

DRAFT
Belcher Branch Lake
Conservation Area
Ten-Year Area Management Plan
FY 2017-2026



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OVERVIEW

- **Area Name:** Belcher Branch Lake Conservation Area, #8925
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1989
- **Acreage:** 405 acres
- **County:** Buchanan
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

The purpose of Belcher Branch Lake Conservation Area (CA) is to provide fishing and hunting opportunities to the public in and around the Buchanan County Area.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Belcher Branch Lake CA is a soundly managed lake, grasslands and successional/annual plant habitats that provide public recreational use while protecting the area's natural resources.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** None
 - B. Natural Areas:** None

- II. Important Natural Features and Resources**
 - A. Species of Conservation Concern:** None observed.
 - B. Caves:** None
 - C. Springs:** None

- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - 1 concrete boat ramp
 - 1 privy (Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] accessible)
 - 5 parking lots (1 ADA accessible parking lot)
 - 55-acre Belcher Branch Lake (fishing lake)
 - 1-acre fishing pond
 - 1 ADA accessible floating courtesy dock
 - 2 ADA accessible fishing piers

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** 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:** The Missouri Department of Conservation owns a 15-acre Easement for Flood Rights on the neighboring property (south half of the northeast quarter of Section 8, Township 55 North, Range 34).
- D. Cultural Resource Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage for upland game and grassland wildlife.
- 2) Manage for deer and turkey populations.
- 3) Provide a diverse mixture of quality native and early successional vegetation.
- 4) Provide healthy and sustainable woodland and forest habitat.

Management Objective 1: Manage for quality upland game and grassland wildlife.

Strategy 1: Increase and maintain quality nesting, brood rearing, and covey headquarters by converting and managing open lands using tool including but not limited to prescribed fire, herbicides, native plantings, disking, food plots, and the agriculture crop permittee program. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Create and maintain soft edge habitat adjacent to open lands using tools including but not limited to herbicides, mechanical treatments, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Manage for quality deer and turkey populations.

Strategy 1: Maintain diverse habitats that will provide both annual and native food types. Use tools including but not limited to prescribed fire, agricultural crop permittee program, food plots or other techniques to provide optimum deer and turkey habitat. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Manage for a diverse mixture of native vegetation and annual food sources.

Strategy 1: Implement annual disturbances to establish and maintain native vegetation. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Implement management practices for disturbance and quality forage including but not limited to agriculture, prescribed fire, and herbicide treatment. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Annually treat invasive and noxious vegetation using tools including but not limited to herbicides, mechanical treatments, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Manage for healthy and sustainable woodland and forest habitat to benefit the Belcher Branch Lake watershed.

Strategy 1: Monitor and treat any invasive and noxious vegetation using tools including but not limited to herbicides, mechanical treatments, and/or prescribed fire. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Manage the area to benefit woodland and forest communities. Management actions include, but are not limited to, conducting forest stand improvement, prescribed burns, snag retention and a multi-layered canopy with small gaps. Conduct management actions in accordance with the forest management plan developed based on the forest inventory. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Utilize Best Management Practices during management as described in the Department's manuals: *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice manual* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014) and the *Missouri Forest Management Guidelines Voluntary Recommendations for Well-Managed Forests* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014) (Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage for quality sport fish populations.
- 2) Manage for native aquatic vegetation on area lake and pond.
- 3) Provide aquatic habitat to enhance sport fishery.
- 4) Manage riparian corridors.

Management Objective 1: Manage for quality angling opportunities on area pond and 55-acre lake.

Strategy 1: Conduct fish population surveys to monitor for quality sport fish populations (e.g., largemouth bass and bluegill). Aim for proportional stock densities of largemouth bass of 40-70 and bluegill 20-40. (Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Supplemental stock fish (e.g., channel catfish) when necessary to maintain quality angling opportunities. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 2: Manage for native aquatic vegetation on area fisheries.

Strategy 1: Plant native aquatic vegetation in pond and 55- acre lake. (Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Treat aquatic nuisance species using tools including but not limited to herbicide. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 3: Enhance sport fish habitat in Belcher Branch Lake and area pond.

Strategy 1: Install brush piles to enhance sport fish recruitment. (Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Add fish holding structures in strategic locations in 55-acre lake and pond as natural fish habitat deteriorates. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 4: Manage riparian corridors within the Belcher Branch Lake watershed to reduce potential soil erosion and deposition in the lake.

Strategy 1: Maintain existing native corridor vegetation and monitor for invasive plant species. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Plant native trees and vegetation, as needed, to maintain adequate riparian corridors within the watershed of Belcher Branch Lake watershed. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: All management activities will follow the *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Keep area regulations up-to-date.
- 2) Maintain quality infrastructure to access area resources.

