terrible. Discourage and destroy.

(Hard copy) My area of concern is the increase deer population in our area. I have a few suggestions: (1) There are certain plants, shrubs, and flowers available that deer will not eat. It might be a good idea for the Conservation Center to publish these items in newer bulletins, brochures and publications to make the public aware in future planting plans. (2) This may not be possible, but it is an idea. Could the deer be caught and moved to another location? Possibly a state park or national forest. This would thin out the deer population and give them a new home. a couple of thank you items. (1) I would like to thank the dept. of conservation for the missouri conservationist magazine. This is an outstanding magazine I look forward to reading each month. (2) Our church's plans children's program really enjoy their tours at runge. Thank you! (3) Friends tell me how much they enjoy walking trails at Runge. It is a beautiful way to get their daily exercise.