Marshall Junction Conservation Area

Ten Year Area Management Plan

FY 2014-2023

Wildlife Division Chief

7/9/14
Date

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PLANNING TEAM

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CENTRAL REGION

RCT Chair

Signature *Date* 6/25/2014

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Unit Chief

Signature *Date* 7/3/14

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Marshall Junction Conservation Area, # 6408
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1964
- **Acreage:** 773 Acres
- **County:** Saline County
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statement of Purpose:**

  A. Strategic Direction
  - Manage open land habitats for early successional wildlife species.
  - Restore woodland communities as appropriate.
  - Maintain limited agricultural row cropping for wildlife benefit.
  - Manage forest community using BMPs.

  B. Desired Future Condition

  Provide early successional habitats with abundant associated wildlife in currently open fields. These would consist of herbaceous and shrubby cover with trees scattered throughout or in draws with interspersed food plots. Wooded habitats will be restored to examples of native woodland.

  C. Federal Aid Statement
  - This area, or a portion thereof, was acquired with Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funds to restore and manage wildlife, conserve and restore suitable wildlife habitat and provide public access for hunting or other wildlife-oriented recreation.
  - This area, or a portion thereof, was acquired with Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars to provide land or facilities for public outdoor recreation.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. <u>Special Considerations</u>

A. Priority Areas: None

B. Natural Area: None

II. <u>Important Natural Features and Resources</u>

A. Species of Conservation Concern: None observed.

B. Caves: None

C. Springs: None

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 50 yard shooting range with associated benches, catch berms, graveled access and fence exclusion
- 5 pond dams
- 5 gravel parking lots
- 16,000 feet (3.0+ miles) of gravel roads
- 1.5 miles of minimally improved field access/hiking trails

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. **Deed Restrictions:** None

B. **Federal Interest:** Uses of land acquired with federal funds may not interfere with the purpose for which it was acquired. Federal funds may also 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. This land must provide land/facilities for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

C. **Easements:** None

D. **Cultural resource findings:** No known cultural resources.

E. **Hazards and hazardous materials:** There is a small area (~1 acre) closed to public use behind the shooting range that is marked with a single strand wire fence. Public access and management are limited in this potentially hazardous zone.

F. **Endangered Species:** None observed.

G. **Boundary Issues:** None.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Old field invasive species (sericea lespedeza, fescue, locust, autumn olive, Johnson grass, cedar, ash, elm).
2) Abundant autumn olive in woody edge habitats.
3) Excessive tree stocking rates in woodland habitats.

Management Objective 1: Increase abundance of woodland indicator plants on 100 acres of woodland habitat.

Strategy 1: Apply management techniques at appropriate intervals and during various times of year to increase plant diversity on 1/3 of woodland acres per year.

Strategy 2: Apply invasive species Best Management Practices (BMPs) to curb invasion and allow proliferation of appropriate native flora.

Management Objective 2: Remove autumn olive from 3,000 feet of woodland/old-field/forest edge

Strategy 1: Utilize appropriate management techniques to reduce autumn olive.

Management Objective 3: Control invasive species in old field habitats.

Strategy 1: Reconnoiter old fields for sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, teasel, Johnson grass, tall fescue, and autumn olive.

Management Objective 4: Manage current cropfields with annual crops, such as small grains, for wildlife benefit.

Strategy 1: Use permittee farming to manage 60-100 acres of a mixture of crops, food plots, idled acres and legume fields.

Management Objective 5: The 2001 forest inventory indicates that a majority of the wooded acres on Marshall Junction CA are woodland habitat. However, there are portions along the Blackwater River of better quality bottomland forest. Continue to manage for woodlands on the appropriate upland sites. A new inventory is scheduled to occur in 2023 at which time new prescriptions may need to be applied.

Strategy 1: Maintain or enhance woodland habitats until the next inventory in 2023.

Strategy 2: Follow BMPs to minimize erosion or negative water quality impacts in the Blackwater River watershed when conducting forest management.

