

Rippee Conservation Area

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2031



Lisa M. Allen
Forestry Division Chief

7-13-17
Date

Rippee Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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Stephanie McKinney, Education Consultant

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OZARK REGION

RCT Chair


Signature

6/30/2017
Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief


Signature

7/10/17
Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Rippee Conservation Area, # 6412
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1964
- **Acreage:** 419 acres
- **County:** Douglas
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry, Design and Development
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for multiple resource use with emphasis on the forest, associated wildlife species, protection of the watershed, and compatible recreational opportunities. Provide outdoor activities and opportunities for multiple user groups.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Rippee Conservation Area (CA) is a healthy forest/woodland, riparian, and glade landscape with diverse old fields and grassland habitat.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

This area, or a portion thereof, was acquired with Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration funds to restore and manage sport fish, conserve and restore sport fish habitat (or a buffer to protect that habitat) and provide public access for sport fishing.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** Priority Forest Landscape
 - B. Natural Areas:** Bryant Creek Natural Area is 52 acres. The portion of Bryant Creek that flows through this natural area is designated as an Outstanding State Resource Waters by the Missouri Clean Water Commission. Bryant Creek supports a number of native fish species from smallmouth bass and longear sunfish to a variety of minnows and darters. This 1.5 miles of stream is a small part of the larger 39 mile Bryant Creek. Across its entirety, Bryant Creek harbors 15 fish and crayfish species that are endemic to the Ozarks.
 - 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

II. Existing Infrastructure

- Three parking lots
- Three privies
- Camping area (15 individual camp sites with tables and grills)
- Picnic area (four sites with tables and grills)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations: None

B. Federal Interest: Uses of land acquired with federal funds may not interfere with the purpose for which it was acquired. Closures to sport fishing must be based on the recommendations of the state fish and wildlife agency for fish and wildlife management purposes. 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.

C. Easements: County Roads 328 and 329

D. Cultural Resources Findings: Yes, records kept with the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) environmental compliance specialist. Managers should follow best management practices for Cultural Resources in the Department Resource Policy Manual.

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) Improve, manage, and restore forest, woodland, and old field landscapes.
- 2) Improve habitat for wildlife.
- 3) Improve habitat and natural diversity by limiting and reducing the spread of invasive plant species.

Management Objective 1: Maintain, enhance, and restore forest/woodland natural communities.

Strategy 1: Implement management recommendations as outlined in the 2015 forest inventory. Conduct the next forest inventory in 2030. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Implement best management practices to prevent erosion when conducting timber harvesting activities, according to the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice Recommended Practices for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry, Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain and enhance wildlife habitats.

Strategy 1: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Improve forest wildlife habitat with forest and woodland management practices that might include timber harvesting, pre-commercial forest thinning, herbicide use, and/or prescribed fire. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Reduce the impact of invasive plant species on natural communities.

Strategy 1: Continue to control invasive species, including fescue, Johnson grass, sericea lespedeza, spotted knapweed, and autumn olive with mechanical, prescribed fire, and chemical methods. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Monitor the area for new invasive species. Suppress any infestations that may develop using appropriate methods. (Forestry, Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage and protect karst land features and the Bryant and Rippee Creek watersheds.

Management Objective 1: Protect and enhance the riparian corridor and karst features on the area.

Strategy 1: Minimize sedimentation within the area from land management practices and/or road systems that will affect biodiversity of unique habitats by following the practices recommended in the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice Recommended Practices for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Maintain a riparian corridor with a minimum of 100 feet from the top of the bank on each side for third-order and larger streams, as recommended in the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice* guidelines (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide for hunting and viewing opportunities.
- 2) Balance area use by stakeholders.

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting and viewing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diverse suite of species, using techniques such as prescribed fire, herbicide applications, food plots, and mechanical treatments. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Provide a balance of activities allowed on the area to promote conservation and sustainability of the areas resources.

