

# LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Areas

## Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2018-2032



*Michael D. Schaefer*

Wildlife Division Chief

*7/19/18*

Date

**LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Areas Management Plan  
Approval Page**

**PLANNING TEAM**

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**NORTHEAST REGION**

RCT Chair

  
Signature

7/12/2018  
Date

**WILDLIFE DIVISION**

Wildlife Management Chief

  
Signature

7/18/2018  
Date

## OVERVIEW

| Area Name                           | Area Number | Year Acquired | Acreage | County   | Administrative Responsibility | Maintenance Responsibility |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------|----------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| LaBelle Lake Conservation Area (CA) | 200402      | 2004          | 334     | Lewis    | Wildlife                      | Forestry                   |
| Ella Ewing Lake CA                  | 6719        | 1967          | 60      | Scotland | Wildlife                      | Forestry                   |

### Statements of Purpose:

#### A. Strategic Direction

These areas were purchased to provide public fishing opportunities and other recreational activities. Management of the upland portions of these areas focus on encouraging healthy populations of turkey, deer, quail, rabbits, and associated non-game species; conserving and enhancing water quality, upland forests, grasslands, diverse natural communities; and providing compatible outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.

#### B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Areas (CAs) are healthy oak woodland and grassland communities that improve water quality; while providing increased public use opportunities.

#### C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

### I. Special Considerations

| Area Name          | Priority Areas                                  | Natural Areas |
|--------------------|---|---------------|
| LaBelle Lake CA    | South Fabius River Fisheries Priority Watershed | None          |
| Ella Ewing Lake CA | None  | None          |

### II. Important Natural Features and Resources

| Area Name          | Species of Conservation Concern | Caves | Springs |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------|---------|
| LaBelle Lake CA    | None                            | None  | None    |
| Ella Ewing Lake CA | None                            | None  | None    |

### III. Existing Infrastructure

| Area Name          | Parking Lots   | Privies        | Concrete Boat Ramps | Lakes/Ponds   | Other  |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| LaBelle Lake CA    | 3 <sup>1</sup> | 2 <sup>1</sup> | 1                   | LaBelle Lake (112-acre fishing lake), four fishless ponds | Fishing dock <sup>1</sup> , pavilion, campground with six individual gravel camping pads |
| Ella Ewing Lake CA | 2              | 1              | 1                   | Ella Ewing Lake (12-acre fishing lake)                    | Camping is allowed on or adjacent to graveled parking areas.                             |

<sup>1</sup>Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible

### IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

| Area Name          | Deed Restrictions | Ease-ments       | Federal Interest | Cultural Resources | Endangered Species | Boundary Issues |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| LaBelle Lake CA    | Yes <sup>1</sup>  | Yes <sup>2</sup> | Yes <sup>4</sup> | None               | None               | None            |
| Ella Ewing Lake CA | None              | Yes <sup>3</sup> | Yes <sup>4</sup> | None               | None               | None            |

<sup>1</sup>The deed states: “Federal funding administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service was provided for the acquisition of the above described property. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service reserves the right to approve the change of ownership or use notwithstanding conflict with state law.”

<sup>2</sup>The Northeast Missouri Electrical Power Cooperative holds easement rights for a series of powerlines stretching across the area. The City of LaBelle holds a perpetual easement for a waterline running along the west boundary of the conservation area. The adjoining landowners, through continued use in excess of 10 years, have a prescriptive easement for a roadway 30 feet wide for field access.

<sup>3</sup>Easement for permanent storage and temporary detention of impounded waters from a Public Law 566 project through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

<sup>4</sup>Federal funds were used in the development of this area, or a portion thereof. The Department must maintain the developed project throughout its useful life. 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.

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

#### Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The open land portions of LaBelle Lake CA are fertile, some of which provide the opportunity to produce crops. These acres supplement natural food supplies, provide cover for wildlife, and create more hunting and viewing opportunities for area users. Crop production also sets back succession and makes areas more attractive for ground nesting birds. Fertile soils result in dense vegetation layers at the ground level, unless they are constantly disturbed. Permittee farmers help meet management goals with cereal and small grain production on the area. Some open fields have remnant stands of native grass and forbs and are managed with prescribed fire to encourage native plants.
- 2) Controlling invasive plant species on LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake CAs is a challenge. Fescue tends to invade on richer sites and autumn olive is present in hedgerows and draws.
- 3) The open land portions of Ella Ewing Lake CA are less fertile than that on LaBelle Lake CA, but do contain native plants. Prescribed fire and other tools will be used to enhance these areas.
- 4) The woodland portions of LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake CAs are limited in size. These acres provide habitat for upland wildlife and, with management, can provide some quality edge habitat.

**Management Objective 1:** At LaBelle Lake CA, provide food and cover for wildlife and maintain early successional vegetation.

**Strategy 1:** Use permittee farmers to manage plant succession when appropriate. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Use food plots to create disturbances when appropriate. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Manage old fields using management techniques, including but not limited to burning, disking, spraying, and mowing, to combat invading woody plants and to encourage native grasses and forbs. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 4:** Establish field borders by edge feathering, herbicide application and/or planting grass/legume borders that would create nesting and brood-rearing cover. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 5:** Follow best management practices while managing food plots and maintaining early successional vegetation to protect water quality and prevent soil erosion, according to the Department's *Missouri Watershed Protection Practices* booklet (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Reduce invasive plant species on LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake CAs.

**Strategy 1:** Reduce fescue, sericea lespedeza, and autumn olive by using a variety of management techniques, including, but not limited to, chemical control. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Prevent the spread of invasive plants by cleaning mower decks so seeds and plant material are not moved to unaffected areas. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** Monitor for other invasive species and treat as necessary. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 3:** At Ella Ewing Lake CA, encourage native plant species.

**Strategy 1:** Manage old fields using a variety of management techniques, including, but not limited to, prescribed fire, spraying, and mowing to combat invading woody plants and to encourage native grasses and forbs. (Wildlife)

## **VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations**

Aquatic resources at LaBelle Lake CA include LaBelle Lake (112 acres) and four small fishless ponds. Ella Ewing Lake (12 acres) is the only aquatic resource on Ella Ewing CA.