Strategy 2.1: Ensure all applicable BMP's (refer to the Missouri Watershed Protection Practice booklet) are used with all management activities that occur including timber harvest and timber stand improvement. Use the current inventory for management guidelines until updated in 2023.

Strategy 3: Layout timber sale skid trails and roads prior to marking timber to ensure feasibility.

Strategy 4: Conduct forest inventory in 2023.

VI. <u>Aquatic Resource Management Considerations</u>

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Maintain area ponds for wildlife watering and semi-aquatic wildlife use.

2) Establish and maintain a 100-foot wide riparian corridor along the Blackwater River.

Management Objective 1: Manage fish populations and provide public fishing opportunities in the Blackwater River.

Management Objective 2: Maintain a forested riparian corridor along the Blackwater River.

Strategy 1: Ensure BMPs are applied to the forested riparian zone.

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Unmanned Shooting Range
2) Multiple Use Opportunities

Management Objective 1: Provide and maintain safe shooting range and facilities.

Strategy 1: Outdoors Skills Specialist complete annual inspection forms and share inspection needs with area staff to implement.

Strategy 2: Area staff maintain range and perimeter fence, and issue Special Use Permits for range use as appropriate.

Strategy 3: Monitor range use and document reported conflicts or concerns with other area uses.

Management Objective 2: Provide area users compatible and inviting multiple use opportunities for recreation, education, and information.

Strategy 1: Maintain accurate area information and regulations through the Atlas database, area brochures, posted information, and staff contacts with area users.

Strategy 2: Promote compatible, safe uses of hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, target shooting, nature photography, and bird watching.

Strategy 3: Monitor and document multiple use conflicts or concerns. Identify timing, seasons, special use permit options to minimize and resolve potential conflicts.

Strategy 4: Work with Protection Division personnel to enforce existing range regulations and identify any needed changes.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Terrestrial Resources Management										
Objective 1	Increase abundance of woodland indicator plants on 100 acres of woodland habitat									
Rx Burn	x		x		x		x		x	
Objective 2	Remove autumn olive from 3,000 feet of woodland/old field/forest edge									
Mechanical		x		x		x		x		x
Objective 3	Control invasive species in old field habitats.									
Rx Burn		x		x		x		x		x
Objective 5										
Forest Inventory										x

APPENDICES

Area Background:
Marshall Junction CA was purchased to provide upland public land in Saline County and for its Blackwater River frontage. It provides the public with upland wildlife habitat and associated hunting and recreation opportunities, river fishing, a shooting range and related outdoor activities.

Marshall Junction Conservation Area is named for nearby historic crossroads. According to local history, the area was noted for an old rock dam built across the Blackwater to form a swimming and fishing hole, and nearby mineral-rich Abell Spring was reputed to have miracle curing powers. The area was included in early releases of wild turkeys in the 1960s for restocking efforts.

Current Land and Water Types

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	Approximate % of Area
Upland Forest/Woodland	671		87
Cropland	77		10
Old Fields	15		2
Native grass/ old field	5		<1
Infrastructure	4		<1
Impounded Water	1		<1
Total	**773**		**100**
Stream Frontage (Blackwater River)		6,600	

Public Input Summary:
The draft Marshall Junction Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period March 1 – 31, 2014. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from four respondents (Appendix A and B). The Marshall Junction 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.

MDC responses to themes and issues identified through public comment period

Suggests converting cropland to native plants.
While the planning team agreed that cropland is not a natural community or restored area, the very limited row cropping on the area is beneficial to wildlife and area users. The Area Manager will consider leaving additional cropland idle for habitat and wildlife benefit, but less than 9% of the area is currently being farmed. It is unlikely that we could maintain a permittee farmer with less land being offered for crop production.

