

J. N. "Turkey" Kearn Memorial Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2016-2025




Wildlife Division Chief

15 JUNE 2016
Date

**J. N. "Turkey" Kearn Memorial Conservation Area Management Plan
Approval Page**

PLANNING TEAM

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KANSAS CITY REGION

RCT Chair


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Wildlife Management Chief


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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** J. N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial Conservation Area, #7717
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1977
- **Acreage:** 1,674 acres
- **County:** Johnson, Pettis
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**

A. Strategic Direction

Maintain existing habitat communities and develop additional wildlife habitat through active management. Manage forests, woodlands, grasslands, crop fields and old fields to enhance a variety of natural communities. Maintain riparian zones and watersheds to ensure water quality. Provide public recreational and educational opportunities compatible with the area’s resources.

B. Desired Future Condition

The future desired condition of the J. N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial Conservation Area (Kearn Memorial CA) is high quality forest and woodland communities with managed open lands, i.e., native warm-season grass/forb communities, crop fields and glades. Riparian zones and lake watersheds will be managed to provide optimal protection for the aquatic resources.

C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

A. Priority Areas: Hi Ridge Conservation Opportunity Area (Units #2, #3), Prairie Chicken Focus Area (Units #2, #3), Crooked Creek Aquatic Conservation Area (Unit #1)

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

- 11 parking lots (Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible)
- 3 lake dams and spillways
- 1 concrete boat ramp (ADA accessible)
- 1 fishing dock (ADA accessible)
- 1 floating boat dock (ADA accessible)
- South Lake fishing lake (9.0 acres)
- North Lake fishing lake (25.0 acres)
- Shop Lake fishing lake (1.5 acres)
- 20 fishless ponds (3.0 acres)
- 1 pesticide storage shed
- 1 grain storage bin
- 1 privy (ADA accessible)
- 1 residence
- 1 shop/storage building
- 1 storage building

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:** Phillips 66 Pipeline LLC natural gas pipeline, Pan Handle Eastern Pipeline Co. petroleum pipeline (Figure 2)
- D. Cultural Resources:** Yes, records kept with Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.
- F. 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.
- G. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Open land habitat consists of crop fields, cool- and warm-season grass/forb plantings and old fields. The area contains approximately 1,213 acres of open land habitat. Small field size and close juxtaposition provide excellent habitat for nesting and brood rearing for a variety of birds and other open-land dependent species.
- 2) Woodland and forest habitat on the area is 423 acres. No past management activities are known for any of these units.

Management Objective 1: Maintain and enhance existing forest and woodland communities.

Strategy 1: Implement appropriate forest management, as warranted. Prior to implementing management activities, conduct a forest stand inventory (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Implement and maintain beneficial riparian corridor practices, as outlined in the Department's Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation (Missouri Department of Conservation 2009).

Strategy 1: Utilize Best Management Practices during timber harvest and woodland management as described in the Department's manuals: Missouri Watershed Protection Practice manual (Missouri Department of Conservation 2014) and the Missouri Forest Management Guidelines Voluntary Recommendations for Well-managed Forests (Missouri Department of Conservation 2014) (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Identify riparian corridors that need to be widened and establish appropriate vegetation using tree planting, direct seeding or allowing natural regeneration. (Forestry).

Management Objective 3: Develop and maintain grasslands.

Strategy 1: Use best management practices to establish prairie reconstruction habitat on appropriate sites. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Convert existing fescue to wildlife-friendly cool-season grasses. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Manage old fields to provide a balance of bare ground, warm- and cool-season grasses, annual forbs and shrubs to maintain and improve habitat.

Strategy 1: Utilize a variety of management techniques to eliminate or control undesirable grasses, provide bare ground, encourage annual forbs and promote areas of shrubby growth. Techniques will include, but not limited to, spraying, prescribed burning, mechanical treatments woody cover removal, disking, and mowing. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Control invasive species using appropriate techniques and monitor for new occurrences. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 5: Control invasive species.