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) LaBelle Lake is one of the most popular lakes in the region and supports excellent fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, and channel catfish. The goal for LaBelle Lake is to maintain high quality largemouth bass fishing opportunities and provide anglers of all skill levels opportunities to catch and harvest bluegill, black crappie, and channel catfish.
- 2) The City of LaBelle previously had chronic problems with their sewage system, which caused periodic releases of partially treated sewage from their lagoon upstream of the lake. The City resolved these problems in 2010 with upgrades to the entire sewage system. These excess nutrients previously caused dense algal blooms and subsequent die offs, resulting in low dissolved oxygen concentrations and several fish kills. Efforts to reduce nutrients entering the lake are important in preventing future fish kills.
- 3) The fishless ponds on LaBelle Lake CA serve as wildlife watering holes and provide important habitat for amphibians and reptiles.
- 4) The Department will manage Ella Ewing Lake to provide public fishing opportunities, especially for largemouth bass and bluegill. The lake is turbid, which impedes the foraging ability of sight-feeding fish (such as largemouth bass and bluegill), and indicates that large amounts of suspended sediments are entering the lake.

**Management Objective 1:** At LaBelle Lake, maintain largemouth bass abundance and size structure with the following characteristics: moderate density of stock-size bass that will be reflected by spring electrofishing capture rates ranging from 80 to 100 per hour, size structure so that proportional stock density (PSD) ranges from 50 to 70 percent and PSD-15 ranges from 20 to 30 percent.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain the current 14- to 18-inch slot length limit and six fish daily limit for bass. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Encourage harvest of small bass through use of appropriate signage. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 3:** Control excessive aquatic macrophytes chemically or biologically to promote efficient foraging by largemouth bass. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 2:** At LaBelle Lake, maintain bluegill abundance and size structure with the following characteristics: moderate density so that spring electrofishing capture rates of stock-size bluegill range from 150 to 200 per hour, size structure so that PSD ranges from 20 to 40 percent and PSD-8 ranges from 5 to 10 percent.

**Strategy 1:** Implement strategies under Objective 1 to maintain adequate predatory control on bluegill. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 3:** At LaBelle Lake, maintain black crappie population size structure so that PSD ranges from 40 to 60 percent and PSD-10 ranges from 20 to 30 percent.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain moderate density of largemouth bass to exert predatory control over small crappie to prevent overpopulation. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Encourage anglers to harvest crappie up to their daily limit of 30 per day with appropriate signing. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 4:** At LaBelle Lake, maintain a channel catfish size structure so that PSD ranges from 50 to 70 percent and PSD-24 ranges from 5 to 10 percent.

**Strategy 1:** Continue annual stockings of channel catfish at a rate of 10 per acre. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 5:** At Ella Ewing Lake, maintain the area to provide public fishing opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Continue to sample the lake every five to seven years. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Control excessive aquatic macrophytes chemically or biologically to promote efficient foraging by largemouth bass and shoreline angler access. (Fisheries)

**Management Objective 6:** Provide suitable habitat for amphibians and reptiles in ponds with no fisheries management potential at LaBelle Lake CA.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain the ponds as fishless wildlife watering sources. Do not stock ponds that provide no long-term fisheries management options. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain a natural vegetative border around fishless ponds at least 100 feet wide. (Wildlife, Fisheries)

**Management Objective 7:** Establish or maintain a permanently vegetated corridor along all shorelines and waterways on the areas.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain a permanently vegetated corridor through natural regeneration or planting. A minimum width of 100 feet, from top of bank, should be maintained, where not limited by area boundary, access road, parking lot, or utility easement. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Inspect corridors along all agricultural fields every three years to determine the need for field adjustments. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 3:** All management activities at the conservation areas 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)

## VII. Public Use Management Considerations

LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake CAs offer numerous public use opportunities, including fishing, hunting, trapping, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing.

### **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 on both conservation areas.
- 2) At LaBelle Lake CA, primitive camping is permitted on the six gravel pads in the camping area. Walk-in camping is also allowed anytime, except during firearms deer and turkey seasons.
- 3) At Ella Ewing Lake CA, camping is allowed on or adjacent to graveled parking areas. Walk-in camping is allowed anytime, except during firearms deer and turkey seasons. No amenities are provided.

**Management Objective 1:** Provide quality-hunting opportunities for squirrels, quail, rabbits, deer, and turkey. Manage for a variety of small game species and waterfowl where appropriate habitat exists on both conservation areas.



**Strategy 1:** Maintain the area's diverse habitats for all species currently present. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Provide diverse habitats using agricultural, mechanical, and chemical treatments; prescribed fire; and native food types, including hard tree, soft tree, and shrub mast. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Provide designated camping and picnic areas.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain camping areas, parking lots, and the adjacent grassed areas to the Level 1 maintenance standards. Prior to hunting seasons, mow these areas so they are user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** At LaBelle Lake CA, install fire pits and picnic tables at the six campsites. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 3:** Maintain infrastructure and regulations to access resources and recreational opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Monitor and evaluate infrastructure and regulations annually. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Ensure that information regarding the area is accurate, consistent, and available to the public through contact with area staff, Missouri Atlas database, posted signs, and brochures. (Wildlife)

## VIII. Administrative Considerations

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Maintain area boundaries so the public can easily identify the conservation areas from private land.
- 2) Consider land acquisition when available.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain clear conservation area boundaries.

**Strategy 1:** Work with adjacent landowners to maintain boundaries and to resolve conflicts. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Annually check area boundaries and ensure that they are clearly marked. (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.



## APPENDICES

### **Public Input Summary:**

The draft LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Areas Management Plan was available for a public comment period Sept. 1-30, 2017. The Department received comments from five respondents (Appendix 11). The LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake 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 LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Areas Management Plan public comment period.

### **Opposes killing aquatic vegetation.**

The Department continues to promote beneficial aquatic vegetation in public fishing lakes. We will also continue to control nuisance aquatic vegetation at densities which do not interfere with anglers.

### **Suggest allowing gas powered boats on Ella Ewing Lake at no-wake speeds.**

To keep regulations uniform statewide and consistent with Forest Service lakes, the Department does not allow gasoline powered motors on lakes less than 70 acres.

