Upper Mississippi Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2016-2025

Wildlife Division Chief

29 APRIL 2016

Date

Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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Jennifer Fakes — *Signature* — 3/21/16 — *Date*

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WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief

Joel W. Poratt — *Signature* — 4/11/2016 — *Date*

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Upper Mississippi Conservation Area, # 6131
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** This land is held under a "General Plans" lease agreement signed in 1954 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- **Acreage:** 14,907 acres
- **Counties:** Lewis, Marion, Ralls, Saint Charles, Lincoln, Pike
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Divisions with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife, Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - **A. Strategic Direction**
    The Upper Mississippi Conservation Area (CA) consists of 87 scattered tracts adjacent to the Mississippi River and some river islands. The area is managed for wildlife, bottomland forest and wetland resources with emphasis on wetland species and compatible recreational opportunities.
  - **B. Desired Future Condition**
    The desired future condition of Upper Mississippi CA is a healthy wetland and forest complex.
  - **C. Federal Aid Statement**
    N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. <u>Special Considerations</u>

A. Priority Areas: Confluence Conservation Opportunity Area, Upper Mississippi – Leach Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area, Upper Mississippi – Shanks Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area

B. Natural Areas: Westport Island Natural Area, which consists of wet and wet-mesic bottomland forest, shrub swamp, and riverine sloughs.

II. <u>Important Natural Features and Resources</u>

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: Occurs in the Mississippi River Alluvial Plains Subsection. This land type association consists of alluvial plains and channel of the Mississippi River

adjacent to the Central Dissected Till Plains of northeastern Missouri. Historically, bottomland prairie, marshes, bottomland forests, and riverfront forest dominated (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- Two parking lots
- Two boat ramps
- Two privies
- Four water control structures
- Two boat pullovers
- Electric pump station that includes a sump pump
- Tower that houses the electrical controls
- Five water control structures
- Concrete/metal bridge
- 90-100 waterfowl hunting blinds

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations: Upper Mississippi CA lands are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and leased to the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USACE maintains the forestry habitat on the Upper Mississippi CA.

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: Fabius Island- Ameren power line easement, Blackburn Island- Rockies Express pipeline easement

D. Cultural Resources Findings: Yes, records kept with the 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: Dresser Island and West Alton areas of Pool 26 have some boundary issues. Currently most of these areas have been replanted with trees and

are being monitored by the Department and USACE staff for any additional issues.

G. Other: General Plans Cooperative Agreements between the USACE and the USFWS; and between the USFWS and the Missouri Conservation Commission are attached.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. <u>Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations</u>

Upper Mississippi CA contains approximately 10,435 acres of forest, 2,385 acres of old field and 2,087 acres of wetlands. The three managed wetland units total 1,275 acres: Clarksville Refuge (120 acres), Bay Island (305 acres) and Dresser Island (850 acres).

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Work with federal agencies (USACE, USFWS) to manage the forest community. Manage bottomland hardwood regeneration/recruitment in stands currently dominated by bottomland hardwoods (e.g., oaks, hickories, and pecan).
2) Wetland water levels are closely tied to the Mississippi River elevation, making moist soil management and soil disturbance difficult.
3) Control invasive species.
4) The USACE retains responsibility for management of forest resources on Upper Mississippi CA. The development of USACE forest management plans are coordinated with the Department and the USFWS for input and review to ensure compatibility, as defined by the Forest Cover Act, and compliance with other federal guidance with wildlife use of the project.

Management Objective 1: Manage forestry resources.

Strategy 1: Evaluate existing bottomland hardwood stands, especially on Westport Island Natural Area, for current ecological health, including canopy tree regeneration/recruitment status. Work with USACE forestry staff on this strategy. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Manage Clarksville Refuge as an opportunistic marsh.

Strategy 1: Determine water levels by the river level. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Control invasive plant species by mechanical methods and herbicide application. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Manage Dresser and Westport Islands as an opportunistic marsh.

Strategy 1: Determine water levels by the river level. (Wildlife)
Strategy 2: Control invasive plant species by mechanical methods and herbicide application. (Wildlife)
Strategy 3: Assess the breeding bird community of Westport Island Natural Area, especially priority bottomland forest bird species (e.g., cerulean warbler, and prothonotary warbler). (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Manage wetland units on Bay Island.

Strategy 1: Encourage diverse natural wetland plant communities (that provide accessible food resources for migratory waterfowl) by annually manipulating drawdowns and pumping at the two Bay Island wetland units.

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

The Upper Mississippi CA consists of 134 linear miles of the Mississippi River. Aquatic habitat includes the river's main stem, as well as a variety of sloughs and side channels.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Aquatic habitat in the Upper Mississippi CA is diminishing in quality due to sedimentation of off-channel areas.

Management Objective 1: Maintain and/or improve aquatic habitat.

Strategy 1: Continue to work with the USACE through the Environmental Management Program to maintain and/or improve aquatic habitat through the use of scouring structures, dredging, vegetative plantings, environmental pool management, and other means. (Fisheries)
Strategy 2: Continue to work with the USACE to select appropriate dredge placement locations to minimize impacts on aquatic habitat. (Fisheries)
Strategy 3: Continue to work with the USACE to provide input regarding maintenance and/or installation of navigation structures and their effects on aquatic habitat. (Fisheries)
Strategy 4: Serve on the River Resources Action Team to assist with prioritization of aquatic habitat projects within the boundaries of the Upper Mississippi CA. (Fisheries)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Provide for hunting, fishing, and viewing opportunities.
2) Administer the Upper Mississippi River Waterfowl Blind program.
3) Ensure the areas are kept safe and attractive for area users while ensuring compliance with the *Wildlife Code of Missouri*.

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting, fishing, and viewing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Conduct annual management activities including but not limited to prescribed burning and invasive species control that provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Maintain boat access to the Mississippi River for hunting and fishing activities. (D&D)

Strategy 3: Annually flood two wetland units on Bay Island to provide 305 acres of flooded wetland habitat. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Conduct a biennial drawing for the Mississippi River waterfowl blinds on the restricted portions of Pools 24, 25 and 26.

Strategy 1: Communicate to the public the biennial drawing process for Mississippi River Waterfowl Blinds. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: The Mississippi River Waterfowl Blind Committee will annually review rules related to waterfowl blinds and update the information in the Upper Mississippi CA Waterfowl Hunting Information Brochure, as needed. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 3: Ensure the areas are kept safe and attractive for area users while ensuring compliance with the Wildlife Code.

Strategy 1: Conservation Agents will patrol the areas to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Code and to assist in keeping the area safe and attractive for area users. (Protection)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

1) Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.
2) The Department will ensure compliance with all federal reporting requirements.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with Department guidelines (Wildlife).

Management Objective 2: The Department will provide the USFWS a brief written summation of the prior year's management activities and relevant issues by March 1 of each year.

Strategy 1: The report will address future plans for capital improvements and address the following topics: (Wildlife)

(a) Boundary management problems, including actions to address trespass or unauthorized uses.
(b) Report of completed construction and improvements, including project costs.
(c) Report of planned future construction, as approved in existing management plans, or identified in new planning efforts.
(d) Cropland acreage utilized, amount of crop that was deemed excess to wildlife management needs including amount of receipts for sale of such crops, and amount and nature of expenditures derived from surplus crop funds.
(e) Any changes to State and Federal regulations that affect agency responsibilities for these lands and waters.
(f) Any problems or opportunities relating to General Plan and water management for interagency coordination or consideration.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

All strategies for this management plan are considered ongoing.

APPENDICES

Area Background:
The Upper Mississippi Conservation Area is rich in wildlife and habitat diversity. The area stretches from the Melvin Price Lock and Dam at Alton, Illinois, to LaGrange, Missouri. It includes 87 tracts of federal lands, totaling nearly 15,000 acres. It is managed under a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Years of silt accumulation has diminished the productivity of this wetland area and reduced the number of wetland habitats. In an effort to balance navigation needs and the need for wildlife habitat, Congress authorized the Environmental Management Program in 1986. This federal program is designed to protect the resources and guide future river management. One of the elements of this program was the construction of Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects. Water regulation is now possible, depending on river elevations, allowing for further improvements in fish and wildlife habitat. Many people visit the riverine area to enjoy the outdoors, hunt and hike on the new sediment deflection levee or fish below the water control structures.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	10,435		70
Old field	2,385		16
Wetlands	2,087		14
Total	**14,907**		**100**
Island Stream Frontage		813,028	

Public Input Summary:
The draft Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period October 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received nine comments from seven respondents (Appendix 3). The Upper Mississippi 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 Upper Mississippi Conservation Area public comment period

Suggests dredging slough starting at Turkey Island.
The Mississippi River channels are managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Department of Conservation is not involved with dredging activities in the river channel.

Suggests holding an in-person waterfowl blind drawing three months prior to the season.
Effective June 2016 for the 2016-2017 waterfowl season, all blind drawings for the Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Managed Waterfowl Hunt will be conducted every two years using an electronic draw system. This will allow the blind draw to be held earlier in the year, allowing hunters more time to prepare for the season and construct permanent blinds, if they choose this blind type. Missouri hunter opinion polls cite scheduling conflicts on the day of the draw as the biggest reason that they cannot attend the in-person blind drawing. An electronic draw would help hunters to avoid scheduling conflicts on the day of the drawing and increase opportunity for many hunters across the state.

Suggests waterfowl blinds must be constructed to specifications and open to the public at set time. Concern with quality of blinds on area.
It is understood that fewer permanent blinds have been constructed since the change of the blind construction rules went into effect in 2014. However, the fact that no permanent blinds were constructed at some sites does not equate to a lost hunting opportunity, as anyone can hunt from these sites with a boat blind, or, if water levels permit, a temporary blind could be constructed. Unoccupied blind sites are open to the public at one half hour before shooting time.

Suggests open hunting not be allowed in areas with blinds.
The Department of Conservation provides a wide variety of hunting opportunities and public use on local conservation areas. Further restricting areas with minimal use is avoided.

Concern with allowing rifle/shotgun hunting on Dresser Island while open for waterfowl hunting.
Currently, deer hunting on Dresser Island is permitted under statewide seasons and limits except: only archery methods may be used. Deer hunting with firearms is prohibited on Dresser Island. It is permissible to use shotguns to hunt other species that are in season. Firearms firing single projectiles are prohibited on Dresser Island except that furbearers treed with the aid of dogs may be taken with a twenty-two (.22) or smaller caliber rimfire firearm.
Concern that Clarksville Refuge will no longer be managed as a waterfowl refuge.
There are no plans to change the refuge status and allow waterfowl hunting at the Clarksville Refuge.