Strategy 1: Use best management practices to control and/or eradicate invasive species. (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The area is in the Muddy Creek watershed. Fourth-order Muddy Creek runs through the northwest portion of Unit #1. The Crooked Creek Aquatic Conservation Opportunity Area runs through the eastern half of Unit #1, which provides opportunity for watershed landscape management.
- 2) The area has two fishing lakes: South Lake (9 acres) and North Lake (25 acres). The fishing lakes were built in 2000. The North Lake area includes ADA-accessible docks, boat ramp and fishing jetty. The area also includes other small ponds that provide opportunity for quality angling.
- 3) The North and South Lakes are relatively shallow and have excessive aquatic vegetation, which presents a challenge in providing quality fishing.
- 4) There are numerous small fishless ponds on the area. Most of the fishless ponds are managed as wildlife watering holes, and are not managed for fishing.

Management Objective 1: Maintain and protect healthy watersheds by implementing best management practices.

Strategy 1: Follow the Department's *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines* (2009) and the Department's *Resource Policy Manual* to ensure management activities adhere to best management practices. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 2: Maintain and restore adequate stream corridors on area streams in order to maintain or improve water quality.

Strategy 1: Restore and establish stream corridors adjacent to management practices. (Fisheries, Forestry and Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Provide quality angling opportunities.

Strategy 1: Manage fishing ponds for self-sustaining populations. Assess sport fish populations as needed in North and South Lakes). Stock channel catfish, as needed. (Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Monitor aquatic vegetation, using mechanical methods and herbicides to suppress and control unwanted aquatic vegetation and nuisance species. Control invasive species (i.e., exotic Eurasian water milfoil, American lotus, naiads, coontail and filamentous algae). Reduce exotic or invasive species to allow diverse aquatic plant communities to exist. (Fisheries)

Strategy 3: Use buffers and BMP agricultural practices that minimize the effects of nutrient and soil runoff in the watershed surrounding the North and South Lakes. (Fisheries, Forestry and Wildlife)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Balance user opportunity and minimize user conflict. (Wildlife)
- 2) Provide educational opportunities for schools, groups and individuals. (Wildlife, Forestry and Fisheries)

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting and viewing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain area parking lots and trails. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Conduct routine management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.

Strategy 1: Provide maps and maintain the Missouri Atlas database for public use. (Wildlife, Outreach and Education)

Strategy 2: Work with Outreach and Education consultants in the Kansas City Region to enhance the usability of the areas for the Discover Nature Schools program. (Wildlife, Outreach and Education)

Strategy 3: North Lake offers easy bank fishing access from the main parking lot, floating dock and jetty. Encourage the use of North Lake as a site for outreach and education classes/clinics. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 3: Facilitate a good working relationship with neighboring landowners.

Strategy 1: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties. (Private Land Services)

Strategy 2: Utilize Kearn Memorial CA for landowner field days or other special events. (Outreach and Education)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Ensure all easements are properly documented and filed.
- 2) Evaluate land offered as additions to these areas.
- 3) Maintain existing infrastructure at highest possible level.

Management Objective 1: Make sure all easements are properly located.

Strategy 1: Use Geographic Information System to ensure that any easements are properly located. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain infrastructure at current levels.

Strategy 1: Maintain infrastructure in accordance with Department Guidelines. (Wildlife, Design and Development)

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:

J. N. "Turkey" Kearn Memorial Wildlife Area is located in Johnson and Pettis counties. J. N. "Turkey" Kearn, who delighted many people with his humor and knowledge of local history, lived on the area in harmony with its natural beauty. In 1976, he donated 1,479 acres to the Department with the wish that the bounty of wildlife his ancestors spoke of when they first settled here be restored and preserved for future generations. The Department purchased an additional 195 acres, bringing the area to its present size of 1,674 acres.

The area features a great variety of habitat types, including wooded hills, bottomlands, crop fields and native grass fields. Two fishing lakes, covering 9 and 25 acres, respectively, were built in 2000. The area contains several small ponds and one 2-acre pond. Muddy Creek crosses the northwest corner of the area.

Management of the area focuses on providing habitat for upland wildlife species, including deer, turkey, quail and greater prairie chickens in Unit #3.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Old Field	700.5		42
Forest	423		25
Crop	325		19
Grassland	190		12
Ponds	35.5		2
Total	1,674		100
Stream Frontage		11.62	

Public Input Summary:

The draft J.N. "Turkey" Kearn Memorial Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period October 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The J.N. "Turkey" Kearn Memorial 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 J.N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial Conservation Area public comment period

Supports managing for quail on Tracts 2 and 3.

