

John Alva Fuson, MD Conservation Area

Fifteen-Year Area Management Plan FY 2015-2029



Jusi B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

11-13-15

Date

Fuson Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Randall Roy, Wildlife Management Biologist

Mary Scott, Fisheries Management Biologist

Shane Rice, Resource Forester

Susan Farrington, Natural History Biologist

Keith Wollard, Conservation Agent

Stephanie McKinney, Education Consultant

Lesly Holt, Private Land Conservationist

OZARK REGION

Ozark RCT Chair

Aj. Pott 10-26-2015
Signature Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Unit Chief

John Tuttle 11/10/15
Signature Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** John Alva Fuson, MD Conservation Area, # 8831
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1988
- **Acreage:** 1,534 acres
- **County:** Wright
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry, Design and Development
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for multiple resource uses with an emphasis on forestry, wildlife and watershed protection; and the provision of compatible recreational opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of the John Alva Fuson, MD Conservation Area (Fuson CA) is a healthy forest/woodland complex that provides appropriate wildlife habitat and provides outdoor recreational opportunities for multiple user groups.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** Parks Creek Aquatic Conservation Opportunity Area (ACOA), Fuson/Smittle Terrestrial COA and Wright County Quail Focus Area
 - B. Natural Areas:** None

- II. Important Natural Features and Resources**
 - A. Species of Conservation Concern:** Yes, records kept in Natural Heritage database.
 - B. Caves:** Yes, records kept with the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) Natural History Biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.
 - C. Springs:** Yes, records kept with the Department's Natural History Biologists.
 - D. Other:** A high quality flatwoods natural community; Land Type Associations: Upper Gasconade Oak Woodland Hills and Upper Gasconade Oak Woodland Dissected Plain

- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - 4 parking lots
 - Area access trails
 - 2 picnic tables and grills

- 1 cave gate
- 3 fishless ponds
- 2 camping areas (no amenities provided)

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:** Utility easements, four adjoining landowners with access easements
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records kept with the Department's Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department's *Resource Policy Manual*.
- E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** None observed.
- 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:** Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Improving and restoring forest and woodland landscapes.
- 2) Improving habitat for quail and other small game species.
- 3) Improving 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 forest inventories as provided in the statewide Forest Inventory Schedule and apply recommendations. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Focus on expanding the flatwoods natural community. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain and enhance small game habitats.

Strategy 1: Implement early successional management in the Calton fields to reduce woody encroachment and encourage old field structure. Disturbance will be created using prescribed fire, herbicides, planting, mechanical, or other methods useful for this purpose. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Maintain burn rotations for flatwoods and other woodland landscapes. (Forestry, Wildlife)

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

Strategy 1: Continue to control exotic species including fescue, sericea lespedeza, Johnson grass, locust and autumn olive. (Forestry, Wildlife)

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

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

Managing and protecting karst land features and Parks 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, which will affect biodiversity of unique habitats, by following the practices recommended in the Department's *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice* manual (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 documented in the Department's *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines* (2009).

Strategy 3: Continue to inspect and repair cave gate as needed. (Forestry)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Providing for hunting and viewing opportunities.
- 2) Providing 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. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Maintain existing area trails for use by the public.

Strategy 1: Monitor and clear/improve area trails as needed. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: 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) Addressing any boundary lines issues with adjoining landowners.
- 2) Land acquisition.

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)

Strategy 2: Maintain boundary maintenance schedule every 10 years. Repaint and sign following Department standards. (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. (Forestry)

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Land Acquisition History: The original Hartman tract was acquired in 1988. The adjoining Pennock tract was purchased later the same year. Money to acquire both tracts was obtained from the Raidler Trust Fund. This money was bequeathed to the Department by Maurine Fuson Raidler “to be used for the express purpose of setting up an appropriate memorial in the name of the grantor’s father, John Fuson, MD” The cost of the original Hartman tract was \$115,000, and the Pennock tract was \$285,000. The balance of \$174,000 was paid with Department funds. In 1999, the Calton addition was acquired with a purchase by the Department and two land trades.