Concern that water control structures at Clarksville Refuge are not being utilized.
The hydrology in the Clarksville Refuge is directly tied to river elevation. Water elevation inside the refuge pool raises or lowers independently of the gates over a short period of time due to the soil type. During the last several years, spring flooding has impacted the timing of spring drawdowns needed to stimulate desirable vegetation. Although the refuge water level cannot be managed as intended, the area does provide refuge habitat for waterfowl, which is very important during migration.

Concern with siltation at Dresser Island and Clarksville Refuge. Suggests either breaching levees and allowing river to flow naturally or pumping water.
The hydrology in the Clarksville Refuge is directly tied to river elevation. Water elevation inside the refuge pool raises or lowers independently of the gates over a short period of time due to the soil type.

On Dresser Island, slough edges will be cleared and channel maintenance will occur to allow better water control in the interior sloughs. This will be a several year project due to the limited amount of time the island is dry or frozen enough to allow heavy equipment to work.

Hopes that "opportunistic wetland" at Clarksville Refuge and Dresser Island does not include opportunistic hunting.
The Department has no plans to transition the Clarksville refuge into a waterfowl hunting area. Waterfowl hunting is currently allowed at Dresser Island, but hunters must hunt within 10 yards of the staked locations.

Suggests adding more trails and boat launches to increase viewing opportunities.
Trails are difficult to establish and maintain in a flood plain and on river islands. There are several opportunities for hiking and viewing on some of the areas adjacent to the Upper Mississippi Conservation Area that are protected by flood control levees such as B.K. Leach and Marais Temps Clair conservation areas.

Suggests enforcing littering as an offense.
Littering is a violation and conservation agents enforce this regulation by issuing citations when a person is caught.

References:

Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A.. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Upper Mississippi CA Map
Figure 2: Area Map, Pool 21 (Cottonwood and Poage Islands)
Figure 3: Area Map, Pool 22 (Whitney and Bay Islands)
Figure 4: Area Map, Pool 24 (Gilbert and Fritz Islands)
Figure 5, Area Map, Pool 24 (Pharrs Island)
Figure 6: Area Map, Pool 25 (Mozier to Sterling Islands)
Figure 7: Area Map, Pool 25 (Stag Island Group)
Figure 8: Area Map, Pool 26 (Bolter and Dardenne Islands)
Figure 9: Area Map, Pool 26 (Mason Island)
Figure 10: Area Map, Pool 26 (Dresser/West Alton)
Figure 11: Westport Island Natural Area (Pool 25)
Figure 12: Ameren Power Line Easement – Fabius Island
Figure 13: Rockies Express Pipeline Easement – Blackburn Island

Additional Appendices:

Appendix 1. General Plans Cooperative Agreement between the USACE and the USFWS
Appendix 2. General Plans Cooperative Agreement between the USFWS and the Missouri Conservation Commission
Appendix 3. Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

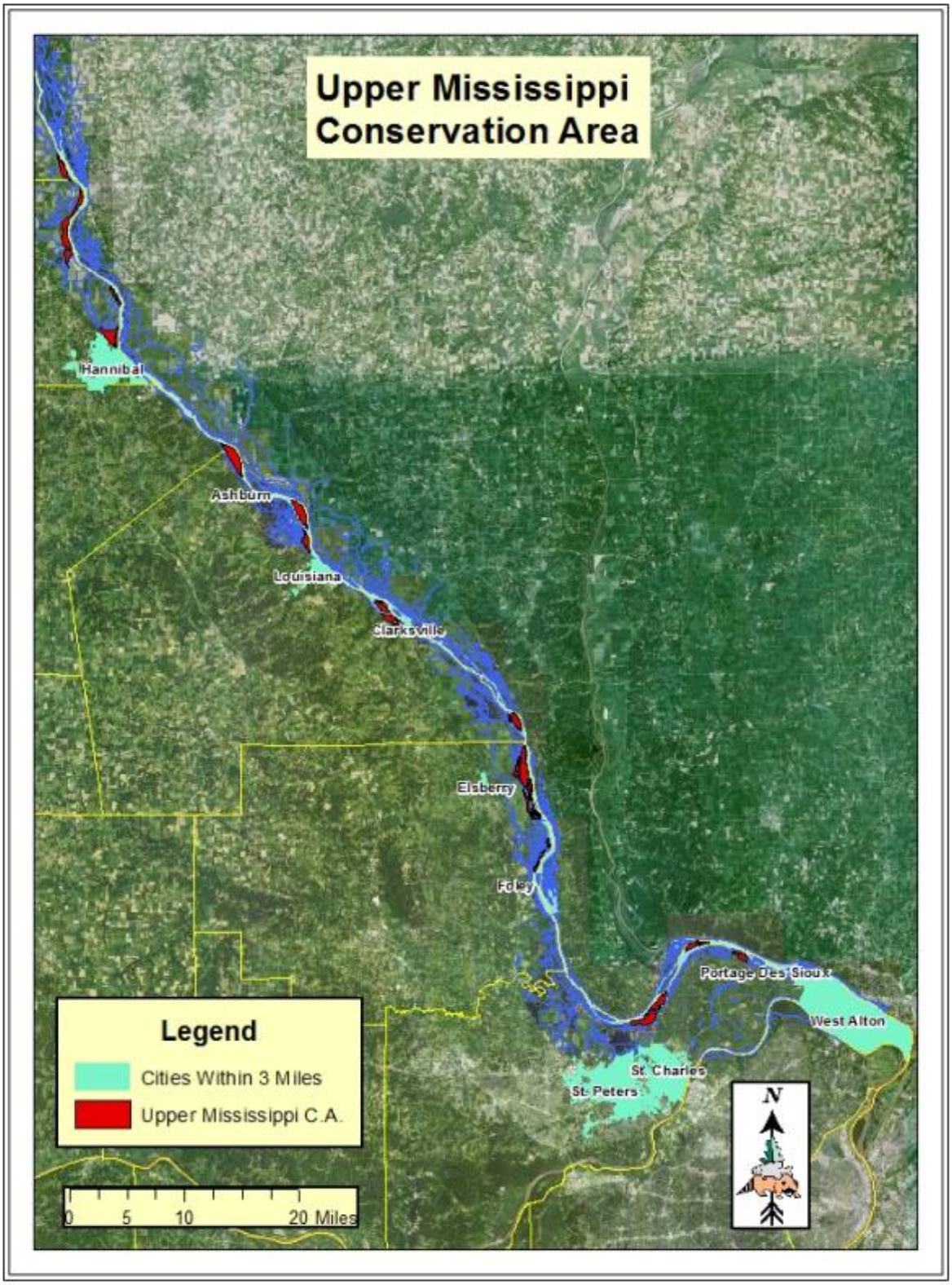
Upper Mississippi Conservation Area
Hannibal
Ashburn
Louisiana
Clarksville
Elsberry
Foley
Portage Des Sioux
West Alton
St. Charles
St. Peters
Legend
Cities Within 3 Miles
Upper Mississippi C.A.
0 5 10 20 Miles
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Figure 2: Area Map, Pool 21 (Cottonwood and Poage Islands)

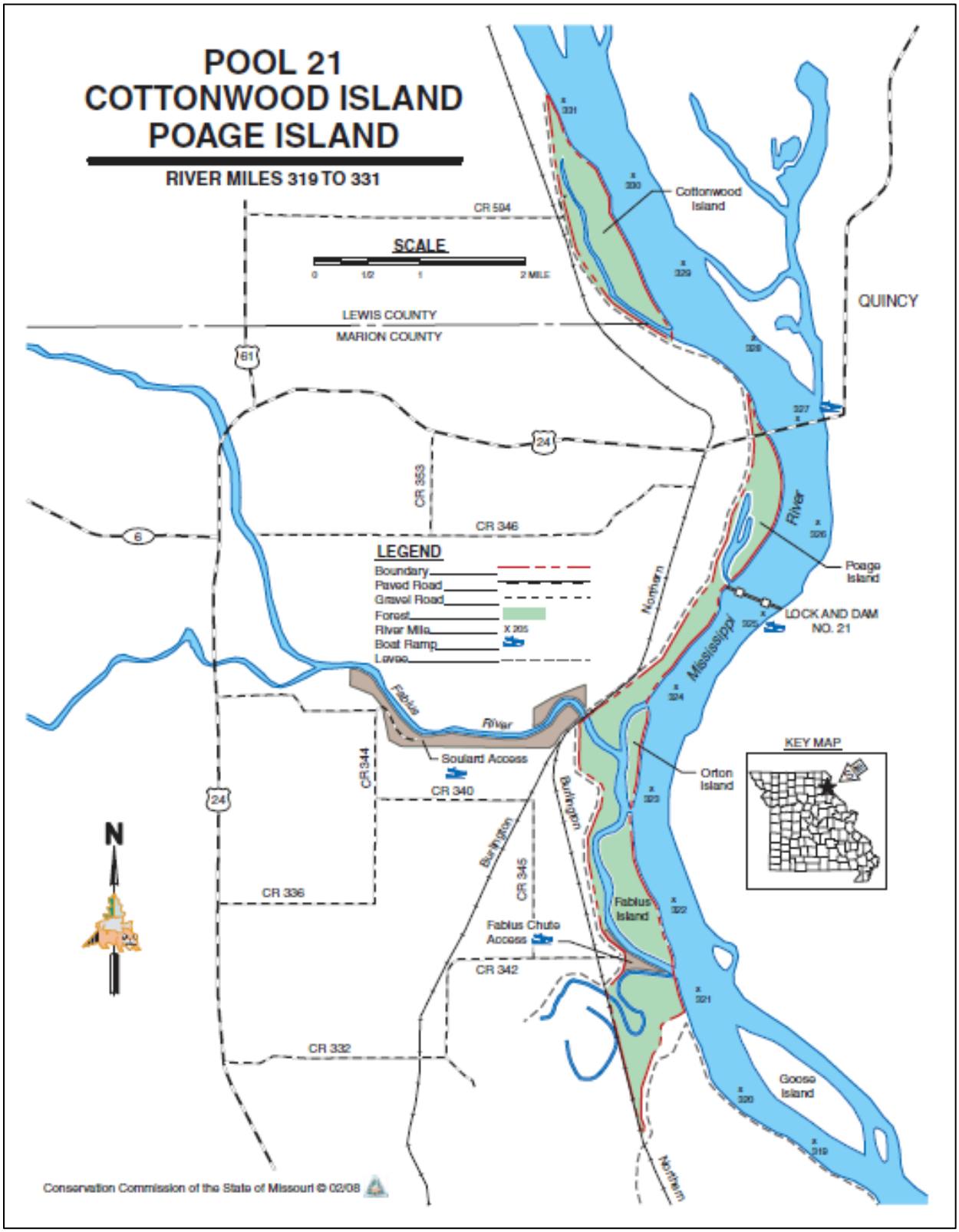


Figure 3: Area Map, Pool 22 (Whitney and Bay Islands)

