Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area

Ten Year Area Management Plan
FY 2013-2022

Wildlife Division Chief

3/31/14
Date

Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Scott Sarantakis, Outdoor Skills Specialist

Eric Merritt, Wildlife Biologist

Jeff Esely, Private Lands Conservationist

Sarah Peper, Fisheries Management Biologist

Tim McDaniel, Conservation Agent

ST. LOUIS REGION

Cathy deJong, SL RCT Chair _____ *Signature* 5/23/13 *Date*

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Joel Porath, Unit Chief _____ *Signature* 2/22/14 *Date*

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name and Number:** Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area, #7218
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1971
- **Acreage:** 157
- **County:** Lincoln
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Design and Development
- **Statement of Primary Purpose**
  - **A. Strategic Direction:** Manage for wildlife, woodland, and openland resources with emphasis on woodland and openland species and compatible recreational opportunities.
  - **B. Desired Future Condition:** The desired future condition of Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area is a healthy woodland/open land complex representative of quality habitat within the Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area.
  - **C. Federal Aid Statement:**
    N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. <u>Special Considerations</u>

A. Priority Areas: Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area (Kessler) is located within the Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area and Cuivre River Priority Watershed.

B. Natural Area: None

C. Land Type Association: Kessler is described in the Cuivre River Woodland/Forest Hills Land Type Association (LTA) of the Central Dissected Till Plains ecoregion of Missouri. This LTA possesses strongly rolling to relatively rugged hills with rather narrow ridges, steep sideslopes, narrow valleys and over 200 feet of local relief. Uplands are mainly in till with a thin layer of loess, while lower slopes grade into sedimentary residuum. Historically, this area consisted of a complex mosaic of narrow ridgetop prairies and savannas, grading into oak woodlands on upper slopes, with well-developed oak and mixed hardwood forests on protected slopes and bottoms. Floodplains with marshes and wet prairies are interspersed throughout. Streams have mainly sand bed channels and well-developed floodplains of variable soil texture. Today, while much of the landscape has been cleared for pasture, the largest blocks of remaining timber in this region occur here. Most blocks are dense, second growth oak forest, fragmenting and simplifying a potentially diverse landscape.

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

A. Species of Conservation Concern: None observed

B. Caves: None

C. Springs: None

III. Existing Infrastructure

- Two parking lots
- One area access trail
- One archery static range

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed restrictions: None.

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: Yes, records kept with MDC Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the MDC Resource Policy Manual.

E. Hazards and hazardous materials: None observed

F. Endangered species: None observed

G. Boundary Issues: One minor issue questioning placement of signs on northeast boundary. Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

H. Other: Only archery methods may be used for deer hunting.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Kessler contains 73 wooded acres and 84 old field or grassland acres. Past management focused on providing suitable habitat for wildlife through tree, shrub and native grass plantings. Recent management has focused on reducing woody exotic invasion in open land and wooded areas.

Kessler lies within the Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area, an area where the ecology of the southern Missouri Ozarks mixes with the plains of northern Missouri. Many plants and animals important to conservation occur in this distinctive landscape. Therefore, any opportunity to enhance natural communities should be explored.

Management should be applied to replicate natural disturbance with special attention given to prescribed burning, invasive woody species reduction and exotic species reduction.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Exotic species management
2) Wooded area enhancement
3) Open land enhancement
4) COA designation for additional funding

Management Objective 1: Exotic species management

Strategy 1: Identify areas where (but not limited to) fescue, sericea lespedeza, bush honeysuckle and autumn olive occur and use proven methods to reduce their occurrence.

Management Objective 2: Wooded area enhancement

Strategy 1: Identify areas where woodlands naturally occurred and manage these areas to enhance habitat for woodland wildlife.

Management Objective 3: Open land enhancement

Strategy 1: Identify areas where open land occurred naturally and manage these areas to enhance habitat for open land wildlife.

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Protect stream corridors.

Management Objective 1: Protect stream corridors.

Strategy 1: Maintain buffers for all streams to a width of at least 50 feet on each side.

