Linscomb Wildlife Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan
FY 2016-2025

Wildlife Division Chief

3/30/16
Date

Linscomb Wildlife Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Matt Hill, Wildlife Management Biologist

Joe Coy, Wildlife Biologist

Peter Noble, Resource Forester

Tom Priesendorf, Fisheries Management Biologist

Aimee Coy, Private Land Conservationist

Jeremy Soucy, Outreach and Education

Zeb Jordan, Conservation Agent

Larry Rizzo, Natural History Biologist

Nick Laposha, Protection Regional Supervisor

KANSAS CITY REGION

KC RCT Chair _____ 3-07-2016
Signature *Date*

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief _____ 3/17/16
Signature *Date*

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Linscomb Wildlife Area, # 9904
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** In 1998 the initial 1,728 acre portion was deeded to the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) from the NeVada P. Linscomb Trust. In 2003 an additional 146 acres was purchased by the Linscomb Trust and then deeded to the Department.
- **Acreage:** 1,874 acres
- **County:** St. Clair
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - **A. Strategic Direction**
    The Linscomb Wildlife Area (WA) is made up of a variety of habitats. Management efforts will be focused on managing/restoring tallgrass prairie, woodlands, savannas, glades, and streams that will support native flora and fauna. Other open lands will be managed for early successional habitats that support many wildlife species with particular focus on eastern cottontail rabbits and northern bobwhite quail. Portions of the area will be used to increase Missouri citizens' awareness of the values and benefits of diverse and native grasslands and demonstrate various management techniques for achieving desired habitat conditions.
  - **B. Desired Future Condition**
    The desired future condition of Linscomb WA is a healthy, diverse, and sustainable mosaic of grassland, woodland, cropland, old-field, and aquatic communities for future generations to use and enjoy.
  - **C. Federal Aid Statement**
    N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. <u>Special Considerations</u>

A. Priority Areas: Linscomb WA is within the Upper Osage Grasslands Priority Geography which is focused on grassland, savanna and prairie stream protection, management and restoration. A portion of the area is also included in the Simms Creek Aquatic Conservation Opportunity Area.

B. Natural Areas: None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

A. Species of Conservation Concern: Species of conservation concern are not known from this site, but are found in the surrounding area. Area Manager will consult annually with the Natural History Biologist.

B. Caves: None

C. Springs: None

III. Existing Infrastructure

- A monument recognizing the contributions of the NeVada P. Linscomb Trust
- 3 gravel parking lots
- 7 non-stocked, man-made ponds

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions: None known.

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:

- Magellan Pipeline has an easement running from the southwest corner of the area to the northeast portion. There is an inspection station on the area (Figure 2).
- The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers owns a flood easement on 628 acres of the area (Figure 2).

D. Cultural Resources: Yes, known cultural resources are present, including old home foundations. Records are kept with the Department Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.

E. Endangered Species: None observed.

F. Boundary Issues: None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) A very small portion of native tallgrass prairie, which historically covered about half of the area, escaped conversion. Opportunities exist to reconstruct native grasslands on a significant scale that would reduce fragmentation and reconnect

the small remnant parcels in a way that could facilitate movement of low-mobility, prairie-obligate species.

2) Forest inventories recently completed (2010) for the area identified places suited for glade and woodland restoration.
3) Numerous invasive plants such as sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, Japanese honeysuckle, Johnson grass, and tall fescue are established on the area.
4) Woody encroachment is an issue in managing the open land portions of the area.
5) Studies and monitoring programs are in place to monitor vegetation, soil biology, grassland birds and pollinator response to management efforts.

Management Objective 1: Manage remnant prairies to maintain diversity.

Strategy 1: Survey and monitor areas for rare and endangered species. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Monitor for invasive species and, if found, take action to eradicate them using management practices including but not limited to spraying, mowing, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Monitor and remove woody species. (Wildlife)

Strategy 4: Manage prairies with management practices including but not limited to mowing, prescribed fire and grazing. (Wildlife)

Strategy 5: Continue annual vegetation and invertebrate monitoring during grassland restoration activities. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Restore grasslands at elevations and locations that provide connectivity to remnant prairie tracts and provide line-of-sight with nearby grassland areas such as Taberville and Wah'Kon-Tah Prairies .

