

Dan and Maureen Cover Prairie Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan
FY 2017-2026



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Wildlife Division Chief

2 May 2016

Date

Dan and Maureen Cover Prairie Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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OZARK REGION

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WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief

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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Dan and Maureen Cover Prairie Conservation Area, # 200113
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 2001
- **Acreage:** 736 acres
- **County:** Howell
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**

A. Strategic Direction

The Cover Prairie Conservation Area (CA) is managed for the protection and enhancement of the area's natural and cultural resources. The area is managed for upland wildlife habitat, grassland and savanna wildlife species (particularly bobwhite quail), and compatible recreational opportunities.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition is a healthy grassland and woodland that provides habitat for wildlife species (particularly bobwhite quail) and provides compatible recreational activities.

C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

A. **Priority Areas:** None

B. **Natural Areas:** None

C. **Other:** Cover Prairie CA is one of the Missouri Department of Conservation's (the Department's) Quail Emphasis Areas. The area offers a restricted managed bobwhite quail hunt Nov. 1- Jan. 15.

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

D. **Other:** The tract is situated within the Brussel Branch drainage and is characterized as a heavy karst field with many sinkholes. All of the surface water flows either into local sinkholes or runs into the Grand Gulf and re-emerges at Mammoth Springs, Arkansas, 11 miles away.

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 2 parking lots

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:** None
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records kept with 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

Cover Prairie CA is comprised of grassland and woodland landscapes. These landscapes are managed to provide early successional habitat for all upland species, particularly bobwhite quail.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage all grasslands and woodlands in an early successional stage, while providing bare ground for grassland species, and controlling exotic invasive species.
- 2) Keep warm-season grass density at a level that is useable and beneficial for multiple species, especially for bobwhite quail in the breeding and brood-rearing months.

Management Objective 1: Manage the grassland landscape throughout Cover Prairie CA in multiple successional stages to provide food and cover for multiple species, particularly bobwhite quail.

Strategy 1: Provide early successional habitat for bare ground and thicker nesting cover in close proximity by breaking up the area in multiple burn units and having prescribed burns. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Rotate burn frequency and season to favor either grasses or forbs, depending on the limiting factor in each burn unit. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Manage the woodlands on Cover Prairie CA to provide early successional habitat. Reduce the basal area in units with a closed canopy to enhance the historical native forb and warm-season grass understory. Allow timber to grow to a larger size class.

Strategy 1: Burn areas that have already had a basal area reduction (from fire or mechanical techniques) on a three-year frequency to control leaf litter buildup and reduce undesirable re-sprouting. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: If fire has not been effective, mechanically thin closed canopy woodlands that were historically open woodlands (based on ecological land type). Subsequently, the areas will be managed the same as open woodlands, i.e., using prescribed burns as the primary tool (on a minimum three-year rotation). (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Manage natural communities while controlling or eliminating invasive exotic species in area grasslands and woodlands.

Strategy 1: Rotate prescribed burns later into the spring months, to reduce the growth potential of the tall fescue and favor warm-season grasses. By rotating the season of burns, tall fescue can be stimulated and more susceptible to herbicide. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: The primary invasive exotic plant threats to the prairie include sericea lespedeza and spotted knapweed. These species are treated by spot spraying broadleaf-specific herbicides seasonally, when it is most effective. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Ensure persistence of healthy quail populations on the area.

Strategy 1: Dog training is allowed on the area by special use permit only. Quail hunting is allowed by managed hunt annually and the drawing is held locally at the Ozark Regional Office annually on October 1 or the closest working day after. Permits are issued by lottery in accordance with area regulations. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Rabbits may not be chased, pursued or taken during the prescribed quail hunting season (Nov. 1-Jan. 15). (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage fishless area ponds.
- 2) Manage watershed.

Management Objective 1: Manage all ponds on the areas as fishless.

Strategy 1: Remove all fish from ponds if remnant populations are found. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Manage drainage area to the pond with minimal disturbance.

(Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Add woody debris for turtles, frogs and salamanders as needed.

(Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Conduct area management in ways that minimizes the supply and transport of sediments, gravel, or pollutants into downstream areas. Follow *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Land and Waters Managed By Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009).

Strategy 1: Minimize adverse impacts to the watershed by observing protection measures during any disturbance in the riparian zones and around the pond.

(Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Use appropriate herbicides when controlling invasive species in the riparian zones and around the ponds. Maintain existing riparian corridor.

(Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Consult Fisheries Division on all work inside the riparian corridors.

(Wildlife)

Strategy 4: Control erosion along the road and trail system. (Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Increase public use of the area for educational opportunities.

Management Objective 1: Increase the awareness and success of habitat management on public lands and promote outdoor education.

Strategy 1: Work with the Outreach and Education Division to promote outdoor skills activities while working with the Discover Nature in Schools Program.

(Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Continue to work with the Master Naturalist program annually while assisting with various programs including Missouri bird workshops. (Wildlife).

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain Department boundaries to increase visibility for area users.

Management Objective 1: Maintain Cover Prairie CA boundary signs so they are visible and presentable to the public.