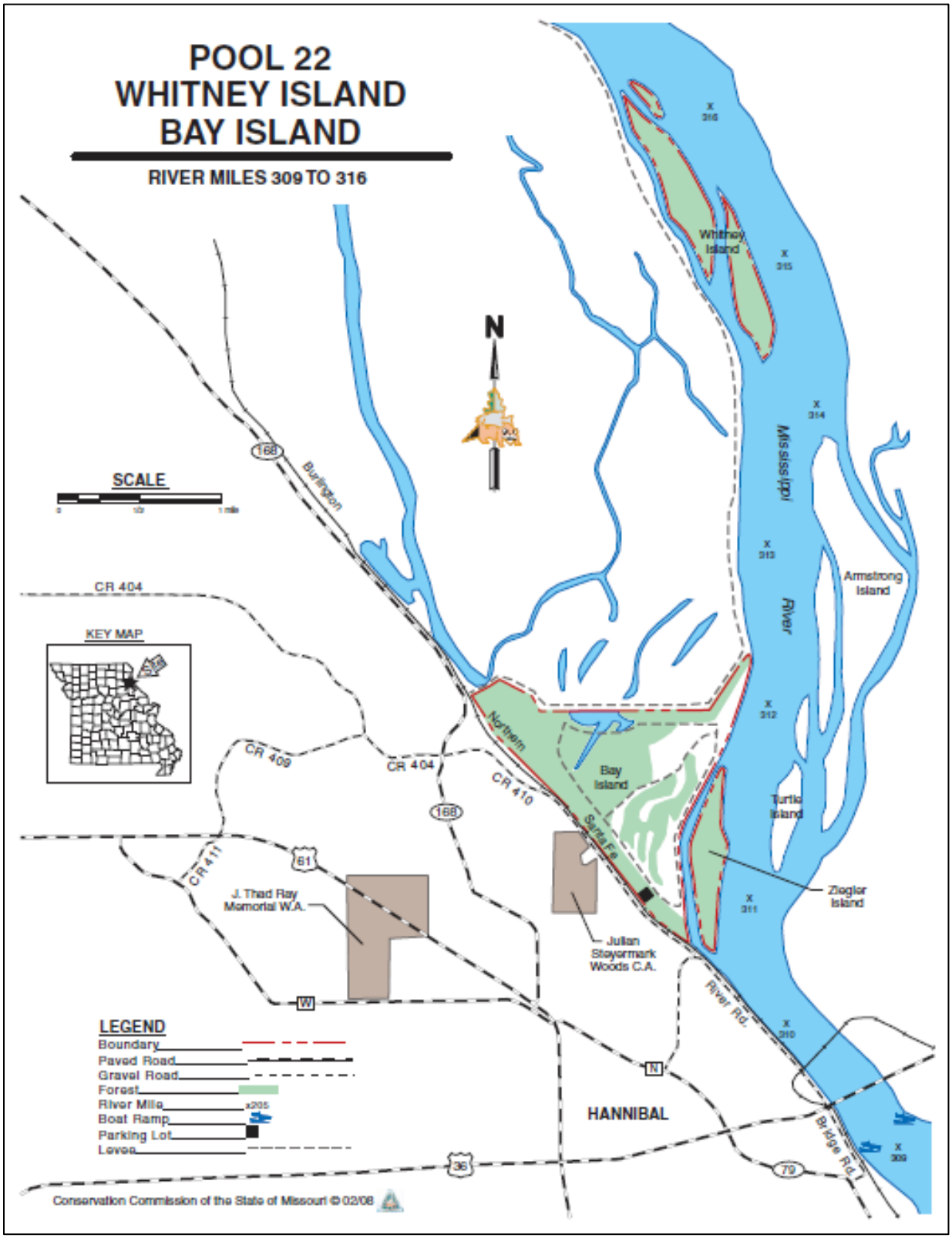


Figure 4: Area Map, Pool 24 (Gilbert and Fritz Islands)

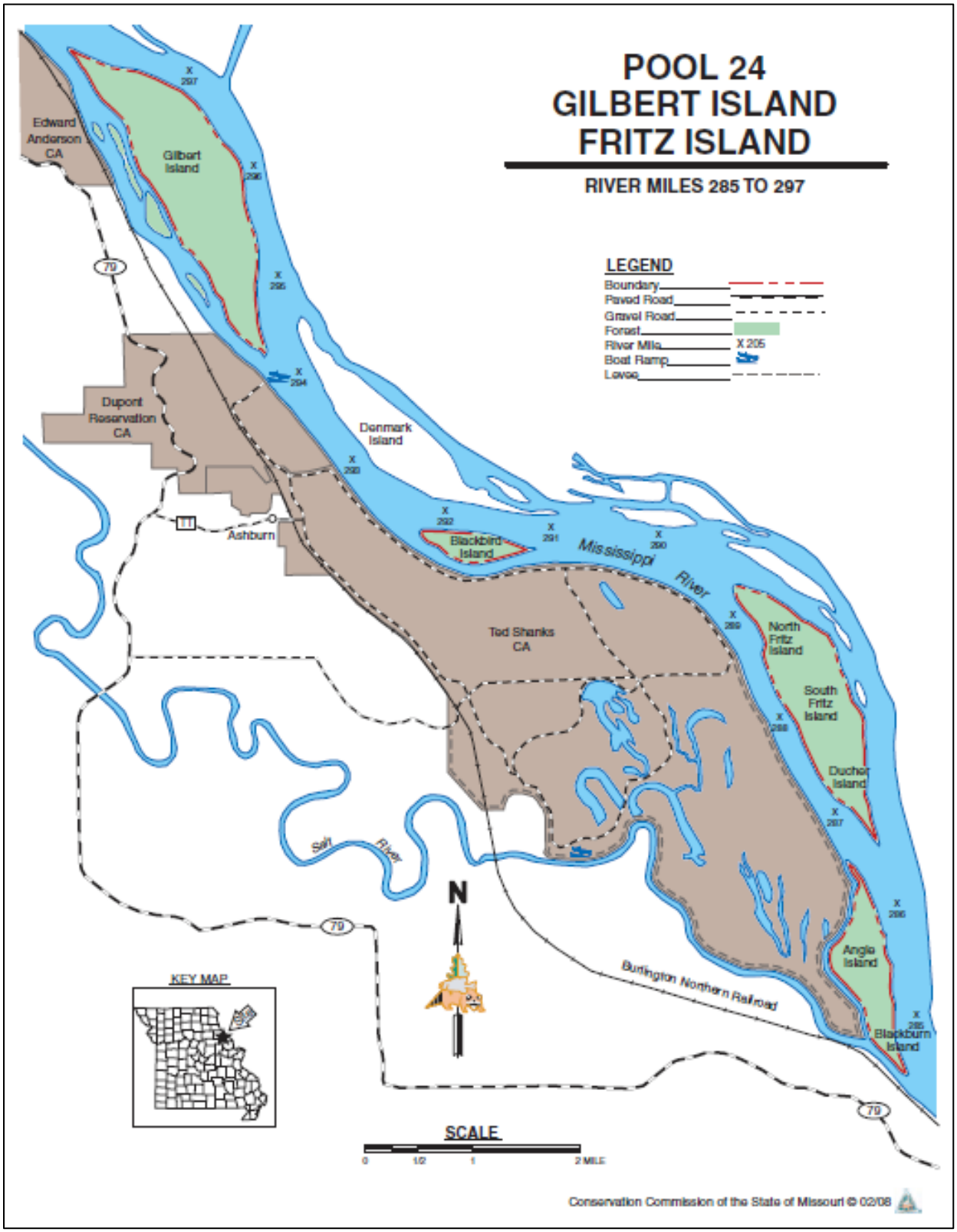


Figure 5: Area Map, Pool 24 (Pharrs Island)

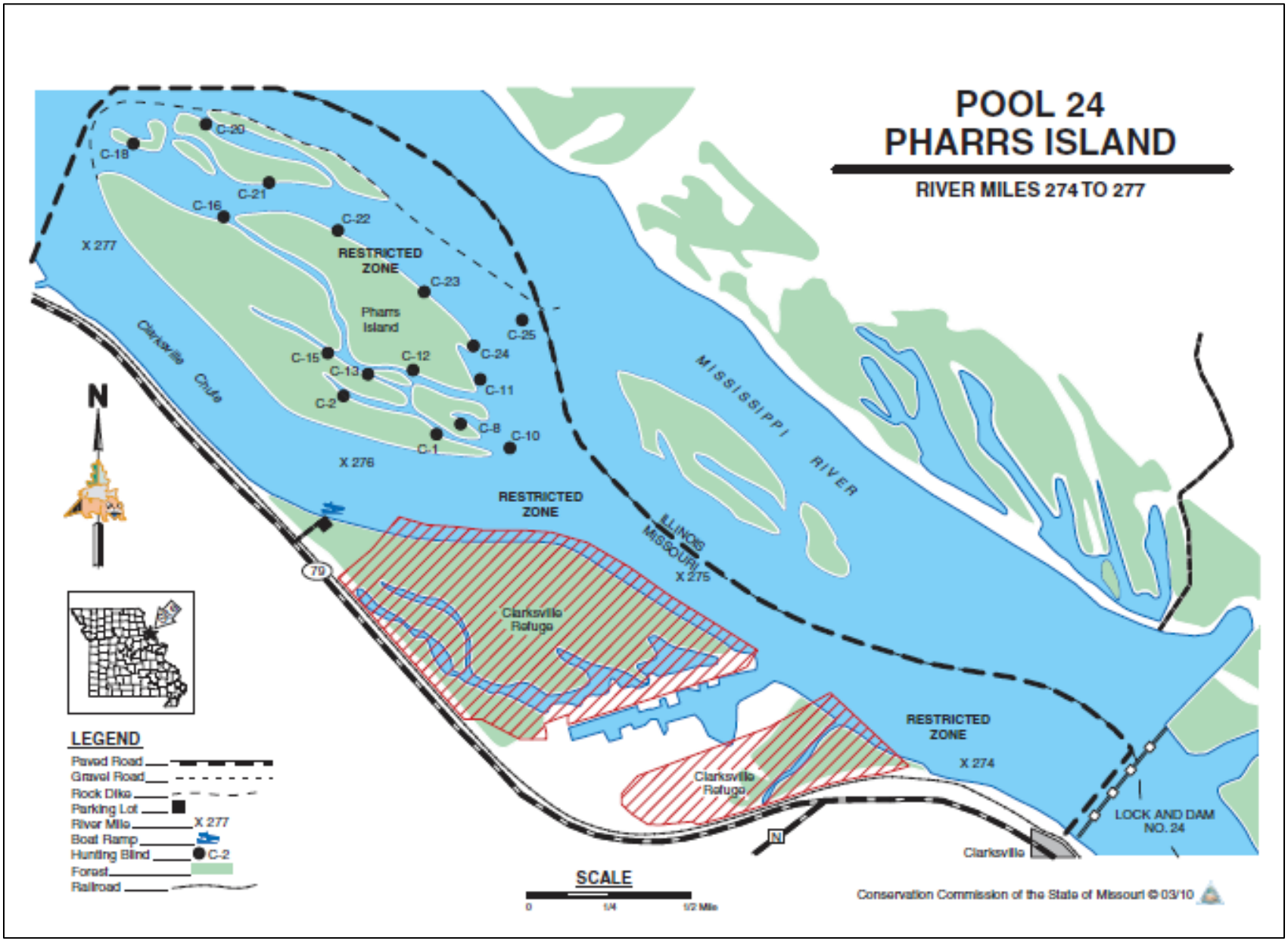


Figure 6: Area Map, Pool 25 (Mozier to Sterling Islands)

