

# Montrose Conservation Area

## Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2026



  
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Wildlife Division Chief

15 FEB 2017  
Date

## Montrose Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

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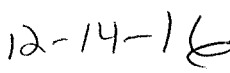
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### KANSAS CITY REGION

RCT Chair

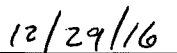
  
Signature

  
Date

### WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief

  
Signature

  
Date

## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Montrose Conservation Area #5604
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** In 1956, the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) purchased 51 acres. The Department began to lease 2,699 acres from Kansas City Power and Light in 1956 and amended the original lease in 1957.
- **Acreage:** 2,750 acres
- **County:** Henry
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - A. **Strategic Direction**

This area is to be managed primarily for waterfowl and its wetland complexes, while providing public recreation to the extent compatible with these resources and the 2007 lease agreement.
  - B. **Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Montrose Conservation Area (CA) is healthy natural communities that include mature forest, woodlands, upland, and wetland complexes.
  - 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:** 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. Existing Infrastructure

- Five parking lots, two are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible
- One concrete boat ramp
- Two gravel boat ramps
- Office/shop building/bunkhouse
- One storage building
- One storage shed

- One grain bin
- One well house
- Three privies (ADA accessible)
- Fourteen waterfowl blinds (one with ADA accessibility)
- Three slide gate water structures
- Seven agri-drain style stop log structures
- One sluice/slide/weir style structures
- One stop log style concrete water structures
- One radio tower
- One chemical shed
- Two primitive campgrounds
- Two miles of trails
- Story Hit Pit Lake (5.5 acres)
- Montrose Lake (1,600 acres)

**IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations**

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Owned by Kansas City Power and Light and the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department); 51 acres are owned by the Department, 2,699 acres are owned by Kansas City Power and Light and leased to the Department through a 20-year lease agreement renewed August 10, 2007. Restrictions outlined in the lease limit certain management activities related to farming, development projects, and public access.
- 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 rural water district has an easement for a waterline and meter located at the office driveway and RA Highway.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

#### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) The Department owns 51 acres where the office and buildings are located. The rest of the land managed by the Department is owned by Kansas City Power and Light. Restrictions outlined in the lease limit certain management activities related to farming, development projects, and public access.
- 2) Lake levels, and therefore waterfowl marshes and their management options, are controlled by Kansas City Power and Light, as outlined in the lease agreement.
- 3) Use of prescribed fire is limited due to the power plant and power lines radiating outward from the plant.
- 4) This area is populated with invasive species, including multiflora rose, autumn olive, Osage orange, black locust, tall fescue, sericea lespedeza, musk thistle, teasel, honeysuckles (Japanese and shrub), callery and Bradford pears, and perennial smartweed. Control and suppression of these species is an ongoing challenge.
- 5) The majority of Montrose CA is managed for waterfowl. The primary management focus is on the wetlands and the species that benefit from them. The warm-water outlet from the power plant holds open water, even in the coldest conditions. The food and cover provided by the wetland areas attract and keep waterfowl and non-game species (such as pelicans, cormorants, shorebirds, eagles, osprey, and others) on the area.
- 6) The upland portions of the area are managed for small game and songbirds with small food plots, manipulation of the old fields, and managing the few native plantings that have been allowed over the years. There are opportunities to increase plant diversity and promote forb growth, provide nesting, brood rearing, and forage.
- 7) The forested communities are generally of poor quality due to past disturbances from strip-mining and invasive species populations.

**Management Objective 1:** Provide food and nesting and brood cover for waterfowl species during fall hunting seasons and migration periods. Provide nesting and brood-rearing cover for resident waterfowl species.

**Strategy 1:** Plant food plots and create early successional disturbances annually. Rotate crops to maintain soil health and leave a portion of these acres fallow each year to increase early successional habitat acres for wildlife. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Control and suppress invasive species in the wetland/marsh areas. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Provide food, nesting cover, brood cover, and winter cover for upland species.

**Strategy 1:** Provide food and cover, especially for rabbits and songbirds, by planting food plots and disturbing old fields and native plantings. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Monitor, treat, and suppress invasive plants in the uplands. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 3:** Improve the health of forest and woodland communities to benefit wildlife and increase diversity of natural communities.