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Provide hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.
2) Maintain positive relationships with adjacent landowners

Management Objective 1: Provide hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Continue to enhance woodland and open land habitats to increase wildlife use on the area.

Management Objective 2: Maintain positive relationships with adjacent landowners

Strategy 1: Continue to maintain signage in a way that clearly designates MDC property boundary.

VIII. Administrative Considerations

A static archery range has been present on the Kessler Area since the early 1990's. This range received moderate use due to an archery club that utilized and maintained the range. The archery club no longer exists. As a result, range condition and use has fallen in recent years. This range does not have a proper safety fan in place due to its size. The dimensions of a proper safety fan would encompass a minimum of 30 acres. This would reduce public use on Kessler by almost 20%. In addition, the main area access trail travels through the proposed range safety fan. Closing this trail would further reduce public use on the area. Since the range receives little use and a proper safety fan would severely reduce public use and access to hunters and wildlife viewers, it will be recommended to remove the static archery range on Kessler.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Reduce maintenance costs and increase amount of safe area for public use.

Management Objective 1: Discontinue static archery range through methods approved in the MDC Range Plan.

Strategy 1: Remove targets, racks, and signage.

Strategy 2: Communicate closure of range to local public.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Terrestrial Resources Management										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1		X		X		X		X		X
Objective 2										
Strategy 1		X			X			X		
Objective 3										
Strategy 1			X			X			X	
Public Use Management										
Objective 2										
Strategy 1			X			X			X	
Administrative Considerations										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1		X								
Strategy 2		X								

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area is in Lincoln County. This 157-acre area includes 73 acres of woods and 84 acres of old fields and grassland habitat. David L. Kessler of Lincoln County willed this land to the Conservation Commission in 1971. Management of Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area focuses on providing food and cover for wildlife. Tree, shrub, and native grass plantings are managed to increase habitat diversity.

Current Land and Water Types (Fig. 3)

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Old Fields/Upland Fields	84		54
Woodland	73		46
Total	**157**		**100**
Stream Frontage		7757	

Public Input Summary:
The draft Kessler Memorial Wildlife Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period September 1 – September 30, 2013. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The Kessler Memorial 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.

<u>MDC responses to themes and issues identified through Kessler Memorial public comment period</u>

Support management that reduces invasive species and enhances native species.
All planning team members agree that reduction of invasive species and enhancement of native species is an important management objective on all public lands. Good to see public comments support this effort. This will continue to be an important objective at Kessler.

Support removing archery range.
All planning team members are in agreement that the range needs to be closed and public comments support this also.

Would it be possible to increase hiking opportunities and access?
Area planning team members agree that hiking trail development should be of low priority due to the high amount of hiking opportunity available less than 2 miles away at Cuivre River State Park. However, Kessler has an area "access trail" labeled on the area brochure. Since hiking was addressed in the public comments section, we may want to increase focus on timely mowing of this access trail to provide hiking opportunities for local residents. Since there is no equipment housed on the area, frequent mowing is difficult due to the need to haul equipment. Use of a local mowing contractor or Design and Development's maintenance crew could reduce the amount of hauling needed to provide quality hiking opportunities.

Would it be possible to manage this area for dove hunting?
Area planning team members agree that dove management is a possibility, but not a necessity due to the presence of intensive dove management at two other MDC owned areas within Lincoln County. Also, concerns of proximity to residences and state highway KK were brought up by the Area Manager.

Removal of the static archery range could allow for some opportunistic dove hunting on the interior of the area. Although intensive dove management is not feasible on this area, some opportunistic dove hunting may occur on years when food plots are planted.

References:

Nigh, Timothy A. and Walter A. Schroeder. 2002. *Atlas of Missouri Ecoregions*. Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map
Figure 2: Aerial Map
Figure 3: Current Vegetative Map
Figure 4: Topographic Map

Appendix A. Draft Kessler Memorial Area Plan Public Comments
Received during public comment period (September 1-30, 2013)

Removing the little used archery range is a great idea. Once this is accomplished it would be a good idea to increase the hiking opportunities and access. Both of these may increase overall usage. Continued land management to eliminate invasive plants and enhance natives should increase both hunting and hiking usage.
I would like to see the area managed again for dove hunting. They used to plant some dove friendly crops in the middle section where the archery range is now and then do some mowing before the season. I think it would provide a nice area for the local hunters to use. Other than the occasional archery hunter, it doesn't appear that the area has much consistent usage. I realize that the area is fairly small, but improving the dove hunting opportunities would be one way to increase the usage.

