

Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2018-2027



Lisa B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

2-28-18

Date

Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Matthew E. Jones, Resource Forester

Mark McLain, Wildlife Management Biologist

Paul Cieslewicz, Fisheries Management Biologist

William Barton, Conservation Agent

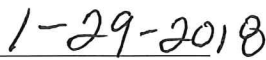
Pat Holloway, Education Consultant

Bruce Henry, Natural History Biologist

SOUTHEAST REGION

RCT Chair


Signature


Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief


Signature


Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area, #7602
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1949
- **Acreage:** 4,877
- **County:** Iron, Reynolds
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Purpose**

The purpose of Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area (CA) is to provide the public with outdoor recreational opportunities, protect natural features, ensure healthy sustainable forests, and enhance wildlife habitat diversity.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Ketcherside Mountain CA is a healthy ecosystem that provides a variety of forest and woodland habitats, complimented by quality glade habitat.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

A. Priority Areas: St. Francois Knobs Forest and Woodland Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), St. Francois Knobs Glades and Woodland COA, Priority Forest Landscape, Big Creek Fisheries Priority Watershed

B. Natural Areas:

- **St. Francois Mountains Natural Area** (7,028 acres) encompasses portions of Ketcherside Mountain (1,600 acres) as well as Taum Sauk Mountain and Johnson's Shut-Ins State Parks. This rugged natural area includes the tallest wet-weather waterfall in Missouri (Mina Sauk Falls), the tallest point in Missouri (Taum Sauk Mountain at 1,772 feet), and the State's deepest valley through which flows Taum Sauk Creek, an Outstanding State Resource Water. Nearly 400 native plant species have been documented from the natural area that contains outstanding igneous glades, woodlands, and forests. The area supports a diverse array of reptile, amphibian, and bird species.
- **Royal Gorge Natural Area** (80 acres) contains an outstanding example of an igneous shut-ins geologic feature along Big Creek along with igneous glades and stunted old-growth trees.

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:** Yes, records kept with Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) natural history biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the Department 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:** Yes, records kept with the Department natural history biologist.
- D. Other:** Glades and woodlands are scattered throughout the property.

III. Existing Infrastructure

- Four parking areas (1 Americans with Disability Act [ADA] accessible, gravel lot with concrete pad)
- 15 fishless ponds/wildlife watering holes (about 3 acres total)
- One shop building
- One fire lookout tower
- Ozark Trail (6.2 mile hiking trail)
- Royal Gorge Trail (2.3 mile hiking trail)
- One ADA privy
- Nine radio towers and associated sheds

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:** Easements and agreements for radio towers and equipment sheds have been granted to the Federal Aviation Agency, U.S. Forest Service, Missouri Department of Transportation, Iron County Emergency Management, Doe Run Inc., Ameren Missouri, and Union Pacific Railroad. M&A Electric has a 100-footwide electrical line easement for 8,300 feet. Ameren has a 100-footwide electrical line easement for 14,400 feet. The Missouri Department of Transportation has right of way easements for Highways 21 and CC.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records 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: Endangered species are known from this area. Area managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the natural history biologist.

F. Boundary Issues: None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

The forest type is typical of the Ozarks and is comprised primarily of oak, hickory, and shortleaf pine on the uplands. The hollow bottoms exhibit an abundance of maple and black gum. The understory species are typically dogwood, sassafras, and assorted shrubs. There is an abundant amount of glade and woodland habitat present, especially on the Proffit Mountain Tract. The Derecho of May 2009 blew down a considerable number of trees throughout most of the area. No salvaging was done because the heaviest blown down areas were in locations that were inaccessible to logging equipment. Except for one burning of a glade, no prescribed burning has been done since 2009 due to the heavy fuel load created by blown down trees. The entire conservation area lies within the St. Francois Knobs Conservation Opportunity Area. There is a large population of feral hogs on the conservation area and surrounding lands.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Improve the woodland/glade complex.
- 2) Improve woodland and forest health.
- 3) Reduce feral hog population.

