Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area

Ten Year Area Management Plan

FY 2015-2024

Lisa D. Allen
Forestry Division Chief

5-26-15
Date

Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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SOUTHWEST REGION

RCT Chair _____ Signature May 4, 2015 Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forestry Unit Chief John Tuttle Signature 5-22-15 Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area, # 6314
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1961
- **Acreage:** Approximately 2,106 acres
- **County:** McDonald
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - **A. Strategic Direction**
    Manage for healthy forest and woodland natural communities, the species they support, and compatible recreational opportunities. Emphasis will be placed on demonstrating management practices that will benefit natural communities found on the area and the species they support. Special emphasis will be placed on wild turkey and small upland game. The conservation area provides hunting, trapping, hiking, nature viewing and outdoor education opportuniteis. Other public uses, such as camping, bike riding and horseback riding are supported, insofar as they do not impede or conflict with natural resource quality, area management or historic uses.
  - **B. Desired Future Condition**
    The desired future condition of Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area (CA) is for sustainable forest and woodland natural communities.
  - **C. Federal Aid Statement**
    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: Elk River Hills Priority Forest Landscape, Big Sugar Creek Conservation Opportunity Area

B. Natural Areas: None

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

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: Yes, records kept with the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) Natural History Biologist. Managers should follow the Cave

Management policy found in the Department's Resource Policy Manual. All caves on this and other Conservation Areas are closed or restricted to public access. The fungus that causes White-nose Syndrome in bats has been documented in Missouri, resulting in the Department's White-nose Syndrome Action Plan that limits public access to protect bats.

C. **Springs:** None

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 13 parking lots
- 17.3 miles of multi-use trails
- 7 primitive campground sites
- 7 fishless ponds (small waterholes)
- 4 miles of ungated interior road

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. **Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** None

B. **Federal Interest:** This land must provide land/facilities for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity. 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.

C. **Easements:** New Mac Electric buried power line (July 5, 1984; T22N, R31W, Sect. 31; 20' x 446'), KAMO Electric Cooperative power line (June 29, 1979; T22N, R32W, Sect. 25; 50' each side of centerline and 1,364' long)

D. **Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.

E. **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** None observed.

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

G. **Boundary Issues:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Huckleberry Ridge CA is comprised of mixed oak-hickory woodlands and pine-oak woodlands. Thinning and application of limited prescribed fire will reduce tree density, increase ground flora cover and diversity and provide quality brood-rearing habitat for turkey as well as food and habitat for numerous other species.

Dry ridge tops and south-facing slopes on the area can produce abundant early successional habitat vital for turkey, deer and small predators (bobcat and gray fox). Scattered sprouts and clumps of Ozark chinquapin are present and need access to full sunlight to reduce competitive stress from adjacent trees.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Managing the woodland community.
2) Maintaining and enhancing the forest, woodland and upland habitat to promote better wildlife habitat.
3) Protecting karst features.
4) Identifying and controlling invasive and exotic species.

Management Objective 1: Manage the forest and woodlands to ensure natural community health and diversity and to provide sustainable forest products.

Strategy 1: Conduct an inventory within forest/woodland compartments on a 15-year rotation to develop prescriptions for ecological and forest management treatments. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Maintain a diversity of tree age classes that will provide both a diversity of wildlife habitat as well as resiliency to biotic and abiotic damaging agents. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Restore and manage forest and woodland communities by using timber harvesting, timber stand improvement, firewood cutting, salvage cuttings and prescribed burns, as needed. (Forestry)

Strategy 4: Utilize best management practices during timber harvests as described in the Department's *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice* manual (2014) and the *Missouri Woody Biomass Harvesting Best Management Practices Manual* (Enyart, 2009). (Forestry)

Strategy 5: Consider aesthetic aspects of timber management operations in high visibility areas along roads and trails. (Forestry)

Strategy 6: Allow low-valued wood to be utilized as fuel wood by local homeowners. (Forestry)
Strategy 7: Control wildfires to minimize damage to forest resources. (Forestry)
Strategy 8: Protect known Ozark chinquapins from mechanical damage and reduce competing vegetation during management activities. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Protect karst features.
Strategy 1: Provide a 150 foot buffer around all cave entrances, sinkholes, springs and fens to protect from disturbance. (Wildlife/Forestry)
Strategy 2: Regularly monitor cave entrance for litter and graffiti. (Wildlife/Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Maintain and enhance forest, woodland and upland habitat, specifically targeting nesting and brood-rearing habitat for wild turkey.
Strategy 1: Utilize timely prescribed fire on woodland sites to reduce under and mid-story canopy cover and to promote herbaceous ground flora development. (Forestry/Wildlife)
Strategy 2: Utilize commercial harvesting and/or pre-commercial thinning to reduce canopy closure. (Forestry/Wildlife)
Strategy 3: Implement edge feathering around wildlife openings/food plots. (Forestry/Wildlife)
Strategy 4: Hinge cut cedars in old fields for living brush piles. (Forestry/Wildlife)
Strategy 5: Establish and maintain legumes and cool-season grasses in forest openings and old field sites. (Forestry/Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Reduce invasive and exotic species to improve wildlife habitat.
Strategy 1: Assess exotic and invasive species. (Wildlife/Forestry)
Strategy 2: Manage exotic and/or invasive native species using chemical, mechanical, and biological methods. (Wildlife/Forestry)

Management Objective 5: Promote early successional habitat in suitable areas.
Strategy 1: Apply prescribed fire on ridge tops and south-facing slopes to promote early successional habitats. (Wildlife/Forestry)
Strategy 2: Establish permanent forest openings for green browse food plots. (Wildlife/Forestry)

Management Objective 6: Restore and manage glade natural communities.
Strategy 1: Use chemical and/or mechanical methods to reduce woody

encroachment on glades. (Wildlife/Forestry)
Strategy 2: Use prescribed fire to restore and maintain glades (two to three year rotation initially, then up to five years during maintenance phase). (Wildlife/Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Permanent water on the area is limited to seven small ponds associated with forest openings. The relatively high relief in the area requires that the wet weather streams convey a substantial amount of runoff after heavy rainfall events. The soils on the area are not suitable for lake construction, leaving little potential for developing a recreational fishery.

