DRAFT
Bear Creek Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan
FY 2016-2025

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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Bear Creek CA, #6523
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1965
- **Acreage:** 720 acres in four separate parcels
- **County:** Laclede
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry Division
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry Division
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - **A. Strategic Direction**
    Manage for healthy, sustainable, forest, woodland and aquatic communities for future generations to use and enjoy. Manage to provide hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities and restore natural communities.
  - **B. Desired Future Condition**
    The desired future condition of Bear Creek Conservation Area (CA) is forested uplands with some grassland/early successional habitat.
  - **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**.**

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. <u>Special Considerations</u>

- **A. Priority Areas:** None
- **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:** None
- **C. Springs:** None

III. <u>Existing Infrastructure</u>

- 4 parking lots
- 3 hunting blinds
- 3 wildlife watering holes (0.25 acres)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. **Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** 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.

C. **Easements:** Noble road easement on Hermit Tract, waterline easement

D. **Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records kept with the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.

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

F. **Endangered Species:** Endangered Species are not known from this site, but are found in the surrounding area. Area Managers should consult annually with the Natural History Biologist.

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

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Management centers on providing upland wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities. Area maintenance is provided by staff within Forestry Division.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Manage forest, woodland and glade natural communities.
2) Control invasive and exotic species.

Management Objective 1: Enhance, restore and protect forest and woodland natural communities.

Strategy 1: Suppress all wildfires on the area through direct control and by maintaining or adding firebreaks. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Use even-aged and uneven-aged management practices to correct deficiencies in tree composition (species and age) and/or stand structure according to current structure, age, site index and species composition. Maintain loose bark tree composition for bat habitat. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Due to the small size of each tract, forest inventory will be completed on an as-needed basis to monitor stand composition and assess needs for forest health. (Forestry)

Strategy 4: Manage or maintain woodland natural communities. Tools such as prescribed fire, herbicide applications, mechanical treatments, and timber harvesting will be considered when managing woodlands and invasive woody plants.

Strategy 5: Implement Best Management Practices to prevent soil erosion when using heavy equipment during site preparation or timber harvesting according to the Missouri Watershed Protection – 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watershed to Protect Streams.

Management Objective 2: Enhance, restore and protect glade natural communities.

Strategy 1: Manage glade natural communities through cutting of invasive woody plants and use of prescribed fire to maintain them in an open condition to enhance herbaceous and forb diversity. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Prevent soil erosion due to road infrastructure.

Strategy 1: Ensure roads and road-side drainages are maintained to reduce runoff, sedimentation and erosion. (Forestry)

Management Objective 4: Control invasive and exotic species.

Strategy 1: Monitor area for invasive and exotic species periodically and use appropriate strategies for control, including, but not limited to, mechanical removal, herbicide application or prescribed fire. (Forestry)

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

Management centers on preventing activities from compromising stream bank integrity and promoting watershed protection. Area maintenance is provided by staff within Forestry Division.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Prevent excessive stream bank erosion.
2) Maintain riparian corridors.

Management Objective 1: Protect and enhance watershed and aquatic habitat.

Strategy 1: Employ appropriate best management practices associated with management and enhancement projects. (Forestry, Fisheries)

Management Objective 2: Maintain riparian corridors as specified in the Department's *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines* (2009).

Strategy 1: Allow natural vegetative processes to continue. (Forestry, Fisheries)
Strategy 2: Replace dead trees as needed to maintain riparian cover. (Forestry, Fisheries)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Provide mobility impaired hunting opportunity area.
2) Keep the public informed of the opportunities available at this area.
3) Maintain the area in a desirable condition.

Management Objective 1: Maintain suitable public access.

Strategy 1: Ensure existing parking lots, hunting blinds and roads are maintained to Department standards. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Continue to inform the public of the opportunities at this area.

Strategy 1: Maintain signage at Bear Creek CA in accordance with Department policy. (Forestry, Fisheries, Outreach and Education)
Strategy 2: Work with local media specialist to highlight special opportunities on the area. (Forestry, Fisheries, Outreach and Education)
Strategy 3: Maintain up-to-date information about Bear Creek CA on the Department Web page. (Forestry, Fisheries, Outreach and Education)

Management Objective 3: Provide recreational and educational opportunities for the public.

Strategy 1: Provide signage to acknowledge and educate the public about active partnerships, e.g., the Bunt Cumbea Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation provided funding and labor to install and maintain the three hunting blinds on the Bear Creek School Tract. (Forestry)
Strategy 2: Issue trapping permits through the Special Use Permitting process. (Forestry)
Strategy 3: Provide mobility impaired hunting opportunity through the maintenance of three hunting blinds available on a first-come first-served basis with special vehicle access allowed through a Special Use Permit available in advance from the Area Manager.