Management Objective 1: Protect and enhance igneous glade/woodland complexes.

Strategy 1: Conduct forest inventories in the woodland and forested areas periodically to collect data on forest health, tree composition and density.
(Forestry)

Strategy 2: Reduce woody vegetation and increase abundance and diversity of herbaceous vegetation, using prescribed fire, mechanical, and or chemical methods. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Monitor and evaluate results of management to determine fire frequency. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 4: Develop additional burn units based on the evaluation of prior burns.
(Forestry, Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain or improve woodland and forest health.

Strategy 1: Explore temporary access opportunities across neighboring landowners. If access is granted, conduct a forest inventory in the accessible areas and implement management prescriptions. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Reduce feral hog population.

Strategy 1: Follow the guidelines of the Department *Five Year Feral Hog Operation Plan* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2012). (Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

The intermittent headwater tributaries on Ketcherside Mountain CA drain into the St. Francis River basin. The intermediate headwater tributaries on the Proffit Mountain Tract drain into the Black River basin. The steep wet weather stream channels on the conservation area support few, if any fish communities. The high gradient streams do, however, generate enough energy to transport heavy sediment loads during periods of wet weather. The stream resource on the area is not significant in terms of providing angling opportunities. A species of conservation concern has been identified in two streams on the conservation area. The Department has conducted monitoring of the species in the past. Scattered small wildlife watering holes do not provide angling opportunities, but will continue to be managed for reptile and amphibian use.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Steep drainages produce high flow rates and carry high sediment loads during precipitation events.

Management Objective 1: Minimize any negative impacts from management activities on the steep drainage areas.

Strategy 1: Where feasible, use drainages as burn unit boundaries and keep burn lines a safe distance upslope of the center of the drainage. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: During management activities (conducting fire lines with dozers or harvesting timber) implement best management practices to prevent soil erosion according to the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practices Recommended for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Approximately 3 miles of the Ozark Trail bisects the Proffit Mountain Tract from east to west. Another 3.6 miles of the Ozark Trail crosses the conservation area from Russell Mountain down to the trailhead on Highway 21. Another hiking trail crosses through the Royal Gorge Natural Area. The area gets moderate use for hunting. Turkey hunters especially enjoy the area. Negative impact uses of the area include all-terrain-vehicle use, which is not allowed, and periodic vandalism.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Increase public access to the area.

Management Objective 1: Increase vehicle access to the area.

Strategy 1: Evaluate the possibility of developing additional parking lots on the area. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Improve hiking opportunities on the area.

Strategy 1: Explore the feasibility of constructing a foot bridge and short trail to connect the Royal Gorge Parking Lot to the Royal Gorge Trail. (Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Ensure that boundary lines are easily identifiable.

Management Objective 1: Maintain boundary lines so that they are easily identifiable

Strategy 1: Maintain signs and re-paint the boundary lines every five years, or sooner, if the paint begins to fade. (Forestry)

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
Terrestrial Resource Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1	X	X	X		X		X		X	
Strategy 2		X		X		X		X		
Strategy 3						X				
Strategy 4		X				X				
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1				X						
Public Use Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1		X								
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1	X									
Administrative Considerations										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1	X					X				

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area (CA) is in Iron County, approximately 4 miles south of Ironton, Missouri. The conservation area totals 4,877 acres with 3,437 acres in Iron County and 1,440 acres in Reynolds County.

The first tract of land was purchased in 1949 for the purpose of constructing a fire lookout tower on Taum Sauk Mountain. In order to access the fire tower, the Department constructed a four-mile road from Highway 21. That road later became Highway CC. Over time other tracts were purchased and Ketcherside Mountain CA was established in 1977. In 1972 the estate of an Ironton resident donated land to the Department that became Proffit Mountain CA. In the early 2000s Proffit Mountain merged into the Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area. No federal funds were used to purchase any of the land.