Strategy 1: Continue to monitor area use and limit special use permits that could impact use by other stakeholders. (Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Resolve any boundary line disputes with adjoining landowners.
- 2) Acquire land, when available.

Management Objective 1: Resolve boundary line disputes, if and when they arise.

Strategy 1: As needed, Forestry Division will request surveys to better determine boundary locations. (Forestry)

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

Area Background:

The original acquisition includes two separate tracts. In August 1964, 280 acres were purchased from Our Lady of the Assumption Abbey for \$7,000 using Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration funds. Upstream about one mile, a 10.7-acre tract was purchased from John Follis in October 1985 and named Evans Access. The primary purpose of acquiring both tracts was to provide public access to Bryant Creek. Although separate, the previous Evans Access tract is now part of Rippee Conservation Area. In 1980, a 128-acre tract was purchased from Don Spurlock using Department funds.

Before Department acquisition, the area was farmed for cattle, hay, and row crops. The property has a distant history of abuse such as high-grade timber harvesting and wildfire damage to the forest.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Upland Forest/Woodlands	341.7	82
Grassland (non-prairie)	34	8
Cropland	25.5	6
Other (campground, roads and parking lots)	7.5	2
Glade	6	1
Old Field	4	1
Total	418.70	100

Public Input Summary:

The draft Rippee Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period November 1–30, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The Rippee 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 Rippee Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

Suggests adding a multi-use (hiking, biking, horseback riding) trail to encourage public use.

Developing a trail for multi-use bike/horse use would increase maintenance, likely cause issues with other area users, and possibly damage sensitive habitats. Horseback riding is currently

limited to roadways open to vehicular traffic. The area manager will continue to monitor area use and make adjustments as needed. The U.S. Forest Service's Mark Twain National Forest offers several trails that allow horseback riding in the vicinity.

Suggests a land swap to “create a clean, straight, and unambiguous boundary line” for Rippee CA and adjacent landowner.

The Department has been in contact with the affected landowner about these concerns.

References

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: County Location Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Aerial Map

Figure 5: Land Cover Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Rippee Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