### **Suggests adding a small shelter house and picnic table to the Ella Ewing Conservation Area.**

The Planning Team has determined the amount of public use at the Ella Ewing CA does not support the construction of a shelter house or the addition of picnic tables. The remote location of the area makes it subject to vandalism; the existing privy has been subject to such abuse. The addition of more infrastructure would likely suffer damage and require additional funds for upkeep and repair.

### **Suggests better boundary signage to keep hunters from encroaching on private property.**

The planning team will check boundaries on an ongoing basis and ensure that they are appropriately posted.

### **Loves going to Ella Ewing Lake to fish and get outside. Appreciates the hard work and care taken to maintain the property.**

Thank you.

**References:**

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

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1. LaBelle Lake Conservation Area Background

Appendix 2. Area Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 3. Land Cover Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 4. Easement Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 5. Topographic Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 6. Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area Background

Appendix 7. Area Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 8. Land Cover Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 9. Easement Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 10. Topographic Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area

Appendix 11. Draft LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Conservation Areas Management Plan Public Comments

**Appendix 1. LaBelle Lake Conservation Area Background**

LaBelle Lake (112 acres) was designed and built as a water supply lake by the City of LaBelle in 1979. The initial fish stocking by the City occurred in 1980 and included largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, and black crappie. In 1983, the City entered into an agreement with the Department through the Community Assistance Program to manage the fishery. The Department reimbursed the City for developments on the lake, which included a concrete boat ramp, privy, and gravel parking lot. The Department managed the lake from 1983 to 2003 to provide high quality largemouth bass fishing.

When the City of LaBelle discontinued use of the lake as a water supply, the Department purchased the lake and surrounding 222 acres from the City in 2003. At that time, improvements were made to the boat ramp and an additional privy was installed. Since that time an ADA-accessible dock, another parking lot, and six camping pads were constructed.

**Current Land and Water Types:**

| <b>Land/Water Type</b>                        | <b>Acres</b> | <b>% of Area</b> |
|---|--------------|------------------|
| Lakes and Ponds                               | 114.0        | 34               |
| Woodlands                                     | 70.0         | 21               |
| Grasslands                                    | 51.4         | 15               |
| Open Land                                     | 44.2         | 13               |
| Old Fields                                    | 42.3         | 13               |
| Parking Lots, Roads, and Adjacent Mowed Areas | 12.1         | 4                |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>334</b>   | <b>100</b>       |

Appendix 2. Area Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area

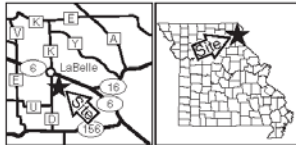
# LaBELLE LAKE CONSERVATION AREA

LEWIS COUNTY  
334 ACRES

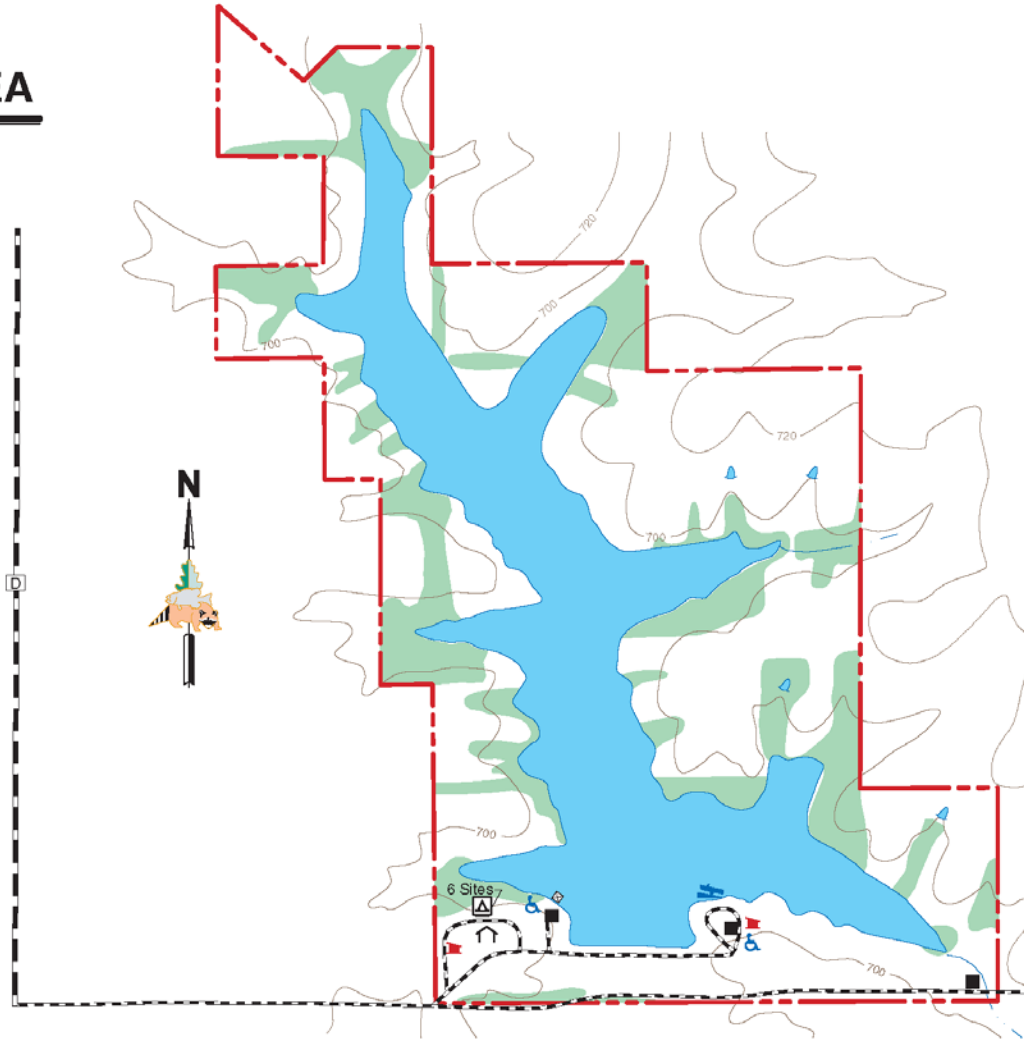
**LEGEND**

- Boundary
- Paved Road
- Gravel Road
- Drainage
- Parking Lot
- Pond
- Privy
- Dock
- Shelterhouse
- Disabled Accessible
- Boat Ramp
- Forest
- Topography
- Primitive Camping-Individual Sites