Elevations range from 930 feet above sea level to 1,759 feet above sea level. Three of the highest mountains in Missouri are part of the conservation area: the 1,698-foot Ketcherside Mountain, the 1,700-foot Proffit Mountain, and the highest point in the state, the 1,772-foot Taum Sauk Mountain. The highest point on Taum Sauk Mountain is on the adjacent Taum Sauk Mountain State Park. The fire tower is the only fire tower in the state with a catwalk around the cab and is on the Register of Historic Fire Towers. It is a very popular tourist destination.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	4,800		98
Glade	77		2
Total	4,877		100
Stream Frontage		0	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period December 1–31, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from one respondent (Appendix A). The Ketcherside Mountain 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 Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

Concerned about the fuel load from the May 2009 derecho (windstorm).

Area personnel are just as concerned about the heavy fuel loads that have accumulated due to the 2009 derecho. Several attempts have been made to reduce the fuel loads, particularly the larger fuels, but the main obstacle has been legal access to the hardest hit areas. Due to the terrain and location of the hardest hit areas, Department personnel cannot access portions of Ketcherside CA unless we gain access across private land. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, access is not always granted. We will continue to pursue partnerships with our adjacent landowners so we can properly manage the natural resources Ketcherside has to offer.

Encourages using timber harvest as a management tool.

Ketcherside CA offers unique challenges that often hinder our ability to conduct commercial timber sales; with the primary challenge being terrain. Due to the steep, rugged terrain that primarily comprises Ketcherside CA, equipment can only be brought in from a few access points. Most of the access to the area is through private property. While we continue to try to form partnerships with adjacent private landowners, in most cases we are not granted access across private property. We will continue to pursue partnerships with our neighboring landowners.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2012). *Missouri Department of Conservation 5 year feral hog operational plan*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

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

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: St. Francois Mountains Natural Area Map