Figure 1. Area Map

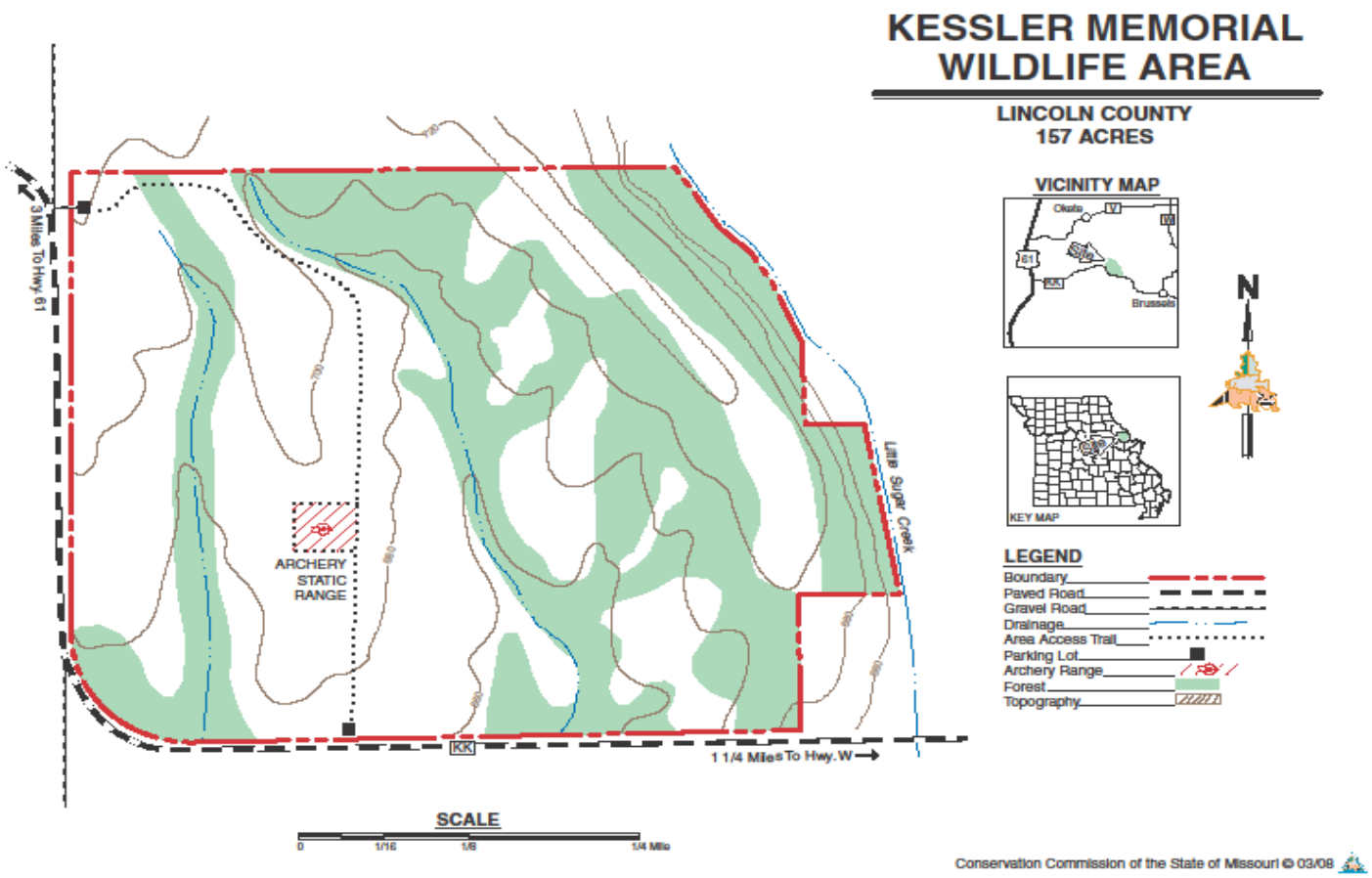