Management Objective 1: Keep area regulations up-to-date.

Strategy 1: Regularly patrol and enforce the *Wildlife Code of Missouri*, with emphasis on vandalism, littering and response to public complaints. (Protection, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Annually evaluate regulations and update, as needed. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain infrastructure to provide public access to area resources.

Strategy 1: Maintain a diversity of accesses to provide angling opportunities. (Wildlife, Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Maintain area accesses for multiple user groups through signage and special use permits. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Mow/maintain the grassy areas around parking lots (areas designated for primitive camping). Mow to a shorter height than what is required for parking areas not used for camping. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Inform public about area regulations.

Strategy 1: Maintain signs according to Department policy. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Maintain accurate and timely information on the Department's Atlas Database. Review information annually. (Wildlife)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide defined area boundaries through Missouri Department of Conservation signage.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area boundaries.

Strategy 1: Annually inspect area boundaries and restore boundary markers as needed. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Resolve boundary issues with adjoining landowners as they arise. (Wildlife)

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

APPENDICES

Area Background:

The Missouri Department of Conservation purchased this area in 1989 and completed construction of Belcher Branch Lake in June 1992.

In addition to the 55-acre Belcher Branch Lake, the area contains open land, grasslands, and timber. The area surrounding the lake features modestly sloping terrain with well-drained soils, including a thick layer of loess on the upland portions.

The Missouri Department of Conservation manages the forest, fish, and wildlife resources of this area to provide for public recreation and to protect soil and water quality. Farming, mowing, disking, prescribed burning, and other techniques are used to improve wildlife habitat.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Grassland (non-prairie)	104	26
Forest and Woodland	100	25
Old Field	82	21
Lakes/Ponds	59	15
Open Land	55	13
Other	5	1
Total	405	100

Maps:

Figure 1: Belcher Branch Lake CA Map

Figure 2: Land Cover Types Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Belcher Branch Lake Contour Map

Figure 5: Forest Resources Map

References:

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

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri forest management guidelines: voluntary recommendations for well-managed forests*. Jefferson City, MO: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri.