Figure 3: Royal Gorge Natural Area Map

Figure 4: Land Cover Map

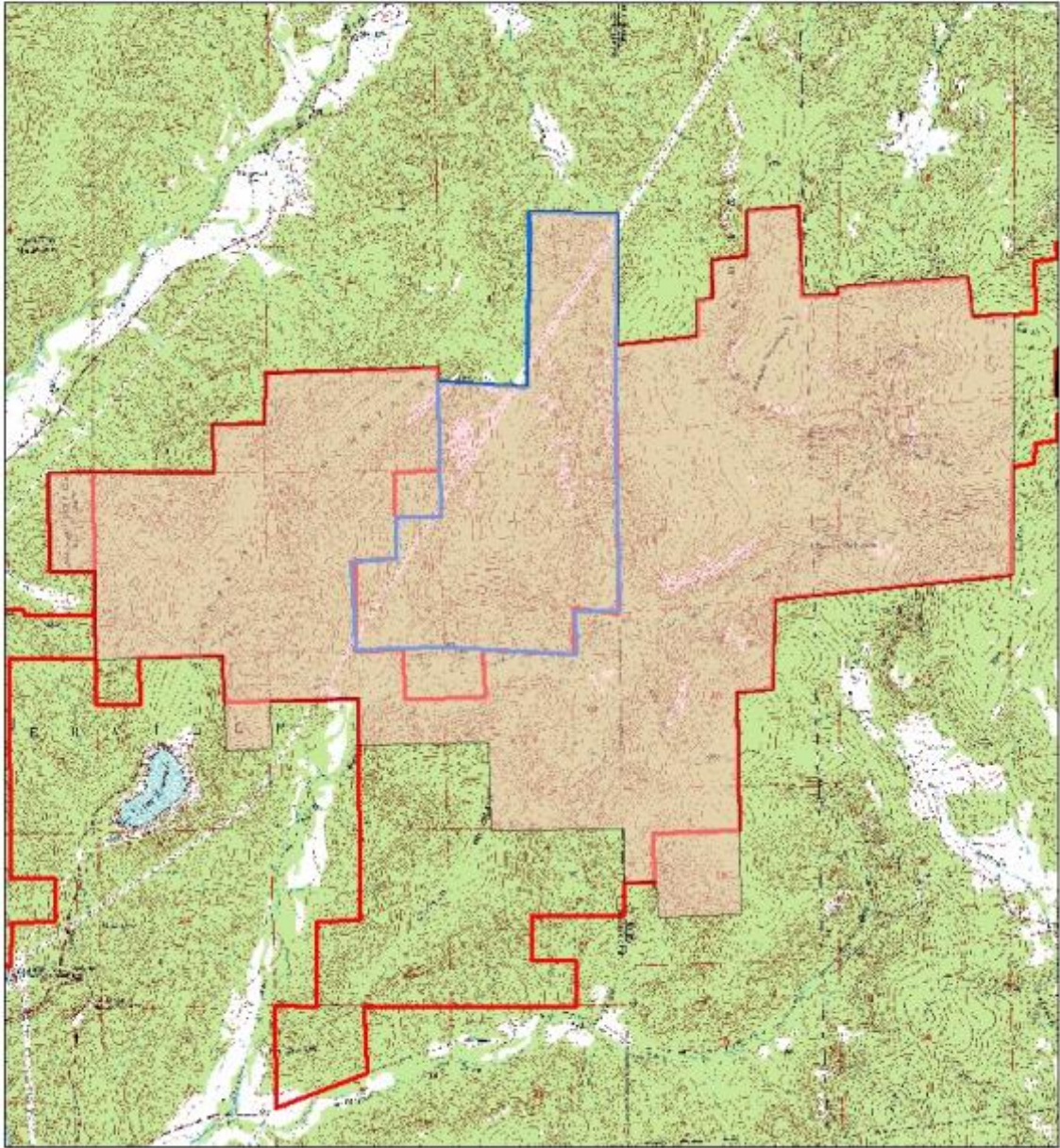
Figure 5: Easement Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 2: St. Francois Mountains Natural Area Map

