

# Cedar Gap Conservation Area

## Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan FY 2019-2033



John Tuttle

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**Forestry Division Chief**

2/13/2019

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**Date**

## Cedar Gap Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

### PLANNING TEAM

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### FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief

John Tuttle

2/13/2019

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## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Cedar Gap Conservation Area, # 9908
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1999
- **Acreage:** 431 acres
- **County:** Wright
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry, Design and Development
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - A. Strategic Direction**

Protect the Bryant Creek headwaters while managing for multiple resource uses with an emphasis on forest, associated species, wildlife, and compatible recreational opportunities.
  - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Cedar Gap Conservation Area (CA) is a healthy forest/woodland and glade habitat that provides outdoor recreational opportunities for multiple user groups.
  - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
  - A. Priority Areas:** None
  - 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
  - D. Other:** Headwaters of Bryant Creek
  
- III. Existing Infrastructure**
  - One parking lot (gravel lot with concrete pad, Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] accessible)
  - Privy (ADA accessible)
  - Cedar Gap Trail, 1.6-mile hiking trail (difficult)

#### IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. **Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** Protection of the Bryant Creek's headwaters
- 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:** SE-MA-NO Electric, and Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) right-of-way
- D. **Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- 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 and restore forest, woodland, and glade landscapes.
- 2) Improve habitat for deer and other game species.
- 3) Improve habitat and natural diversity by limiting 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 2012 forest inventory. (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* (MDC, 2014). (Forestry, Wildlife)

##### **Management Objective 2: Maintain and enhance deer and other wildlife habitats.**

Strategy 1: Implement glade management to reduce woody encroachment and encourage native species. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Improve forest wildlife habitat with forest and woodland management practices that may include timber harvesting, forest thinning, and use of herbicides or prescribed fire. (Forestry)

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

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

Strategy 2: Monitor the area for priority invasive species. Suppress any infestations as possible, using appropriate methods. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Manage and protect karst land features and the headwaters of Bryant Creek watershed.

**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 MDC *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice Recommended Practices for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines* (MDC, 2014). (Forestry)

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

**VII. Public Use Management Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Provide public hunting and viewing opportunities.
- 2) Provide public use access and 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 diversity of species. These include prescribed fire, herbicide applications, and mechanical treatments. (Forestry, Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2: Maintain existing area parking lots and trails for use by the public and MDC staff.**

Strategy 1: Monitor and clear/improve area trails and parking lots, as needed.

(Forestry)

Strategy 2: Continue to monitor area use and limit special use permits that could impact use by other stakeholders or harm the watershed. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Conduct boundary line maintenance every five years or as needed.

(Forestry)

## **VIII. Administrative Considerations**

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Resolve any boundary line disputes with adjoining landowners.
- 2) Consider acquisition of 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 MDC priorities, as identified in the annual MDC land acquisition priorities, may be considered.

## MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	FY32	FY33
<b>Terrestrial Resource Management</b>															
<i>Objective 2</i>															
Strategy 1	X			X			X			X			X		
Strategy 2	X			X			X			X			X		
<i>Objective 3</i>															
Strategy 1		X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
<b>Aquatic Resource Management</b>															
<i>Objective 1</i>															
Strategy 1		X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
Strategy 2		X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
<b>Public Resource Management</b>															
<i>Objective 2</i>															
Strategy 1		X		X		X		X		X		X			
Strategy 2	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Strategy 3		X					X					X			

## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

The original 391 acres of Cedar Gap Conservation Area (CA) was acquired in 1999 by private individuals and then donated to MDC for the single purpose of protecting the headwaters of Bryant Creek. Another 40 acres were acquired in 2002 to facilitate pedestrian public use.

The property has a distant history of high-grade timber harvest and wildfire.

### Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Upland Forest/Woodlands	280	65
Glade	127	29
Savanna	14	3
Roads	2	1
Other (Abandoned rock quarry)	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>100</b>

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Cedar Gap Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period Dec. 1–31, 2016. MDC received comments from five respondents (Appendix A). The Cedar Gap 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.

MDC responses to themes and issues identified through the Cedar Gap Conservation Area Management Plan public comment period.

#### **Suggests allowing bicycle riding on Cedar Gap CA’s trails.**

Expanding the group of users to allow bicycles on the existing walking trail would increase maintenance, likely cause issues with other area users, and possibly damage sensitive habitats.