Management Objective 1: Protect and enhance the aquatic features used by amphibians, reptiles and other wildlife species.

Strategy 1: Remove woody vegetation from all wildlife watering/amphibian and reptile impoundment dams. (Fisheries/Forestry/Wildlife)
Strategy 2: Add limbs and brush from non-coniferous species along the perimeter of existing ephemeral ponds to provide cover and egg deposition areas for amphibians and reptiles. (Fisheries/Forestry/Wildlife)
Strategy 3: Inventory ponds for amphibian and reptile species. (Fisheries/Forestry/Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Evaluate and expand riparian corridors, as needed, to a width of at least 100 feet on both sides of all third-order and larger streams, where possible.

Strategy 1: Enhance riparian corridors by allowing natural regeneration or by planting suitable native woody vegetation in areas with riparian corridors less than 100 feet. Exotic and invasive species should be managed under current invasive species policies. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife)
Strategy 2: Ensure survival of riparian plantings by controlling competing vegetation with mechanical and chemical methods within the corridor. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife)
Strategy 3: Implement best management practices on all area streams. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Enhance or expand the riparian corridors of first- and second-order streams to a minimum of 50 feet on both stream sides.

Strategy 1: Allow natural regeneration to vegetate the riparian corridors or plant trees and shrubs within the corridors where natural regeneration is not likely to succeed. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Implement appropriate watershed best management practices on all Department managed areas.

Strategy 1: Implement State Forest Management guidelines during all forest management activities. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Manage roads and trails utilizing appropriate best management practices to minimize runoff and sedimentation into streams. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Recreational use of the area is typical of that compatible with heavily-forested areas. The area receives moderate to heavy use during firearms deer season and light to moderate use during spring turkey season. Otherwise, hunting activity on the area is light.
2) The area is used by horseback and bicycle riders.
3) Trail use by horseback riders and others is increasing with limited trail maintenance occurring. Erosion potential is high due to steep grades.
4) Since 1996, the area has been the site of a Boy Scout camping event.
5) Educational opportunities exist for private landowners to implement forest and wildlife habitat management practices on their land, and to expand the habitat work on adjoining and nearby private landowner property, resulting in a larger landscape of quality woodland habitat.

Management Objective 1: Provide for safe and sustainable public use.

Strategy 1: Map all designated and non-designated multi-use trails currently being used by the public. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Determine if any existing trails negatively impact natural resources, or pose a safety hazard. Close any such trails. (Forestry/Protection)

Strategy 3: Designate trails that will be open for public use and maintain an area trail map. Monitor and close unauthorized trails. (Forestry/Outreach and Education)

Management Objective 2: Cooperatively patrol the area and report unauthorized activities.

Strategy 1: Engage regular users and neighbors to help assess the type and amount of public use occurring on the area. (Forestry/Protection)
Strategy 2: Utilize law enforcement agreements with McDonald County Sheriff's Offices to maintain a supplemental and periodic enforcement presence on the area. (Protection/Forestry)
Strategy 3: Post and maintain signboards with information regarding authorized public uses of the area. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Encourage volunteer/community service groups to provide resource and conservation area stewardship.

Strategy 1: Contact horseback riders to determine specific saddle clubs using the area and solicit their help in trail maintenance. (Forestry/Wildlife/Protection)
Strategy 2: Continue relationships in nearby communities with scout troops that may be interested in cleanups, plantings and other stewardship projects at the area. (Forestry/Wildlife/Protection/Fisheries)
Strategy 3: Work with area users to educate, define, and locate potential erosion issues on current existing trails and work to re-route those trails and/or add water diverting features to reduce future negative impacts.

Management Objective 4: Provide recreational opportunities for hunting, trapping, wildlife observation, natural resource education and primitive camping.
Strategy 1: Maintain open ridge-top areas for primitive camping opportunities. (Forestry)
Strategy 2: Install signage where significant management activities have occurred to better inform area users about resource management activities. (Forestry)

Management Objective 5: Improve adjoining private landowner relationships and awareness of conservation activities on the area.
Strategy 1: Conduct outreach to neighboring landowners, showcasing natural resource management work on the area. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife/Outreach and Education/Private Land Services)
Strategy 2: Provide education and cost-share opportunities to adjoining landowners that wish to become engaged in land management activities. (Forestry/Fisheries/Wildlife/Outreach and Education/Private Land Services)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Maintaining area infrastructure at current levels.
2) Maintaining clearly identified property boundaries.
3) Lands proposed for acquisition.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with Department guidelines and at currently identified maintenance level (1). (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Maintain clearly identified property boundaries.