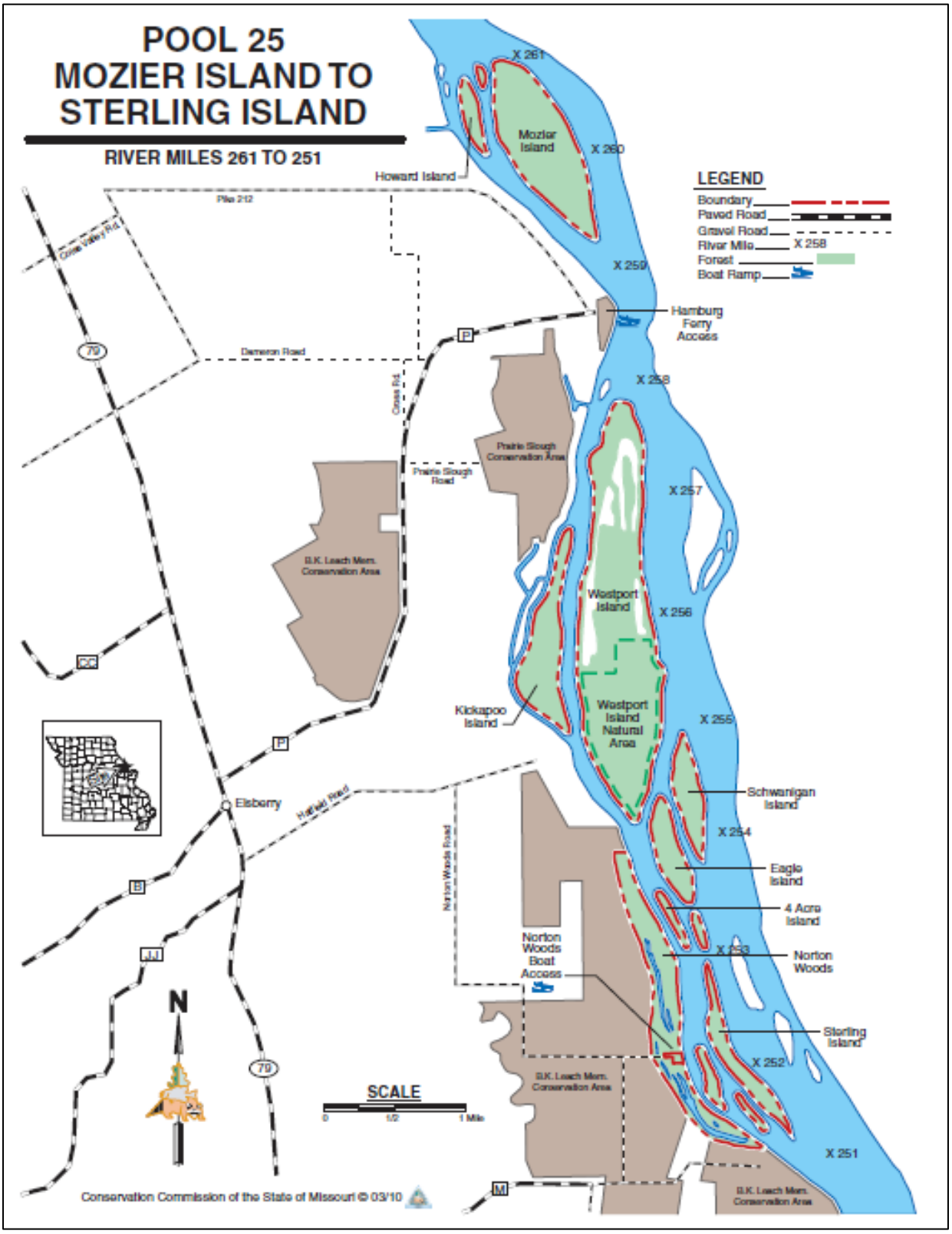


Figure 7: Area Map, Pool 25 (Stag Island Group)

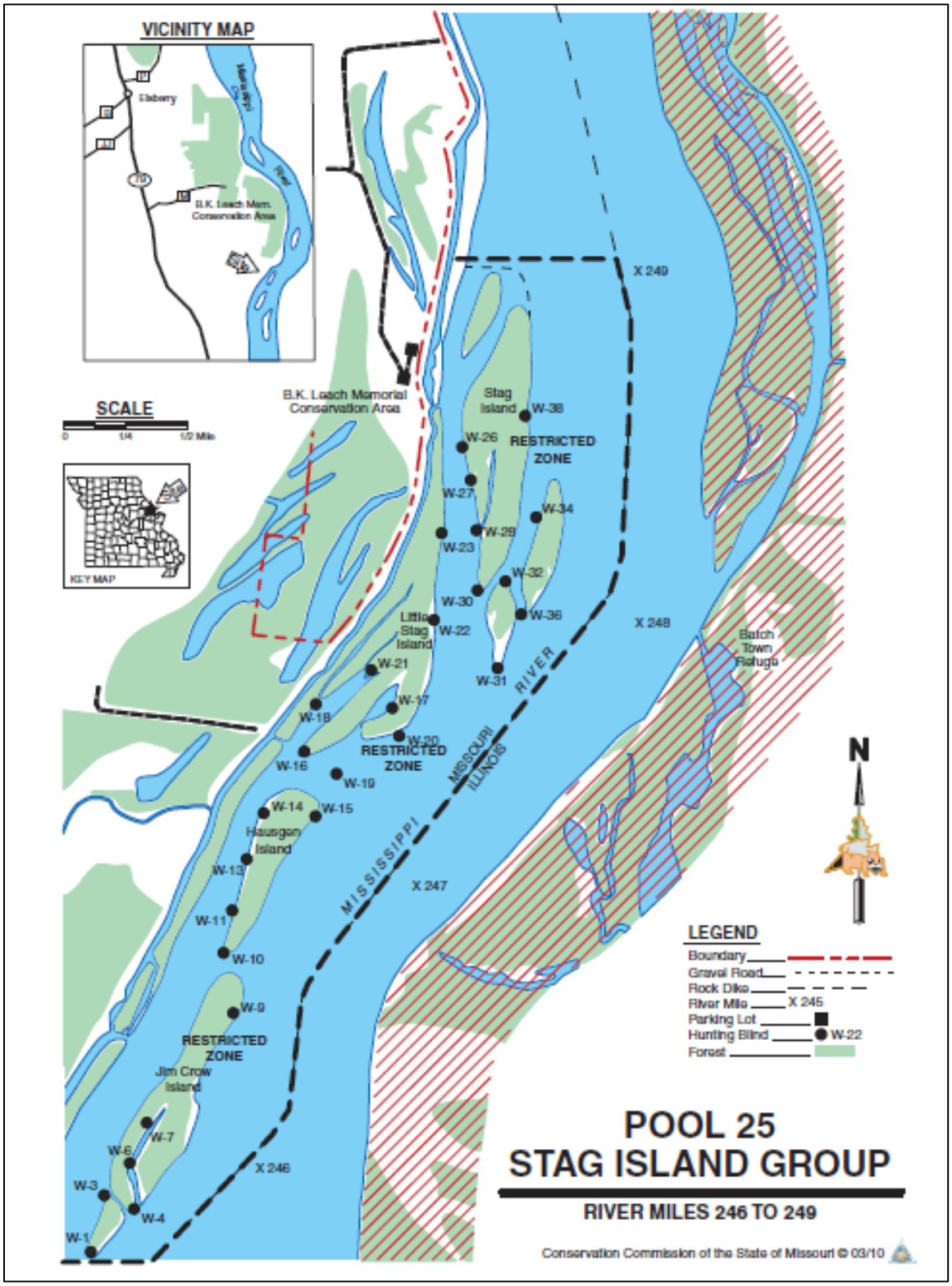


Figure 8: Area Map, Pool 26 (Bolter and Dardenne Islands)