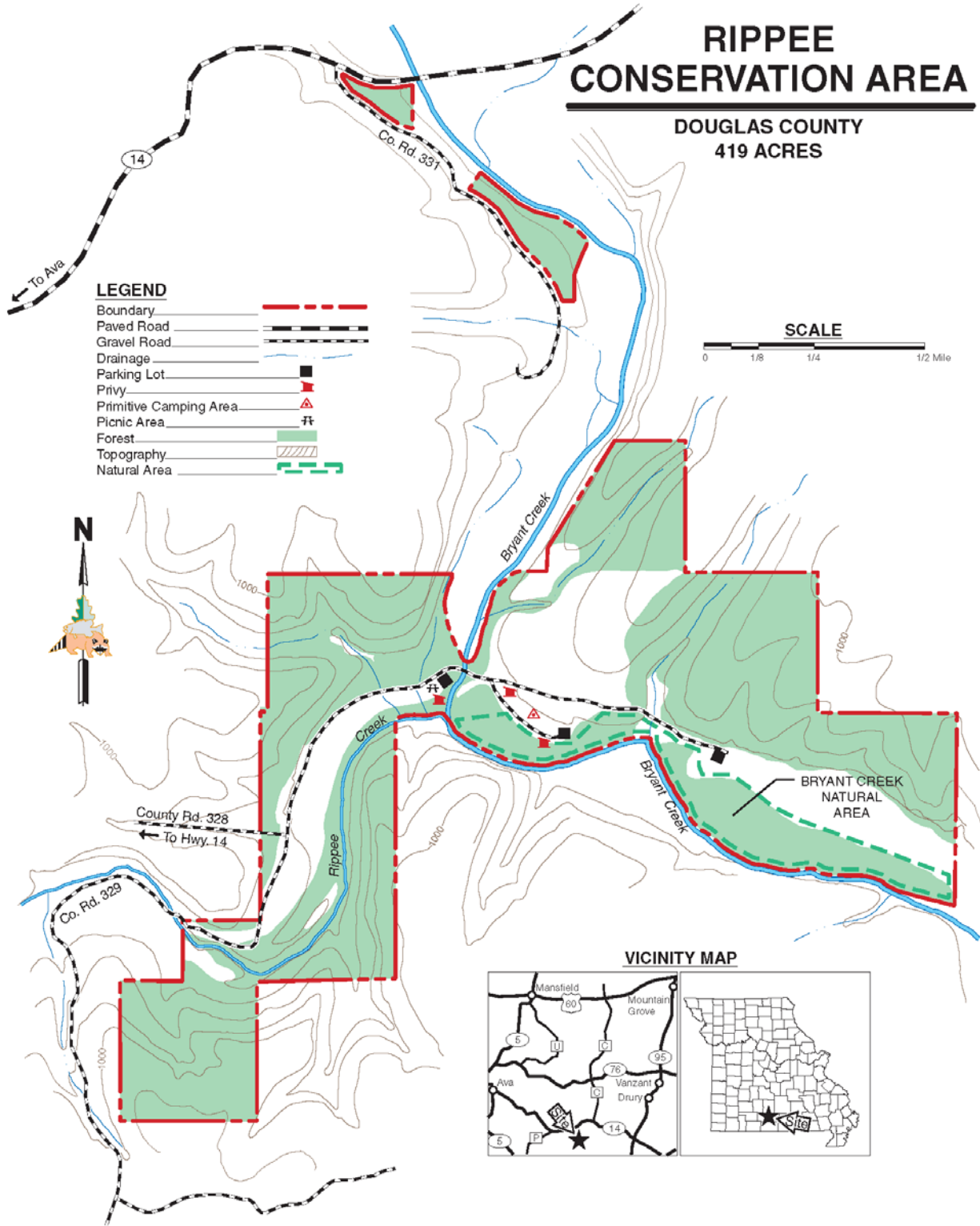


Figure 2: County Location Map