Strategy 1: Paint boundaries on a five to seven year cycle with standard blue boundary marking paint. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: In appropriate high-use areas, maintain signage that informs the public of "End of Public Use Area." (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Work with Department staff to determine if boundary lines need to be resurveyed and adjusted. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Acquisition of land

Strategy 1: When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Terrestrial Resource Management										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1				X					X	
Objective 3										
Strategy 1				X					X	
Strategy 2			X					X		
Strategy 3		X					X			
Strategy 4	X					X				
Objective 5										
Strategy 1		X			X			X		
Strategy 2				X					X	
Objective 6										
Strategy 1		X				X				
Strategy 2	X			X			X			
Aquatic Resource Management										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1		X			X			X		
Strategy 2		X			X			X		
Strategy 3		X			X			X		
Objective 2										
Strategy 1				X					X	
Strategy 2				X					X	
Objective 3										
Strategy 1		X			X			X		
Public Use Management										
Objective 3										
Strategy 1		X		X		X		X		
Strategy 2	X		X		X		X		X	
	FY15	**FY16**	**FY17**	**FY18**	**FY19**	**FY20**	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**FY24**
Objective 4										
Strategy 2		X			X			X		
Objective 5										
Strategy 1		X			X			X		
Administrative Considerations										

Objective 2										
Strategy 1					X					
Strategy 2			X					X		

APPENDICES

Area Background:

The area was settled in the 1830s. Most of the original forest was heavily cut and burned, and livestock were left free to roam the hills. This area is on the northwest fringe of the range for native shortleaf pine and historically, pine was more abundant locally. Pineville, about 5 miles west of the area, was named for this once common tree. The area was named for the huckleberry, a type of wild blueberry found in association with pine forests. The area was sparsely settled due to the limited amount of arable land suitable for row crops. Widespread burning of the forested areas continued throughout the 1960s, but has declined to the point that wildfires only occasionally occur. This was the first large forested tract purchased by the Department in Southwest Missouri. A wildfire caused by an unextinguished campfire April 16, 1989 resulted in mortality to forest stands in the eastern half of Section 25 and subsequent regeneration.

According to the *Atlas of Missouri Ecoregions* (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002): Huckleberry Ridge CA is located in the center of McDonald County. Ecologically this conservation area is located in the Big Sugar Creek Oak Woodland/Forest Hills Land Type Association, within the Elk River Hills Subsection of the Ozark Highlands Ecological Section. Topography on the area is characterized by steep slopes, narrow ridges and narrow valley bottoms. Soils were formed from parent material of cherty limestone. Vegetation is composed of oak-hickory woodlands, pine-oak woodlands, with occasional small glades and talus barrens supporting stunted timber and well developed shrubs and grasses. Naturally occurring water is limited. The area south of Highway K drains into Little Sugar Creek while that north of the highway drains into Big Sugar Creek. About 2 miles west of the area Big Sugar Creek and Little Sugar Creek join to become the Elk River, flowing west into Grand Lake of the Cherokees in Oklahoma. Specific natural communities found on the area:

377 acres: Ultic Chert Upland Mixed Oak Woodlands
366 acres: Ultic Chert Upland Pine-oak Woodlands
657 acres: Alfic Chert Exposed Backslope Woodlands
621 acres: Alfic Chert Protected Backslope Forests
44 acres: Dry-Mesic Footslope/High Terrace Forests
<1 acres: Sandy/Gravelly Low Floodplain Forests

Acquisition History:

Year	Acres	Name
1961	160	Kosharek tract
1961	1183	Miller tract
1962	200	Flynt tract
1962	40	DeWitt tract
1964	123.34	Hafner tract
1964	80	Bailey tract
1964	40	Davenport tract
1966	40	Lammers tract
1966	40	Lampo tract
1982	-0.16	Stout tract
1984	160	Roach tract
1990	40	Olsen/Dworak tract
Total:	2,106.18	

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	**Acres**	**Miles**	**% of Area**
Woodland	1,437.68		68
Upland Forest	621		29
Bottomland Forest	44		2
Oldfield/grassland	3		<1
Impounded Water	0.5		<1
Total	**2,106.18**		**100**
Stream Frontage		14.21	

References:

Enyart, D. (2009). *Missouri woody biomass harvesting: Best management practices manual*. Missouri Department of Conservation: Jefferson City, Missouri.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri watershed protection practice recommended practices for Missouri forests: 2014 management guidelines for maintaining forested watersheds to protect streams*. Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri: Jefferson City, Missouri.

Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Public Input Summary:

The draft Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period January 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation comments from 23 respondents (Appendix A). The Huckleberry Ridge 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 Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area public comment period

Appreciates seeing wildflowers, woodlands and glades at Huckleberry Ridge CA.
Tree thinning and application of prescribed fire reduce tree density, increase ground flora cover and diversity, and provide quality brood-rearing habitat for turkey as well as food and habitat for numerous other species. The Area Planning Team appreciates this comment and will continue to manage the area to maintain healthy communities of mixed oak-hickory and pine-oak woodlands and glades for Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife, as well as for people to enjoy these natural resources

Appreciates horseback riding at Huckleberry Ridge CA. Please keep and improve equestrian trails.
The Area Planning Team appreciates this comment. There are 17.3 miles of multi-use trails located on Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area, most of which have limited access by Department staff, and therefore require excellent stewardship of our area users to report problems or potential hazards.

Several equestrian clubs would be interested in assisting with trail maintenance.
One of the main management objectives for Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area is to encourage volunteer/community service groups to provide resource and conservation area stewardship and to increase citizen involvement and partnerships. The Area Planning Team has set out two strategies to help achieve this objective. The first is to maintain contact with horseback riders to determine specific saddle clubs using the area and solicit their help in trail maintenance, and the second being to continue relationships in nearby communities with scout troops that may be interested in cleanups, plantings and other stewardship projects at the area.

Supports better marking of trails and creation of trail map.
The 17.3 miles of multi-use trails located on Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area, are mapped on the Area pamphlet. This map includes only designated trails that are open to public use. The Area Planning Team agrees that these trails should be more plainly marked to aid users in navigating the trail system. Unauthorized trails are not listed to reduce the use and negative impacts that can be associated when trail are improperly placed.

Shares concern about severe erosion on trails. Volunteers have assisted in blocking off fire roads that run straight up and down the hills (in order to keep horse riders on trails).
The Area Planning Team understands and appreciates the efforts of volunteers that have assisted in mitigating current and potential erosion problems that have and could occur due to poor trail design and placement. The potential erosion caused by improperly placed trails can be mitigated by using switchbacks and installing water bars to divert water run-off from the trails. The Area Planning Team will continue to monitor existing trails for negative impacts to natural resources and close any unauthorized trails.