Strategy 1: Convert some cropland, food plots, cool season grass fields, and old fields to diverse grassland plantings to reduce fragmentation, improve small game habitat, and connect the remnant prairie parcels. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Remove trees from fence rows, field borders, and grassland stream riparian areas to reduce grassland fragmentation, raptor perches, and predator travel corridors. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Monitor potential restoration sites for invasive species. Remove invasive species when found using management practices including but not limited to spraying, mowing, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

Strategy 4: Use diverse prairie seed harvested from local tallgrass prairies for restoration plantings. (Wildlife)

Strategy 5: Manage plantings with management practices including but not limited to mowing, prescribed fire and grazing. (Wildlife)

Strategy 6: Continue annual vegetation monitoring and soil sampling to track prairie plant establishment. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Increase and maintain the herbaceous plant component in woodlands and glades.

Strategy 1: Collect data annually at established vegetation monitoring plots to monitor changes in vegetation composition and structural diversity. (Wildlife, Forestry)

Strategy 2: Use prescribed fire to remove leaf litter and promote plant growth. (Wildlife, Forestry)

Strategy 3: Implement the management prescriptions of the Forest Management Plan by the end of FY18. (Forestry)

Strategy 4: Follow the appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP's) outlined in the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice* (2014) booklet when conducting silvicultural operations. (Wildlife, Forestry)

Strategy 5: Follow the appropriate *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* standards (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife, Forestry)

Management Objective 4: Maintain forest cover in a healthy, productive and sustainable condition.

Strategy 1: Implement the management prescriptions of the Forest Management Plans by the end of FY18. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Follow the appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP's) outlined in the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014) booklet when conducting silvicultural operations. (Wildlife, Forestry)

Strategy 3: Follow the appropriate *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* standards (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife, Forestry)

Management Objective 5: Manage natural communities as part of a larger landscape by cooperating with/assisting neighboring landowners. (Private Land Services, Wildlife)

Strategy 1: Offer technical assistance and cost share funding to adjacent landowners to increase and/or improve grassland acres and improve water quality in streams and ponds. (Private Land Services, Fisheries, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Coordinate with cooperating landowners to manage landscapes that extend beyond Department boundaries. (Private Land Services, Wildlife)

Management Objective 6: Consider whether livestock grazing will occur on the area to increase plant diversity and improve vegetative structure .

Strategy 1: If livestock grazing occurs on the area, a grazing plan will be designed in collaboration with Wildlife and Fisheries staff prior to introduction of the animals. (Wildlife, Fisheries)

Management Objective 7: Reduce the potential for surface runoff and soil erosion.

Strategy 1: Remove some fields from annual cropping rotation by planting to a diverse grassland mix or perennial green browse. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Incorporate cover crops into the current row crop rotation. (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) The Osage River forms the northern boundary of the area. At that point it is part of Harry S. Truman Reservoir, which causes parts of the area to flood at times.
2) There are several old channel meanders, sloughs and scours along the Osage River that act as seasonal wetlands. With proper management, these could provide important spring migration habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.
3) Simms Creek runs along the eastern boundary of the area and has been identified as an Aquatic Conservation Opportunity Area.
4) The few small ponds not influenced by Truman Reservoir are not large enough to support healthy balanced fish populations. With proper management these ponds could provide important breeding grounds for amphibians.

Management Objective 1: Protect clean and healthy waters.

Strategy 1: Use management techniques that minimize soil disturbance and erosion. Follow the appropriate *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* standards (2009). (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Establish or maintain riparian corridors of appropriate vegetation type along all streams on the area.

Strategy 1: Maintain a forested riparian corridor along Simms Creek and Osage River a minimum width of 100 feet from top of bank. Headwater streams in grassland areas will be managed for a shrub component consistent with the grassland habitat, where not limited by area boundary, access road, parking lot, or utility easement. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Where access roads or parking lots are in the stream corridor, they should be relocated outside of the corridor, if feasible.(Wildlife and Design & Development)
Strategy 3: Inspect riparian corridors along all agricultural fields every three years to determine the need for field adjustments. (Wildlife)
Strategy 4: All management activities at the conservation area should follow the *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Conserve plants, animals and their habitats.
Strategy 1: Manage for aquatic diversity by providing diverse habitats and good water quality management for streams, ponds and downstream neighbors. Refer to *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Wildlife, Fisheries)
Strategy 2: Identify impoundments, which are fishless or can be managed as fishless, to be managed for amphibian habitat. (Wildlife, Fisheries)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) The area offers numerous public use opportunities, including hunting, wildlife viewing opportunities and photography.
2) We currently have good relationships with our neighboring landowners. By keeping our neighbors up-to-date with the planned management changes on the area, they can help explain these changes to other local landowners and area users as opportunities arise.
3) Improve educational and interpretive opportunities. This is a very rural part of the state where many of the local small schools are looking for educational opportunities outside of the classroom.