**VICINITY MAP**

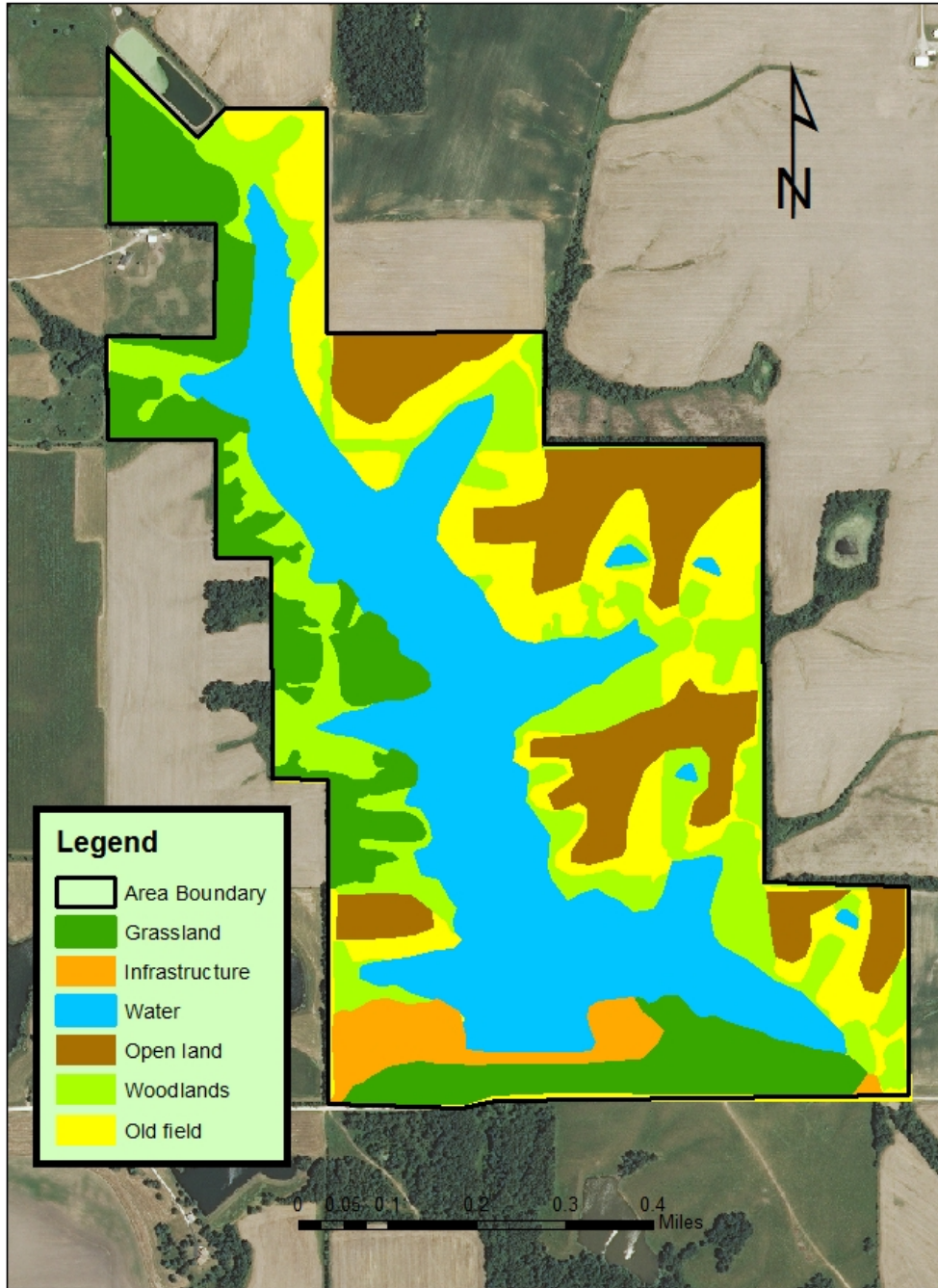


**SCALE**

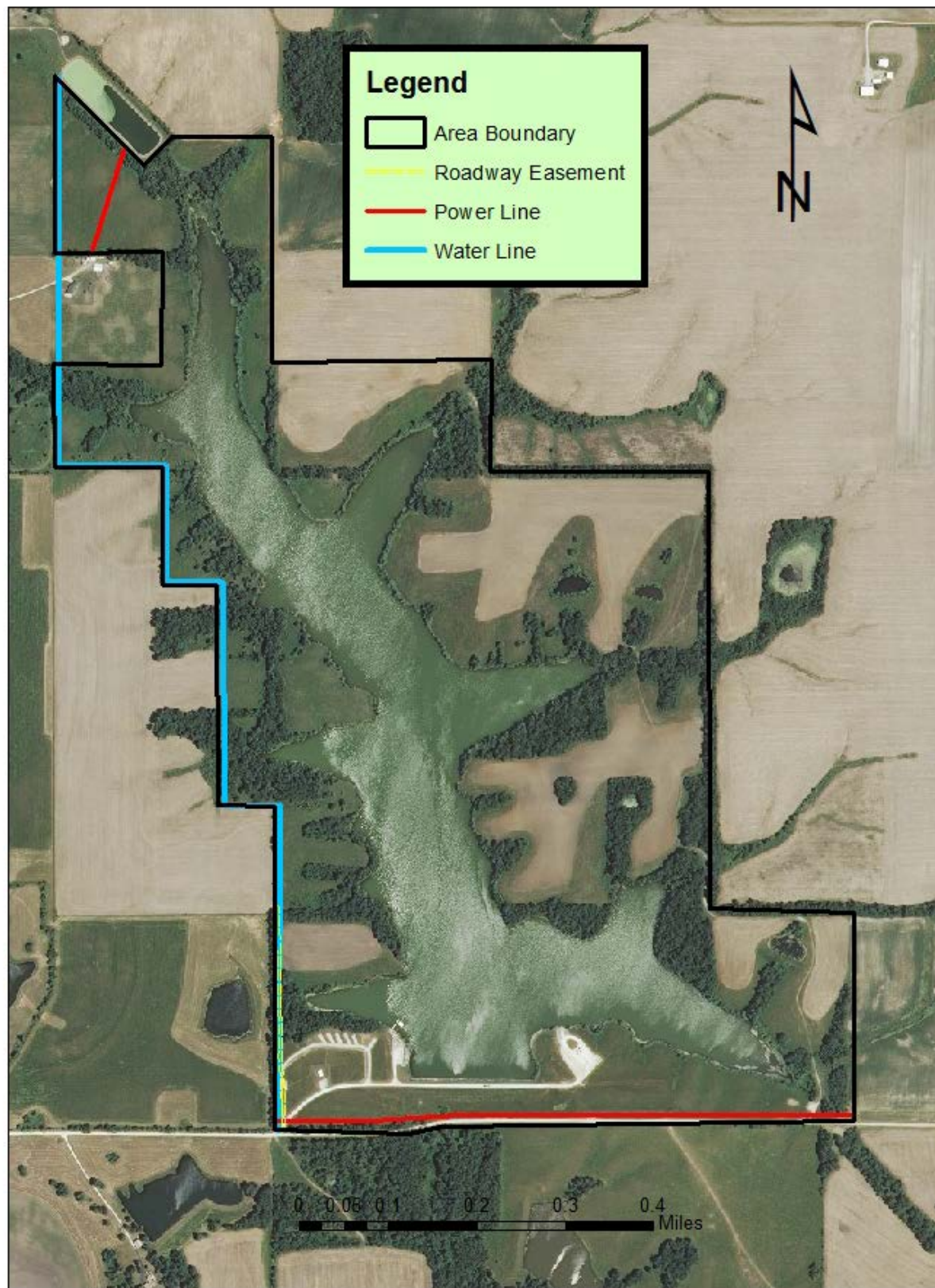


**Appendix 3. Land Cover Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area**

LaBelle Lake CA Landcover Map



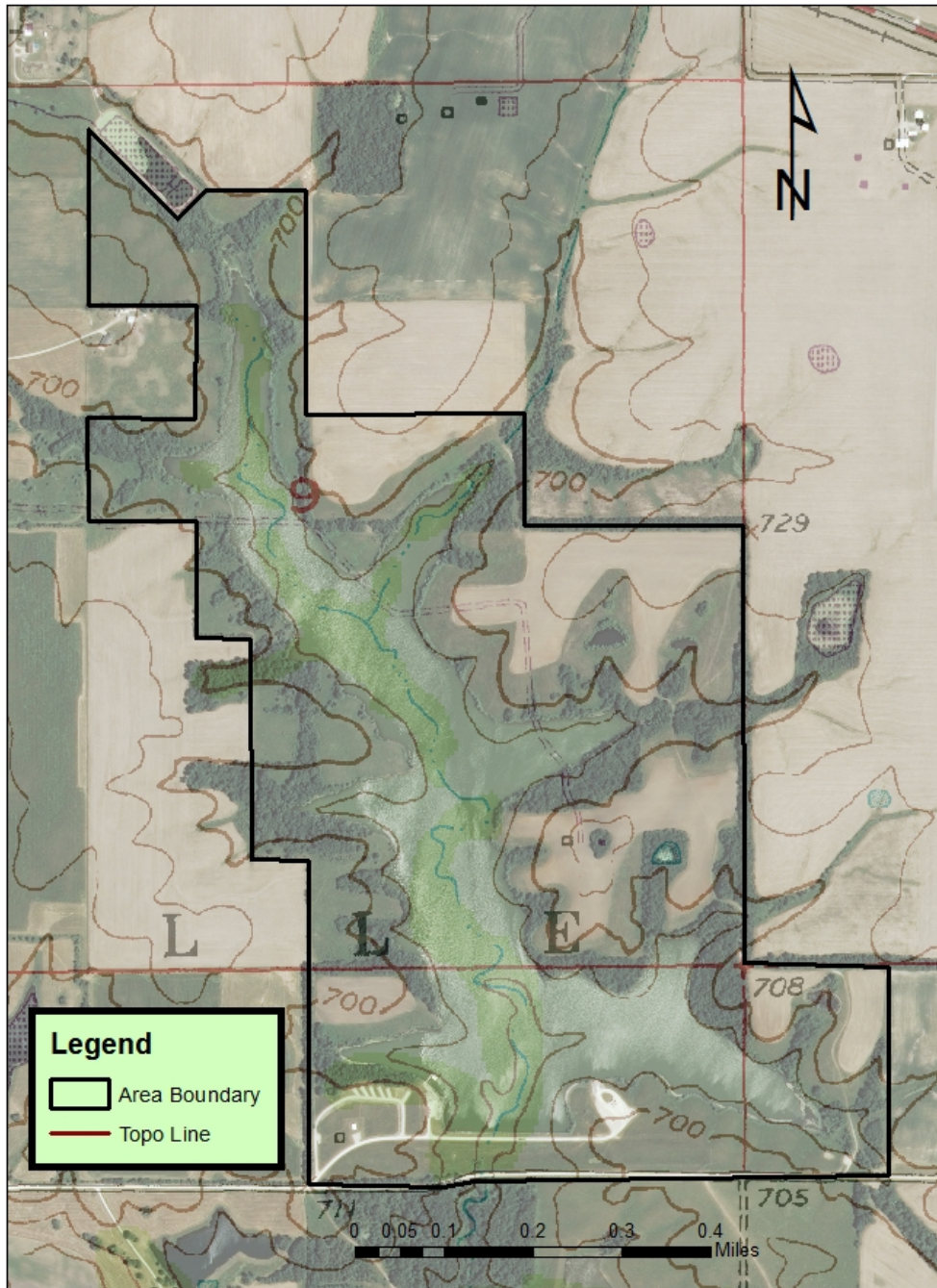
**Appendix 4. Easement Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area**





**Appendix 5. Topographic Map of LaBelle Lake Conservation Area**

**LaBelle Lake CA Topographic Map**



**Appendix 6. Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area Background**

Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area was purchased in 1967 from Cleon and Doris Rhodes. The lake had previously been built by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of the Bear Creek Watershed Project and was intended to be a flood control structure. The lake was built under Public Law 566 and was completed in 1965. Upon purchase by the Department, the property was named Ella Ewing Lake after the local legend, Ella Ewing who was the world’s tallest woman standing 8’4” tall. Ella Ewing lived nearby from 1872 until 1913. The Department opened the lake for fishing Oct. 1, 1969.