Historically, area management objectives have included an emphasis on quail. Unit 1 of the area, has more timbered acres than openland habitat and receives more management emphasis for deer and turkey. Quail management efforts have been concentrated on area Units 2 and 3. An inventory taken in 2006 indicated those units had adequate nesting cover, but inadequate brood-rearing cover, too many large trees, and not enough shrubby cover. Currently, efforts to remove larger trees and establish plots of quail-friendly shrubs are underway. Some grassland habitat is managed for brood rearing through mechanical mowing and grazing which will continue and expand in the future. Units 2 and 3 have recently been designated as a Quail Emphasis Area.

Suggests allowing horseback riding on Tracts 1 and 2.

The area management team has evaluated the compatibility of currently allowed activities with other activities such as horseback riding and determined this activity would have direct negative impacts on permitted activities such as hunting, photography, and bird watching. Horseback riding is permitted on any roadway that is open to public vehicle travel.

Suggests adding a parking lot on SE 1221 Road to prevent vehicles parking on road.

SE 1221 Road is lightly used by the public to gain access to Unit 1. At this time there is little justification for adding a parking lot at this location. If use patterns shift, consideration of an additional parking lot will be addressed. Signs will be installed as needed to direct the public to park in designated parking lots or to limit impediments to traffic using public roadways surrounding the area.

Suggests not allowing tree stands within 30 yards of boundary fence on public areas.

Currently, there are no statewide regulations prohibiting the location of hunting stands, except in close proximity to private residences. State statutes clearly define trespass. Any area user must obtain permission from a private landowner prior to entry, even if in pursuit of a wounded animal.

Suggests better marking of area boundaries. Concern with trespassing onto private property.

Area boundaries are regularly monitored for proper signage. Weather, vandalism, and flooding often damage or remove signs, which are replaced in a timely manner. All adjoining landowners are encouraged to contact any Department employee to discuss a particular site or incident that requires attention. Problems of trespass should be immediately handled by the landowner by contacting local law enforcement officials or their county conservation agent.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (1998). Missouri Natural Heritage Database. *Area and resource management policies and procedures manual*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

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.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2010). *Forest land action strategy*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri Forest Management Guidelines Voluntary Recommendations for Well-Managed Forests*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri

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, Missouri: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Habitat Cover Map

Figure 3: Aerial and Easement Map of Units 1 and 2

Figure 4: Aerial Map of Unit 3

Additional Appendices

Appendix A. Appendix A. J.N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 2: Habitat Cover Map