Management Objective 1: Provide for hunting, exploring and viewing opportunities.
Strategy 1: Maintain parking lots and trails throughout the areas. (Wildlife)
Strategy 2: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Continue good relationships with neighboring landowners.
Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize boundary and trespass issues. (Wildlife, Protection)

Strategy 2: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties. (Private Land Services)
Strategy 3: Keep neighbors up-to-date on planned management changes so they can provide accurate information to those they interact with. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.
Strategy 1: Provide maps and information to promote recreational opportunities to the public. (Wildlife)
Strategy 2: Communicate the possibilities for area educational programs to teachers and other youth leaders. (Outreach and Education)
Strategy 3: Provide portable toilets and mow trails to accommodate field trips. (Wildlife)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Ensure all easements are properly documented.
2) Evaluate land offered as additions to these areas.

Management Objective 1: Make sure all easements are properly filed.
Strategy 1: Use Geographic Information System to ensure that any easements are properly located. (Wildlife)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, inholdings and adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, eliminate in-holdings, 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:

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Terrestrial Resource Management										
Objective 2										
Strategy 1	X	X	X							
Strategy 2	X	X								
Strategy 4	X	X	X							
Objective 2										
Strategy 3	X	X	X							
Objective 3										
Strategy 3	X	X	X							
Objective 6										
Strategy 1					X					
Objective 7										
Strategy 1	X	X	X							
Aquatic Resource Management										
Objective 2										
Strategy 2		X								
Objective 3										
Strategy 2			X							

APPENDICES

Area Background:
Prior to European settlement, this area included tallgrass prairie, savanna, woodland, forest, wetlands, and associated streams. The area is located in the transition zone from the Osage Plains to the Ozark Highlands which results in diverse land cover and species.

Formerly known as Winding River Ranch, the property (1,728 acres) was deeded to the Department from the NeVada P. Linscomb Trust in 1998. In 2003, Linscomb Trust purchased 146 additional acres which was deeded to the Department.

Legal Description: Township 37 North, Range 27 W, Sections 3,4,8,9,10,15,16, and 17.

Area Location: From El Dorado Springs, take Highway 82 northeast 9 miles, then Route OO north 1.5 miles.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	765	41
Cropland	484	26
Wetland	251	12
Old Field	143	8
Grassland	109	6
Native Prairie	90	5
Glade	32	2
Total	**1,874**	**100**

Public Input Summary:
The draft Linscomb Wildlife Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period October 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from three respondents (Appendix A). The Linscomb Wildlife 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 Linscomb Wildlife Area public comment period

Supports grassland priority for this area.
Thank you for your support for our efforts to manage for native habitats.

Opposes removing trees on area.
Tree removal has been done on the area recently for two reasons; forest management and grassland restoration.

Forest management activities (commercial harvest, thinning, etc.) are essential to maintaining a healthy and productive forest. Most of the forested acres will continue to be managed for healthy stands of native trees that will continue to provide ample cover and food for wildlife including deer and turkeys.

Mature trees in fence lines and along headwater prairie streams will be removed in a small portion of the area to restore the open vista that existed when it was native prairie. The trees are being removed to reduce the shade that keeps the native grasses and wildflowers from growing as well as remove perches that raptors use to hunt small game.

Suggests edge feathering fields to the north of the grassland restoration area.
The planning team agrees that locations should be identified to provide an appropriate amount of shrubby cover for small game in all open portions of the area whether it is edge feathering or native shrub thickets.

Suggests adding 10-12 miles of multi-use trails for horseback riding.
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 Linscomb WA was not chosen to offer this type of use. The area manager will suggest to users who request this activity to pursue this recreational activity on: Corps of Engineers (COE) Stockton Lake Horse Trail (30 miles away), COE Berry Bend Equestrian Camping Area and Trail at Truman Reservoir (50 miles away), or the section of Katy Trail from Clinton to Sedalia which is also open to equestrian use (approximately 45 miles away).