**Strategy 1:** Perform woodland management on higher quality stands to remove or deaden less desirable tree species, where they are competing with hard mast species. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Suppress invasive species as time and budget allow, in areas that will benefit from further management. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 4:** Maintain bottomland hardwood habitat and wooded riparian corridors.

**Strategy 1:** Identify locations where forested stream corridors need improvement or where cleared bottomland could be converted to hardwoods. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Plant trees or use direct seeding to establish mast producing trees species that will benefit wildlife. (Wildlife)

## VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations:

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) The primary aquatic feature of Montrose CA is Montrose Lake, a 1,600-acre cooling lake owned by Kansas City Power and Light. The fisheries and aquatic resources are managed by the Department under a 20-year lease agreement. Montrose Lake is an impoundment on Deepwater Creek. The lake contains many fish native to the region. Primary game fish include channel and flathead catfish, largemouth bass, and crappie. Over time the lake has been managed for largemouth and hybrid striped bass.
- 2) Montrose Lake has experienced high levels of siltation due to upstream land use practices, primarily row crop agriculture.
- 3) Montrose Lake has experienced water quality issues tied to power plant operations.
- 4) Approximately 2 miles of Deepwater Creek run through the conservation area upstream of Montrose Lake. The stream is influenced by Montrose Dam and the Department managed wetlands within the area. The stream has experienced high levels of siltation due to upstream land use practices.

- 5) Deepwater Creek, directly below Montrose Dam, has experienced water quality and fish health issues related to Montrose Dam operation.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain and improve the quality of the flathead catfish population as outlined in *Managing Missouri's Catfish – A Statewide Catfish Management Plan* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2003).

**Strategy 1:** Annually sample the lake's fish populations (e.g., flathead catfish, sunfish, and catfish). Collect data on the lake's flathead catfish population, such as population size structure, and growth and harvest rates. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Conduct additional sampling to further investigate the potential for maintaining and improving flathead catfish quality. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 3:** Manage aquatic vegetation at levels beneficial to fish populations. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 2:** Maintain and improve sportfish populations.

**Strategy 1:** Sample sportfish populations annually. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain and increase aquatic vegetation at levels beneficial to fish populations. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 3:** Improve water quality in Deepwater Creek and Montrose Lake.

**Strategy 1:** Work with Kansas City Power and Light and Missouri Department of Natural Resources to prevent, minimize, and mitigate future water quality issues. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Facilitate a working relationship with landowners in the Deepwater Creek watershed, upstream of Montrose Lake, in an effort to educate landowners on land use practices that reduce erosion. (Fisheries, Private Land Services)

## VII. Public Use Management Considerations

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Management opportunities exist for a diversity of habitats and wildlife species to provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing.
- 2) Provide and pursue improvements to the waterfowl hunting program.
- 3) There are opportunities for school and civic groups to fish, hunt, and camp through the special use permit guidelines.
- 4) Continue to build relationships with Kansas City Power and Light and neighboring landowners.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain the area's amenities to provide public users with quality hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain parking lots, trails, and roads to aid area users in accessing the area's food plots, natural communities, and recreational opportunities.

(Wildlife, Design and Development)

**Strategy 2:** Follow the guidelines of the Montrose lease agreement for permitted activities. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Maintain positive relationships with neighboring landowners and Kansas City Power and Light.

**Strategy 1:** Work with neighbors to minimize boundary and trespass issues.

Maintain positive relationships with neighboring landowners. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Partner with Kansas City Power and Light on projects that will improve area use, wildlife, and management capabilities. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Assist neighbors with wildlife damage issues and offer expertise in land management. (Wildlife, Protection)

**Management Objective 3:** Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Provide up-to-date maps and information to the public about area opportunities. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Communicate to teachers and other youth leaders the possibilities for educational programs on the area. (Wildlife, Outdoor Skills Specialist)

**Management Objective 4:** Maintain the boat ramps in a usable condition that will meet the high demand of area users.

**Strategy 1:** Keep ramps clear of trash and debris in a timely manner, especially during times of peak use. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Remove heavy silt deposits at boat launches. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

**Strategy 3:** Repair rock ramps periodically to improve accessibility, as needed. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