Suggests allowing horseback riding on the area (other than public roadways).
The planning team agrees that offering additional horseback riding opportunities is not possible with current staffing due to the maintenance requirement of horse trails. In addition, the Commission approved only selected conservation areas for horseback riding circa 2007 and at that time Marshall Junciton CA was NOT chosen to offer this type of use. Horseback riding will continue to be limited to current roadways open to vehicular traffic. The Area Manager will suggest to users who request this activity to pursue this recreational opportunity on: MDC's Prairie Home Conservation Area (50 miles away); DNR's Knob Noster State Park (25 miles away) or to the section of Katy Trail from Sedalia to Clinton which is also open to equestrian use (approximately 20 miles away).

Concern with noise from shooting range during firearms deer season. Suggests closing the range during firearms season.
The planning team agreed that most of the noise from the shooting range is likely perceived to be more of a problem than it actually is related to game movement on the area. We want the range to be available to the public during deer season so that it can be used to check the accuracy of their firearms for deer hunting. There was also concern from the planning team that range users likely outnumber other area users; and that any range closure would likely upset more users than those concerned/disturbed by the noise. Department-wide evaluation of shooting range use and other issues is about to commence. The Area Manager will monitor range use and revelations from our near future monitoring and keep the noise related issue in mind for future discussion with the planning team.

Concern with deer hunters parking on sides of road instead of using parking lots.
The planning team agreed that roadside parking is seldom a disruptive issue for most area users. Some team members felt that roadside parking helped users access the remote portions of the area and that roadside parking actually contributes to a greater number of users enjoyment of the area than it hurts. Protection Division and the Area Manager will monitor roadside parking and will address flagrant abuses, or damage to roadsides, if it and when it occurs.

Concern with unsafe firearms handling on the shooting range. User suggests requiring all shooting range users to be hunter education certified.
Planning team agreed that this is an idea worth considering, yet it may "discriminate" against otherwise lawful and safe use of the range by users who are not hunter education certified.

Appendix A. Marshall Junction Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (March 1 – 31, 2014)

I would like horseback riding to be allowed off the main road. We visit several other CA's each year that allow this... we would sure appreciate the opportunity. Thank you
This was my first year living next to this conservation area, and I enjoyed it. I was able to have a lot of friends and family out this fall for the hunting seasons. I think the property is managed well for hunting. My main issue is with the gun range. I do think it is a good thing to have it. I would like to see time restrictions on its use during deer and turkey hunting seasons. During early bow season it had typical use, sounded like people siting their rifles to get ready for gun season and that was fine. But on the weekends during the gun seasons there was a group of people at the range that were doing rapid fire drills from sunrise to sunset in what was an obviouse attempt to make as much noise as they could. I don't know if they were trying to mask more sinister activities or just wanting to annoy every hunter within 5 miles. I think that it would be reasonable to most people that use this site to have shooting hrs at the range during bow season (like 10am to 2pm). I think in the interest of hunter safety the range should be closed during the firearms seasons too help hunters be able to locate other hunters by where they here shooting. My other issue involved parking. I would like to see parking onely aloud at posted parking lots instead of on the side of the road. Especialy in front of my house. Last year I had a four wheeler and trailor stolen during the first week of firearms season while I was in another county trying to escape the noise at the gun range. Please don't interpret this as the ramblings of a winey neighbor. I had a lot of conversations with hunters that used this property last fall and everyone complained about the gun range noise and having someone park there truck on the side of the road next to there stand. If you need any help over there let me know. I do have a vested interest in the area.
Convert all cropland acreage to native plants. Preservation should have priority over any management consideration and decisions especially within conservation areas.

Appendix B. Marshall Junction Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Comments received by Area Manager after public comment period ended

Citizen from Marshall, MO, telephoned to suggest that the Department require some type of training, such as a hunter education course, of all users of the Marshall Junction CA shooting range. He has observed unsafe behavior when it comes to firearms handling and felt the issue should be addressed by the Department. He felt hunter education being required of range users would decrease unsafe behavior and be easily enforced.