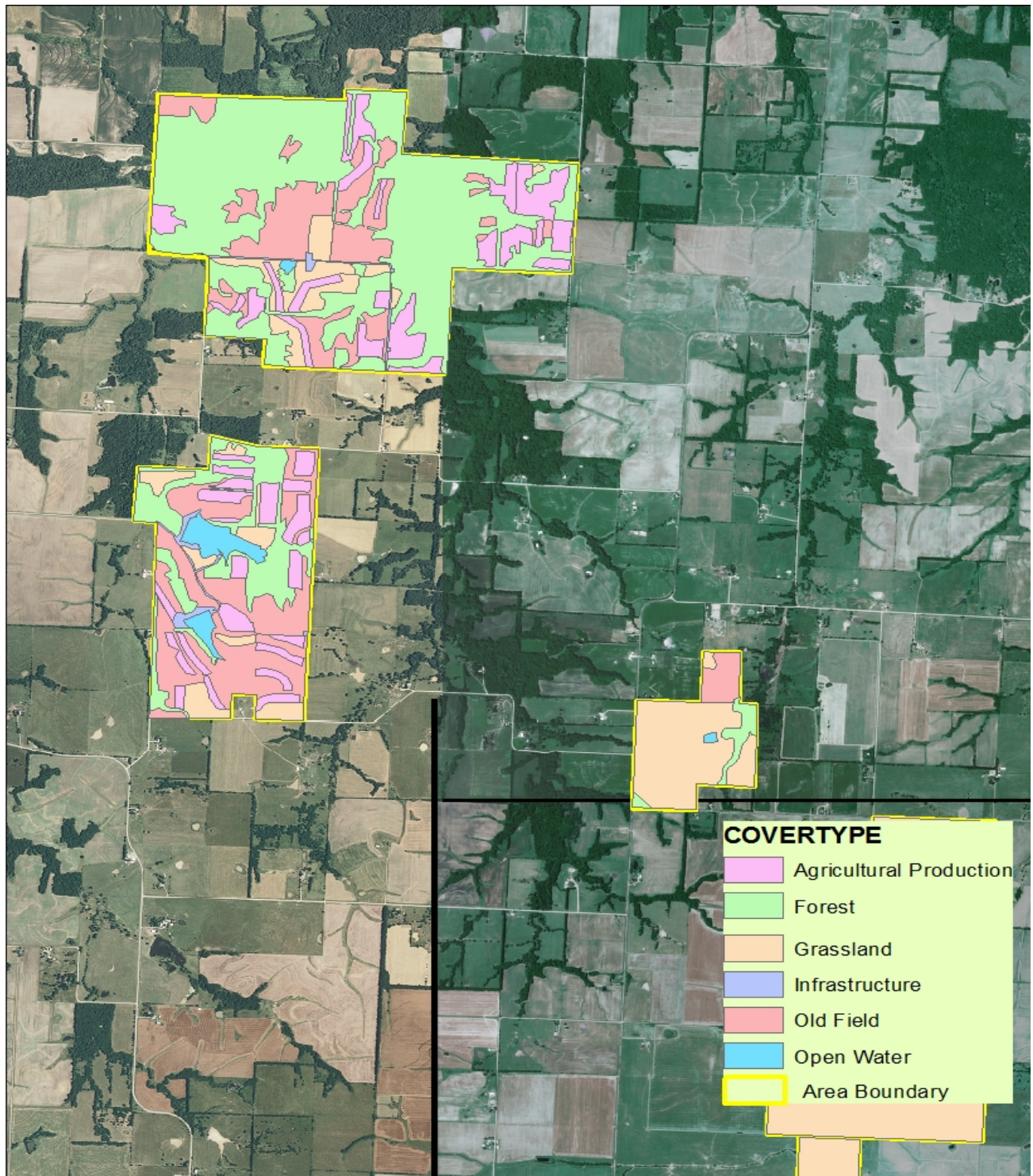


Figure 3: Aerial and Easement Map of Units 1 and 2

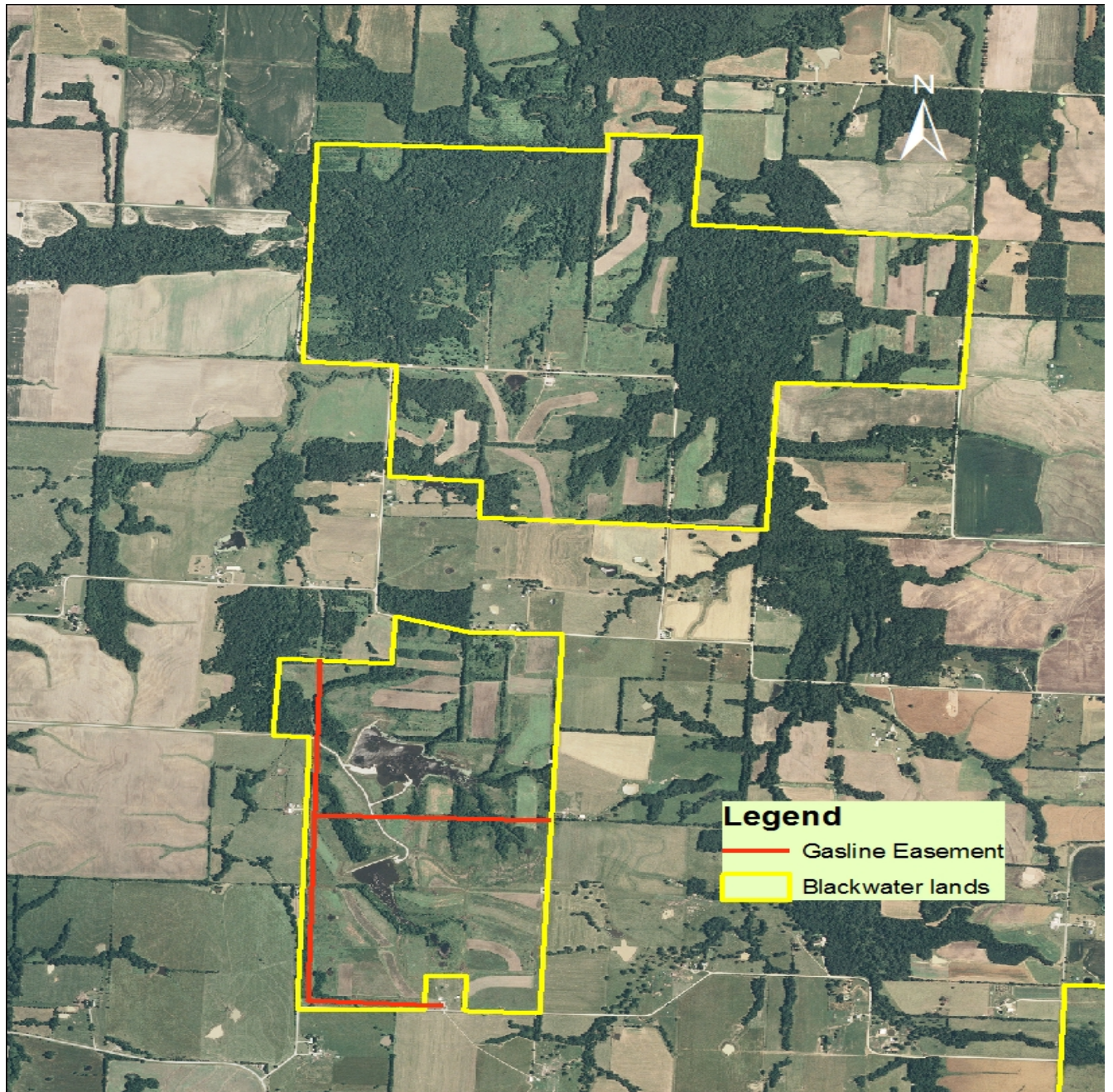


Figure 4: Aerial Map of Unit 3



Appendix A. J.N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (October 1-31, 2015):

Consider improved marking of boundary between public and private land, may require some clearing of brush and trees and installation of posts to install boundary signs. Problems continue with trespassing from tract 2 onto private property. Good fences make good neighbors.

Consider a requirement to not allow tree stands within 30 yards of boundary fence on any public area, with the proposed regulation change to archery and muzzle loader only on this area, very rarely does a deer drop in its tracks with an archery shot even a well placed shot. Allowing tree stands to be erected on property line does not make for good landowner relations. Not sure if this is a management issue or regulation issue?

Consider an additional parking lot on SE 1221 RD at access point used by farmer this may keep vehicles from parking on road.

Continue the development of habitat for quail on tract 2 and 3. You have made great progress the last few years.

Consider the possibility of allowing horseback riding on portions of tract 1 and 2 utilizing the roads used by farmer to access crop fields as well as the county roads that border the area, maybe by special permit only during times when it will not conflict with hunting seasons.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft J. N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial Conservation Area Management Plan.

SMMBCH recommends that the Department designate 10-12 miles of multi-use trails on Unit 1 of the J. N. “Turkey” Kearn Memorial CA. The size of this Area, the predominantly upland landscape, and the general absence of cultural, resource, or safety conflicts make the area suitable for developing a multi-use trail network. It will be simple to locate the trails in such a way as to minimize conflicts with other users, such as fishermen. A trail system could also be designed to provide fishermen an access route to ponds on the CA.

This CA is listed as a priority for trail implementation in the 2015 SMMBCH Proposal to Expand Public Land Multi-Use Trails in Missouri; the purpose is to help to meet the demand for public-land riding opportunities in Johnson County, part of the underserved Cherokee Prairie Region. Our organization offers, subject to availability of volunteers, to assist the Department to layout and mark trails and install or improve supporting infrastructure.

Thank you for your due consideration and for the opportunity to comment.