Supports and suggests increased equestrian group partnership with the Department (Missouri Backcountry Horsemen, the Friends of Huckleberry Equine Group, Cowgirl Up Womens Trail Riding group, National Equestrian Trails Coalition, etc.). For instance: assisting the Department in resolving resource/trail issues, mapping and marking trails, having greater communication and consultation with the Department, working with the Department to develop a reward system for volunteering.
This proposal is a very good recommendation and is supported by the Area Planning Team. Currently, many of the multi-use trails are included in the Area map pamphlet. The Area Planning Team has outlined three strategies to help facilitate and provide safe and sustainable use of multi-use trails. The three strategies are as follows: 1) map all designated and non-designated multi-use trails currently being used by the public, 2) determine if any existing trails negatively impact natural resources, or pose a safety hazard, and 3) designate trails that will be open for public use and maintain an area trail map. Monitor and close unauthorized trails.

Concern with people partying on the area after hours.
Huckleberry Ridge CA is open for public use from 4 a.m. To 10 p.m. Camping is allowed anytime in 7 designated camping areas and is limited to a period of 14 consecutive days in any 30-day period. Groups of more than 10 people must obtain a special use permit prior to camping. Only two camping units are permitted in each site in areas with established campsites. Quiet hours are in effect from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily. Visitors who are not occupying a campsite are required to leave the campground by 10 p.m. MDC conservation agents regularly patrol the areas but cannot be everywhere at once due to the large areas they cover. In addition, the Missouri Department of Conservation utilizes law enforcement agreements with McDonald County

Sheriff's Offices to maintain a supplemental and periodic enforcement presence on the area. The Public can call into one of our local offices or a McDonald County Sheriff's Office to report illegal activity and details (date of incident, time of day, location on Conservation Area...etc.) to assist the Department in investigations.

Suggests reinstating the Adopt-a-Trail program.
The Adopt-a-Trail program is certainly a way to provide recognition and support to those area users who are leaders in stewardship and provide positive examples in the community. The Area Planning Team supports the use of volunteers to expand the message of conservation. The Adopt-a-Trail program is a method that the planning team will certainly consider in the future.

Concern that multi-use trail is closed during hunting season. Would like to see ban on hunting near equestrian trails.
The Area Planning Team understands the concern of trail closings during hunting seasons. All trails located on Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area are considered multi-use (bicycling, hiking, and horseback riding). The Area was acquired with Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars, which are dollars resulting from excise taxes on hunting/firearm related items. As a result, hunting must remain as a primary use of the area and allowing horseback riding to take precedence on the area would violate the rules that govern the use of Federal Aid dollars. The first goal of the Missouri Department of Conservation is to ensure healthy and sustainable forest, fish, and wildlife resources throughout the state. To this end, 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.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map
Figure 2: Forest Compartment Map
Figure 3: Proximity Map
Figure 4: Ecological Land Type Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