**Management Objective 5:** Provide a variety of waterfowl hunting opportunities that is consistent with the standards of all the Department's intensively managed wetlands.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain blinds and wade-and-shoot areas so they provide a diversity of quality hunting opportunities. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Provide ADA-accessible waterfowl hunting opportunities that include blinds and daily reservations. (Wildlife)



## VIII. Administrative Considerations

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Costs of area management and maintenance continue to increase annually.
- 2) Several portions of Montrose Conservation Area are completely surrounded by private property and are not easily accessible by the Department or the public.
- 3) The current lease agreement with Kansas City Power and Light is for 20 years with an option for 10 more years. The amount and location of acres leased to the Department has changed in the past when previous agreements expired.
- 4) Kansas City Power and Light has plans to completely stop coal fired electricity generation by 2021.
- 5) Consider land acquisition, when available.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with the Department and Kansas City Power and Light lease agreement guidelines, and at currently identified maintenance level. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

**Management Objective 2:** Maintain lease agreement with Kansas City Power and Light.

**Strategy 1:** Follow all the terms that are outlined in the current lease agreement. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Renew lease Aug. 10, 2027 with the option to extend for 10 years per section (h) of current lease agreement. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Evaluate lease if power plant is shut down. (Wildlife)

### **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.

## **MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE**

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

In the early 1950s, Kansas City Power and Light bought nearly 4,000 acres of land along Deepwater Creek in Henry County as a site for a coal-fired electrical generating plant and created a 1,600-acre lake to provide the water necessary to cool the plant. The dam of the relatively shallow lake was closed Dec. 14, 1955, and completely filled in 60 days.

Montrose Conservation Area (CA) was established in 1956 and managed for public use under a lease amended in 1957 to the Department. The original lease totaled approximately 3,600 acres with an initial emphasis on fishing. During the 1960s and 1970s, emphasis on the area changed to waterfowl management, and several wetland units were developed adjacent to the 1,600-acre Montrose Lake to enhance wetland habitat and provide improved management ability. The Department signed a new lease for 20 years with an option to extend for 10 years in Aug. 10, 2007. The current lease totals 2,699 acres and will continue to be managed for public use. The Department owns 51 acres of Montrose CA, where the office and buildings are located.

Montrose Lake offers good fishing (especially for catfish) due to its flow of warm water from the generating plant. It has become a favorite waterfowl location; large concentrations of ducks and geese visit the area each winter.

### Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Lakes/Ponds	1,600		58
Forest and Woodland	500		18
Wetlands	300		11
Old Field	125		4
Open Fields	95		3
Grassland	75		3
Roads/Structures	50		2
Native Prairie	5		<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2750</b>		<b>100</b>
Stream Frontage		5	

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Montrose Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period July 1–31, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from three respondents (Appendix A). The Montrose 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 the Montrose Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

**Suggests adding managed fields for dove hunting.**

Dove management attempts on Montrose CA have never yielded great results. Previously, fields saw little bird use and only a few hunters as a result. Management efforts at Montrose CA are focused on other places with managed dove fields nearby include Truman Lake Management Lands and Settle's Ford CA.

**Suggests sowing millet in low areas to provide waterfowl food.**

Millet is currently planted or occurs naturally along with other moist-soil plants when conditions are favorable. Montrose lake elevations (controlled by Kansas City Power & Light operations) often prevent staff from fully dewatering wetland pools, which is needed to establish millet plantings and encourage desirable moist-soil plants.

**Suggests restoring hiking trail on north side of Montrose CA.**

Area staff no longer has equipment small enough to mow and maintain the portion of the former hiking trail that went through the woods on the west side of Camp Creek. The portion of the trail on the east side of Camp Creek is currently maintained as an access road that could also be used for hiking or public access. We plan to assess the feasibility to construct an access road on the west side of Camp Creek that could provide public access and used for hiking.

**Kansas City Power and Light appreciates the opportunity to provide a public recreation area by working with the Department.**

The area planning team echoes this statement. Missouri Department of Conservation and Kansas City Power and Light have maintained a strong relationship and have partnered to provide citizens with a variety of outdoor experiences.