#### **Offers assistance to maintain trails open to bicycles.**

Currently, no trails are open to bicycle use.



**References:**

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

**Maps:**

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: County Location Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Aerial Map

Figure 5: Easement Map

Figure 6: Land Cover Map

**Additional Appendices:**

Appendix A: Cedar Gap Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

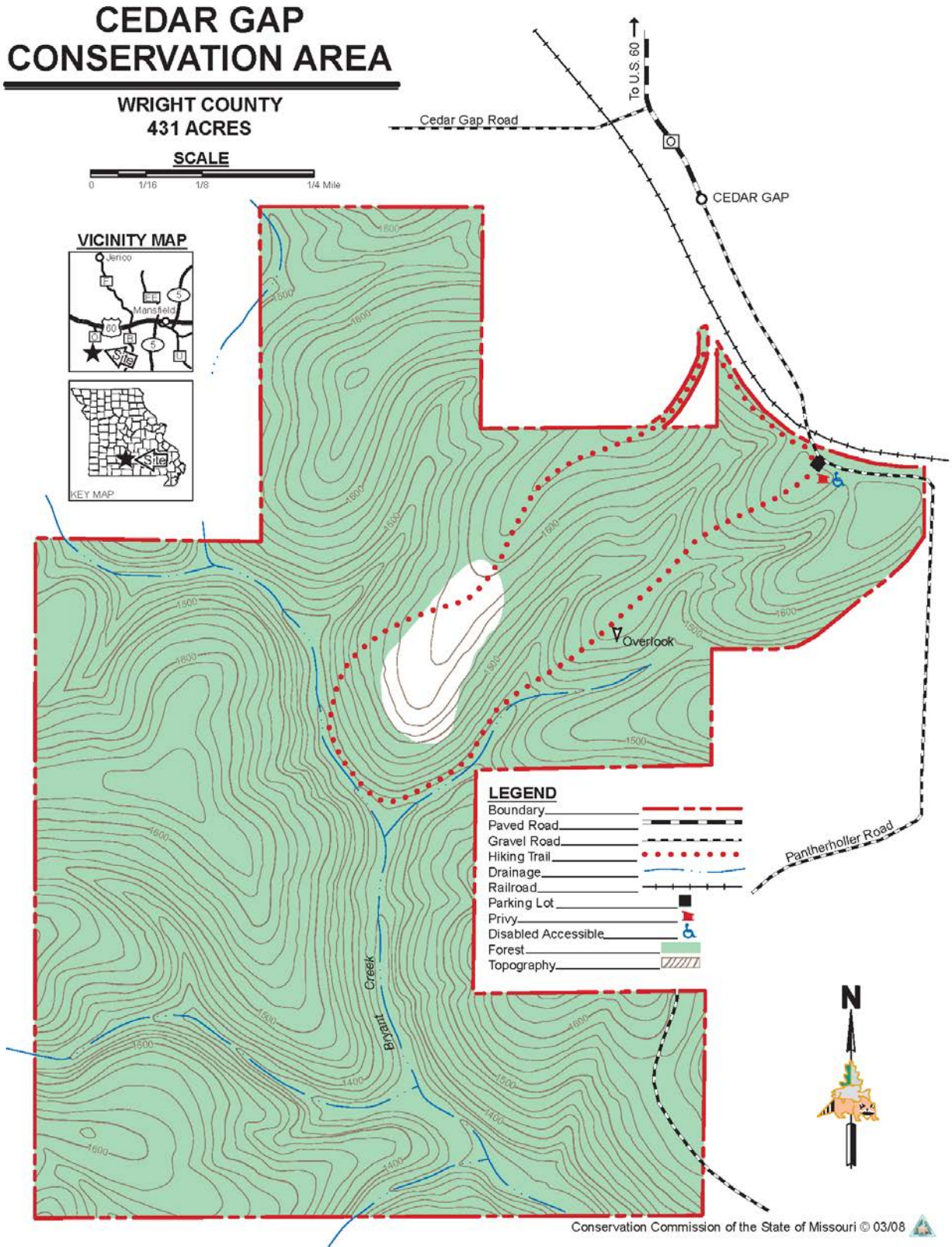