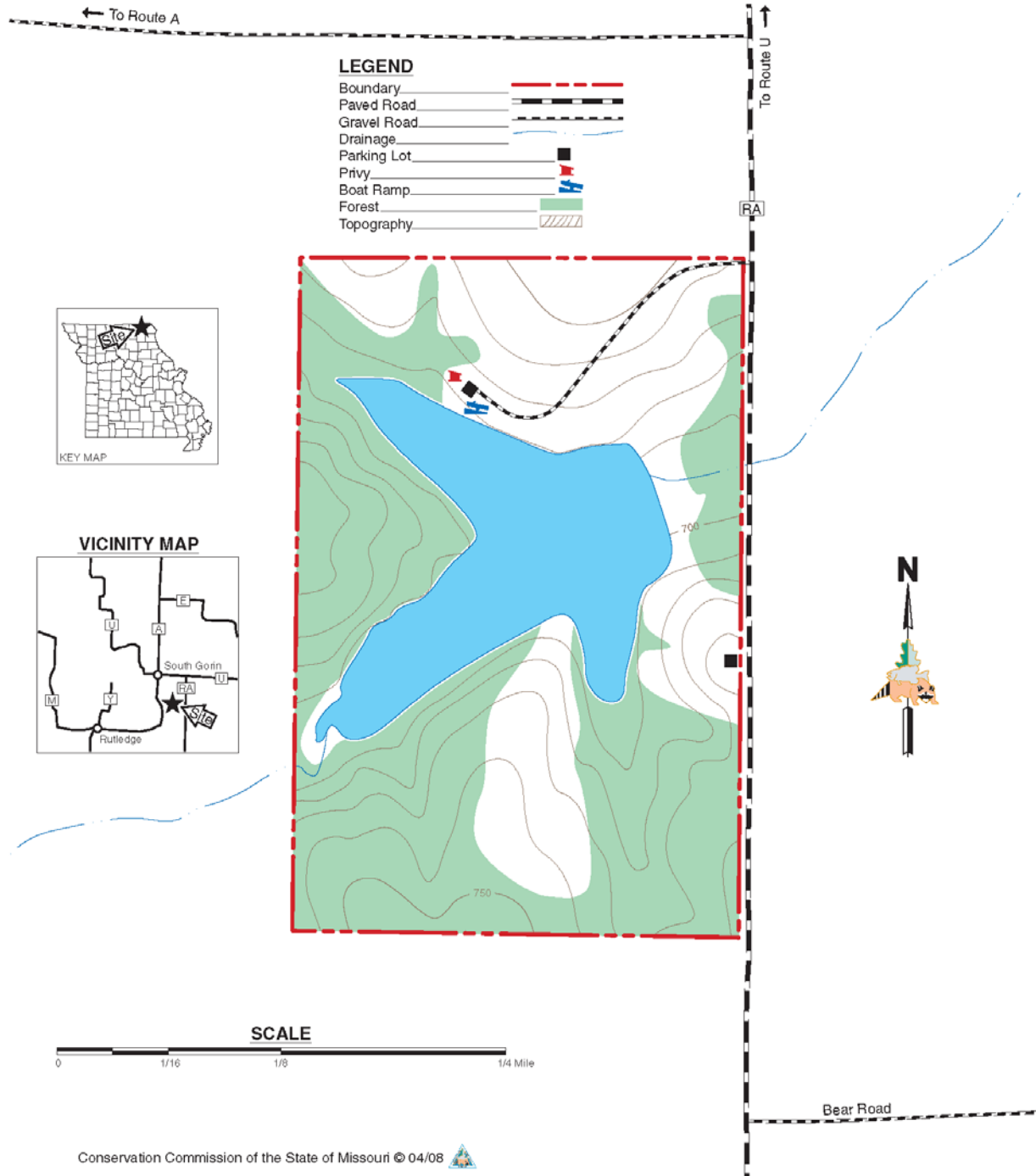
**Current Land and Water Types:**

| <b>Land/Water Type</b>                       | <b>Acres</b> | <b>% of Area</b> |
|--|--------------|------------------|
| Woodlands                                    | 34           | 57               |
| Lake   | 12           | 20               |
| Old Fields                                   | 9            | 15               |
| Parking Lots, Roads and Adjacent Mowed Areas | 5            | 8                |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>60</b>    | <b>100</b>       |