**References:**

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2003), *Managing Missouri's catfish – A statewide catfish management plan*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

**Maps:**

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial and Easement Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Land Cover Map

**Additional Appendices:**

Appendix A. Montrose Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

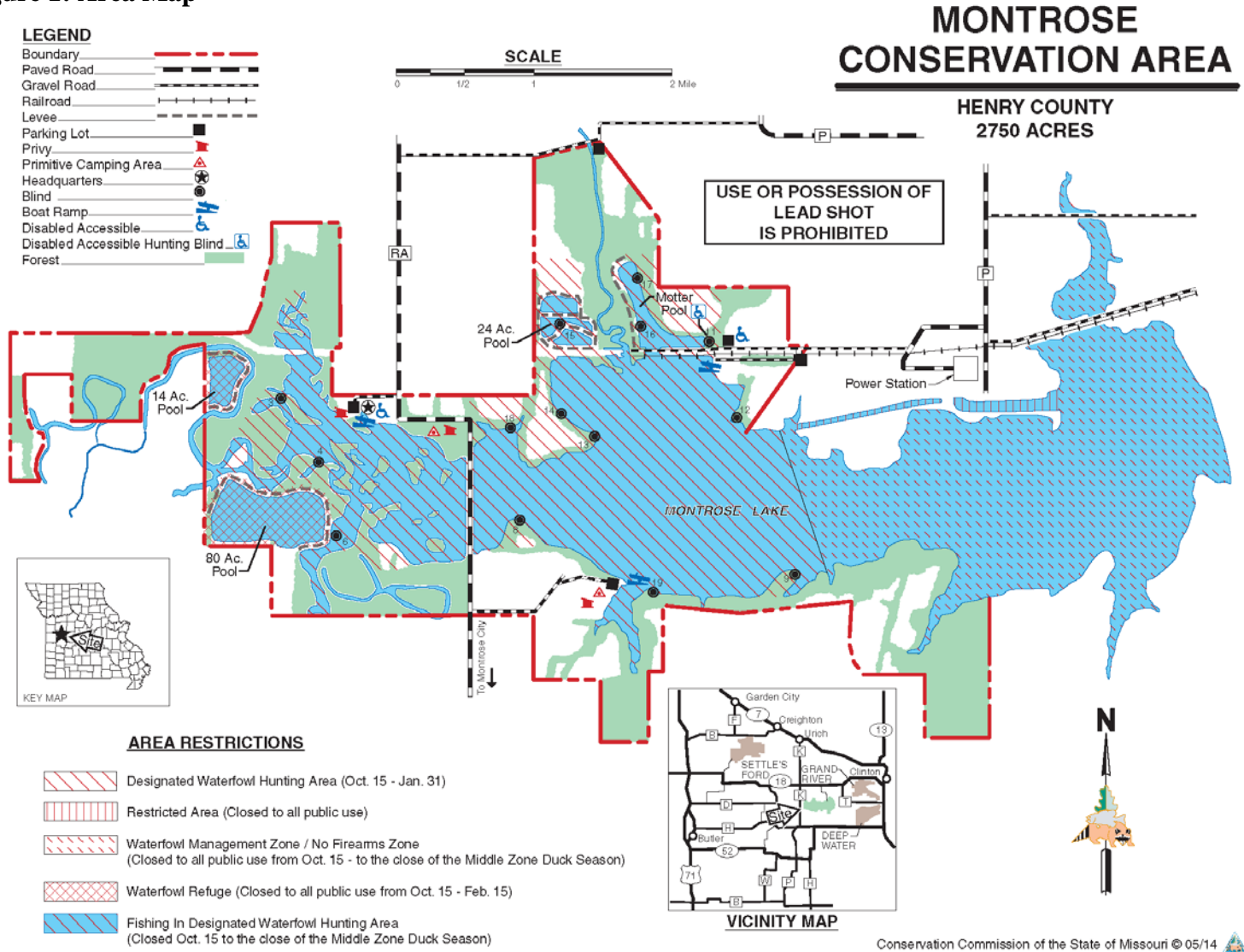


Figure 2: Aerial and Easement Map



Figure 3: Topographic Map

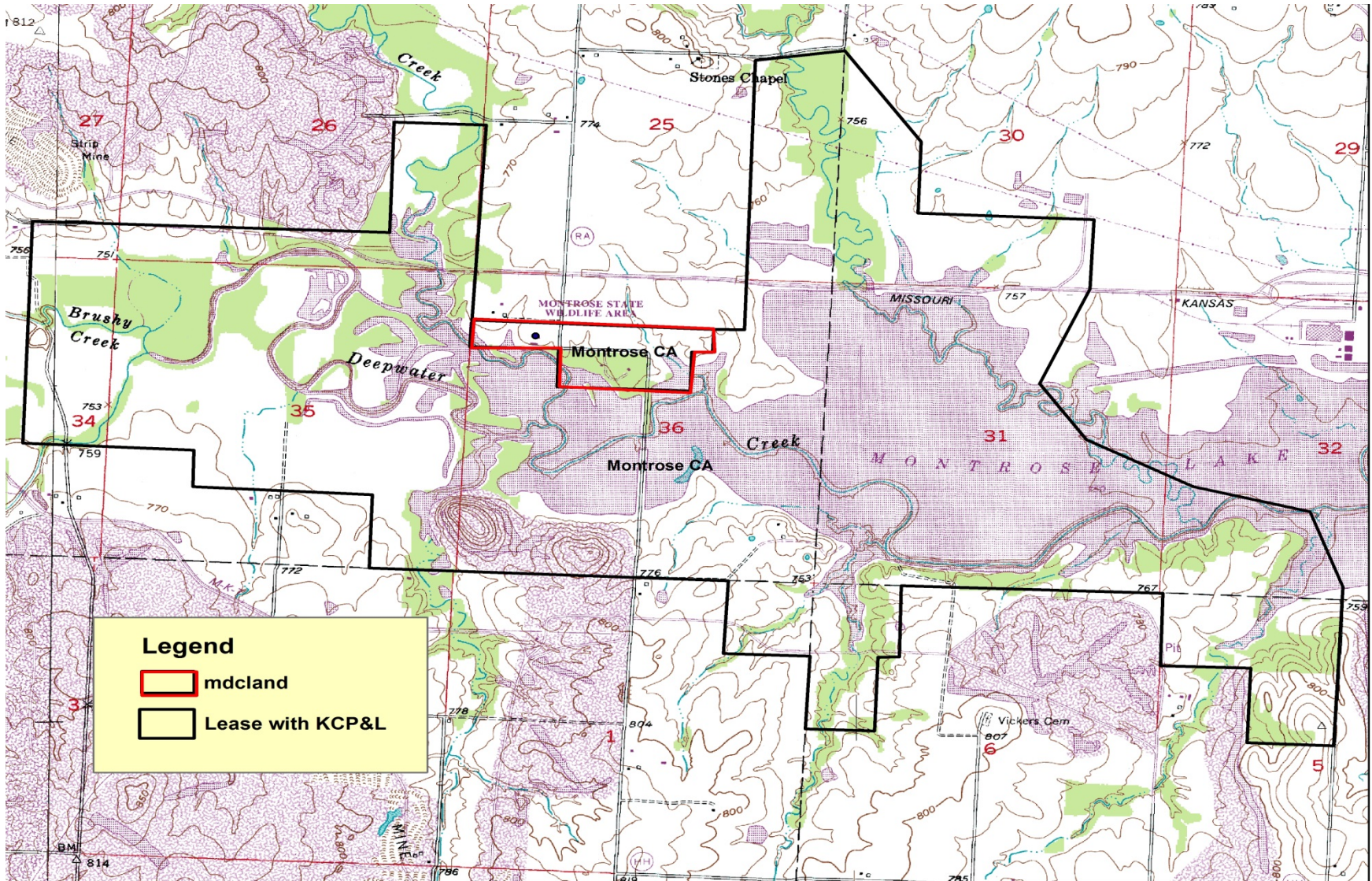