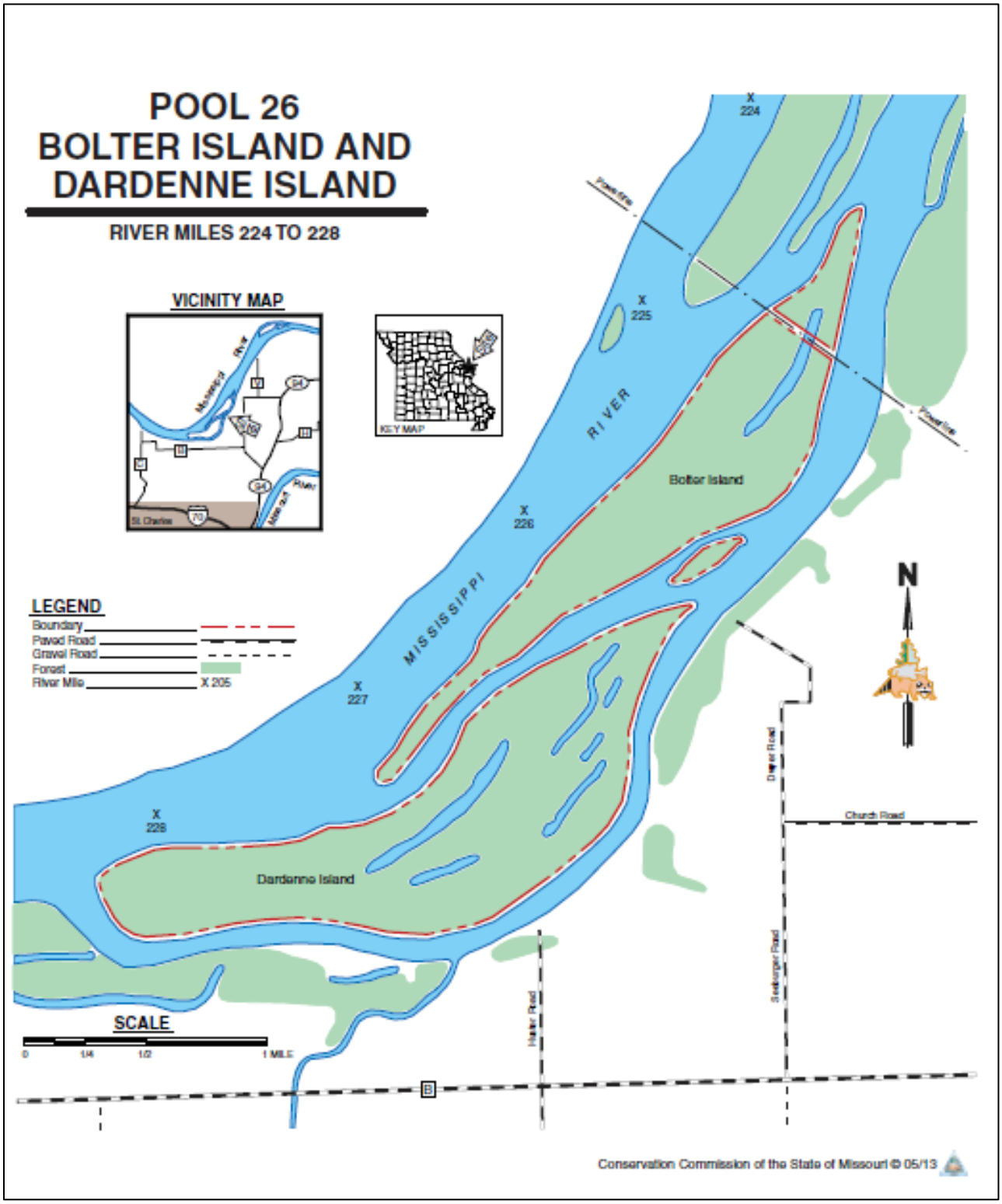


Figure 9: Area Map, Pool 26 (Mason Island)

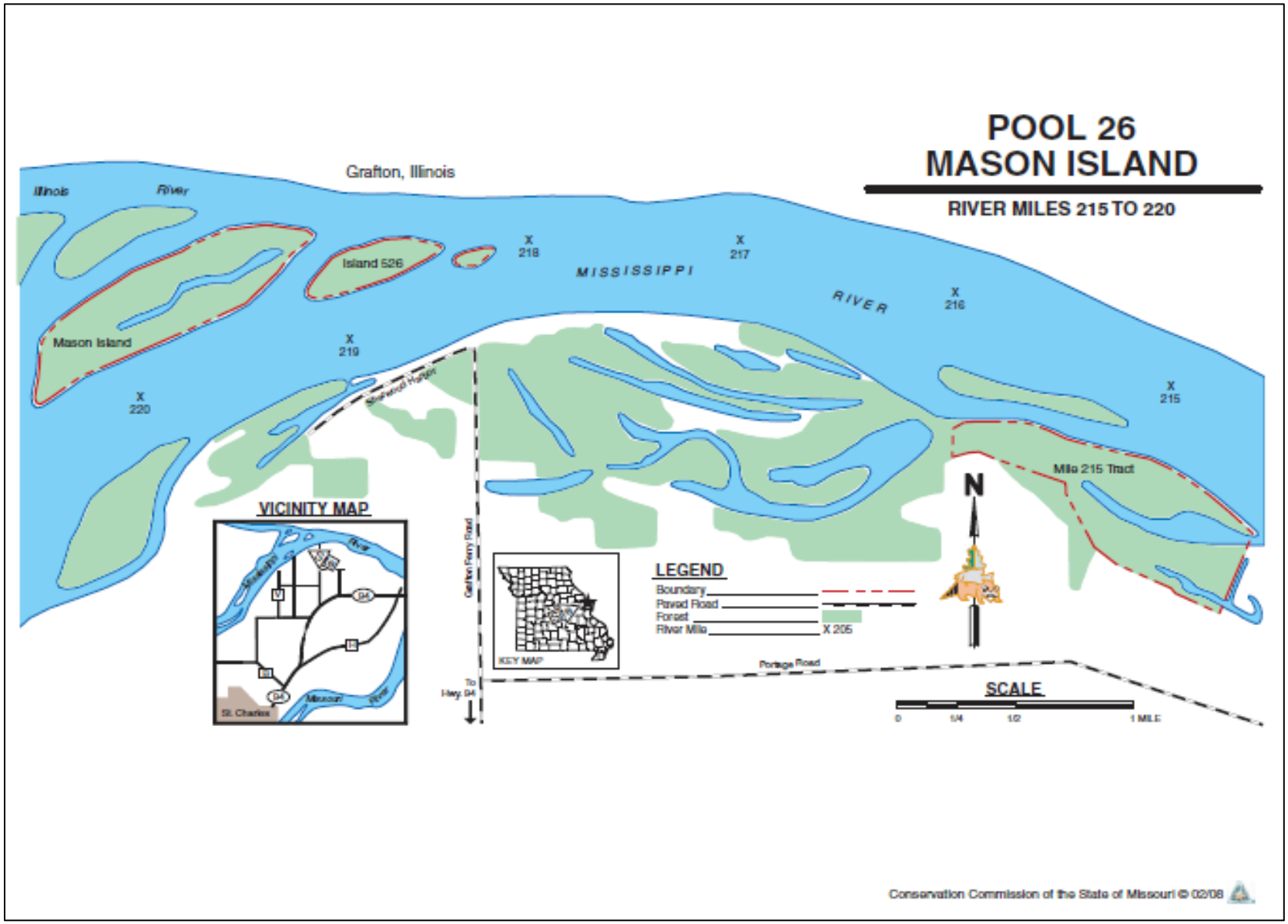


Figure 10: Area Map, Pool 26 (Dresser/West Alton)