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

Smittle cave was a commercial attraction in the 1930s. Protecting the cave ecosystem was a justification for the Fuson property purchase. The cave was gated by the Department in 1998. All caves are currently closed to limit the spread of white-nose syndrome in bats.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Upland Forest/Woodlands	1,231		80
Old Fields/Upland Fields	230		15
Stream Frontage (first-order and above)	73	10,000	5
Total	1,534		100%

Public Input Summary:

The draft John Alva Fuson, MD Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period March 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The Fuson 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 Fuson Conservation Area public comment period

Opposes the use of bicycles at the area.

There are no approved bicycle trails on Fuson CA and none are currently planned.

Suggests developing 10 to 12 miles of multi-use (hike/bike/horse) trails at Fuson CA.

The planning team agrees that offering an official 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 and on a limited basis, by special use permit. The area manager will continue to monitor special use permits and make adjustments as needed.

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.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft John Alva Fuson, MD Conservation Area Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

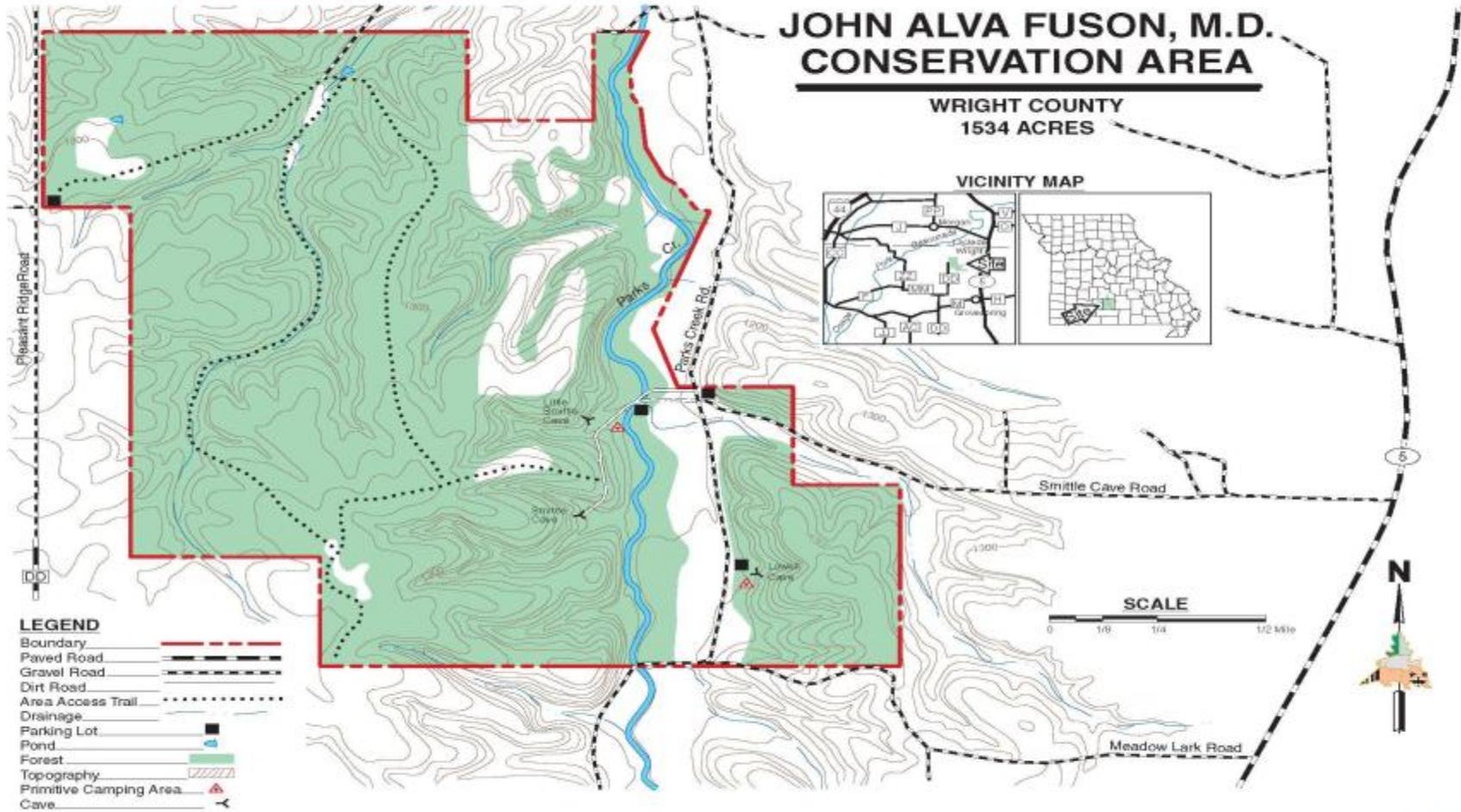


Figure 2: Aerial Map

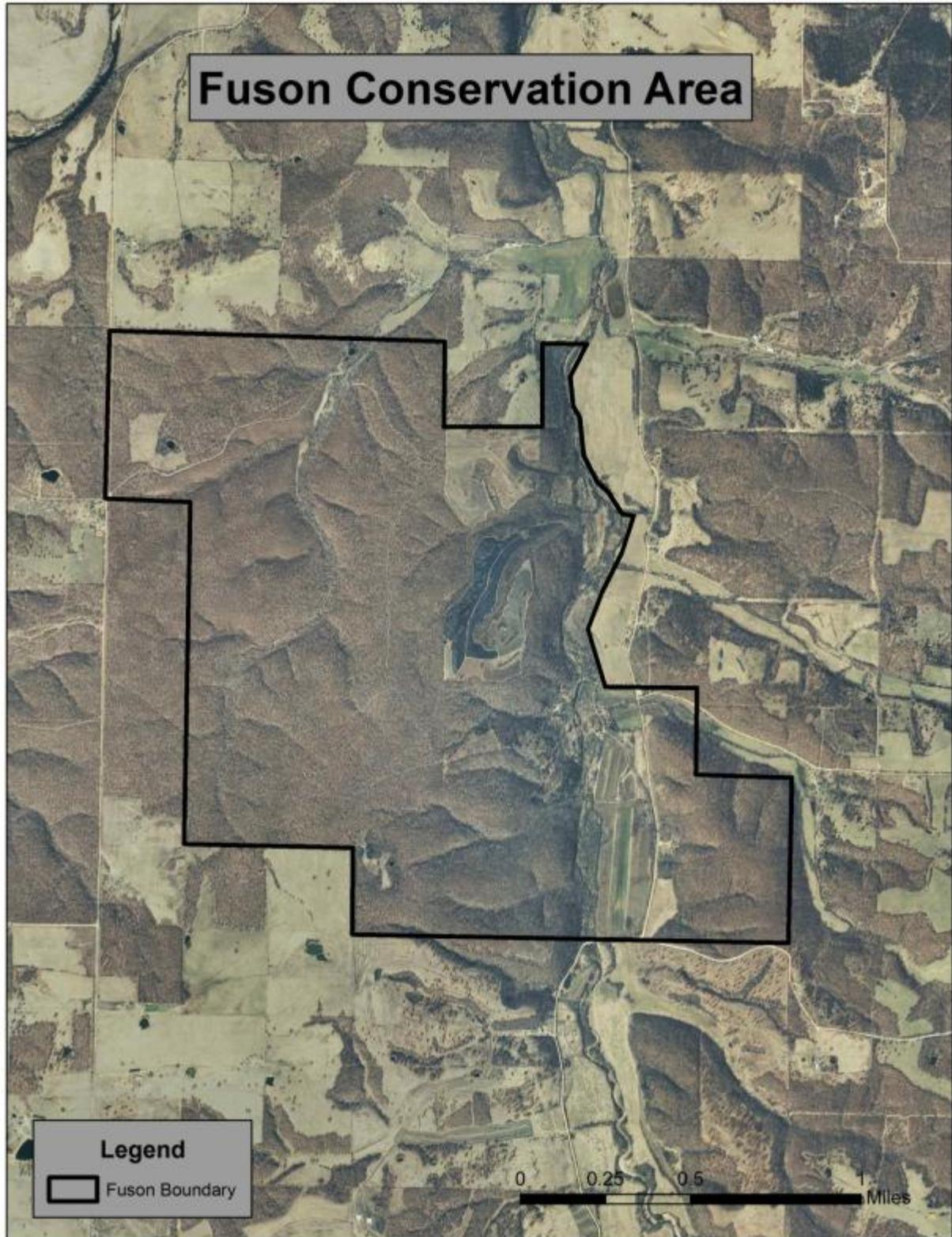
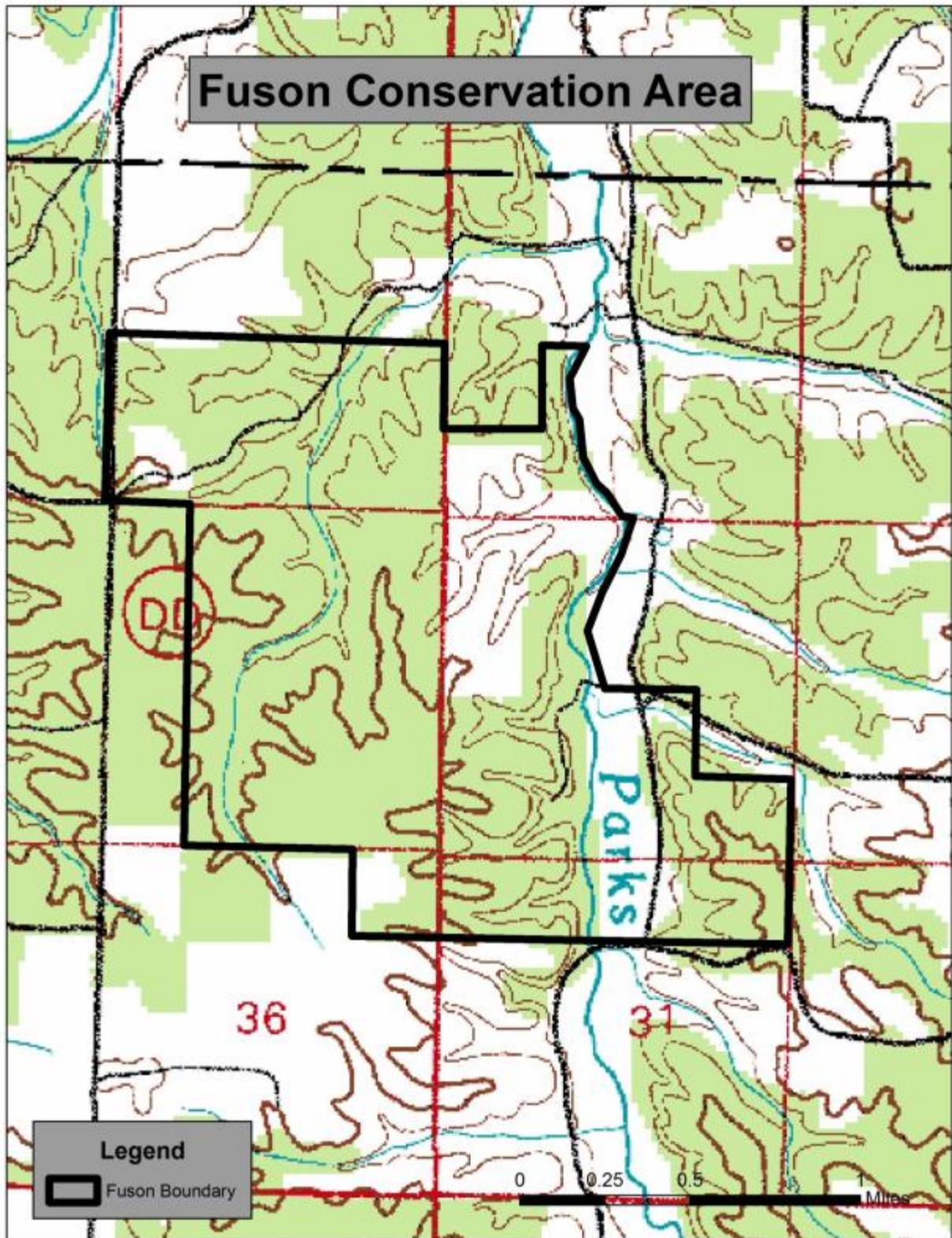