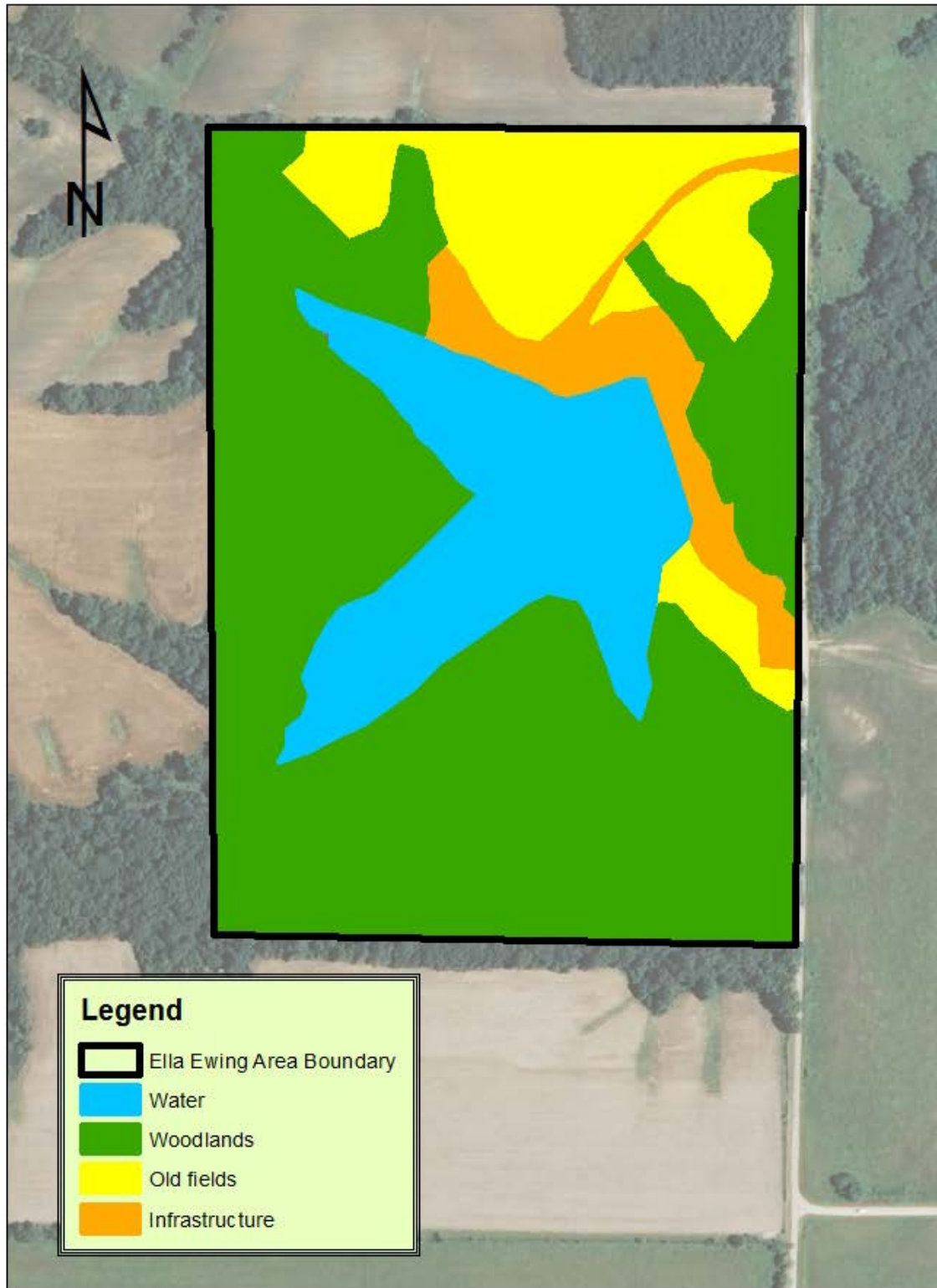
### Appendix 7. Area Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area