Strategy 1: Conduct annual visual survey of all boundary signs. Replace damaged or missing signs. (Wildlife)

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Dan Cover purchased this tract in 1988, before his purchase the area had been cleared and used for raising swine. After Mr. Cover acquired this property, he created an early successional community by conducting prescribed fire, planting warm-season grasses, and removing exotic species. In 2001, Mr. Cover donated this property to the Missouri Department of Conservation because he felt the Department would continue his efforts to manage the landscape for wildlife. Many of the challenges that Mr. Cover faced in the past are still present. Exotic and invasive species eradication remains a priority to maintain the area's biodiversity. Prescribed fire is the primary tool used to maintain early successional habitat because the majority of the area is comprised of warm-season grasses and woodland complexes and dependent on fire.

A small portion of the area is covered by early first growth dry-mesic chert woodland. Soils are poor and are predominately chert. Dominant tree species include black hickory, post oak, black oak, and black jack oak. The continued presence of fire on the landscape has led to the present distribution of plant communities across the area.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Grassland	650	88
Woodland	86	12
Total	736	100

Public Input Summary:

The draft Dan and Maureen Cover Prairie Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period February 1-29, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received no comments during this time period.

References:

- Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.
- Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 1: Area Map

DAN AND MAUREEN COVER PRAIRIE CONSERVATION AREA

HOWELL COUNTY
736 ACRES

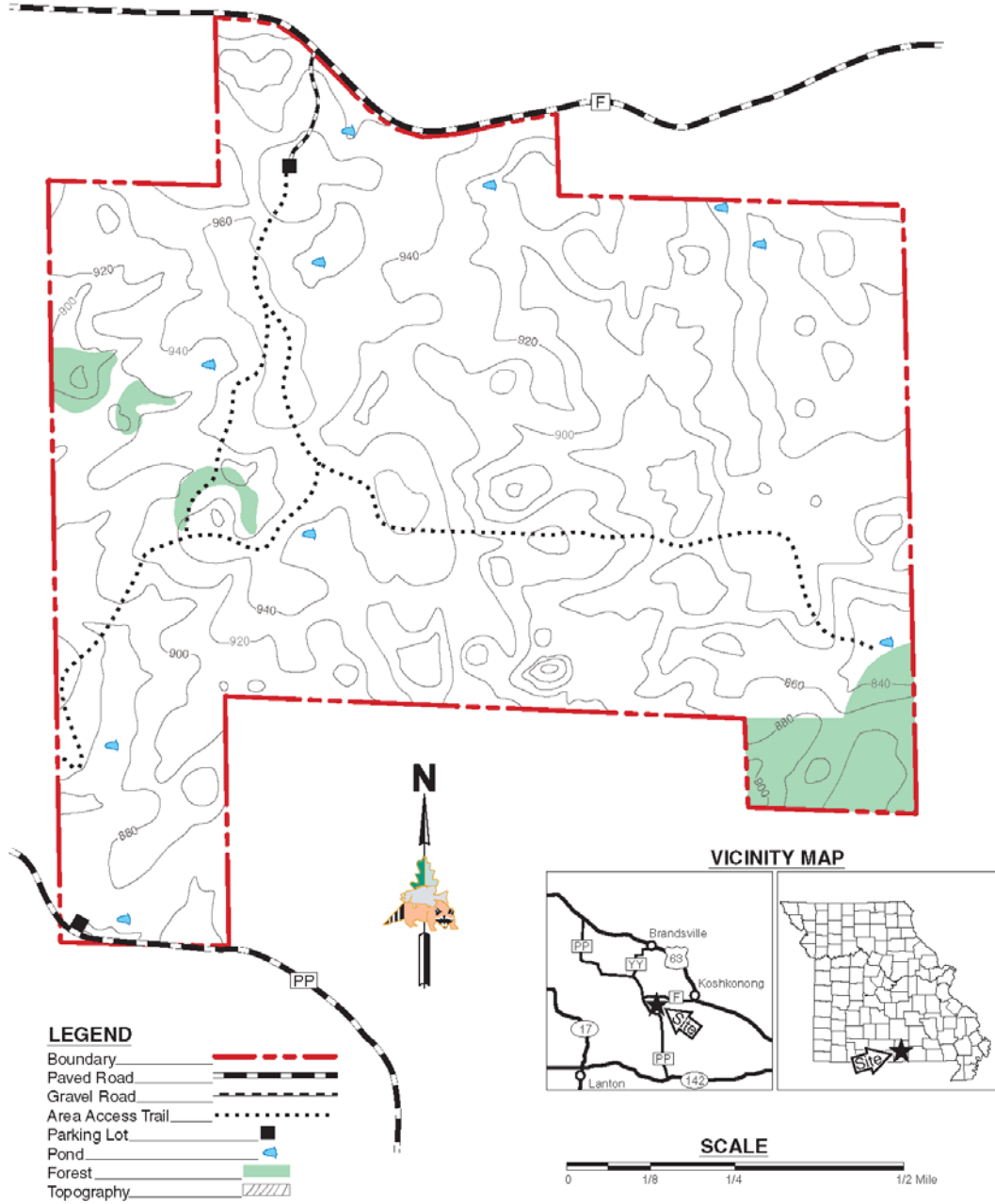


Figure 2: Aerial Map



Figure 3: Topographic Map