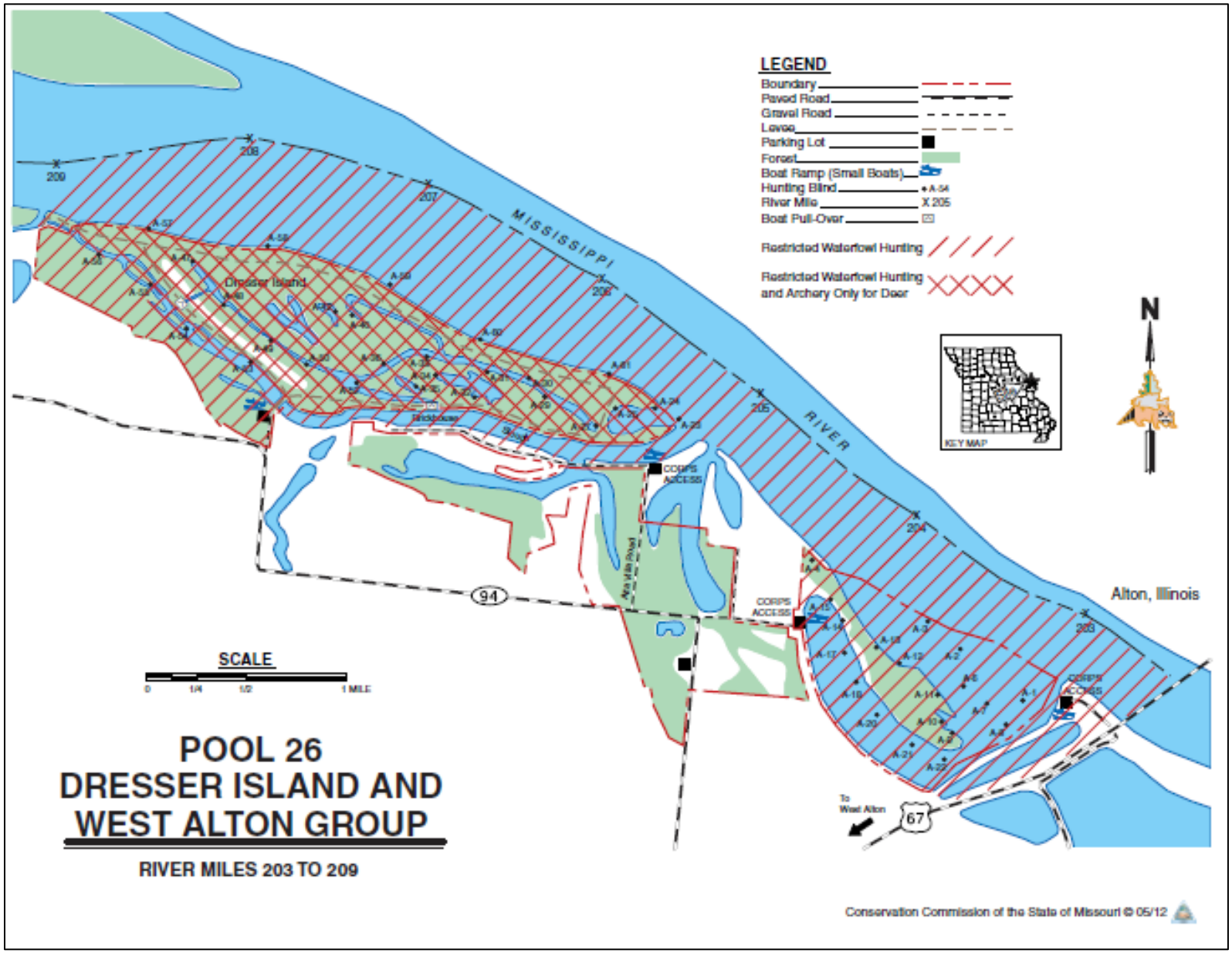
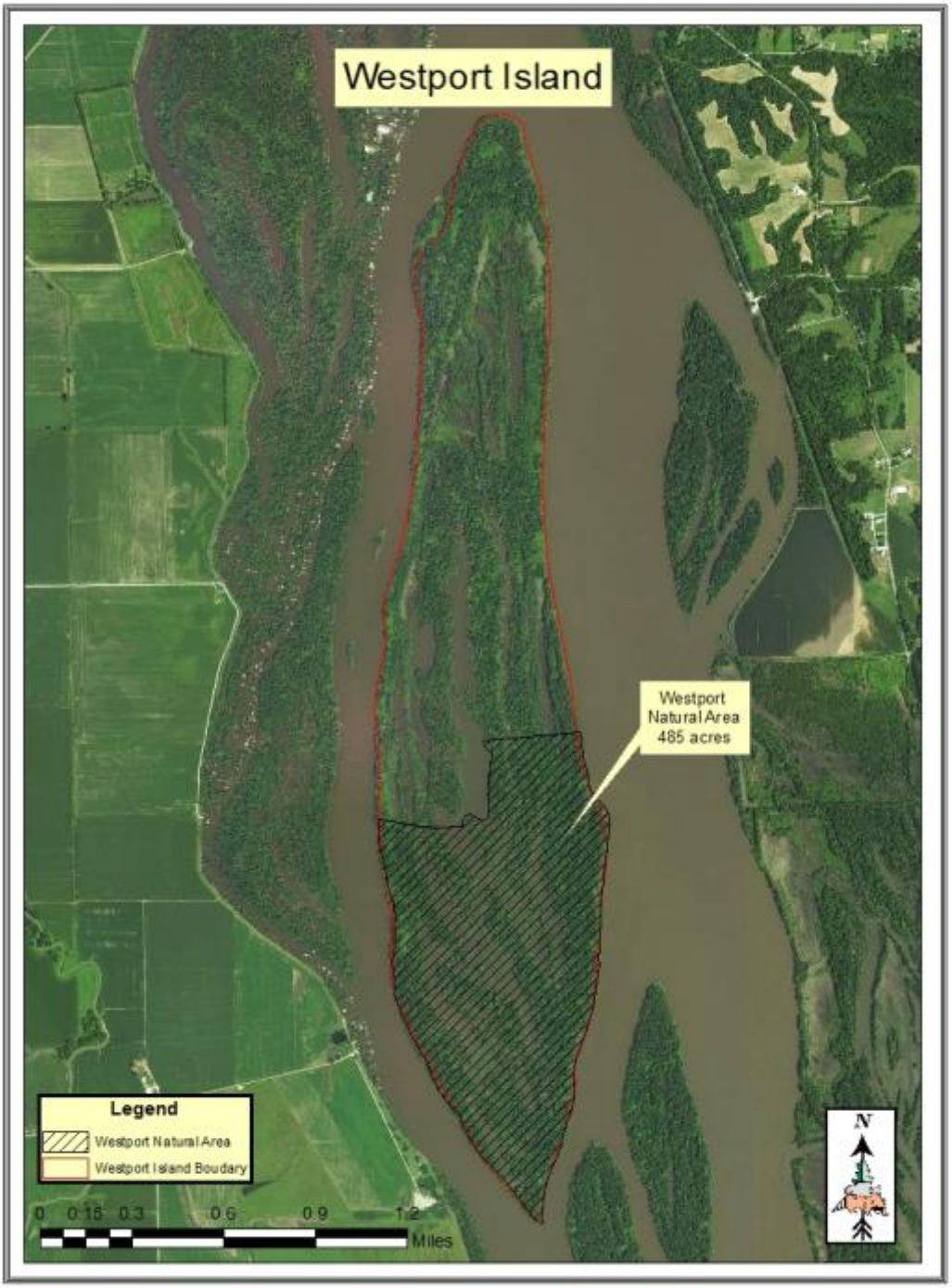
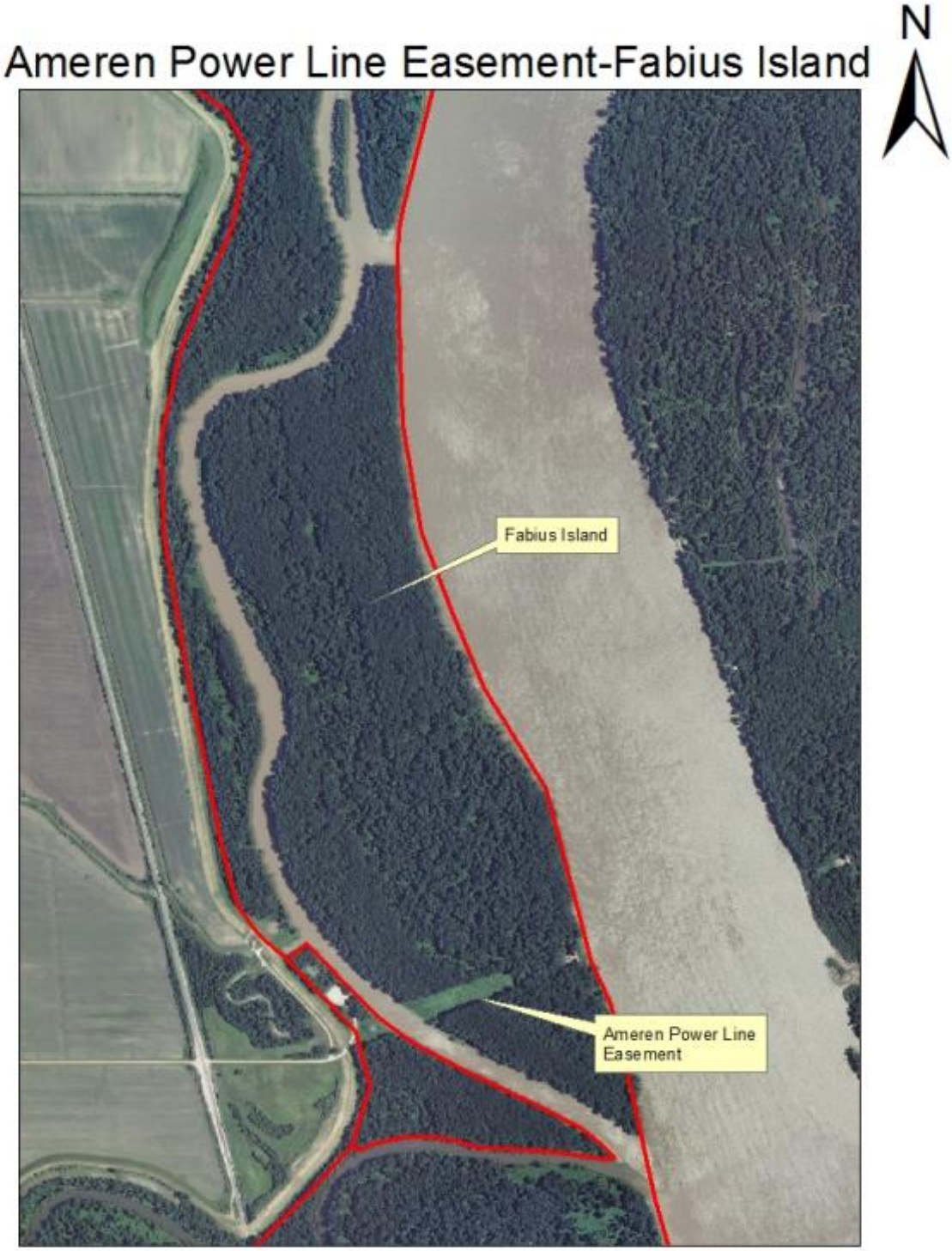


Figure 11: Westport Natural Area

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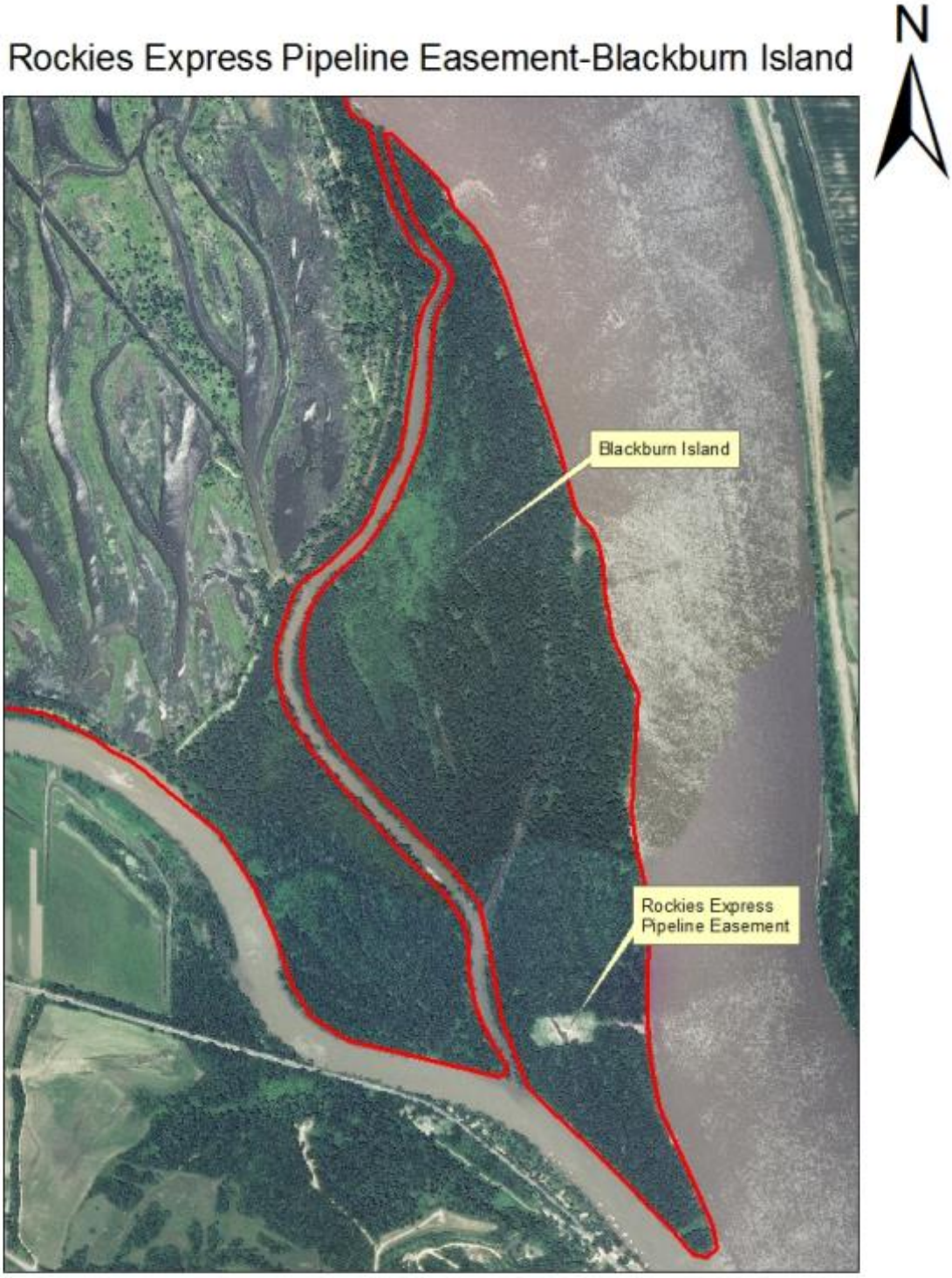
Fabius Island
Ameren Power Line Easement