# ELLA EWING LAKE CONSERVATION AREA

SCOTLAND COUNTY  
60 ACRES

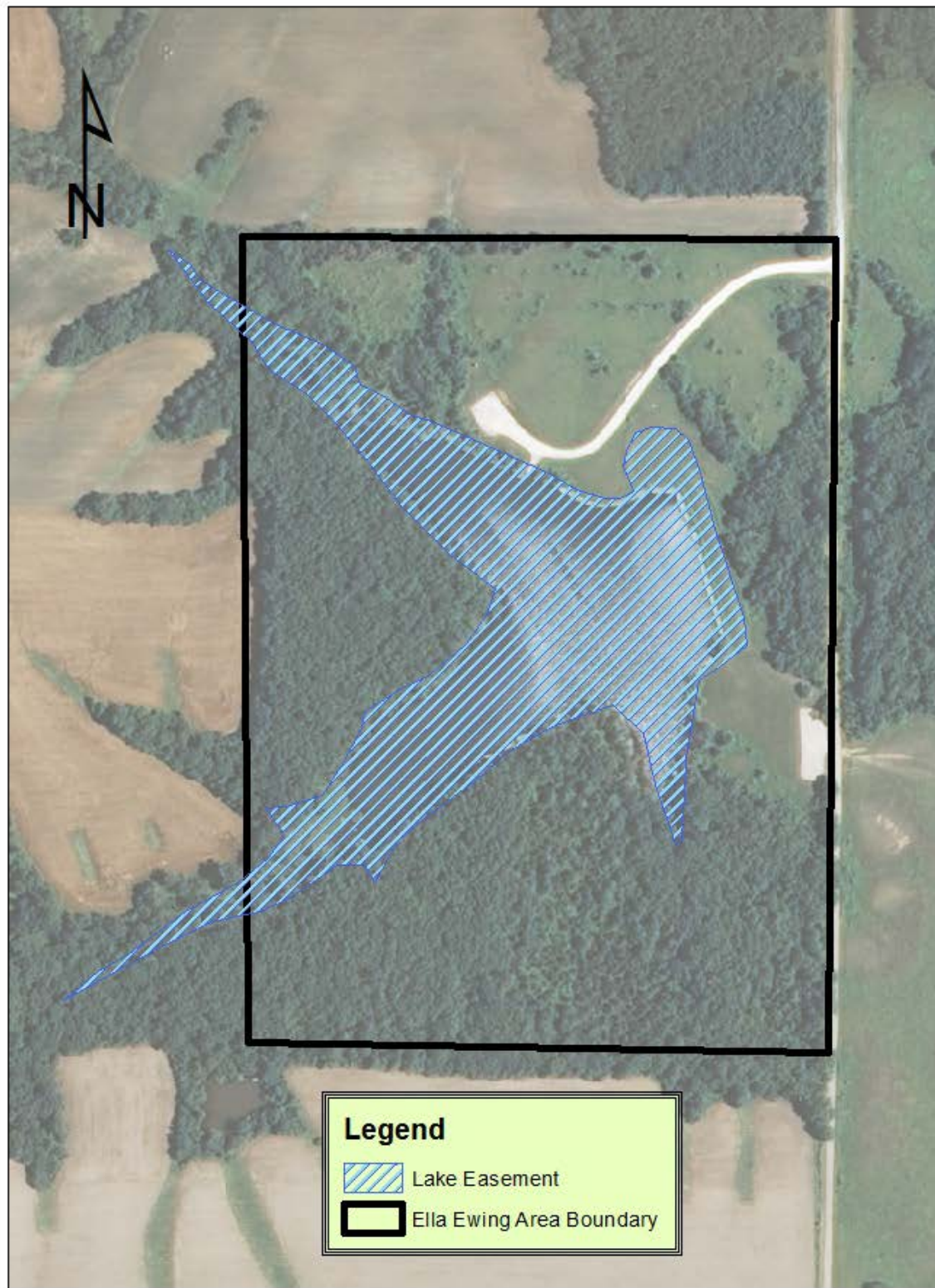


**Appendix 8. Land Cover Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area**



0 0.02 0.04 0.08 0.12 0.16 Miles

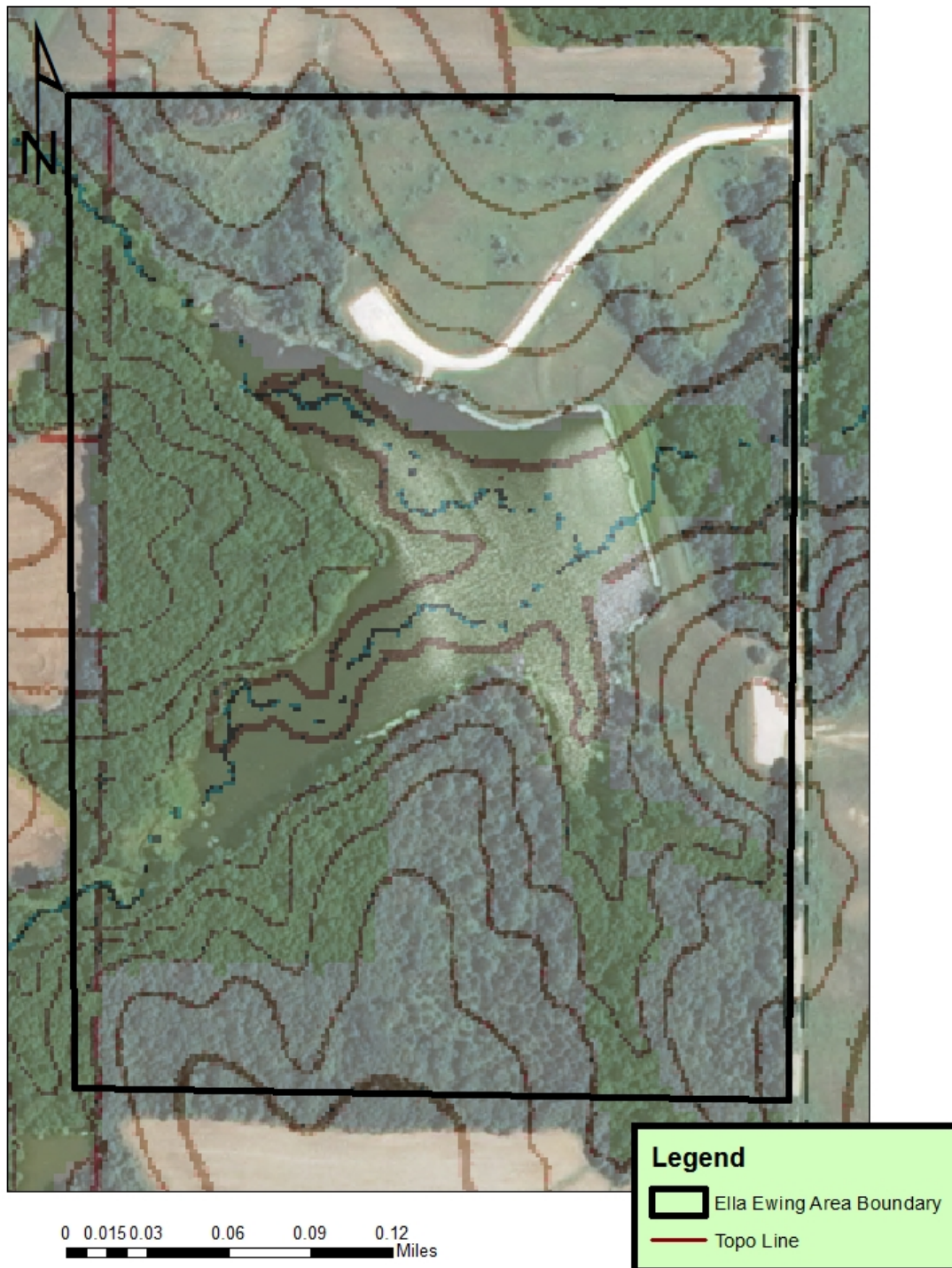
**Appendix 9. Easement Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area**



0 0.02 0.04 0.08 0.12 0.16  
Miles

**Appendix 10. Topographic Map of Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area**

Ella Ewing Lake CA Topographic Map



**Appendix 11. Draft LaBelle Lake and Ella Ewing Conservation Areas Management Plan  
Public Comments**

Received during public comment period (Sept. 1–30, 2017):

|   |
|---|
| <p>I think gas powerd boat motors should be allowed on Ewing Lake at nowake speeds. I say this as it is hard to launch a boat with an electric moter there due to the fact there in not a dock on or right next to the ramp.</p>  |
| <p>Please stop killing all the aquatic vegetation. We have so little as it is. Maybe try spraying to control not eradicate. Thank you</p>   |
| <p>Ella Ewing lake is a great place to go. I often take my boys there to fish and get away from our every day busy lives. The conversation area has also been a very important training tool for my search and rescue K-9. We thank you very much for your hard work in taking such good care of a valuable asset and beautiful piece of ground</p>   |
| <p>I live quite close to Ella Ewing Lake and drive out to it at least 3-4 times/week, a good place to watch the sun set. The upkeep on it has been excellent. It's always kept mowed and cleaned up. It would be nice to have a small shelter house and maybe a picnic table. I think it is underutilized by the community and something like that might stimulate more utilization. I understand the negative aspect, though, in that we don't want it to become an available hang-out for underage drinking and drug use.</p> |
| <p>We would suggest better signs of property lines so hunters do not encroach on private property.</p>  |