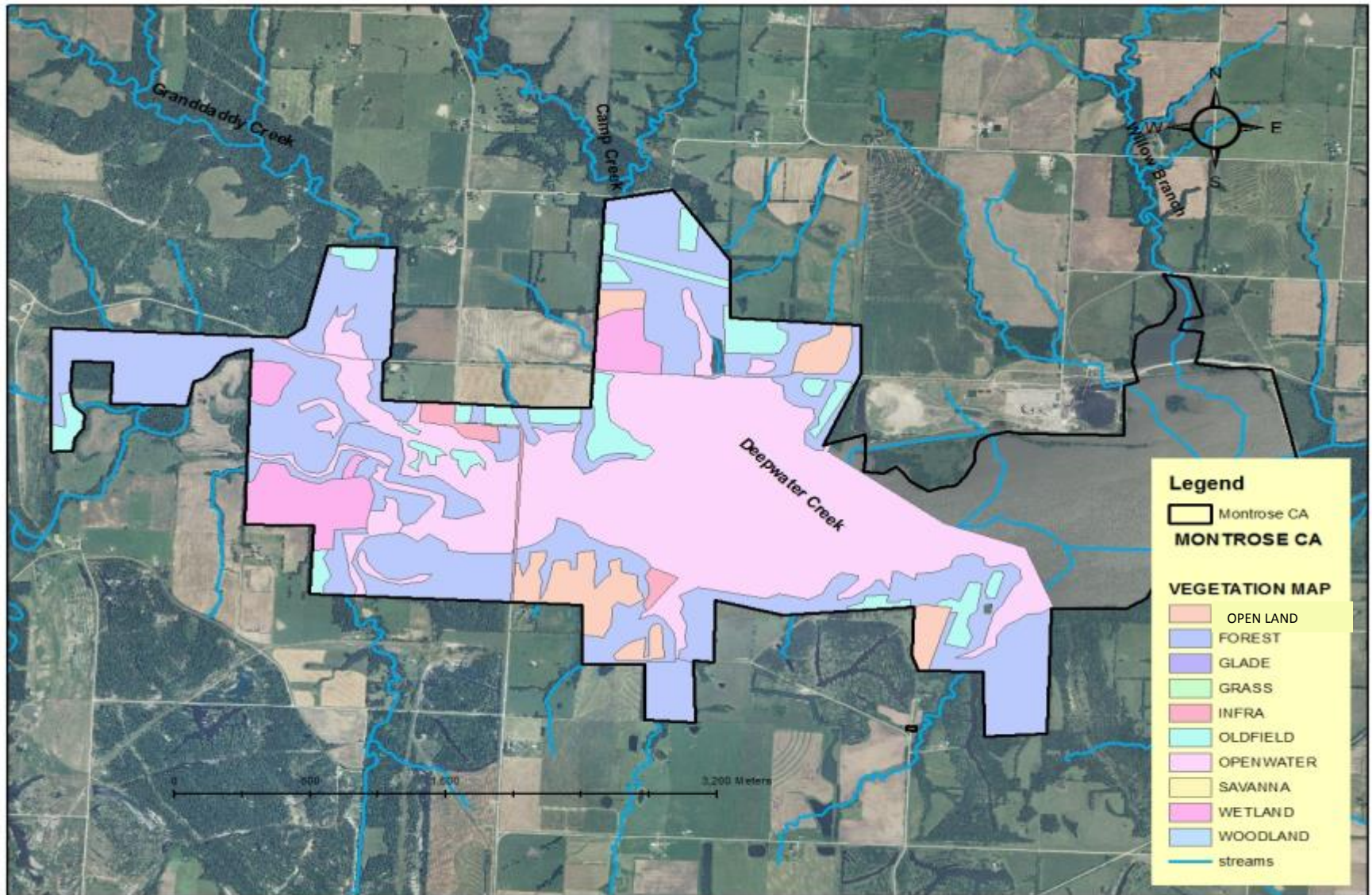


Figure 4: Land Cover Map





## Appendix A. Montrose Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (July 1-31, 2016):

I am very disappointed that there isn't anything in the plan to restore the hiking trail on the north end of the area. The trail used to be maintained and made access to the forest area convenient for hunting squirrels, turkey, and deer. The area is so overgrown now that you can barely walk through it. Some of the old signs are still on the trail and the area looks horrible.

Area Management should include managed fields for dove hunting.

Where possible low areas should be sowed with millet to provide waterfowl food.

Kansas City Power & Light Company (KCP&L) announced in January of 2015 our plan to cease combusting coal in 2021 at Montrose Generating Station to comply with pending environmental regulations. Currently, KCP&L is still considering its options on how to manage the site, including the lake, after that date.

KCP&L has appreciated the opportunity to provide a public recreation area for our customers by working with the Missouri Department of Conservation.