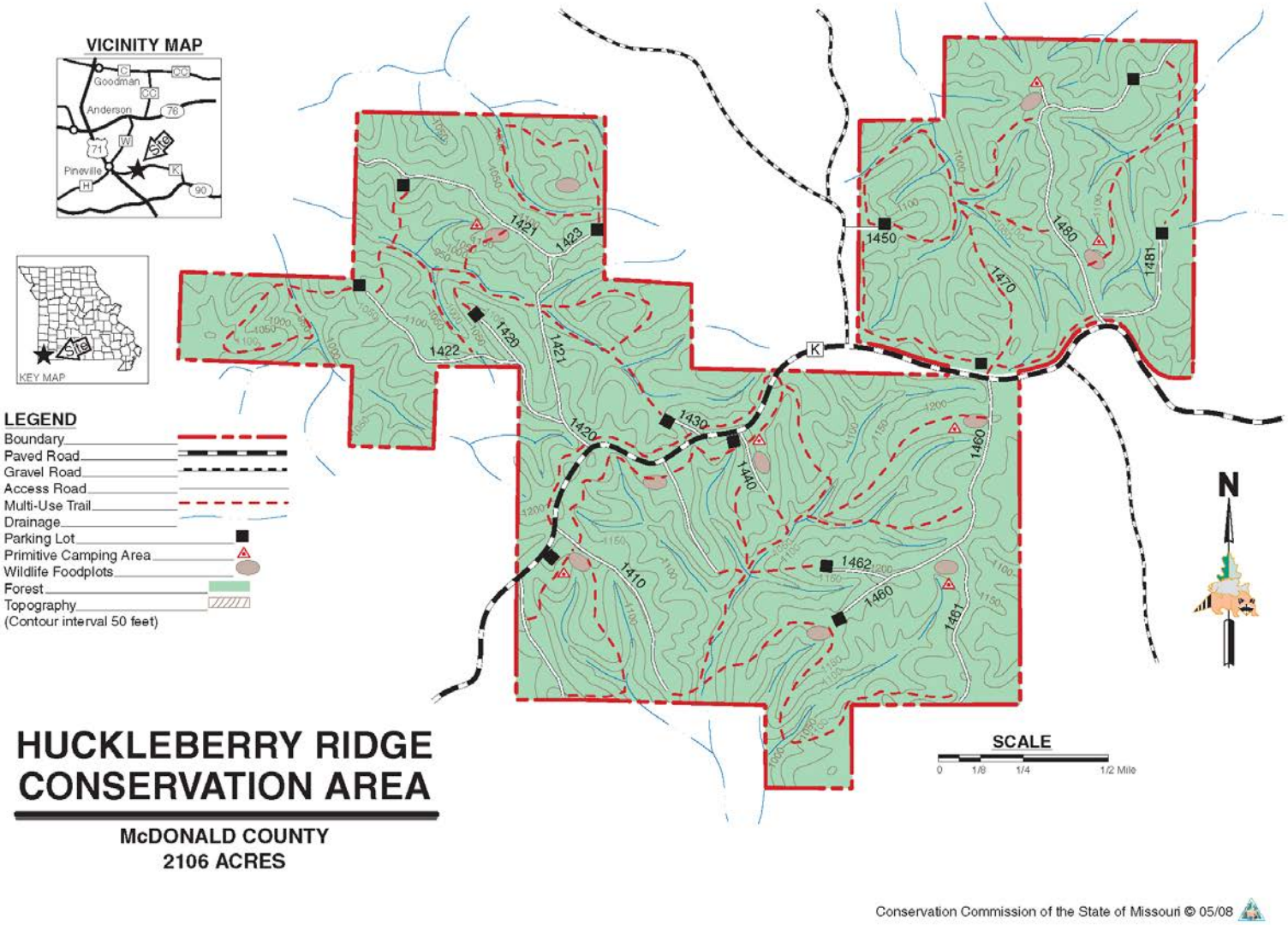


Figure 2: Forest Compartment Map

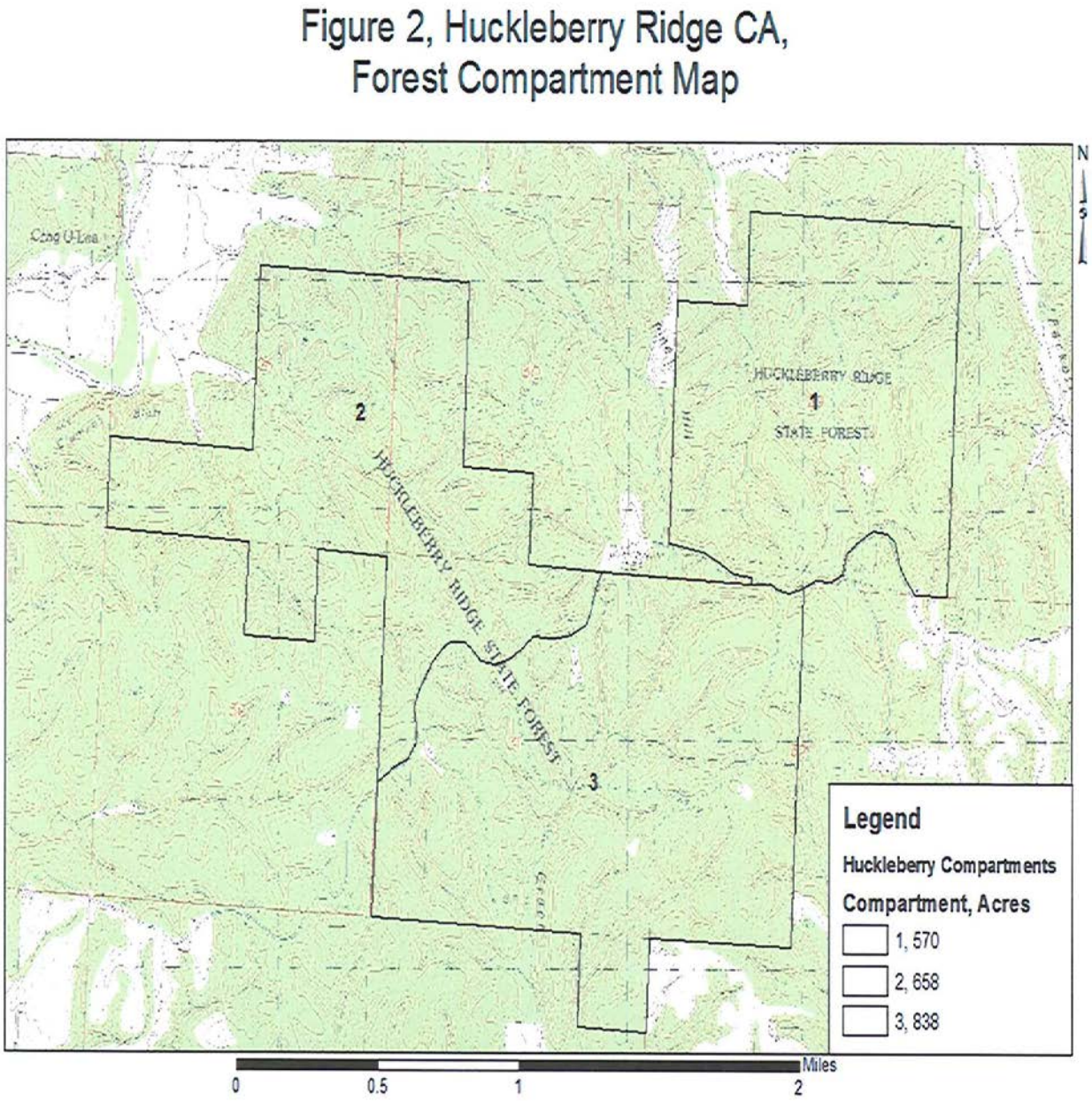