Ketcherside Mt. C.A. St. Francois Mountains Natural Area



1:50,000

Legend

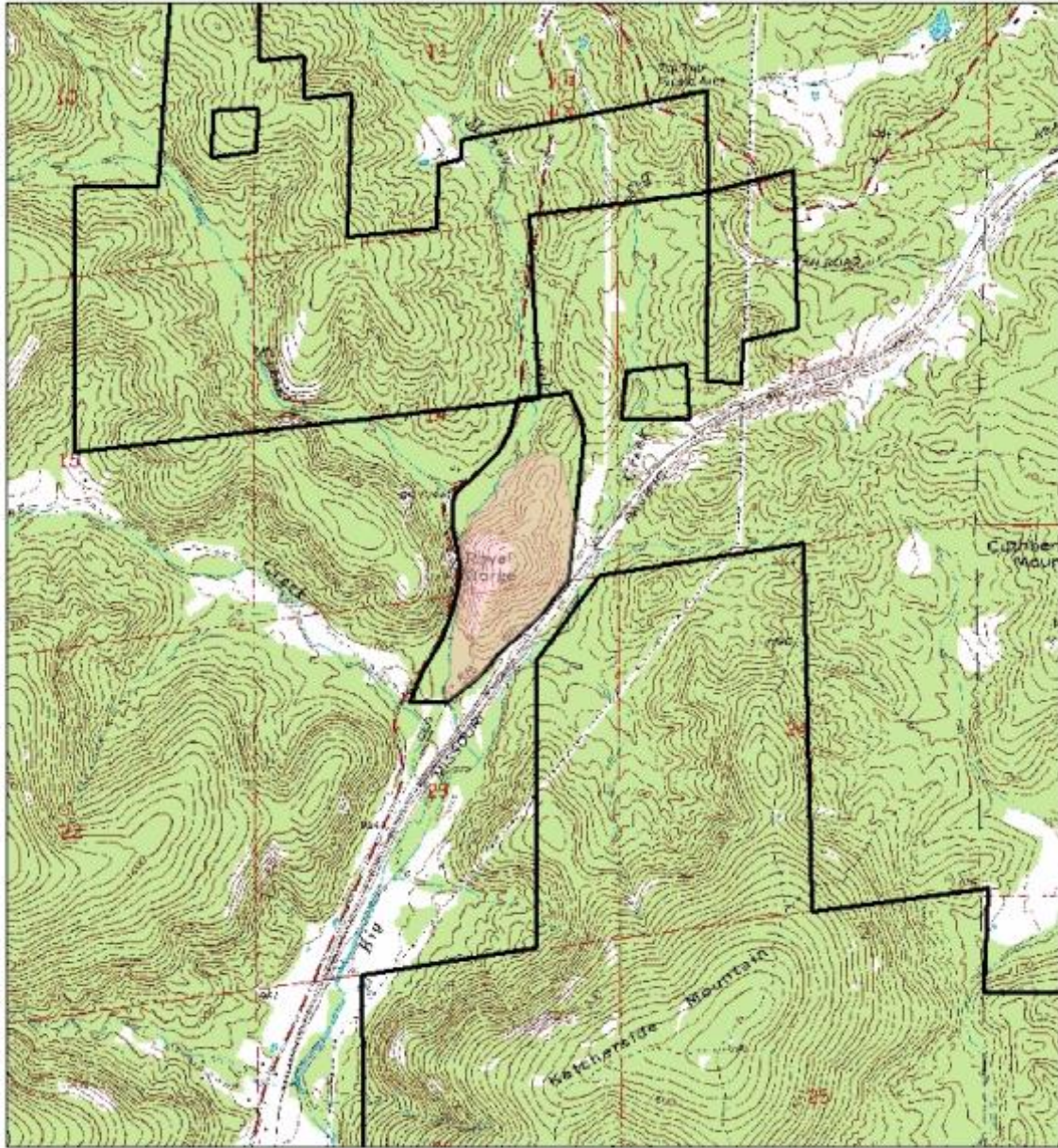
- St. Francois Mountains N.A.
- profitmountain
- Dnr



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Figure 3: Royal Gorge Natural Area Map