References:

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

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

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map
Figure 2: Area Easement Map
Figure 3: Land Cover Map
Figure 4: Potential Grassland Restoration Unit

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Linscomb Wildlife Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

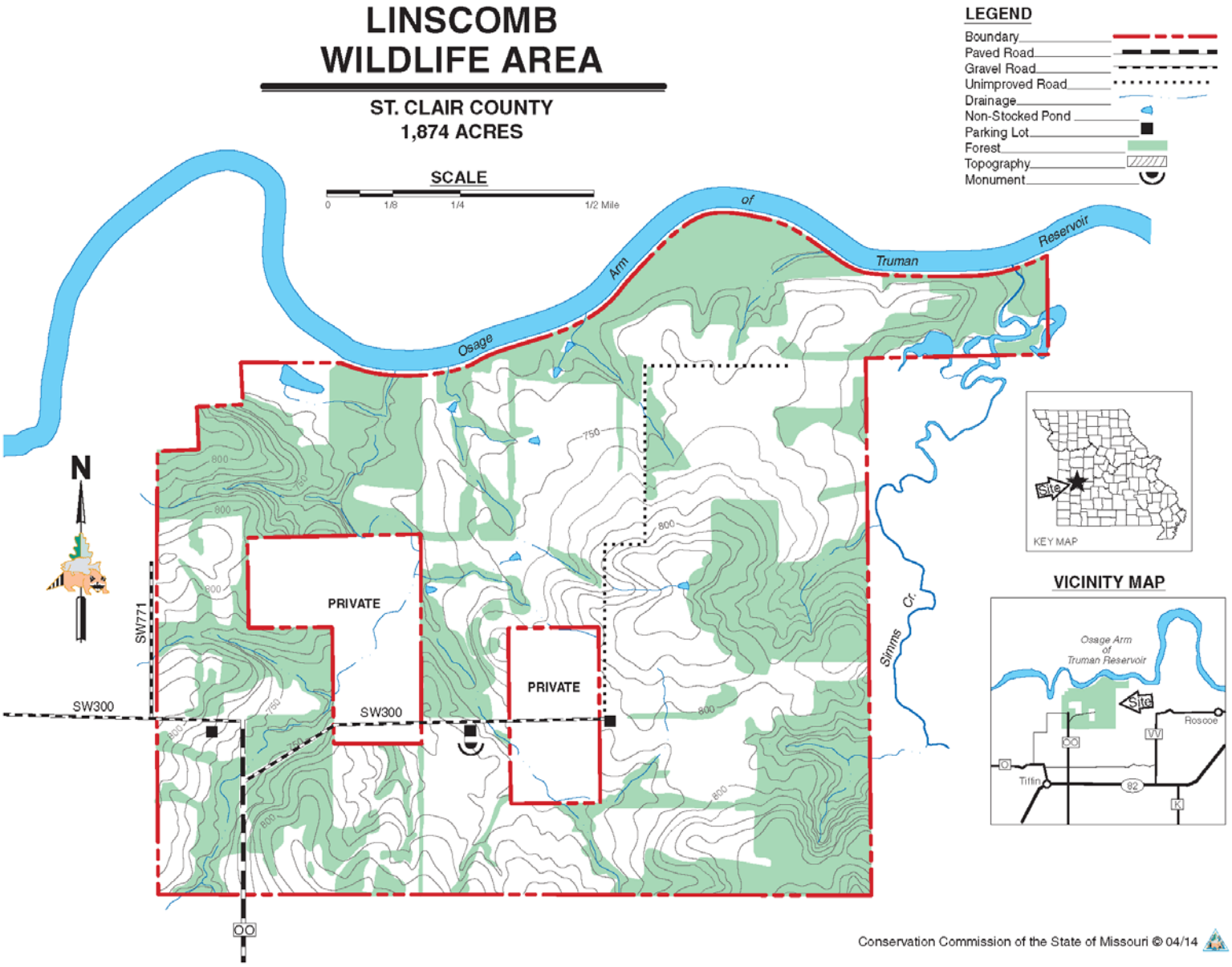


Figure 2: Area Easement Map

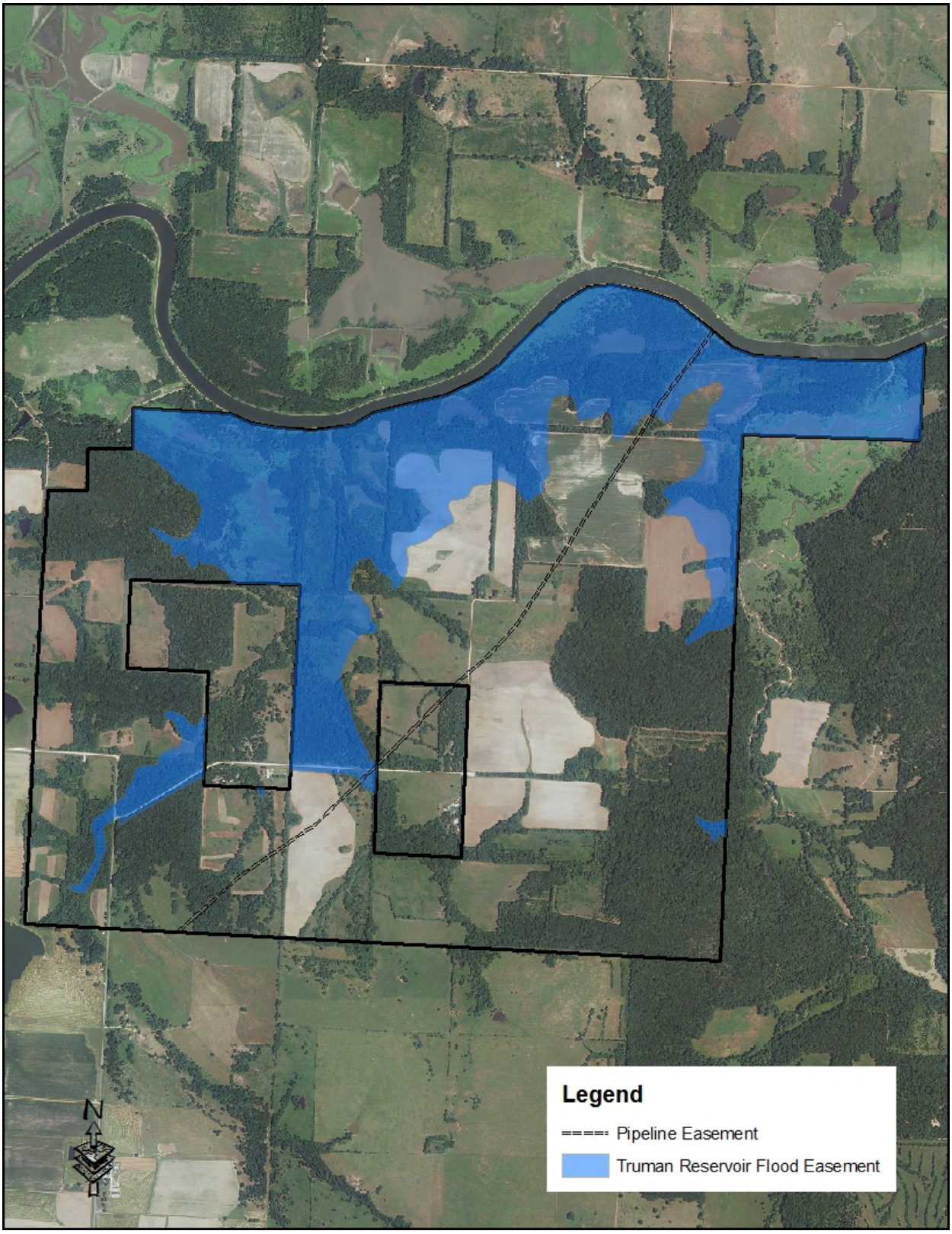


Figure 3: Land Cover Map

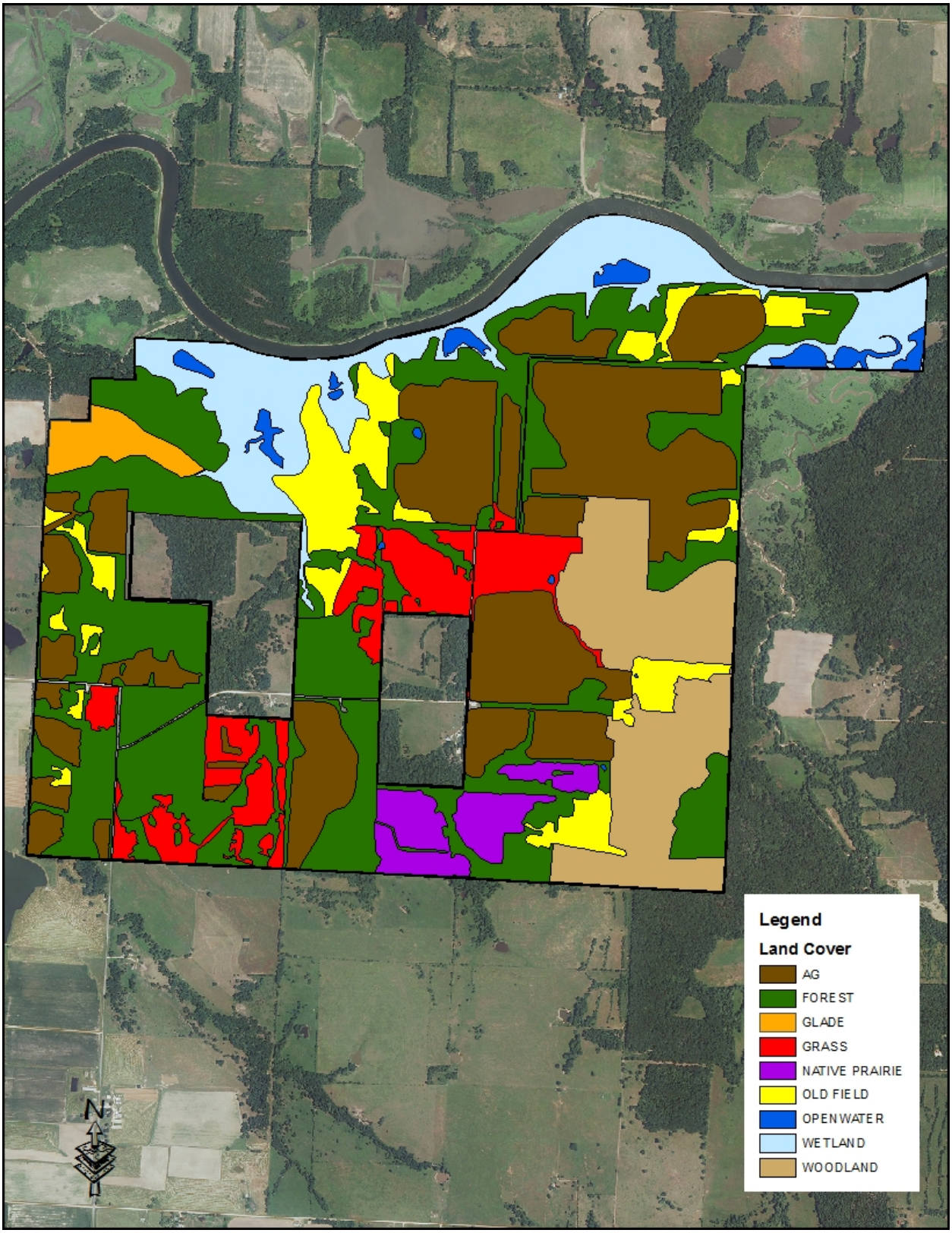
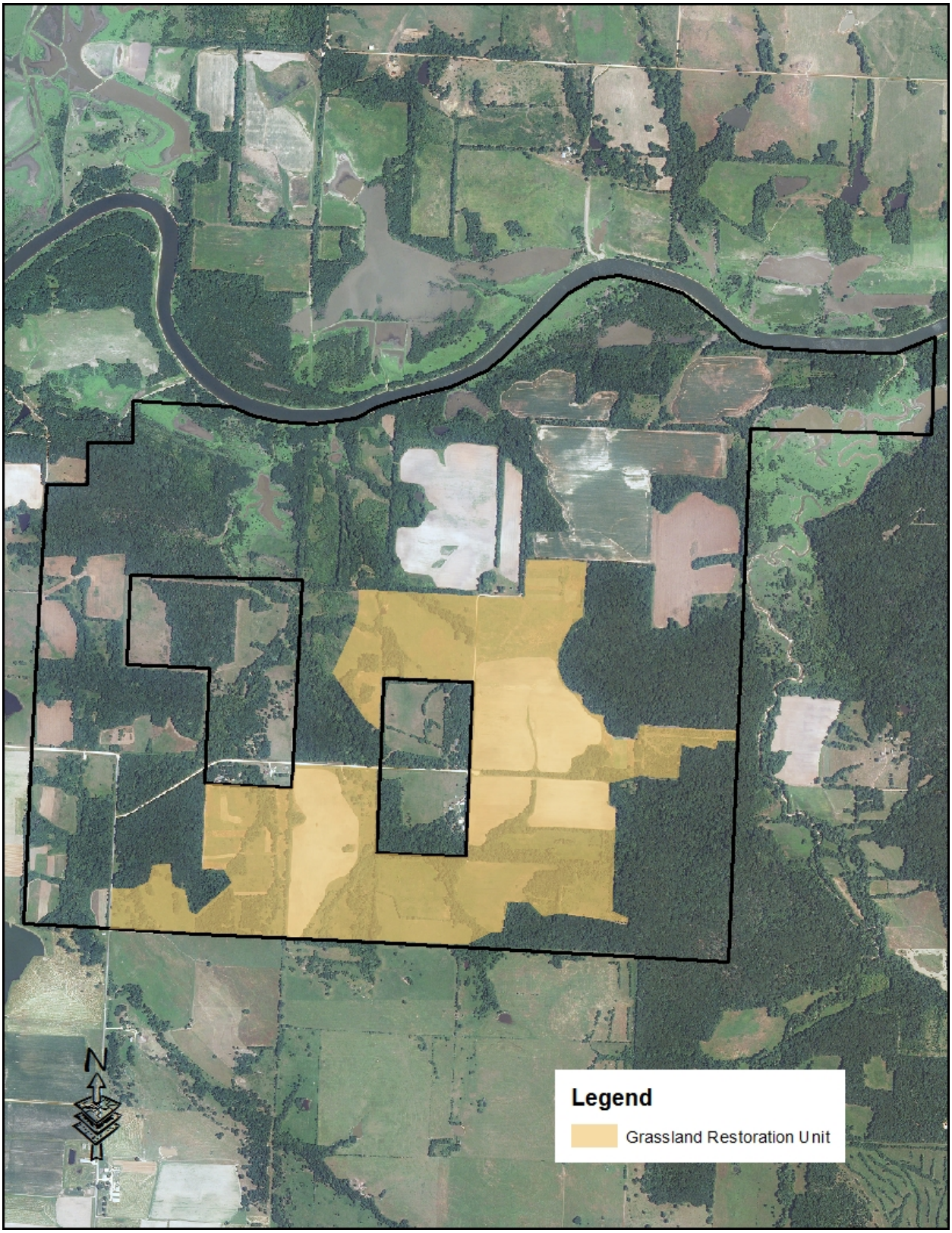