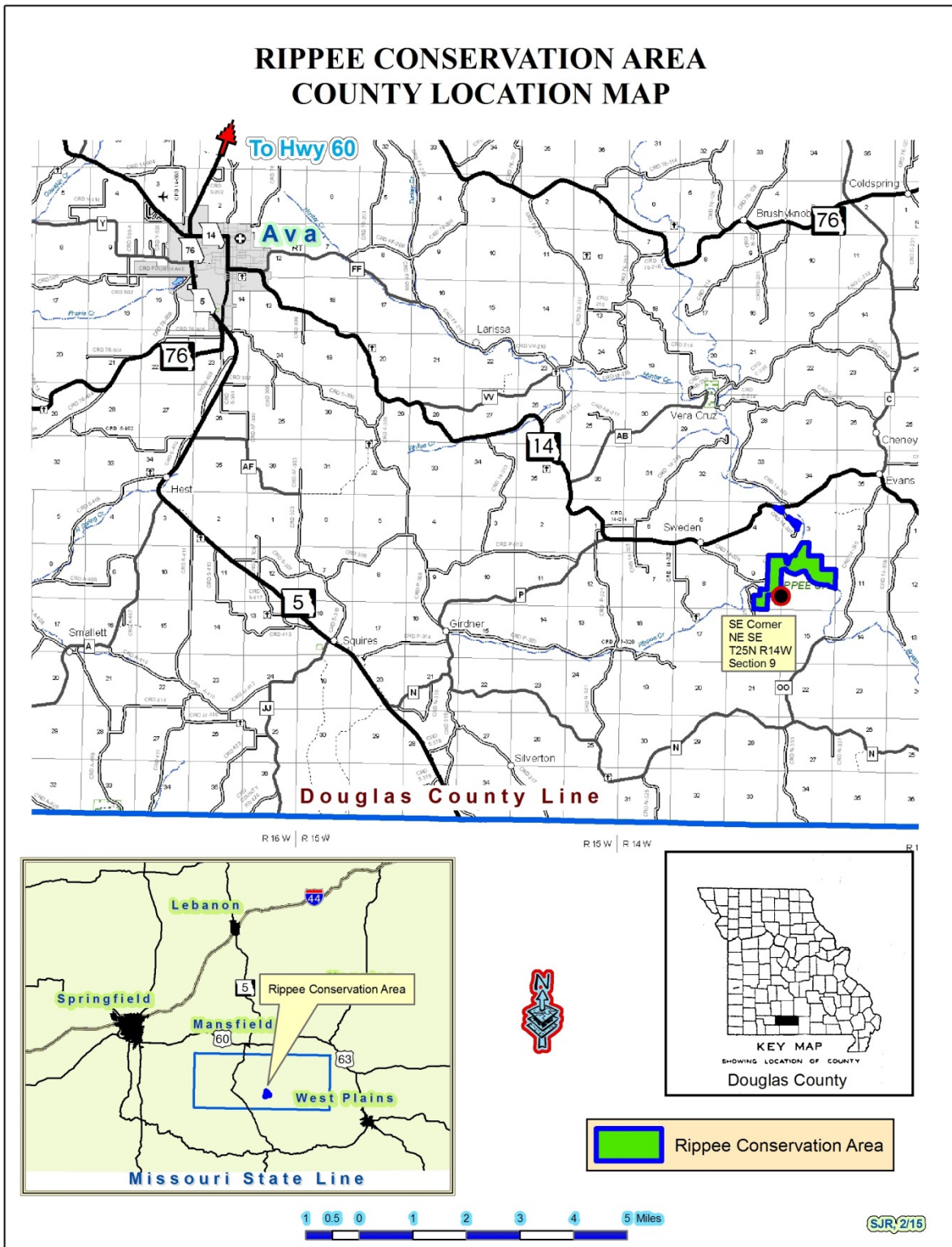


Figure 3: Topographic Map