Figure 2. Aerial Map

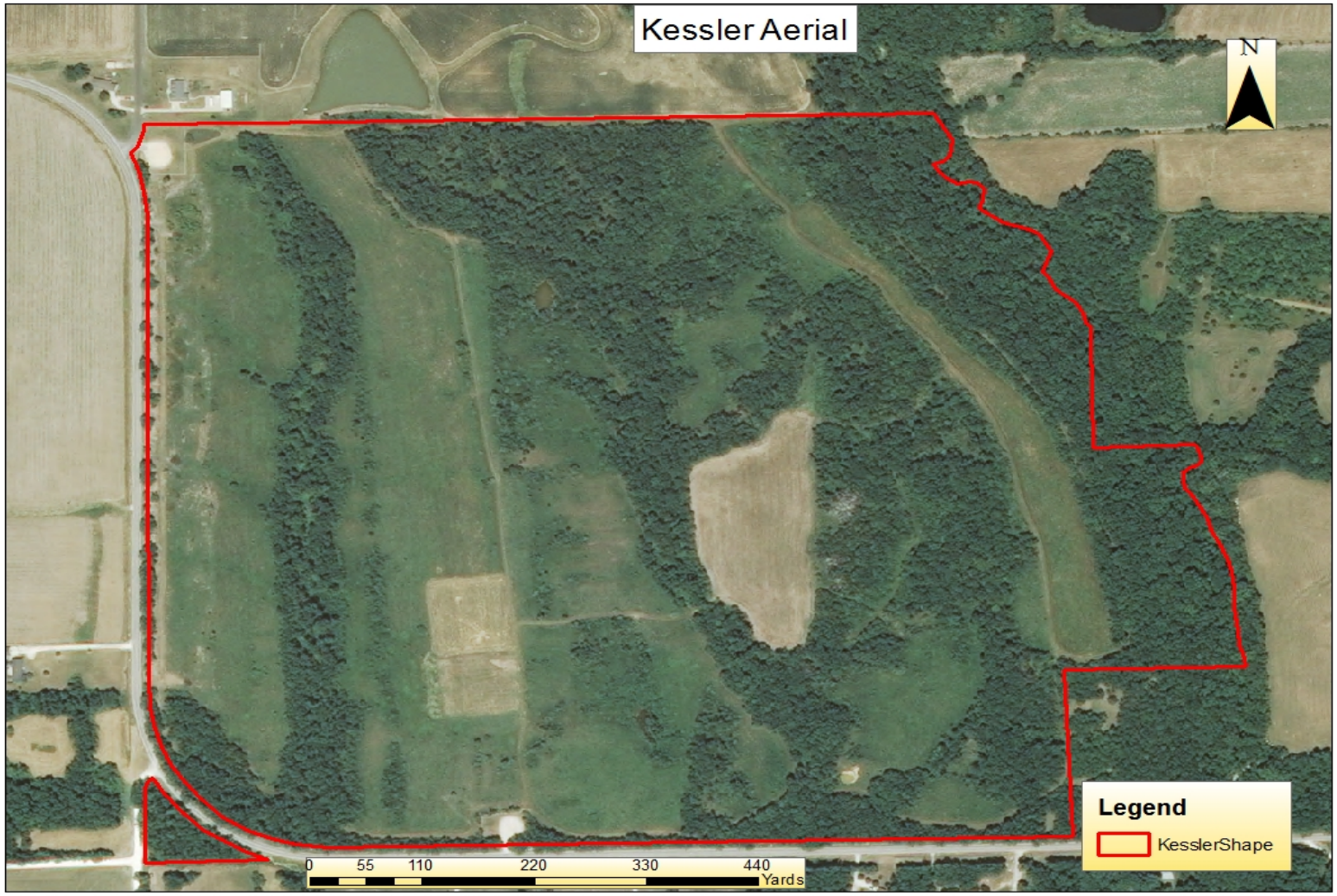