References:

Missouri Watershed Protection Practice - Missouri Conservation Commission 2005

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map for Marshall Junction CA
Figure 2: Cover types on Marshall Junction CA
Figure 3: 2011 Timber Sale on Marshall Junction CA
Figure 4: Marshall Junction CA prescribed fire treatment since 2005

Figure 1: Area Map for Marshall Junction CA

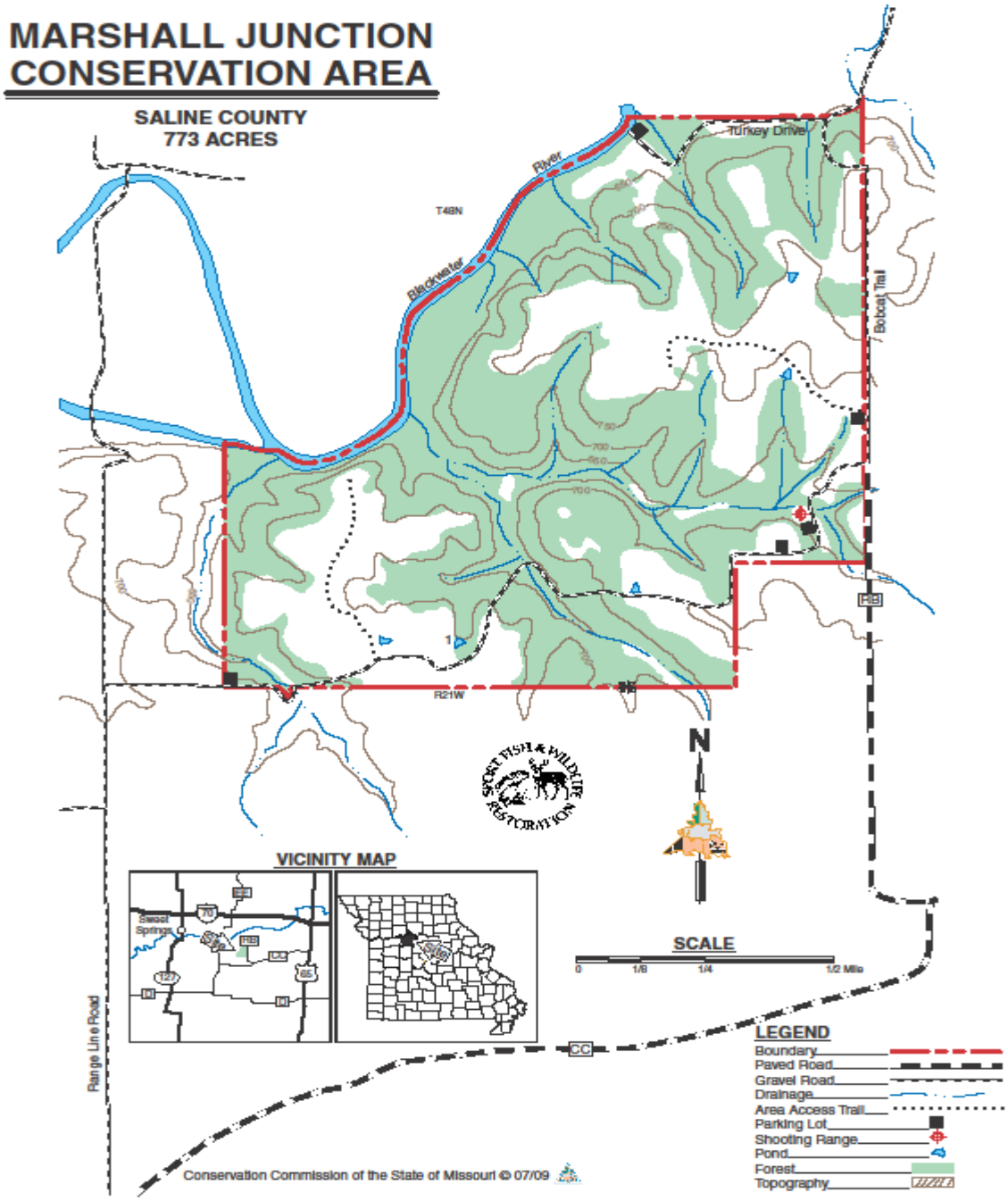

Figure 2: Cover types on Marshall Junction CA

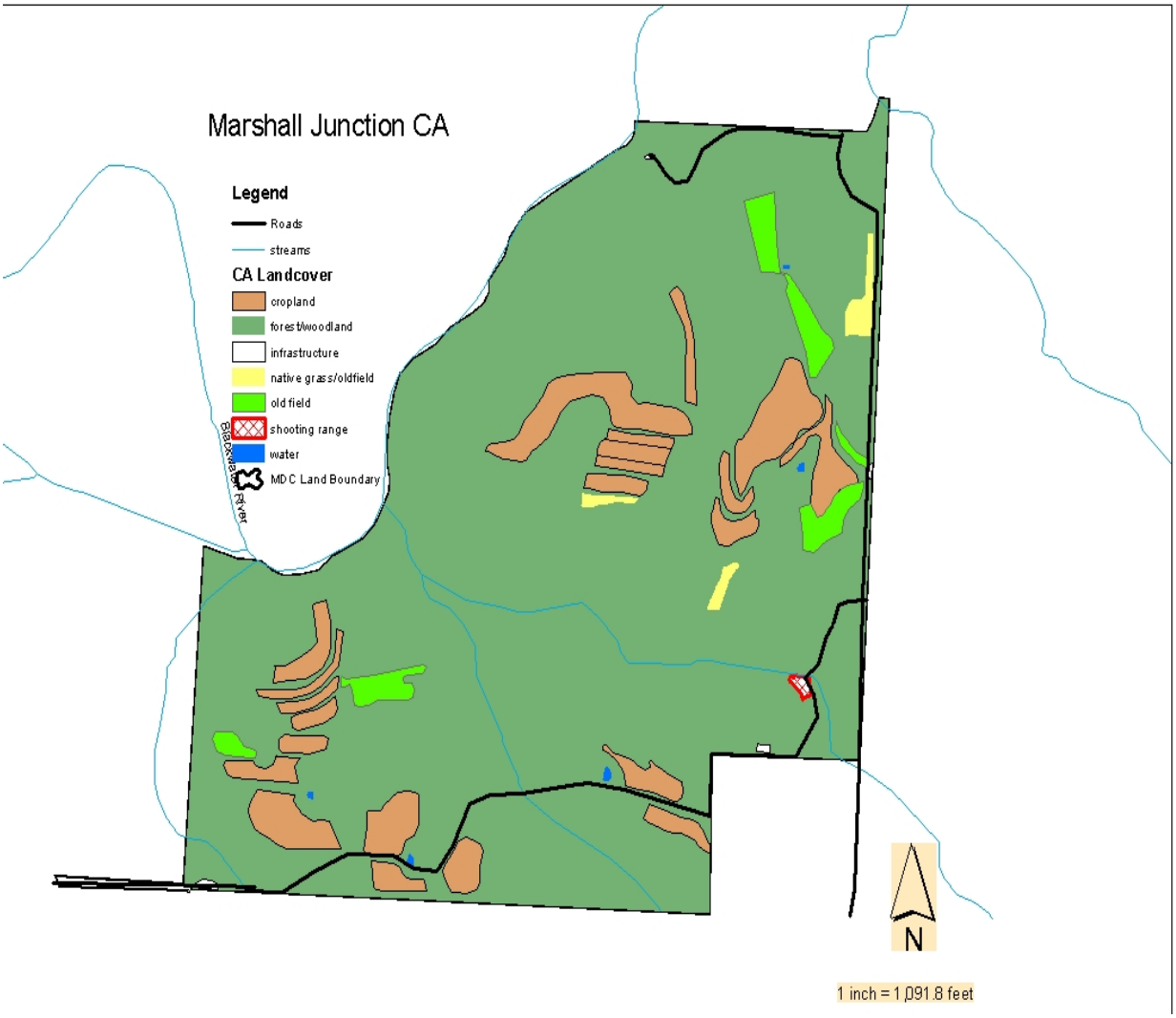