Figure 3, Huckleberry Ridge CA Proximity Map

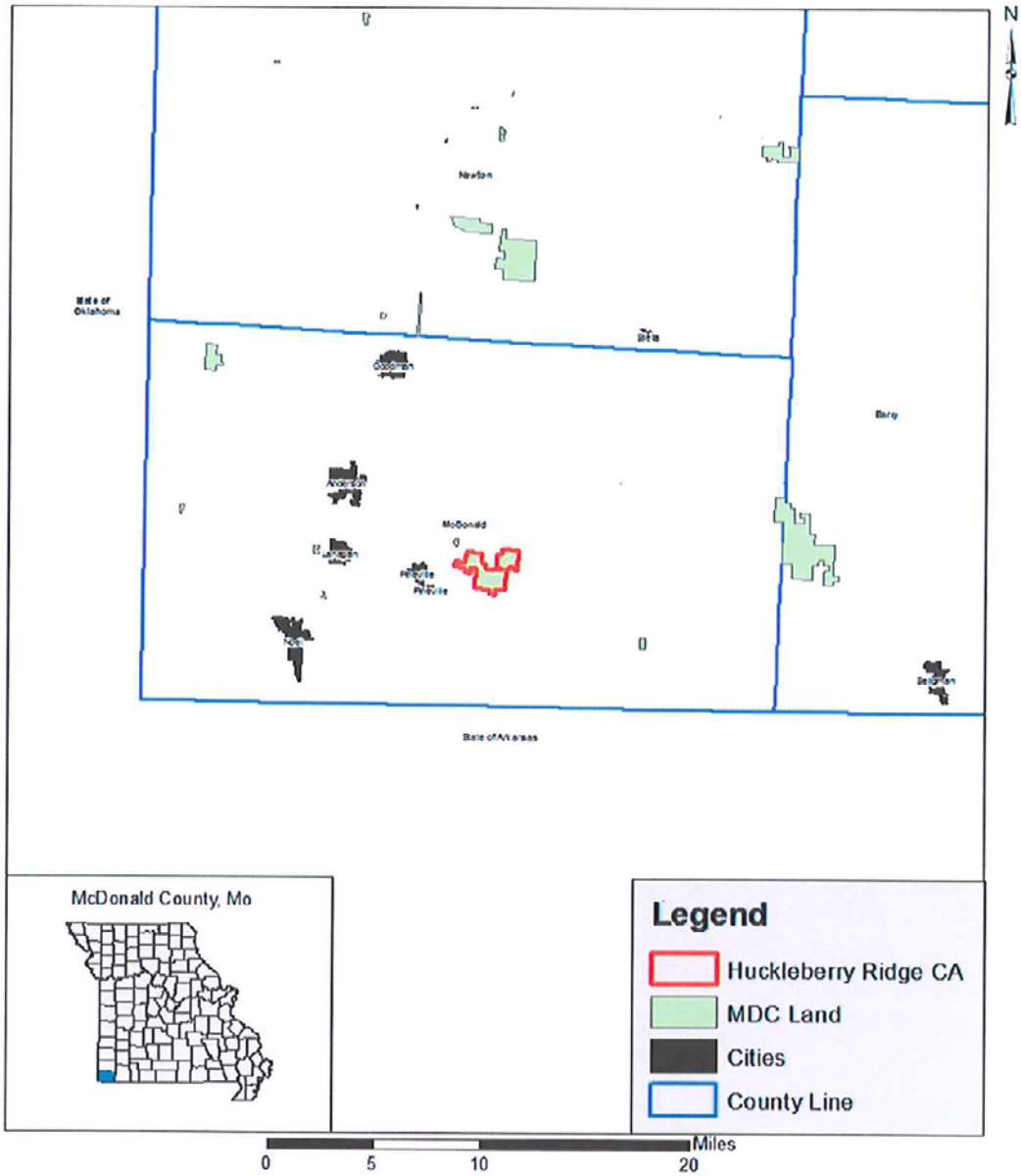
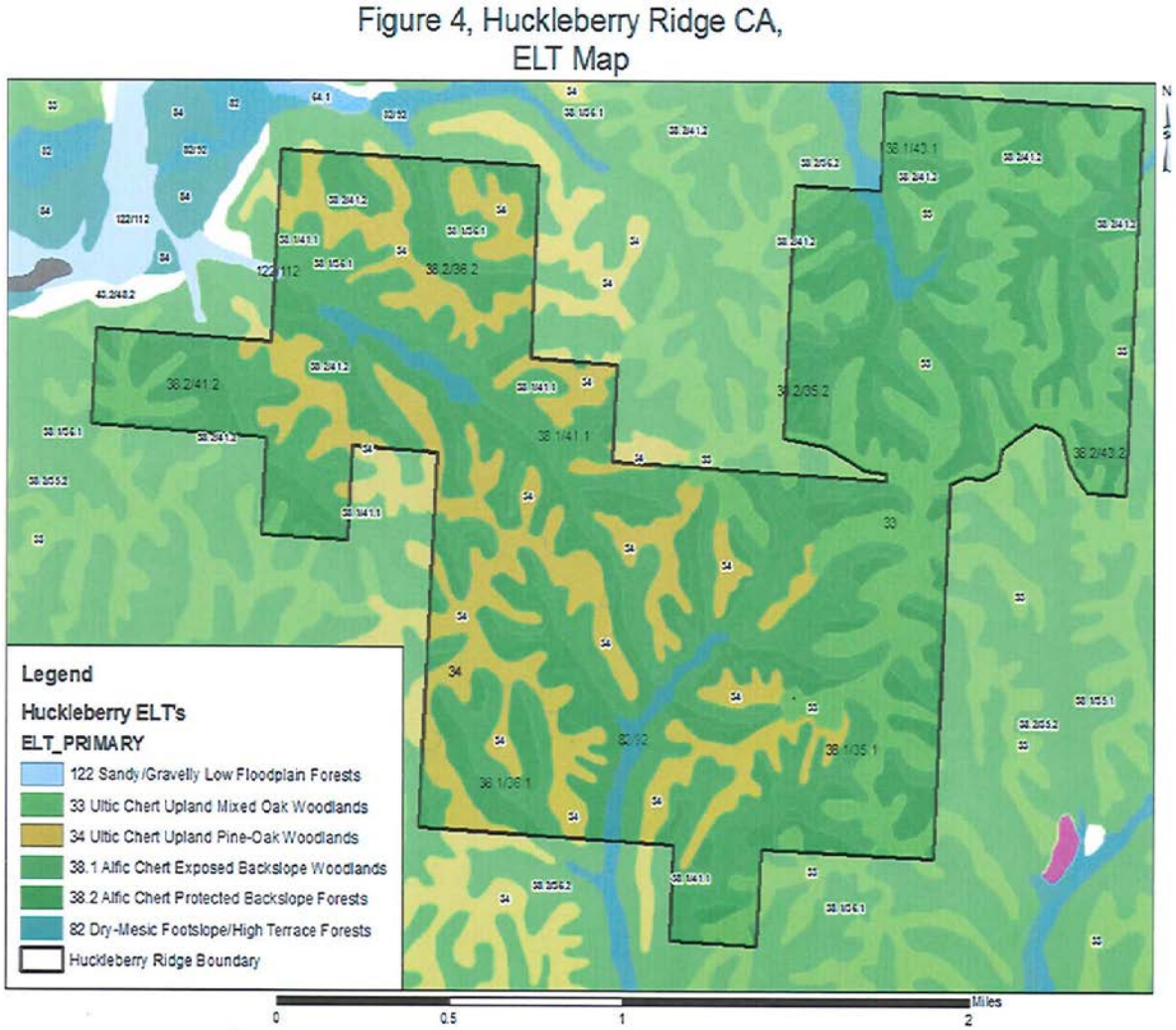