Figure 3. Current Vegetative Types

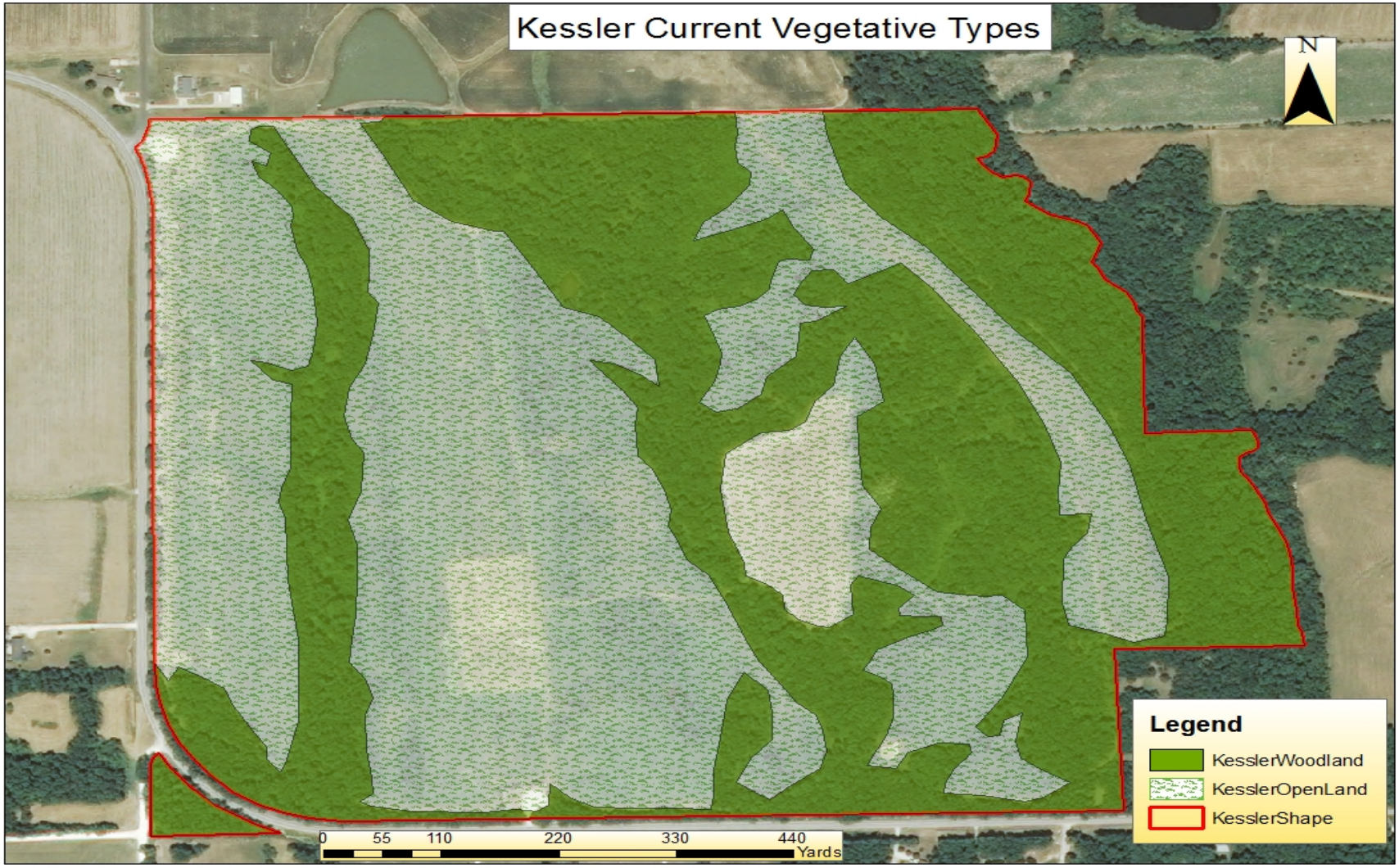