Ketcherside Mt. C.A. Royal Gorge Natural Area



1:24,000

Legend

- Royal Gorge N.A.
- ketchersidemountain



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Figure 4: Land Cover Map

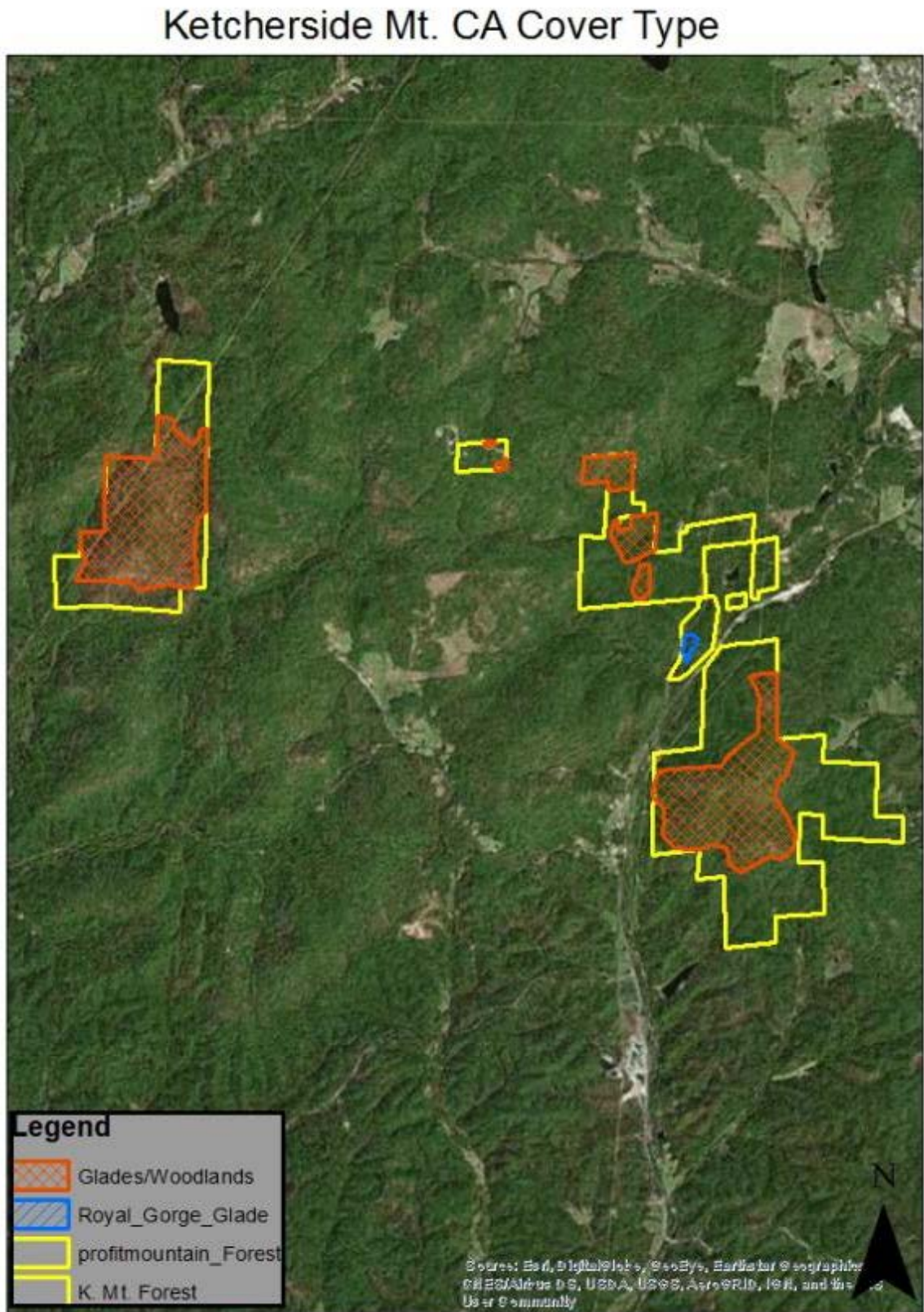
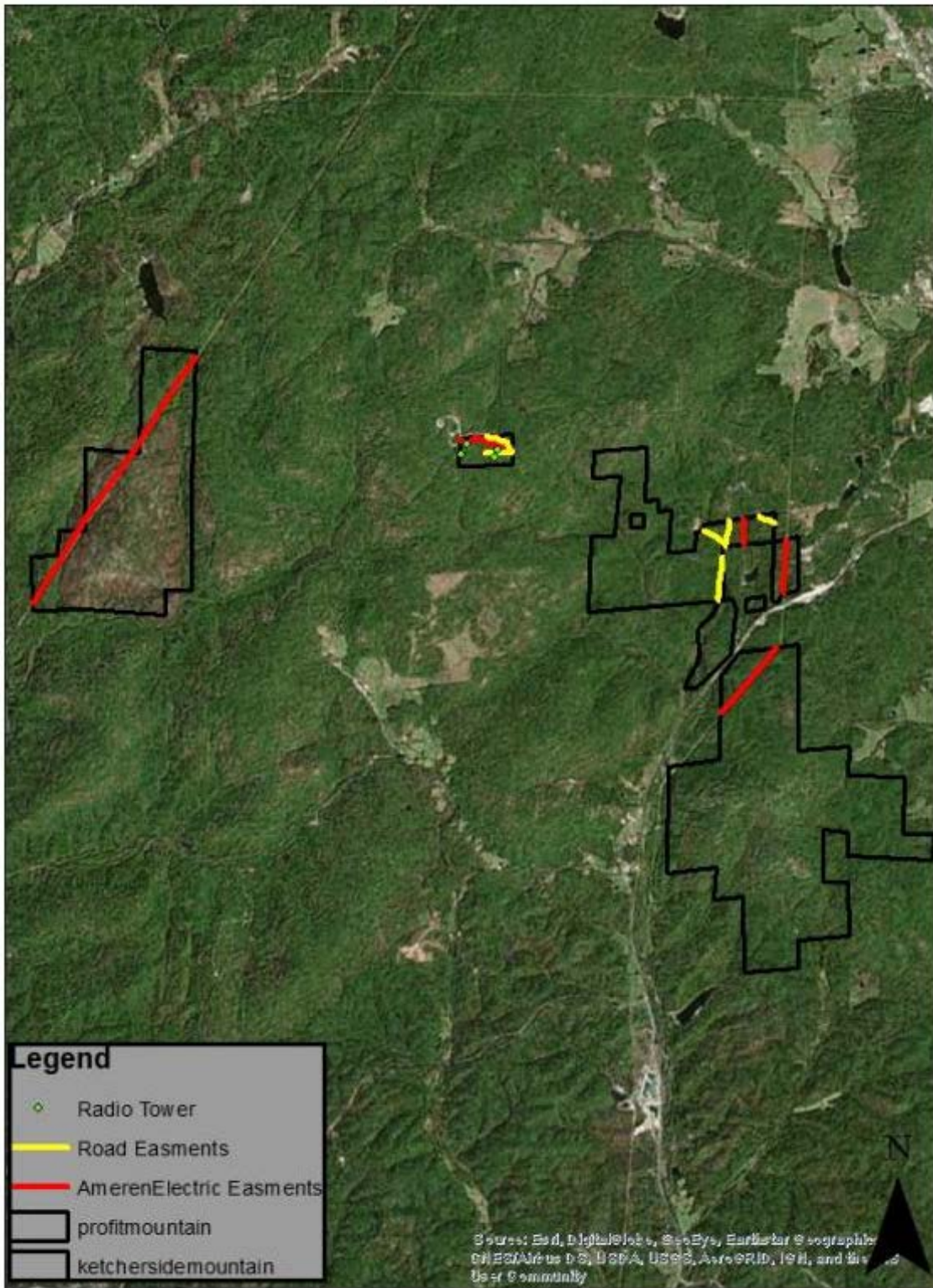


Figure 5: Easement Map

Easement Map Ketcherside Mt. CA



Appendix A: Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

I am a former resident of Iron county, and grew up in the Glover area. My Dad and I spent a lot of time on Ketcherside Mountain in the late 60's and 70's. He especially enjoyed hiking and scouting the "Ketcherside Gap" area.

Overall, I think the management plans are sound. It concerns me that the fuel load created by the 2009 derecho is still in place. I understand from talking to US Forest people that this has created extremely hot and difficult to contain fires in other parts of Reynolds county. I am glad to see that addressing that is part of the plan. I recall seeing Ketcherside burn a number of times and it was during one of those times that my Dad helped me to understand that the health of the forest was improved by the burns.

Dad was also in the logging business, and I would encourage that to be part of the plan as well. Harvesting timber is still an important resource to the local economy and to the degree that it can be done without adding to the erosion problems noted, it should be continued.

Overall, I have great confidence in MDC's ability to manage these beautiful wild resources for generations to come. Please keep the area as accessible as possible in a controlled fashion that will preserve it's pristine beauty.

Thank you for all you do to conserve Missouri's heritage and resources, and the for opportunity to comment.