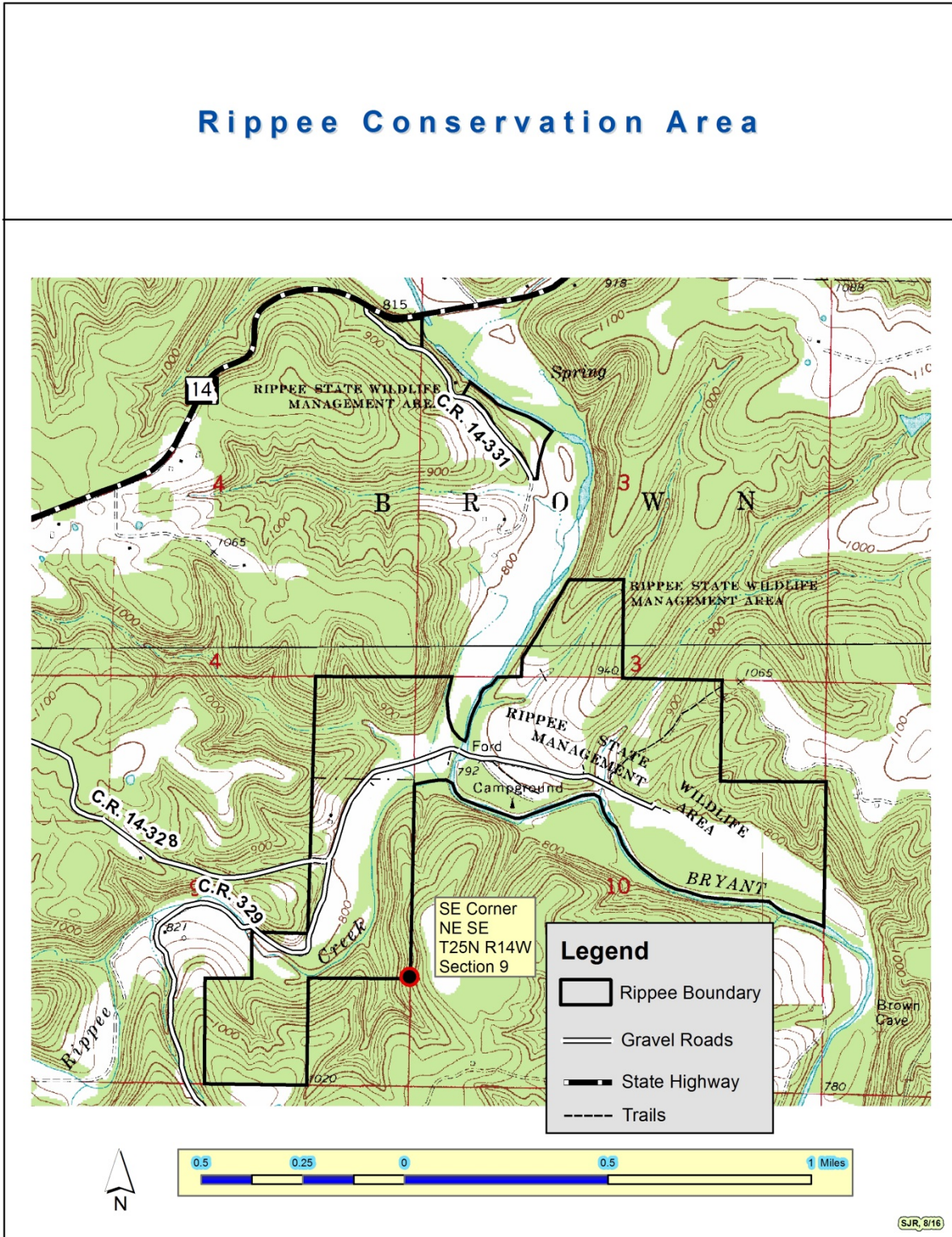


Figure 4: Aerial Map