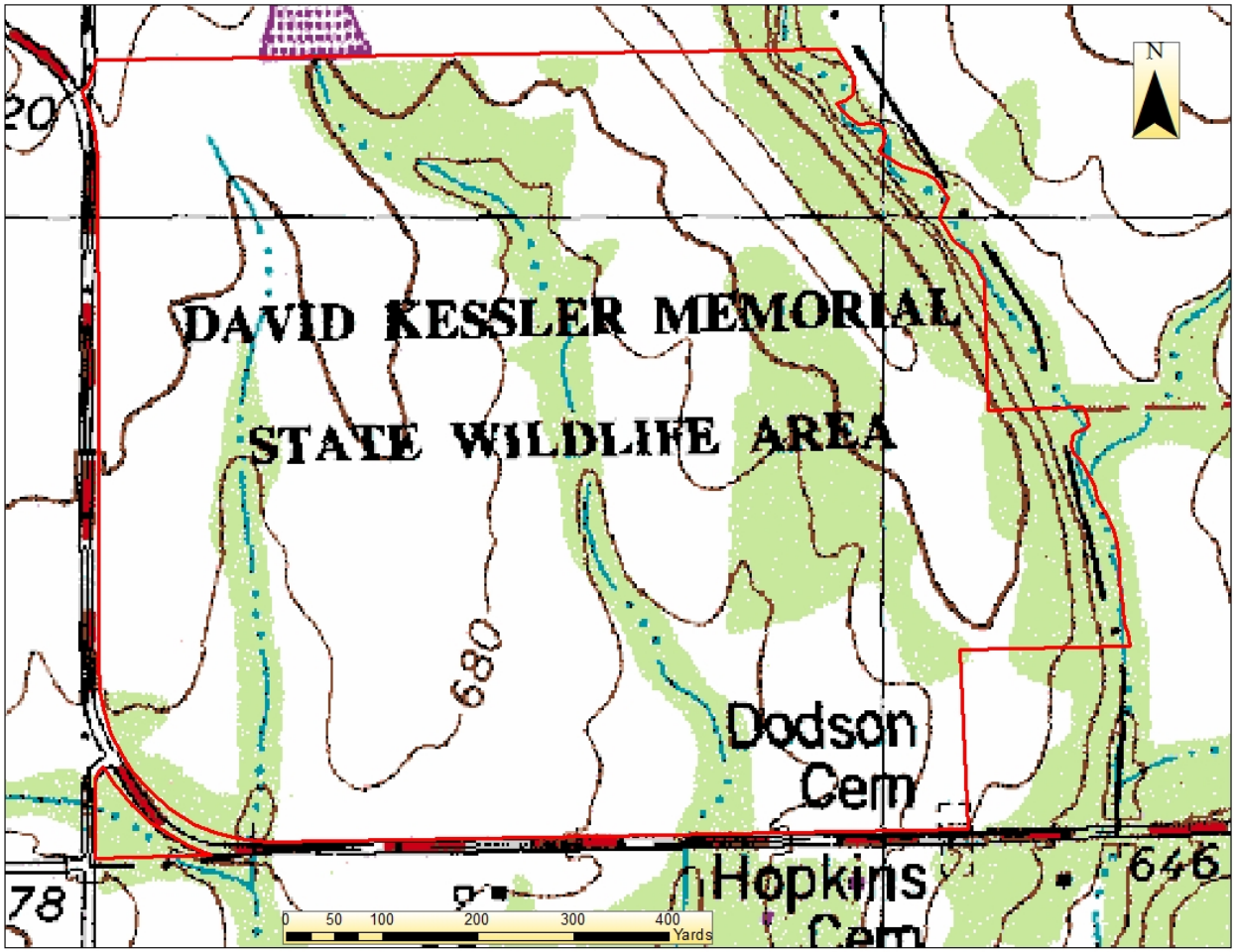
Figure 4. Topographic Map