Figure 2: County Location Map

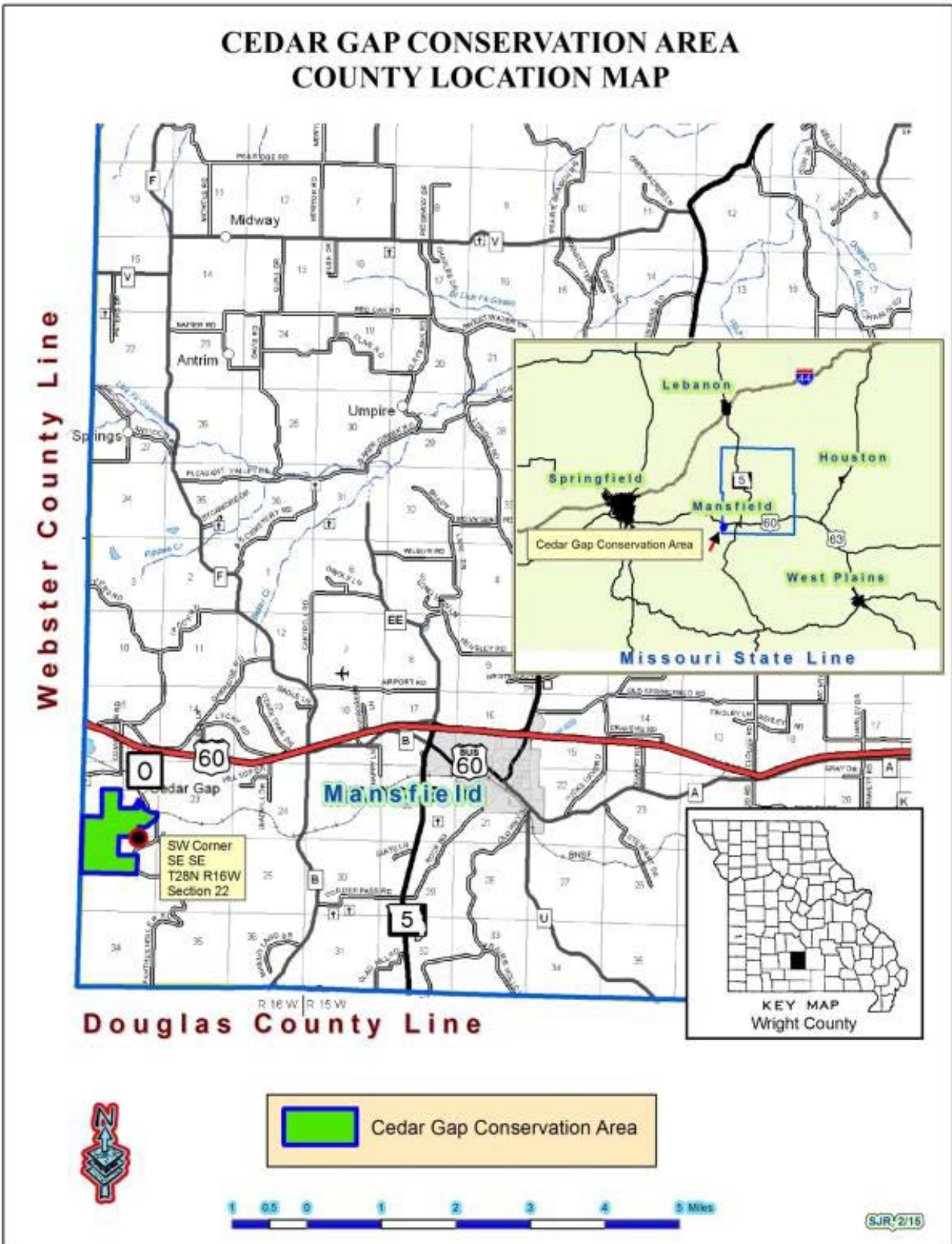


Figure 3: Topographic Map

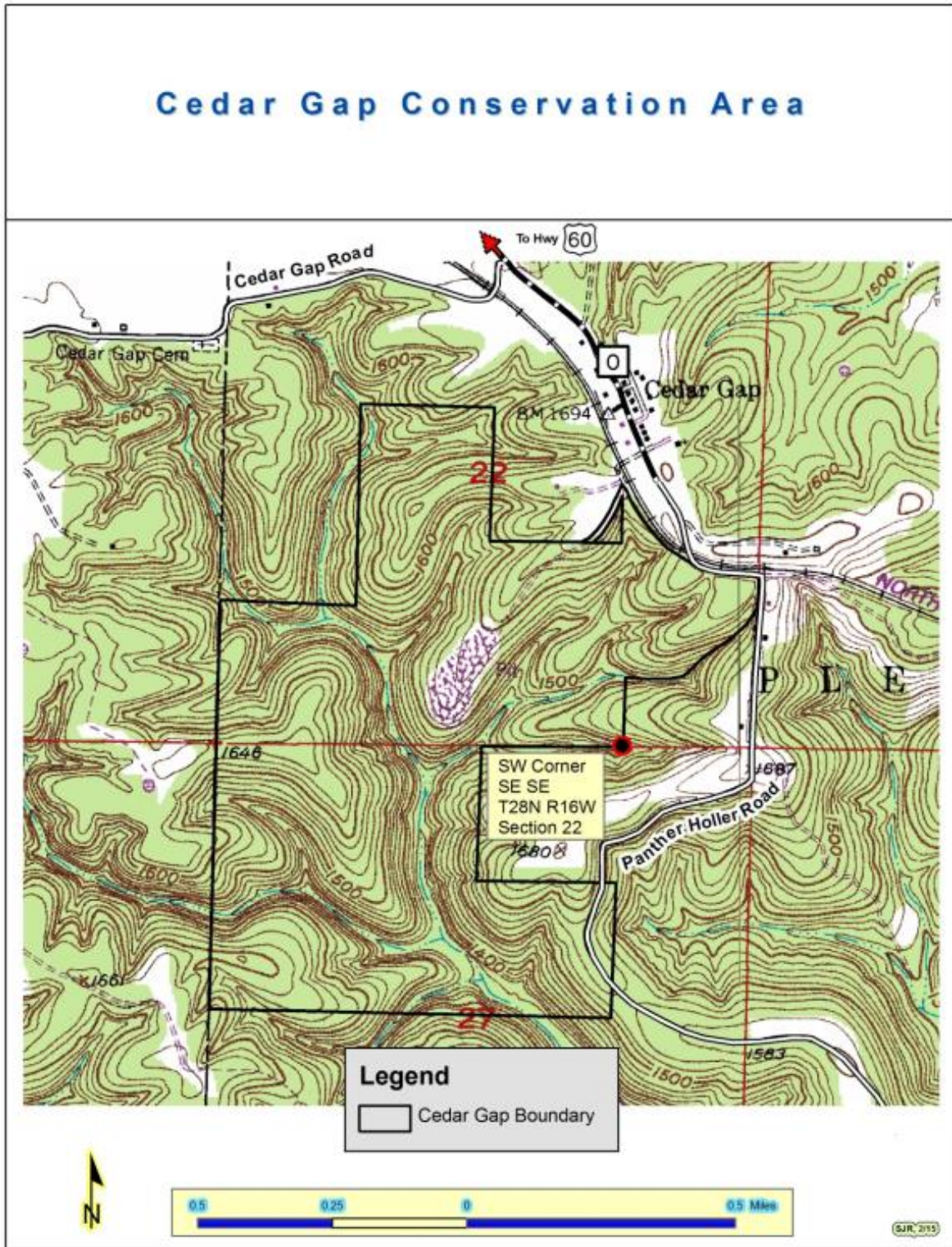