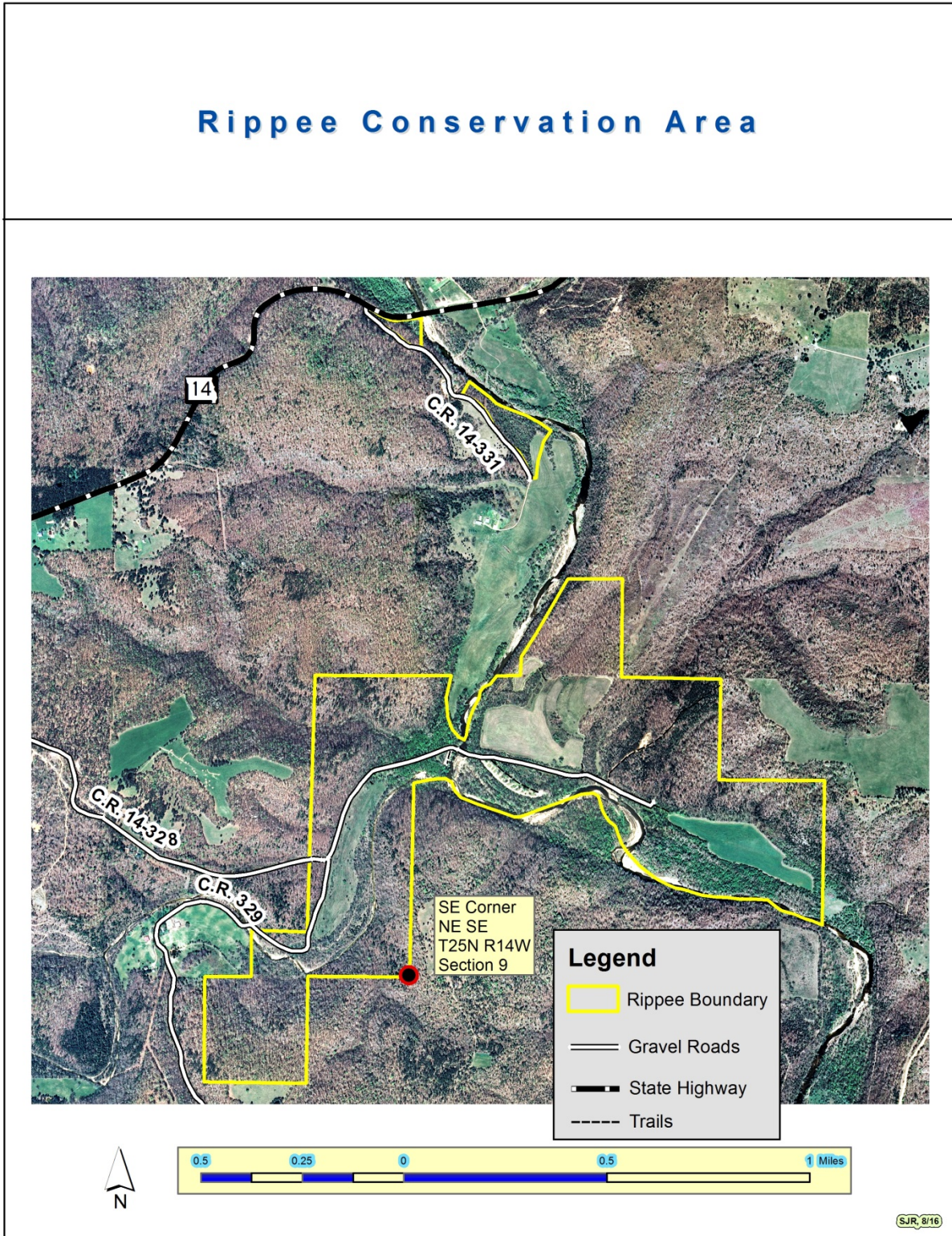
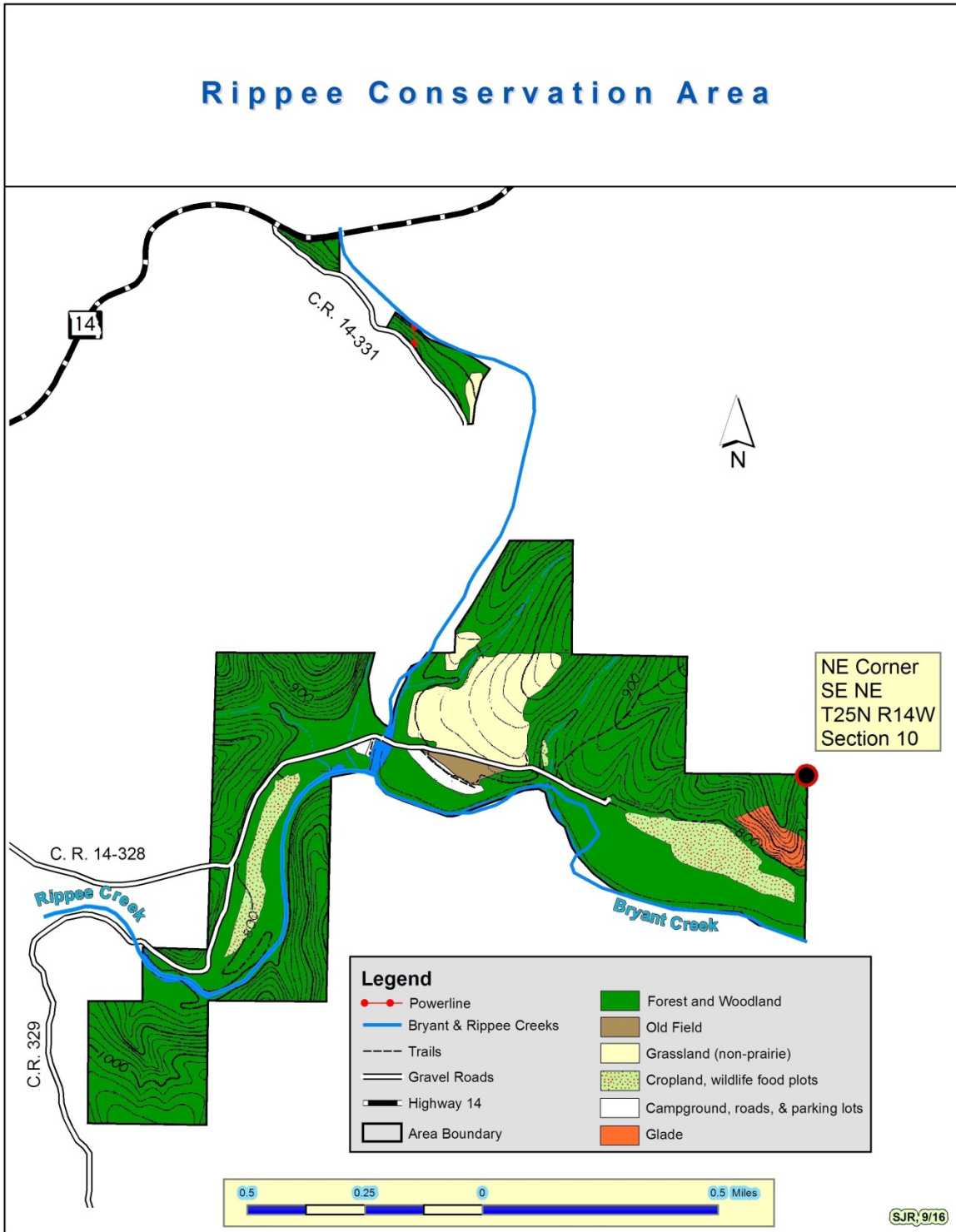