Rockies Express Pipeline Easement-Blackburn Island



Appendix 1: General Plans Cooperative Agreement between the USACE and the USFWS

AMENDED
COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
Between the
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers
and the
Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

This amendment made and entered into this _____ day of _____, 2001, between the Department of the Army through the Corps of Engineers, hereinafter referred to as the Corps, and the Department of the Interior through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hereinafter referred to as the Service, amends the Cooperative Agreement between the parties dated February 14, 1963;

WHEREAS the United States through the Corps, has acquired certain lands in fee for the improvement of navigation in the Upper Mississippi River to provide a 9-foot channel from the Missouri River to Minneapolis, and portions of the Illinois River, hereinafter referred to as the Navigation Project, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 3 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401 as amended by 60 Stat. 1080 and 72 Stat. 563; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), lands shall be made available to the Service, consistent with navigation as the primary purpose of the Project, for the conservation, maintenance, and management of fish and wildlife and its habitat. There have been General Plans formulated for the use of lands and waters of the Navigation Project for fish/wildlife conservation and management and the same have been approved by the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Interior, and the heads of the State agencies exercising administration over fish and wildlife resources within the States of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Certain segments of the land subject to this Amended Agreement, as indicated in the General Plan, may be allocated to the States of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, and Wisconsin for conservation management through subsequent agreements between the Service and those states, and

WHEREAS the Corps cannot abrogate its stewardship role for the conservation, maintenance, and management of fish and wildlife and its associated habitats as required by subsequent legislation such as, but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, the Forest Cover Act, the Historic Preservation Act, and as directed by Agency policy, guidance and regulations for the Corps' stewardship role for the conservation, maintenance, and management of these natural resources, and

WHEREAS the Corps and the Service shall continue to foster and maintain partnerships through specific regional working groups for addressing Navigation project issues that impact the conservation, maintenance and management of fish/wildlife resources specific to the lands addressed by the Amended Agreement.

Now therefore, in accordance with the aforesaid Section 3 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the aforesaid General Plans, the Corps and Service hereby amend the Cooperative Agreement of February 14, 1963.

The Corps pursuant to the language of the third paragraph of the first page of this amendment hereby makes available to the Service the land and water areas of the Navigation Project substantially as identified on the exhibits attached to the General Plans referred to above, and by reference made a part hereof, for the conservation, maintenance, and management of fish/wildlife resources thereof, and its habitat thereon, in connection with the national migratory bird management and other fish/wildlife species programs in accordance with said General Plans. The Service shall manage these lands consistent with the National Wildlife Refuge System. This Amendment to the Cooperative Agreement of February 14, 1963 shall be subject to the provisions and conditions of the said General Plans and to the following additional conditions:

Paragraph 1 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

1. The Corps reserves all rights in and to the lands above described, which are not herein specifically granted, including, but not limited to, the operation and maintenance of the Navigation Project for its primary purpose of navigation. The Corps agrees that in fulfilling this primary purpose and other stewardship roles, as required by law and defined within Corps policies and regulations, that operation and maintenance activities will be carried out in accordance with current approved documents such as Master Plans, Operational Management Plans and Channel Maintenance Plans, and any future agency directive or legal requirement specific to the continued operation and maintenance of the Navigation Project.

Paragraph 2 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

2. The use and occupation of the said premises shall be without cost or expense to the Corps, under the general supervision of the Division Engineer, U.S. Army Division, Mississippi Valley Division, Vicksburg, Mississippi, herein after referred to as the "Division Engineer," and subject also to such rules and regulations in the interest of navigation and flood control as the Corps may from time to time prescribe.

Paragraph 3 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

3. Any damage to the property above described which results as an incident to the exercise of the privileges herein granted, shall be promptly corrected by the Service to the satisfaction of the Division Engineer. The Service will post appropriate project boundary lines, while the Corps will provide survey data, to the extent that it is available, for this purpose. The Service shall also take appropriate action to prevent and resolve minor trespass or unauthorized use of said property. The Service shall immediately report instances of unauthorized land use or serious trespass to the appropriate Corps Project Office. The Corps and Service shall coordinate enforcement efforts or legal actions taken against those responsible.

Paragraph 4 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

4. The exercise of the privileges granted shall in no way interfere with navigation and shall be subject at all times, without approval of the Service, to the occupation and use by the public for specific and related Navigation Project purposes and by the Corps for navigation, flood control, and all other Navigation Project related purposes, including, but not limited to, change in water surface elevations, dredging and placement of dredged material there from, and construction of training works, bank protection, and navigation aids.

Paragraph 5 of the Cooperative Agreement is deleted.

Paragraph 6 of the Cooperative Agreement is deleted.

Paragraph 7 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

7. It is understood that the privileges hereby granted do not preclude the necessity of obtaining from the Corps permits for work and structures in, under or over navigable waters as may be required under the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977, or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended,

Paragraph 8 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

8. No significant additions to or alterations of the premises, such as buildings, bridges, pump stations, roads, etc., shall be made by the Service without prior written consent of the appropriate District Engineer unless included in the Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved by the agencies.

Paragraph 9 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

9. In accordance with the aforesaid General Plans, authority to administer the lands and waters covered by this agreement may be delegated to the heads of the State agencies exercising administration over the wildlife resources of the aforesaid

States by cooperative agreements entered into pursuant to the provisions of Sections 1 and 4 of the said Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Copies of each such agreement, revisions, or amendments shall be furnished to the Division and District Engineers, respectively, promptly upon execution.

Paragraph 10 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

10. In development of lands described for public and agency use, as identified on the exhibits attached to the general plans referenced above, the Corps may in accordance with approved management plans and other appropriate agency documents, develop public use facilities or issue leases, licenses, and easements for the same purpose, issue special use licenses authorizing non-exclusive private uses which do not interfere with public use of areas involved, maintain and construct access roads, and issue outgrants. As appropriate, these actions will be coordinated with the Service and appropriate States to insure agency involvement and input into the Corps processes for implementation of these actions. During the development and implementation of these actions, the Service and States will be given the opportunity to provide recommendations regarding perceived impacts of the actions on the lands and waters defined by this amended agreement. The instruments provided for in this condition shall be issued only by the Corps and shall contain appropriate provisions prescribed by the Service regarding fish/wildlife management, including the continuing rights of the Service to post and patrol to enforce hunting regulations; however, the Service shall not have the right to deny access to or use of planned and developed, Corps-managed public use areas. Any planned developments for public and agency use shall address appropriate provisions prescribed by the Service regarding fish/wildlife management

Paragraph 11 of the Cooperative Agreement is deleted.

Paragraph 12 of the Cooperative Agreement is deleted.

Paragraph 13 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

13. The use of all agricultural treatments on lands covered hereunder shall be in compliance with laws, rules, and regulations administered by the Department of Agriculture and applicable to this type of land; provided that no part of the foregoing shall be construed as prohibiting the use of sharecrop agreements. All agricultural crops accruing to the Service or the pertinent States shall be used exclusively for wildlife, or wildlife habitat management purposes on the described lands, and for no other purpose. In the event that all the yield thus made available for wildlife or habitat management is not used for that purpose, the Service or the States shall, in order to avoid waste, sell for cash the remainder thereof in such a manner as to protect the public interest. Pursuant to Section 4 of the Act of Congress approved 22 December 1944, as amended (76 Stat. 1195; 16 U.S.C. 460d), all proceeds from the disposal of surplus production may be used by the Service or States in the development, conservation, management, and utilization of such lands; provided, that any balance of proceeds, not so utilized shall be paid to the Division Engineer at five-year intervals. In connection therewith, the Service shall establish and maintain adequate accounts and render statement of receipts and expenditures to the Division and District Engineers in an annual report that will be furnished not later than 30 calendar days prior to the scheduled annual meeting.

Paragraph 14 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

14. The Service shall administer and maintain the premises made available for wildlife conservation and management in accordance with current approved management plans for both agencies. An annual coordination meeting shall be organized by the Service each year on or before April 1 with each of the three Corps Districts (St. Louis, Rock Island, and St. Paul) and the states managing General Plan lands subject to this Agreement (Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri). The contents of the meeting shall include information specific to any changes and activities during the previous calendar year and information concerning proposed future projects. Issues covered shall include, but not be limited to, those management issues listed below:

(a) Boundary Management problems, including actions to address trespass or unauthorized uses;

(b) Report of completed construction and improvements, including project costs;

(c) Report of planned future construction, as approved in existing management plans;

(d) Report of conceived changes in management strategy;

(e) Cropland acreage utilized; amount of crop that was deemed excess to wildlife management needs including amount of receipts for sale of such crops; and amount and nature of expenditures derived from surplus crop funds;

(f) The Service liaison for the Agreement will consolidate a concise written annual report from the material presented at the meeting for submission to the Corps;

Paragraph 15 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

15. This agreement may be suspended or revoked at the discretion of the Department of the Army in case of national emergency or disaster declared by the President of the United States. In the event that problems are identified in compliance with any of the terms and conditions of this agreement, the following dispute resolution procedures will be followed:

(a) Service Refuge Managers and Corps District Operations Managers will meet to discuss the pertinent issue and seek resolution;

(b) In the event that informal efforts to resolve the issue at the field level are not successful, the appropriate Service Assistant Regional Director will meet with the appropriate District Engineer to seek written resolution; and

(c) Finally, if the matter remains unresolved, it will be referred to the Division Engineer whose decision will be final.

Paragraph 16 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

16. This agreement may be relinquished by the Service at any time by giving to the Division Engineer at least one-year's notice in writing.

Paragraph 17 of the Cooperative Agreement is amended to read:

17. If this agreement is relinquished or revoked as provided above, the Service shall vacate the premises, remove all property of the Service there from, and subject to the availability of funds, restore the premises to a condition satisfactory to the Division Engineer, ordinary wear and tear and damages beyond the control of the Service excepted, within such time as the Secretary of the Army may designate.

Paragraph 18 of the Cooperative Agreement is deleted.

The following paragraph is added to the Cooperative Agreement :

19. The Corps retains responsibility to provide protection of forest or other vegetative cover on reservoir areas, including navigation projects, in compliance with P.L. 86-717, the Forest Cover Act, and to establish and maintain other conservation measures on these areas. Corps management programs are to promote future resources and to increase the value of such areas for conservation, recreation, and other beneficial uses, provided that management is compatible with other uses of the project. The development of plans or other natural resource management activities will be coordinated with the Service for input and review of impacts of proposed actions on wildlife management use of the project. The Service will identify forest habitat goals and objectives in Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans to provide guidance to the Corps in this partnership effort. Revenue from sale of any timber in conjunction with the Forest Cover Act Program shall be credited to the Corps.