Figure 3: 2011 Timber sale on Marshall Junction CA

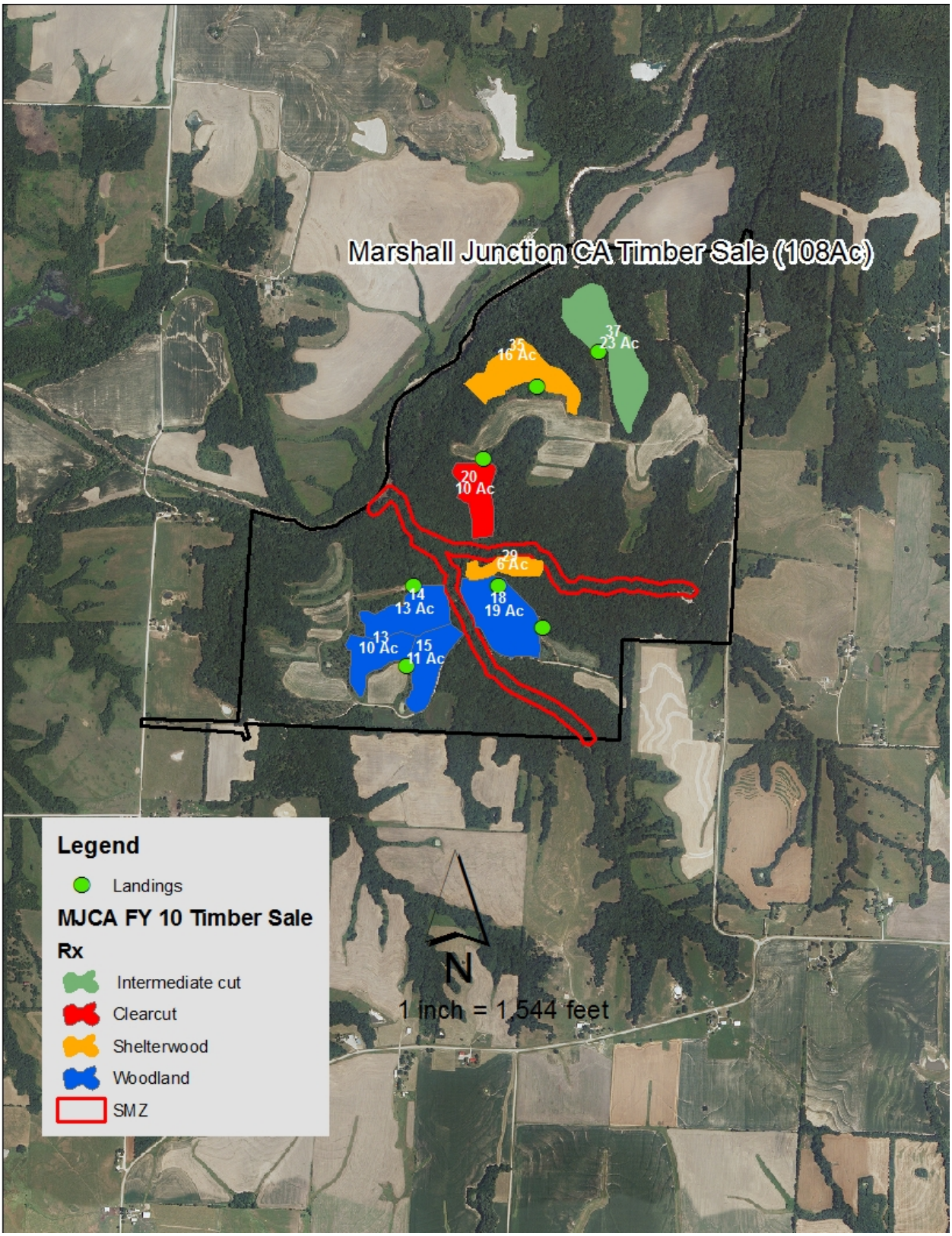
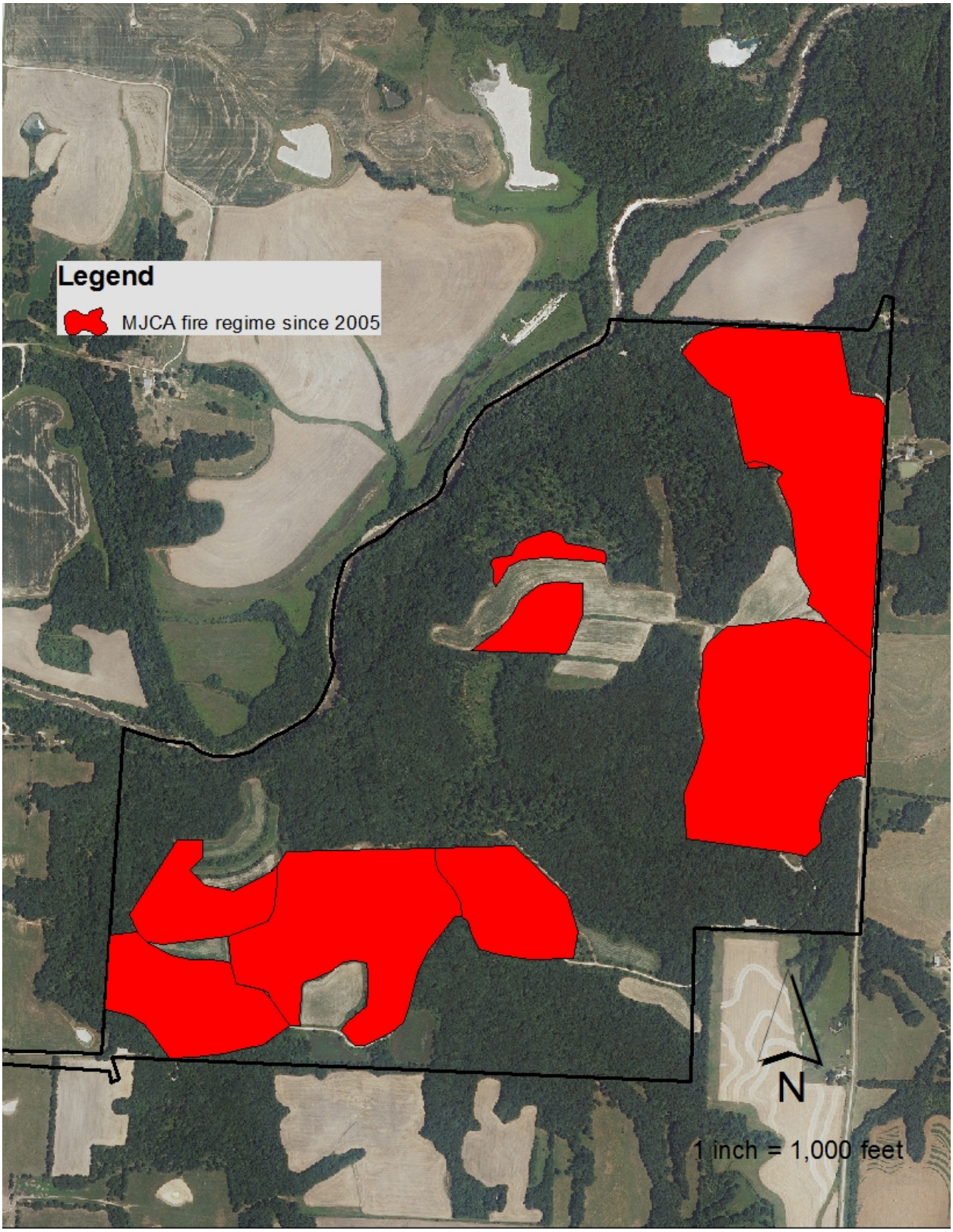
Figure 4: Marshall Junction CA prescribed fire treatment since 2005