Figure 5: Land Cover Map



Appendix A. Rippee Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (November 1-30, 2016):

Thank you for sharing the Draft copy of the Rippee Conservation Area, Fifteen-Year Management Plan. My wife and I own the property that borders the Conservation Area to the north along the Bryant Creek valley. This beautiful farm was originally homesteaded by Mr. Ezra Rippee in February, 1873 and we have registered it with the State under the name, Bryant Creek Farm.

Before I comment on the specifics of the Management Plan (draft), I want to share that I am a very pro-conservation landowner. I grew up on a cattle farm in Barry County, MO, graduated from Monett High School, and went on to receive a B.S. in Biology from SMSU way back in 1978. These early years shaped within me a perspective and appreciation for the natural beauty of the Ozarks. I subsequently served over 30 years in the U.S. Military and it was near the end of my career in 2004 that we purchased Bryant Creek Farm. We have lived here full-time since 2011, and in that time, I have engaged MDC on several occasions for assistance in improving the farmland. One effort was to install a rock weir in Bryant Creek to slow down bank erosion and establish riparian cover along the bank where only fescue pasture existed. A second effort was a forestry study to lay out a plan for timber stand improvement with Forester, Shane Rice. A third and most recent effort is a plan with MDC and NRCS to convert the entire river valley to native grass and reestablish the riparian corridor along the creek (EQIP 2014 74642415669). This plan will establish about 40 acres of native grass and nearly 2000 trees in the riparian zone. After two seasons of spraying and controlled burns, I am proud to say that Fescue, Sericea Lespedeza, and Johnson Grass appear eradicated in the bottomland just upstream of the Conservation area.