Figure 4: Aerial Map

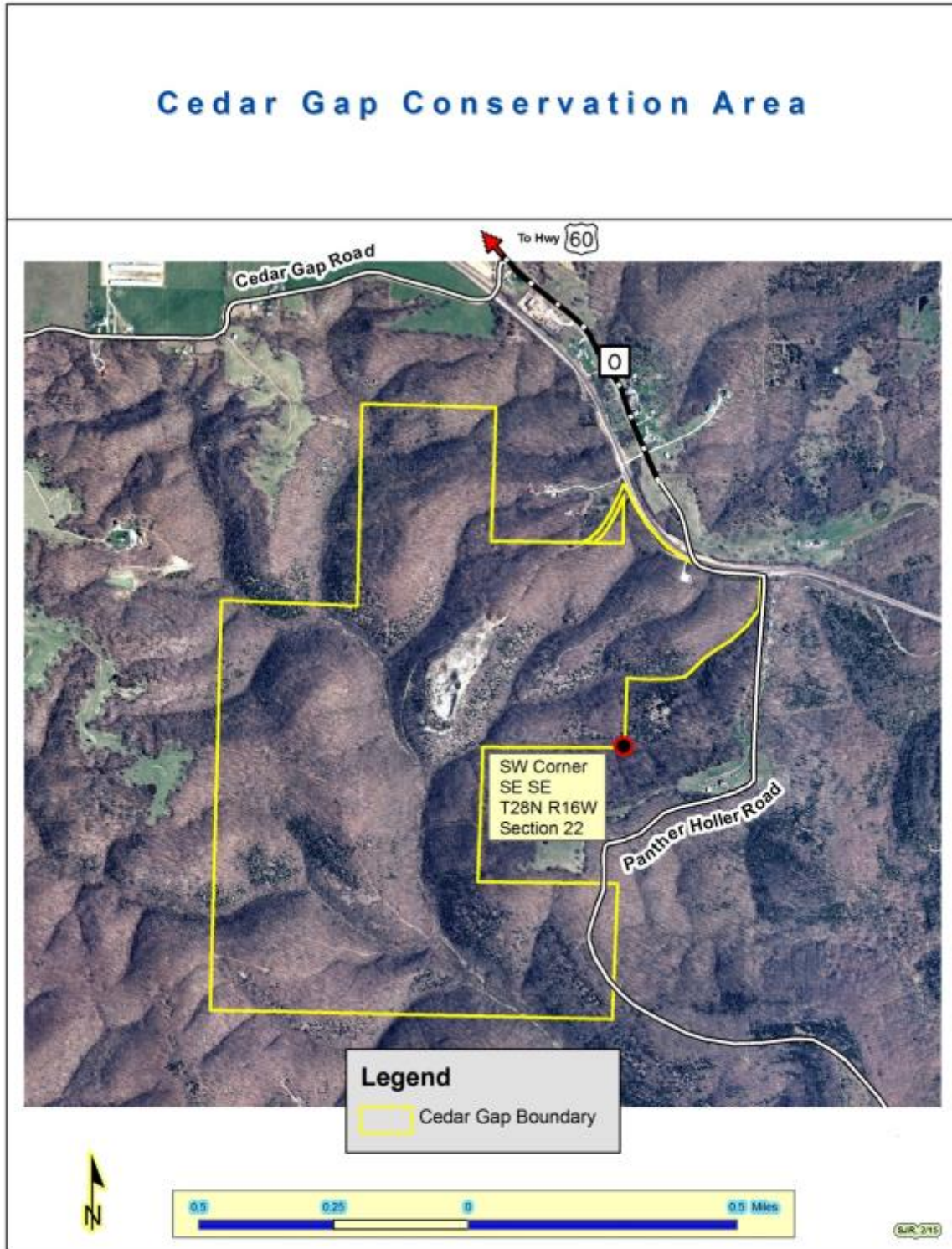


Figure 5: Easement Map

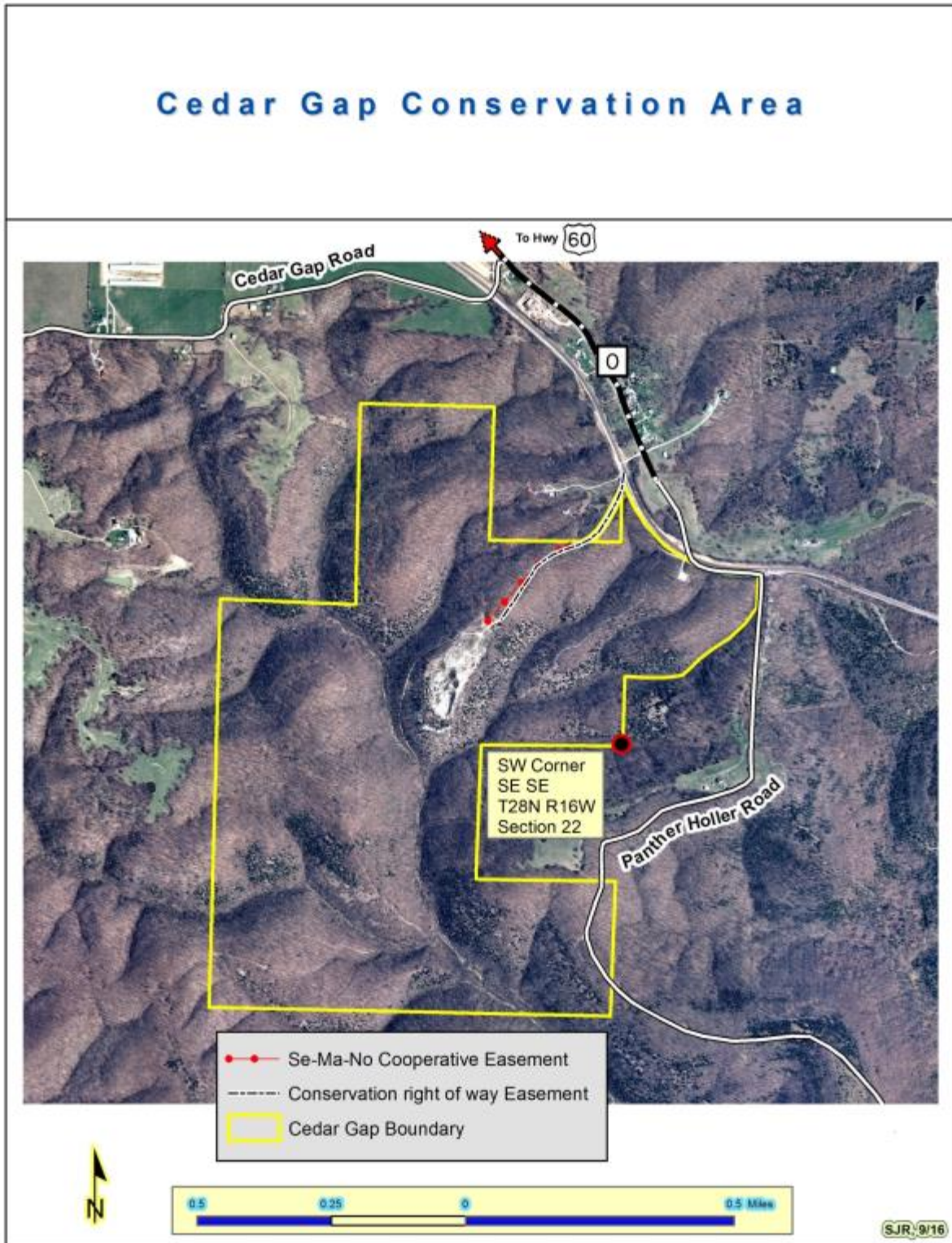
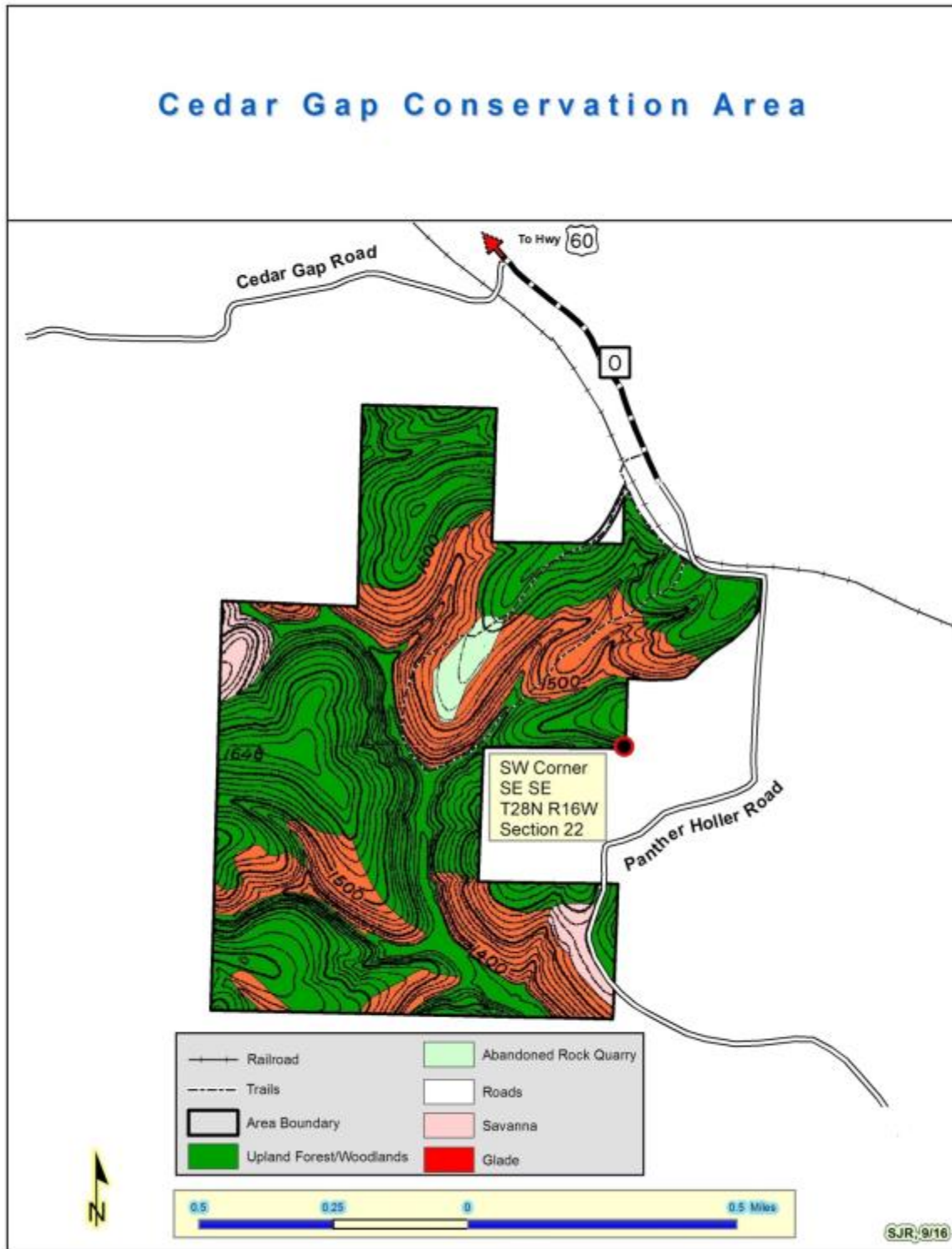