Figure 4: Ecological Land Type Map



Appendix A. Draft Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (January 1-31, 2015)

There are very few places for horseback riders to ride in the SW part of the state. Please take it in consideration when planning to change or make new trails. I have rode at this conservation area and would like to ride there again. I think there would be several clubs that would be on board to help build and maintain trails to keep them open with the lack of funds Missouri has to spend on areas. Thank you
The trails at Huckleberry Ridge are heavily used by horseback riders. Please keep and improve them. Many people come to ride there from quite a distance away, and spend money in the area, supporting local businesses and campgrounds. They are also used by many local day riders.
I love riding horseback at Huckleberry as well as all my trail buddies please keep this park available to us it is a lovely place to ride and the wildflowers are just wonderful to view, as well as the woodlands and glades. The trails did not seem to be over used and Please keep the equestrian trails open to us, I love riding there and so enjoy the wildflowers, and woodlands, and glades, there is nothing like seeing all of this from the backs of our trusty steeds.
Huckleberry is a beautiful place to trail ride and experience the wildlife and scenery. It is by far one of the favorite equestrian areas, left untouched. Please consider this when planning for the future of equestrians and hikers. Multi use lets all enjoy its beauty, please don't limit its use to one group.
Leave it for the trail riders/hikers. National Equestrian Trails Coalition, LLC!
We use the Huckleberry Ridge area to go horseback riding quite a bit. The area is beautiful, trails are beautiful, and it is close to our area. We do not ride in unsafe areas, or go off the trails. We actually would love to have more trails in this area. I do think that they can be marked, and maps drawn out for the trails. Please do not close this area to riders and hikers, but enhance the area. It would be a shame to have this wonderful place here and it not be available for use for our children to enjoy.
First, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Huckleberry Ridge CA Draft Management Plan. There are over 17 miles of designated multi-use trails. Horseback riding is permitted. Conversations with area residents indicate that local trail riders, the Friends of Huckleberry, work diligently to pick up trash, trim and maintain trails, monitor violators, and report problems including abandoned campfires. The Draft Management Plan indicates a concern about trails with severe erosion; the Friends of Huckleberry share that concern. They report that a significant part of the problem is caused by riders abandoning the switchback trails and following cleared

fire roads that run straight up and down the hills. The riders report that the Department is addressing the problems by constructing water bars and diversions on the fire roads. The Friends are assisting by blocking the roads to keep trail users on the trails. The Friends report a good relationship with Department staff. Show Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen commends the Department for permitting equestrian use of the wonderful trail network on Huckleberry Ridge CA, the Friends of Huckleberry for the service they provide that benefits all trail users, and both for the effective partnership. The Friends of Huckleberry should be mentioned along with area scout troops in Public Use Management Objective 3. The Friends of Huckleberry stand ready to assist the Department to resolve issues, including resource concerns, associated with trail use (Public Use Management Objectives 1 and 2). SMMBCH recommends that the effective partnership be further strengthened by communication and consultation. This partnership could be a model to be replicated at other CAs around the state. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.
we camp and ride our horses at the horse camps adjacent to Huckleberry Ridge Conservation. We take our grandkids there to camp and ride our horses almost every weekend. Please in your plans please continue to let us ride our horses there. It would be a great loss not to be able to continue the use of it
It is important to maintain trail access for all users, including horseback riders. Many people, such as my husband, have physical limitations that prevent them from hiking or cycling. The only way for him to get out and enjoy the beautiful areas Missouri has to offer is by riding a horse on these trails. Horses were also important historically in the settling of this state, and it is important to maintain ties to our heritage. Please, do reach out to area saddle clubs and equestrian groups, like Back Country Horsemen, to find ways to keep the trails maintained and open for all to enjoy. Thank you!
Besides founding CU, we are homeowners that purchased land next to the Huckleberry for the express purpose of horseback riding. We have a very strong interest in keeping the park clean and the trails trimmed. We will gladly map, mark and work on trails as well as the CU group. (over 100 members) We love this beautiful area and want to keep it open and functional for equine use.
Huckleberry Ridge is a popular equestrian trail riding area for Missouri equestrians as well as those who occasionally visit from other states. Please keep the trail riders in mind as you develop the GMP for the next 10 plus years. With this said, the National Equestrian Trails Coalition, LLC (NETC) realizes that with decreased budgets and doing more for less, We The People also need to take on more