These efforts should enhance the watershed and greatly benefit wildlife habitat and lands downstream. In 2015, I established Stream Team #5155 to monitor Bryant Creek between HWY 14 and the Rippee Conservation Area and Stream Team volunteers are involved with implementing the EQIP plan.

I mention all this to give assurance that I am in lockstep support of MDC causes and its plans for the Rippee Conservation Area. My sole comments on the DRAFT copy relate to section VIII. Administrative Considerations, which discusses resolution of potential boundary disputes and acquisition of land. From my point of view, we do have property line issues between the Rippee Conservation Area and Bryant Creek Farm. The following specifics regard our shared boundary: When we purchased Bryant Creek Farm, we were pleased when the seller presented an actual survey her husband had ordered on April 22, 1985 by Midwest Surveyors from Branson, MO. A copy of that document is filed at the Douglas County Courthouse. It shows the southernmost, triangular-shaped tip of the farm extending all the way to County Road 328 that accesses Rippee Conservation Area. The presentation of the survey was a very important factor as we considered the pros and cons of buying this place. More recently, I've learned that MDC-published maps show our privately-owned land stopping well short of CR 328, in complete disagreement with the 1985 survey. This discrepancy begs for clarity as the Rippee area receives fairly intensive

use by the public. I am hopeful we can resolve this in a constructive way to the benefit of both parties. It is in this cooperative spirit that I propose the following solution:

We are willing to trade that southernmost tip of land for the two strips of MDC land along CR 331. I can honestly say, as the sole resident on CR 331 and having lived here nearly 6 years, I've seen little evidence that these isolated land parcels are used by the public. There is no signage on HWY 14 informing the public of the accessible land, and even if signs were installed and maintained, these lots consist mainly of rocky, steep topography along the creek, too narrow to do much with recreationally. The southern tip of the farm, on the other hand, contains the richest bottomland soil and has a very unique natural feature along the west side. That feature includes a spectacular limestone bluff at the base of which lies a slough, sheltered by trees and surrounded by reed so favored by wood ducks and other wildlife. This water hole, which straddles the property boundary, would become public property in its entirety and the land-trade would create a clean, straight, and unambiguous boundary line running east-west between our private and public lands. Agreeing to this proposed trade would benefit the public by adding unique habitat within this simplified boundary. Regarding Bryant Creek Farm, it would also give us a clean, straight southern boundary easily understood by the public. On the north end of the farm, since the isolated plots along CR 331 both adjoin our place, a single, contiguous acreage would result. In brief, these adjustments would greatly improve the layout of both properties and would benefit private and public landholders.

I am optimistic that we can resolve this issue alluded to in the Management Plan's Administrative Considerations section and I look forward to hearing from the Missouri Department of Conservation team. I can be reached at Thank you.

Very Sincerely,

A pedestrian trail along Bryant Creek would be a nice improvement to the acreage. A 10 foot wide multi use pedestrian (no motorized vehicle access) trail would be a great way to encourage public enjoyment of the wildlife including biking, bird watching, fishing and kayak access. It could also be a way to designate where and how public access the Rippee Conservation such that the more impactful equestrian use can be pre-guided to respect the delicate Forest and Woodland areas along Bryant. A trail and presence of users would also deter unlicensed harvest of wildlife.

Floodplain best practices and Missouri codes for setback from streams are necessary to good trail development and are widely used across the USA in stream floodplain areas.

Jane Jacobs coined the phrase "Eyes on the Street" as a way to make public space vibrant and also safe for trail users and is a great wildlife management tool against unlicensed harvesting of wildlife. The DNR is doing great things at the Rippee Conservation property in protecting the wild and native wildlife and plant habitats for future generations. A trail would be a great management feature that would support access to fish and game yet also preserve the environment.

I have been personally involved in trail and other public use developments along water ways of the United states on large scale government projects including design, construction management and environmental permitting and would love to be a part of a steering committee to move trail planning, permitting and development forward.