Figure 1: Belcher Branch Lake CA Map

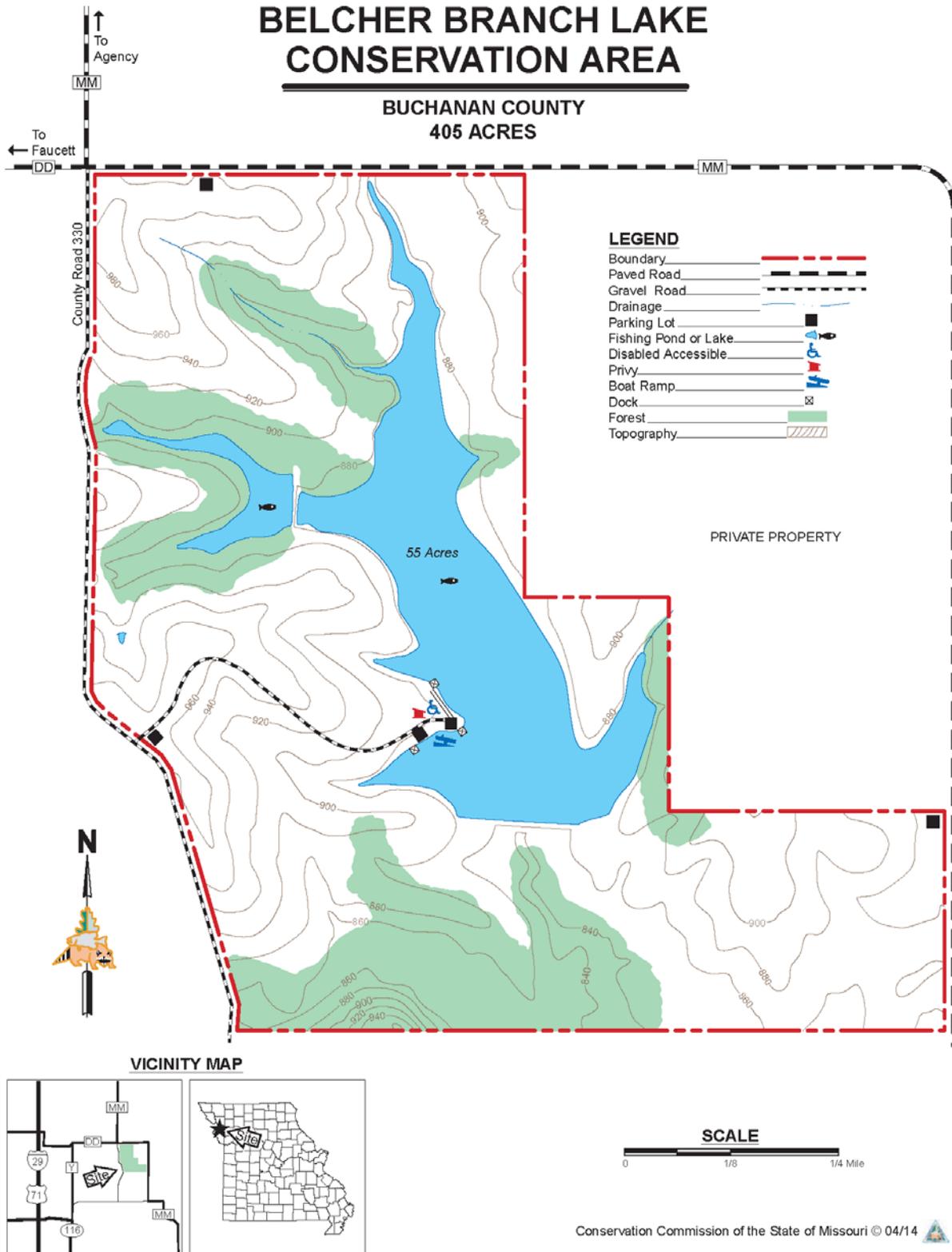


Figure 2: Land Cover Types Map

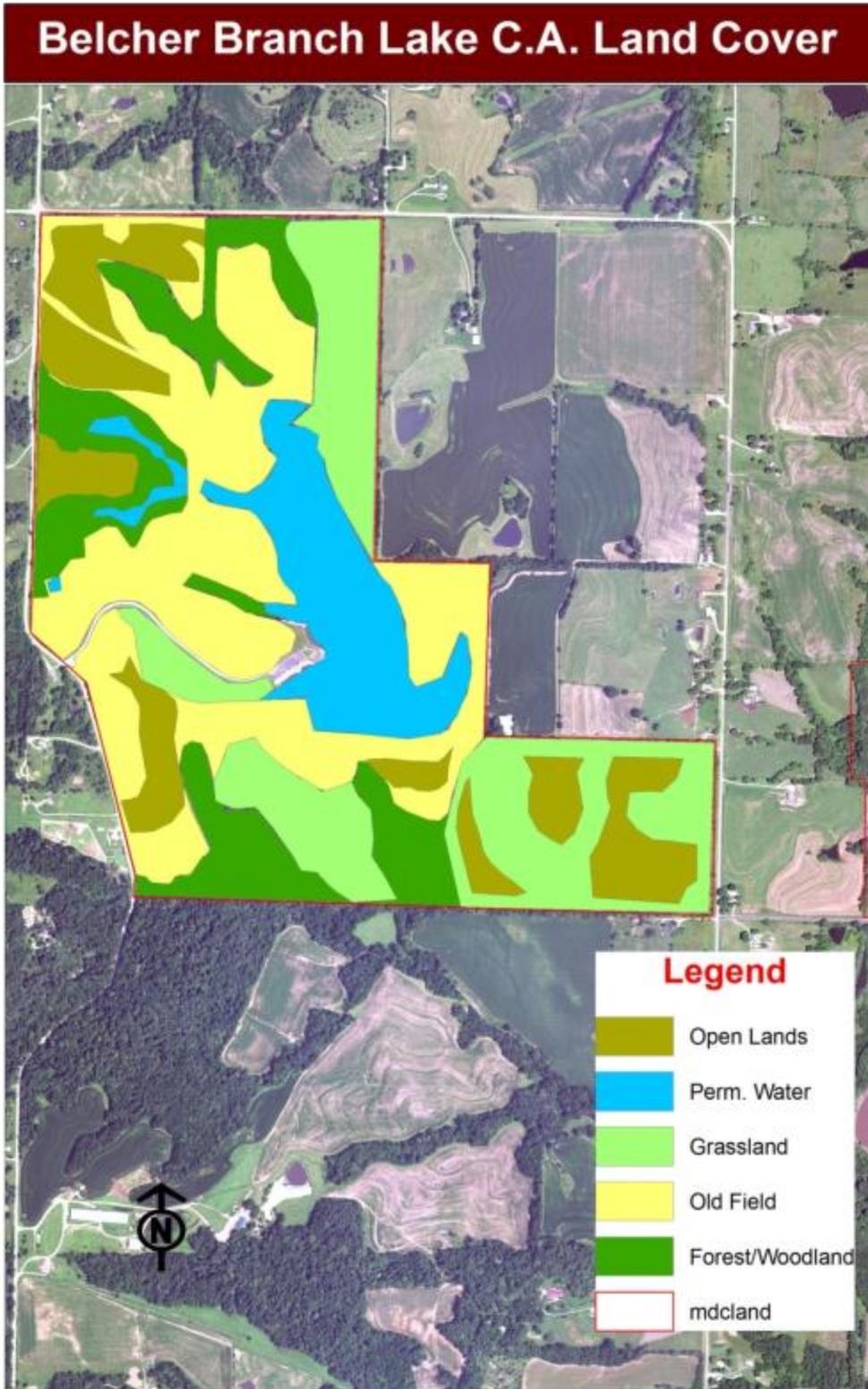


Figure 3: Topographic Map