Figure 3: Topographic Map



Appendix A: Draft John Alva Fuson, MD Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

Bicycles should not be allowed in any natural area. They are inanimate objects and have no rights. There is also no right to mountain bike. That was settled in federal court in 1996: <http://mjvande.nfshost.com/mtb10.htm> . It's dishonest of mountain bikers to say that they don't have access to trails closed to bikes. They have EXACTLY the same access as everyone else -- ON FOOT! Why isn't that good enough for mountain bikers? They are all capable of walking...

A favorite myth of mountain bikers is that mountain biking is no more harmful to wildlife, people, and the environment than hiking, and that science supports that view. Of course, it's not true. To settle the matter once and for all, I read all of the research they cited, and wrote a review of the research on mountain biking impacts (see <http://mjvande.nfshost.com/scb7.htm>). I found that of the seven studies they cited, (1) all were written by mountain bikers, and (2) in every case, the authors misinterpreted their own data, in order to come to the conclusion that they favored. They also studiously avoided mentioning another scientific study (Wisdom et al) which did not favor mountain biking, and came to the opposite conclusions.

Those were all experimental studies. Two other studies (by White et al and by Jeff Marion) used a survey design, which is inherently incapable of answering that question (comparing hiking with mountain biking). I only mention them because mountain bikers often cite them, but scientifically, they are worthless.

Mountain biking accelerates erosion, creates V-shaped ruts, kills small animals and plants on and next to the trail, drives wildlife and other trail users out of the area, and, worst of all, teaches kids that the rough treatment of nature is okay (it's NOT!). What's good about THAT?

To see exactly what harm mountain biking does to the land, watch this 5-minute video: <http://vimeo.com/48784297>.

In addition to all of this, it is extremely dangerous: http://mjvande.nfshost.com/mtb_dangerous.htm .

For more information: <http://mjvande.nfshost.com/mtbfaq.htm> .

The common thread among those who want more recreation in our parks is total ignorance about and disinterest in the wildlife whose homes these parks are. Yes, if humans are the only beings that matter, it is simply a conflict among humans (but even then, allowing bikes on trails harms the MAJORITY of park users -- hikers and equestrians -- who can no longer safely and peacefully enjoy their parks).

The parks aren't gymnasiums or racetracks or even human playgrounds. They are WILDLIFE HABITAT, which is precisely why they are attractive to humans. Activities such as mountain biking, that destroy habitat, violate the charter of the parks.

Even kayaking and rafting, which give humans access to the entirety of a water body, prevent the wildlife that live there from making full use of their habitat, and should not be allowed. Of course those who think that only humans matter won't understand what I am talking about -- an indication of the sad state of our culture and educational system.

Wright County is the fifth most underserved county in Missouri in terms of equestrian trail riding opportunities on public land; it is part of the top priority area for equestrian trail development—ten counties in Southwest Central Missouri—in Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen's 2015 proposal for expanding public land trails.. The Fuson CA possesses many important desirable characteristics for multi-use trail development with permitted equestrian use. The soils, topography, area size, and relatively light competing uses are conducive to trail development; access can be gained just a short distance off the end of Route DD.

SMMBCH recommends the development of 10-12 miles of multi-use trails on the Fuson CA. Much of the existing, extensive area access trails could become part of the network. SMMBCH offers our services (availability of volunteers permitting) to help decide on the best location and then clear and mark the trails.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.