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Ensure all easements are properly documented and filed at the County Recorder's Office.
2) Evaluate land acquisition opportunities.

Management Objective 1: Ensure all easements are properly filed at the County Recorder's Office.

Strategy 1: Use Geographic Information System and surveys, where necessary, to ensure that any easements are properly located. (Forestry)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

- 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.
- Any expansion of this area should be considered only after review of the impacts to staff work loads and whether the area can be maintained using current staffing level. (Forestry)

MANAGEMENT TIME TABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY16	**FY17**	**FY18**	**FY19**	**FY20**	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**FY24**	**FY25**
Administrative Considerations										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1		X								

APPENDICES

Area Background:
Bear Creek CA was purchased by the Department from the University of Missouri to provide upland wildlife habitat for public use. Open areas are managed to provide wildlife habitat through planting of crops and manipulation of grassland areas to maintain early successional habitats. Forest areas are managed through a combination of selective tree harvesting and pre-commercial thinning through firewood permits.

Area Location: Four tracts are found to the northeast of Lebanon off Historic Route 66 on Rustic Drive and on Sassafras Drive (Figure 1).

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Forest/Woodlands	688	96
Old Field	22	3
Glade	10	1
Total	**720**	**100**

References:
Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:
Figure 1: Area Map
Figure 2: Cover Type Map