Figure 4: Belcher Branch Lake Contour Map

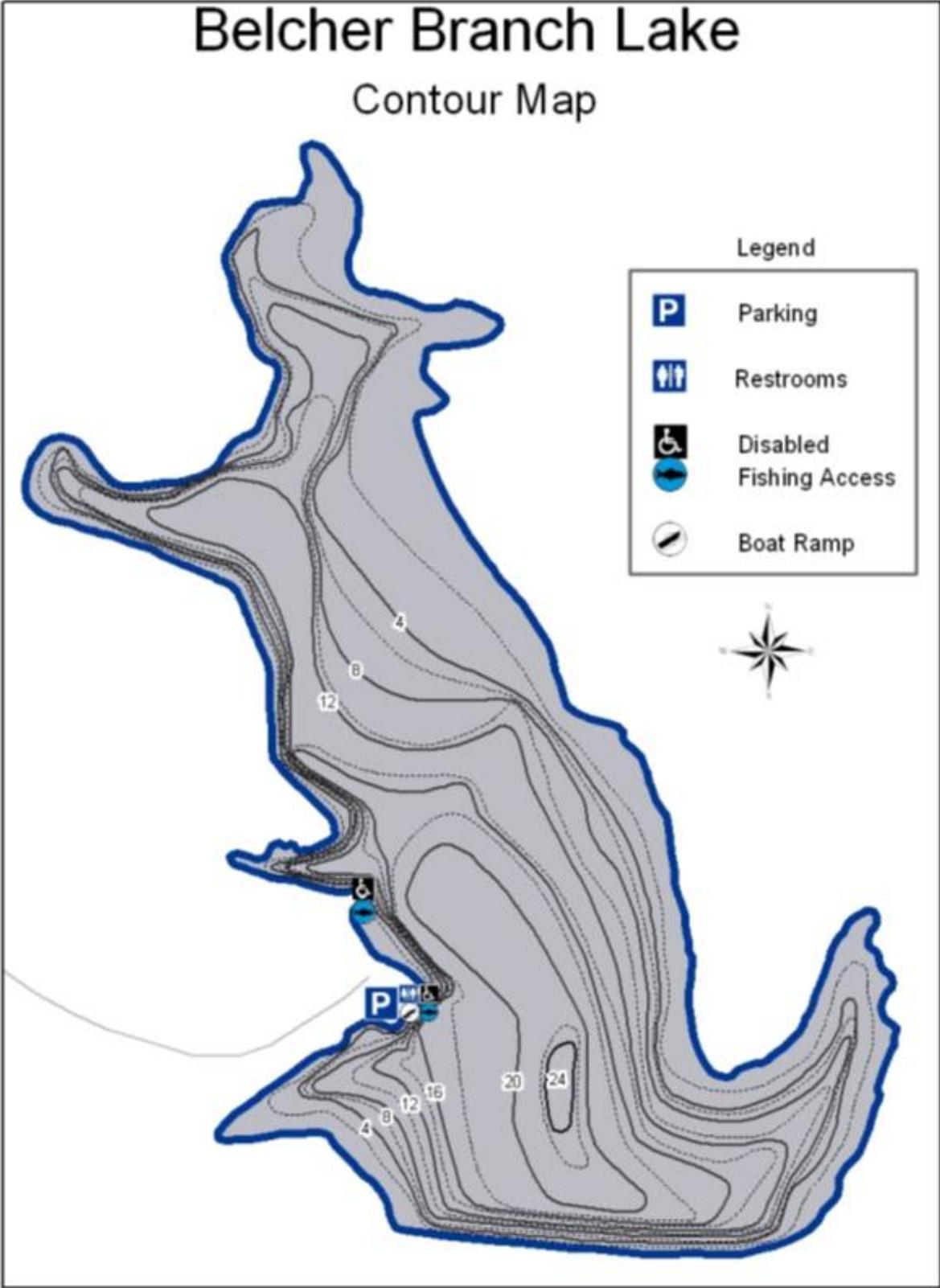


Figure 5: Forest Resources Map



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