Figure 4: Potential Grassland Restoration Unit



Appendix A. Linscomb Wildlife Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

I am glad to see the grassland priority for this area, as it has a lot of potential. Ag fields to the north of the grassland restoration area need some edge feathering. I used to find some rabbit and quail at the edge of the large field directly to the north of this area, but the grassy borders have disappeared into fescue and row crops. Wildlife has followed suit. None of these large fields have any buffer areas. Let's get some edge feathering around these fields!
I am as familiar with Linscomb WA as anyone. I hunted it for many years before MDC aquired it and know that several areas were old growth timber. Mainly the far east and much of the far west sides. Excellent deer and turkey hunting were found in these areas. Last year I saw where MDC were removing trees to return prairie areas and I find what they did absurd and a play on my intelligence. Most of the areas where trees were removed it was done for harvestation. These areas were always timber. It should have been left alone.
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Linscomb Wildlife Area Management Plan. This CA is not listed as a priority for trail implementation in the 2015 SMMBCH Proposal to Expand Public Land Multi-Use Trails in Missouri. Although the Area is located in the underserved Cherokee Prairie Region, the Weaubleau Creek WMA was determined to be a preferable area for multi-use trail implementation. That being said, the size, predominantly upland landscape, and general absence of cultural, resource or safety conflicts make the Linscomb WA quite suitable for the development of a 10-12 mile trail system. Should the Weaubleau Creek WMA prove, for some reason, unsuitable for trail development the Linscomb Area would be a quite satisfactory substitute. Such a trail network would provide visitors with an opportunity to view and enjoy the varied cover types and associated wildlife. Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen offers, subject to availability of volunteers, to assist the Department to layout and mark trails and install or improve supporting infrastructure. Thank you for your due consideration and for the opportunity to comment.