Figure 1: Area Map

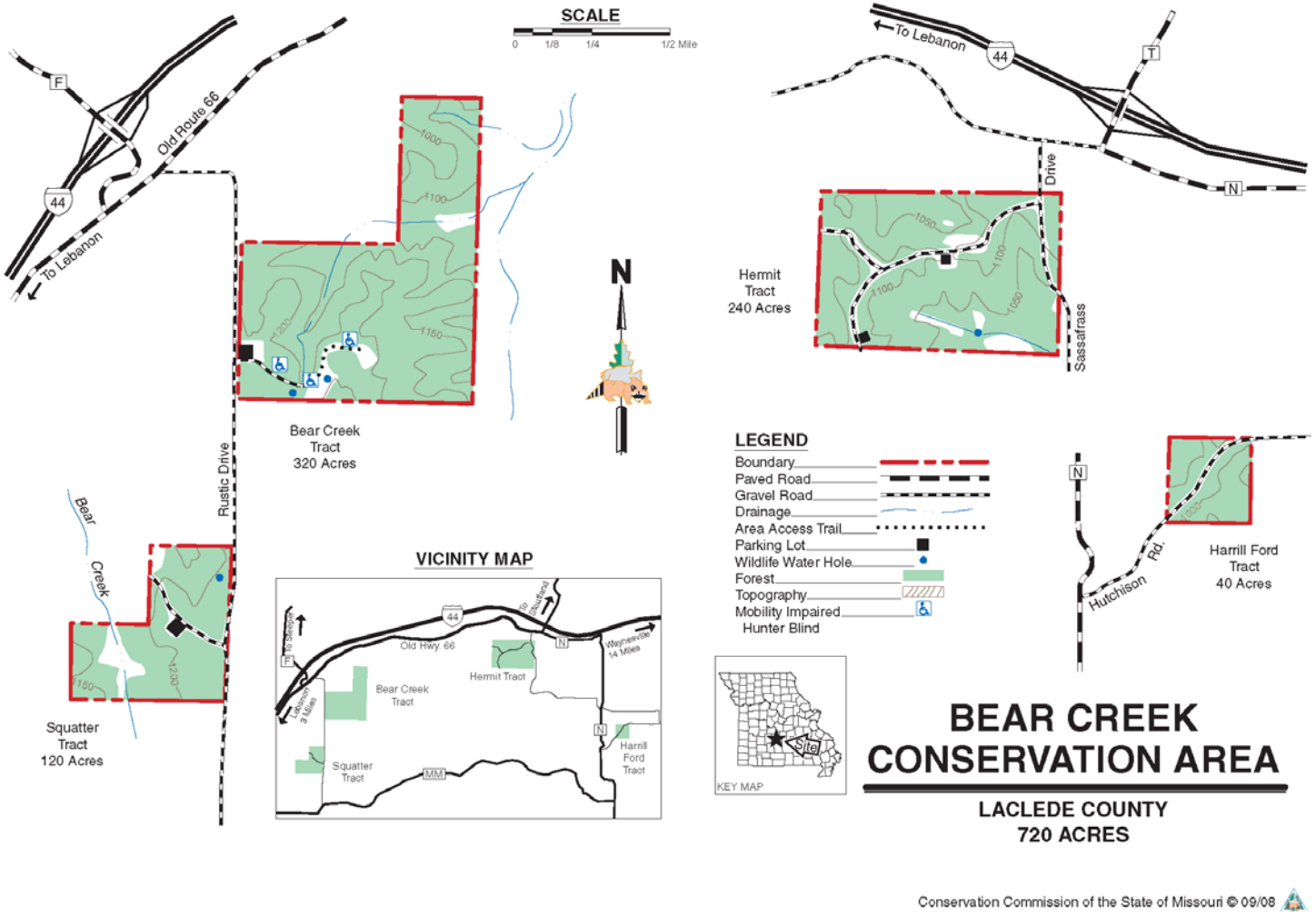
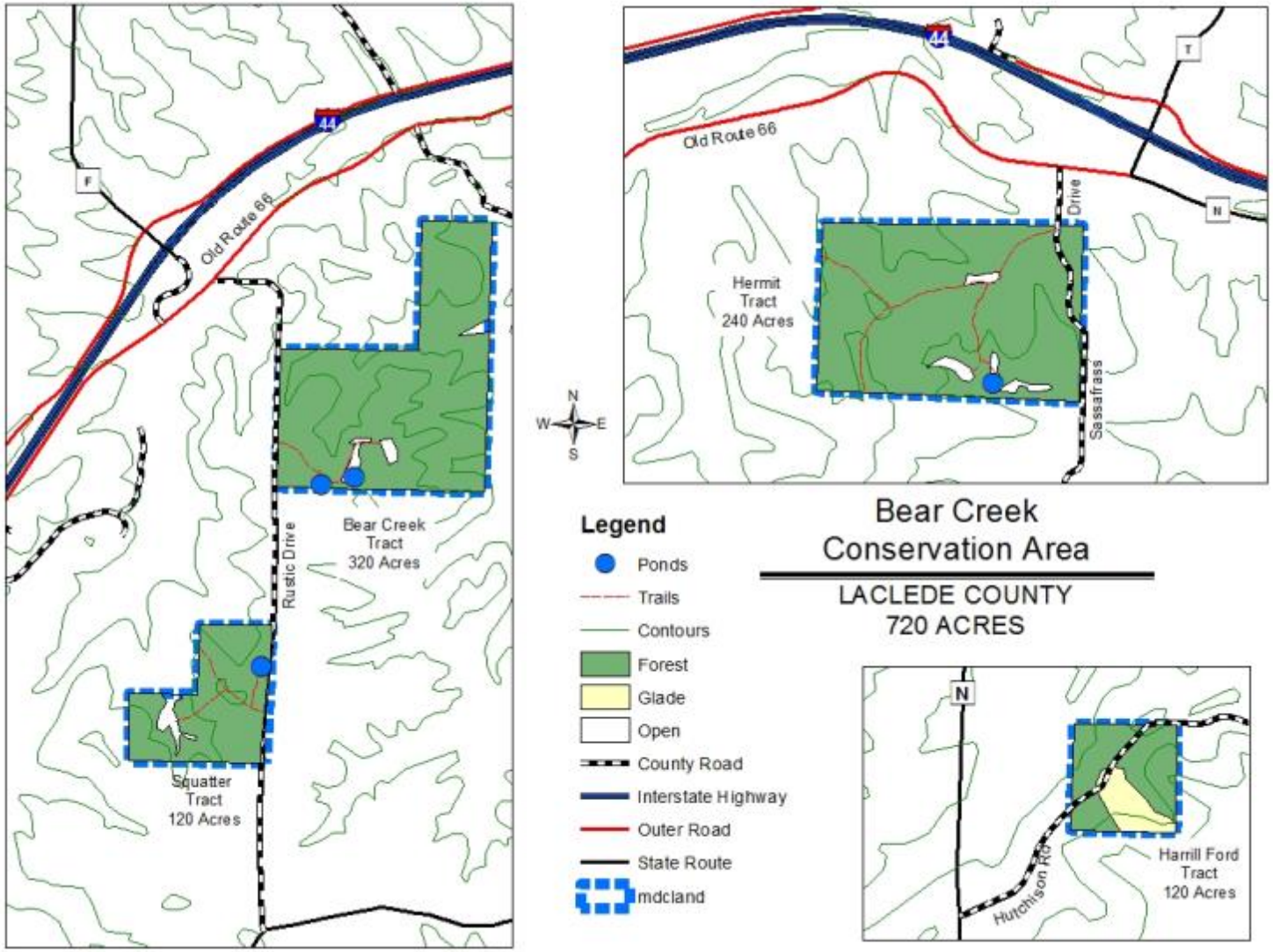


Figure 2: Cover Type Map



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