Figure 6: Land Cover Map



## Appendix A: Cedar Gap Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

I would like to see the prohibition of bicycles lifted in this area. There are few other recreational opportunities for mountain bikers in the Seymour/Mansfield region; the nearest singletrack trails are about 1 hour away. The nearest CA with single track trail permitted for bicycle use is Busiek State Forest.

I don't believe allowing bicycles conflicts with the Department's management goals for Cedar Gap. The loop trail is rugged, suited for hiking or a skilled mountain biker. Because of its technical nature, I expect the increase in trail use from bikers would be moderate at most, limiting the chance of conflict with other user groups. Trail impact from mountain biking is similar to hiking, and even less in certain conditions ( <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/ManageMaintain/WKeenImpacts.html> ).

In addition to furthering the management goal of providing recreational opportunities, I believe allowing bicycle access will help with the goal of protecting the Bryant Creek headwaters. The loop trail has some sections with significant erosion. Mountain bikers provide lots of volunteer trail work in the Springfield region, with Midwest Off-Road Cyclists (MORC) recently assisting in a trail reroute at Busiek State Forest to reduce erosion. If mountain bikers are given a stake in the Cedar Gap area, we would love to work with the Department to repair and improve the loop trail in order to make it more sustainable and enjoyable for all users.

I would love to see this area opened up to mountain biking. We've (cyclists) have proven to be good stewards and users of the land. We'd continue that tradition in Cedar Gap if given the opportunity.

Thanks for your consideration

I would love to see more mountain biking in the Springfield area. I have helped work and clear trails at Busiek for years. If you look at the Bentonville Ar plan they are now a mountain bike destination. Recently they had the IMBA world summit.

Cedar Gap is a great place that could be better if you guys helped lift the no bicycles rule. There are many opportunities for your trail to enjoy an active group of people that give back to their sport by building and maintaining great trails. We already know of an active community of cyclists living in your area that travel over an hour to enjoy mountain biking in Springfield, and a great community of people in Springfield that would be happy to enjoy Cedar Gap for the same reasons. Mountain bikers easily travel up to two hours to enjoy their sport, and really poses no negative affects to the trail systems and most times give the trail a group of people that are great stewards to the outdoors. Help Southwest Missouri become the travel destination for mountain bikers that Northwest Arkansas has embraced. Sincerely, President of Midwest Off-Road Cyclists, Springfield, Missouri.



It would be a great benefit to open Cedar Gap to mountain bikers.