responsibility for maintaining our trails. One of NETC's goals for 2015 is to set up a 3-tier reward system to encourage voluntary trail maintenance on our public lands. We would be happy to work with you, building a Strategic Alliance, in establishing a mileage program where members of our Trail Buddy Program can earn points for miles of trails they help maintain. The NETC is also planning to become educators and proponents of Leave No Trace for Stock Horse use and will be promoting proper trail etiquette. We will be happy to work with you to maintain our equestrian trails on public lands. Founder National Equestrian Trails Coalition, LLC Thank You and Happy New Year!
We ride our equestrians here about 15 times a year. Sometimes we have as many as 30 riders. Please continue to keep these trails open to equestrians as it is one of our favorite places to ride.
One plan objective is to contact horseback riding clubs and groups for volunteer assistance in maintaining the trails. if you have not already done so please contact: The missouri chapter of Back Country Horsemen. Please contact http://showmebch.org/ The Kansas chapter may also be interested in assisting.
Please keep the trail riders in mind as you develop the Area Management Plan for the next 10 plus years. Trail riding is compatible with your Management Objectives and is a great need of the public. Trail riding continues to grow in popularity and is essential for aged individuals and those with disabilities to enjoy the remote areas our rural resources. Under Public Use Management Considerations: Management Objective 1; Strategy 2 - Rather than simply closing the trail please consider re-routing so that any negative impact may be eliminated or significantly reduced. I think this would work well in conjunction with Management Objective 3 (Volunteer group involvement). Regarding Management Objective 3: In addition to reaching out local saddle clubs please also reach out to any other organizations that may assist with these efforts (Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen, National Equestrian Trails Coalition etc.)

A lot of locals and others that camp,ride,hike and hunt have picked up trash for years here even before adopt a trail was formed,then done away with,we also try to keep the trails cleared and have also had the fire dept and sheriffs office here when fires have been started from partiers in the middle of the night and have been discovered by horseback riders the next mornings,90 per cent of trash and destruction come from partiers,we also keep picking it up after the adopt a trail program was done away with and have kept records ,if there is anything we can do to help contact us please Thanks Phone call (1/12/2015) - This commenter is a neighboring landowner. He owns Huckleberry Stables - provides horseback riding and cabin rentals. If we need any new signage placed on trails, he would be happy to assist. He and others have picked up trash on the area for years. They are part of the Friends of Huckleberry Equine Group - horseback riders and hikers that help clean up the area. He asked why we no longer have the Adopt-a-Trail program. He indicated that people partying after hours is the main problem on the area.
We ride our horses in Huckleberry Ridge several times a year. Huckleberry Ridge is a popular equestrian trail riding area for Missouri equestrians from all over the state plus riders who visit from other states. Please keep the trail riders in mind as you develop the GMP for the next 10 plus years. We have joined the National Equestrian Trails Coalition, LLC (NETC). NETC realizes that with decreased budgets and doing more for less, We The People also need to take on more responsibility for maintaining our trails. One of NETC's goals for 2015 is to set up a 3-tier reward system to encourage voluntary trail maintenance on our public lands. We would be happy to work with you, building a Strategic Alliance, in establishing a mileage program where members of our Trail Buddy Program can earn points for miles of trails they help maintain. The NETC is also planning to become educators and proponents of Leave No Trace for Stock Horse use and will be promoting proper trail etiquette. We will be happy to work with you to maintain our equestrian trails on public lands. National Equestrian Trails Coalition, LLC
I would like to see equestrian use continue in this area. We like trail riding throughout MO, and don't want to lose this area.
Heard that you are looking to take away the Equestrian trails from the Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Area from the National Equestrian Trails Coalition, LLC and the Missouri Horse, Tack & Hay Trading Post! Please keep these trails available to riders and horses. It's hard enough to find good, safe places to ride, we certainly don't want to lose any more! Thank you!
As you know, this area is frequented by many equestrians who enjoy it's beauty and excellent trails. I myself travel from the West Plains, MO area to enjoy Huckleberry and ride there with my Cowgirl Up Ladies Riding Club. Many equestrians would be more than willing to help with trail maintenance to improve the trails and keep them nice for horse riding. Please continue to provide this great riding opportunity in our State. Thank you.

Please keep horse multitrails open as you have a lot of us trail riders in Mo and want to keep trails wehave and get more open when and where we can.
Although I haven't made it to this area yet, I'm hoping to this year with my horse. I would like to see additional trails to the area. Shortening the amount of trails would prevent me from coming, as it wouldn't make the long drive worth it. I like to ride for several hours when I go somewhere.
It is simply exhausting trying to keep up with where and when one can ride equestrian trails in Missouri. We don't stop riding just because it's winter yet we must because y'all continue to "close areas to equestrian" during hunting season. How about this....stop allowing hunters near/around equestrian trails. Stop closing us off from hiking trails. It's not us leaving trash behind. We have saddle bags and pack out our own trash but your hikers and hunters consistently leave trash behind. I've watched them do it. And open the Katy trail across the state for equestrian. It's silly and ridiculous for us to have only from Clinton to Sedalia to equestrian ride the Katy trail. We pay taxes like everyone else and guess what...my truck and trailer tags cost WAY more than those buying hunting license. Keep up the way you are going and watch your $$$ support drop. There are many who are moving and going elsewhere for equestrian vacations from MO now because of all the restrictions. This country was settled on horseback. And I pay my fair share to use the same public lands as the bird watchers, hikers, fishermen, hunters and the likes. OPEN ALL TRAILS TO EQUESTRIAN
I am an avid horseback trail rider and am interested in the preservation of the horse/multi-use trails in the Huckleberry Ridge Conservation area. Please let me know what I can do to help keep these trails open. I am the program manager of Top Trail (www.toptrailhorse.com) and am affiliated with www.opentrail.us which is an online repository of horse trails across the U.S.