The following paragraph is added to the Cooperative Agreement :

20. The Corps retains the right to use and/or improve existing roads as a means of ingress and egress to and from the Mississippi River and to any areas that the Corps administers.

5 Jul 01
(Date)

By EDWIN J. ARNOLD, JR.
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
Division Engineer
Mississippi Valley Division

7/31/01
(Date)

By WILLIAM F. HARTWIG
Marvin E. Moriarty
Acting Regional Director for
Regional Director, Region 3
U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior

Appendix 2: General Plans Cooperative Agreement between the USFWS and the Missouri Conservation Commission

AMENDED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
For Management of Corps General Plan Lands
Between the
Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
and the
Missouri Conservation Commission

This agreement, effective on the date of last signature, between the Department of the Interior through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hereinafter referred to as the "Service", and the Missouri Conservation Commission, hereinafter referred to as the "State", replaces the Cooperative Agreement between the parties dated 5 May, 1954, and last amended 10 October, 1987;

WHEREAS the United States through the Corps of Engineers within the Department of the Army, herein referred to as the "Corps", has acquired certain lands in fee for the improvement of navigation in the Upper Mississippi River to provide a 9-foot channel from the Missouri River to Minneapolis, and portions of the Illinois River, hereinafter referred to as the "Navigation Project", and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 3 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401 as amended by 60 Stat. 1080 and 72 Stat. 563; 16 U.S. C. 661 et seq.) certain Corps owned lands have been made available to the Service, consistent with navigation as the primary purpose of the Project, for the conservation, maintenance and management of habitat in support of the National Migratory Bird management program, as well as other fish and wildlife objectives. There have been General Plans (GP) formulated for the use of lands and waters of the Navigation Project for fish/wildlife conservation and management and the same have been approved by the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Directors of the State agencies exercising administration over wildlife resources within the 5 Project states, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the General Plan a Cooperative Agreement exists between the Corps and the Service, as revised 31 July, 2001, for the management of GP lands (attached). Additionally, the Agreement provides authority to be delegated to the head of the State agency exercising administration over wildlife and wildlife resources, by subsequent cooperative agreement (FWS/State), administration of designated GP lands and waters, pursuant to the provisions of Sections 1 and 4 of the said Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

WHEREAS, the Missouri Conservation Commission and the Missouri Department of Conservation were established by the Missouri Constitution under Article IV, Section 40(a) through 42, and are responsible for the control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation of the bird, fish, game, forestry and all wildlife resources of the state; and

WHEREAS, the Service administers the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System), with a mission, "to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans", and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Missouri Conservation Commission is "To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources", and

NOW THEREFORE, in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the aforesaid General Plans, the Service hereby makes available to the State the land and water areas of the Navigation Project identified on the exhibits for the General Plans referred to above, as may be amended or delineated in Corps Master Plans, Land Use Allocation Plans, or Operational Management Plans, for the conservation, maintenance, and management of fish/wildlife

resources thereof, and its habitat thereon, in connection with national migratory bird management and other fish/wildlife programs, pursuant to provisions contained in this Agreement, the attached Corps/Service Agreement, and said General Plans.

The State agrees to manage these Corps fee title lands under the "Coordination Area" designation of the National Wildlife Refuge System and they are therefore not subject to Service administrative and policy standards required of Service managed Refuge units, such as the compatibility policy. However, as a part of the Refuge System, these State administered lands are intended to contribute to the Refuge System mission. The Service does retain the authority to temporarily close migratory hunting on the lands and waters subject to this agreement, if so compelled by emergency (such as chemical spill), flyway population management concerns or quotas;

The Corps, Service, and the State shall continue to represent agency positions and discharge responsibilities related to other Mississippi River System issues independently, and not constrained by this Agreement. Both the Service and State will continue to foster and maintain partnerships with the Corps through specific regional working groups for addressing Navigation project issues that impact the conservation, maintenance and management of fish/wildlife resources throughout the entire Upper Mississippi River System.

The authority to operate State wildlife habitat operations and public use management programs on lands under this agreement shall be derived from the State, consistent with the General Plan, Corps regulations contained in CFR 36, and the specific conditions listed below:

1) The Corps reserves all rights to the lands subject to this Agreement, which are not herein specifically granted. The exercise of the privileges granted shall in no way interfere with navigation and shall be subject at all times to the occupation and use by the public for specific and related Navigation Project purposes and by the Corps for navigation, flood control, and all other Navigation

project related purposes, including, but not limited to, change in water surface elevations, dredging and placement of dredged material there from, and construction of training works, bank protections, and navigation aids. The Corps retains the right to use and improve existing roads to and from the Mississippi River or to other areas they administer.

2) No significant additions to or alterations, such as buildings, bridges, pump stations, roads, etc., shall be made by the State without prior written consent of the appropriate District Engineer, coordinated through the Service. The use, occupation, operations and maintenance of these lands shall be without cost or expense to the Service or Corps. Any damage to the property which results from the exercise of the privileges granted shall be promptly corrected by the State, and as approved by the Corps.

3) It is understood that this Agreement does not preclude the necessity of obtaining required Corps permits for management projects or structures, such as Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act,

4) The State may post appropriate management area boundary lines for lands designated in this Agreement at its discretion for site management or enforcement purposes. The Corps, or Service, will provide updated survey data, preferably in electronic format, for this purpose to the extent that it is available. The State shall take appropriate action to prevent and resolve minor trespass or unauthorized use of the property. The State shall immediately report instances of unauthorized land use or serious trespass to the Service, which will involve the appropriate Corps Project Office. The State, Service, and Corps shall coordinate enforcement efforts or legal actions taken against those responsible.

5) The use of agricultural treatments and share crop agreements on lands covered hereunder shall ensure that crops accruing to the State are used exclusively for wildlife, or wildlife habitat management purposes on the described lands, and for no other purpose. In the event that all the yield thus made available for wildlife or habitat management is not used for that purpose, the

State shall, in order to avoid waste, sell for cash the remaining crop. All proceeds from such disposal of surplus production may be used by the State in the development, conservation, management, and utilization of these lands. In connection with this provision, if needed, the State shall establish and maintain adequate accounts and render statement of receipts and expenditures to the Service for distribution to Division and District Engineers in the annual management report. The Service and Corps may review this program periodically to ensure that cropland utilization is not consistently excessive to wildlife needs, where other appropriate habitat types would better meet the Refuge System mission.

6) The Corps retains responsibility for management of forest resources on these GP lands. The development of Corps forest management plans are coordinated with the State and Service for input and review to ensure compatibility, as defined by the Forest Cover Act, with wildlife management use of the project. Any specific State or Service plans will be considered in the guidance of Corps forest management activities. Overall, the Corps' forest management program should be viewed as a cooperative component to the State's day to day management of the out-granted General Plan area. Revenue from sale of any timber in conjunction with the Forest Cover Act Program shall be credited to the Corps.

7) The State Director shall designate a liaison for administrative matters pertaining to this agreement by way of letter to the Service Regional Director. The Service liaison for matters relating to this agreement is designated to be the Upper Mississippi River System Refuge Zone Supervisor. The Service liaison shall attempt to handle mutual management concerns regarding lands subject to this agreement at the field level with State Managers/Biologists, while maintaining coordination with the State liaison. The State liaison will act as the interagency point of contact for issues that may arise from provisions of this agreement, and for other issues that require a cross-program response or involvement on the part of the State.

8) The State shall regulate public use activities on these General Plan lands to the extent necessary to protect their natural resources, consistent with enforcement of the" Wildlife Code of Missouri, Rules of the Conservation Commission", State resource goals and objectives, Refuge System mission and Corps conservation responsibilities. Through the yearly reporting process, or as necessary, the State will supply the Service and Corps copies of updated State regulations which apply to these lands, subject to provisions herein, if there are any changes. The State is the lead enforcement agency for State regulations pertaining to lands subject to this agreement. The Corps and/or Service may assist with resource protection by utilizing applicable Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) in instances where State regulations prove to be inadequate to address an issue.

9) By March 1 of each year, the State will provide the Service a brief written summation of prior calendar year management activities and relevant issues. This report will also address future plans for capital improvement, etc. addressing the above topics by the scheduled meeting date each year. Topics covered in annual report shall include, but are not limited to, management issues listed below:

(a) Boundary management problems, including actions to address trespass or unauthorized uses;

(b) Report of completed construction and improvements, including project costs;

(c) Report of planned future construction, as approved in existing management plans, or identified in new planning effort;

(d) Report of conceived changes in land management strategy;

(e) Cropland acreage utilized; amount of crop that was deemed excess to wildlife management needs including amount of receipts for sale of such crops; and amount and nature of expenditures derived from surplus crop funds;

(f) Any changes to State and Federal regulations that pertain to these lands and waters and responsibilities of each agency.

(g) Any problems or opportunities relating to General Plan land and waters management for interagency coordination or consideration.

The Service liaison will consolidate a concise written annual report from this submitted material for submission to the Corps. An annual coordination meeting will also be organized by the Service each year on or before April 1 with each of the three Corps District (St. Louis, Rock Island, and St. Paul) and the States managing General Plan lands (Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri). The agenda of the meeting shall include information specific to any changes and activities during the previous calendar year and information concerning proposed future projects.

10) This agreement may be relinquished by the State at any time by giving the Service at least one-year's notice in writing, unless a shorter notice period is mutually agreed upon.

11) In the event that problems are identified in compliance with any of the terms and conditions of this agreement, the following dispute resolution procedures will be followed:

(a) State liaison will meet with Service liaison to discuss the matter and attempt to resolve the matter at the lowest administrative level.

(b) If the above step is unsuccessful the State liaison, Service Liaison and Corps District Operation Managers will meet to discuss the pertinent issue and seek resolution;

(c) In the event that informal efforts to resolve the issue at the field level are not successful, the State Wildlife Division Chief and the Service Regional Refuge Chief will meet with the appropriate District Engineer to seek written resolution; and

(d) Finally, if the matter remains unresolved, it will be referred to the Corps Division Engineer whose decision will be final.

13) The State agrees to confer with the Service on any application for an instrument granting permanent rights-of-way for roads, telephone lines, power lines, and other similar uses over, across, in and upon the above described

lands. During such conferral the State will indicate its recommendation as to the application, with a statement that such proposed uses will or will not interfere with the purposes for which these lands are made available to the State. No entry will be allowed by the State on such lands for these purposes until the State receives notice that permission is granted. If applications for such permanent rights-of-way are received firsthand by the Corps Division Engineer or the Service, they will be referred to the State for such recommendation as it may care to make relative to issuance of a permit.

The provisions above in this Service/State "step-down" agreement have been modified for readability from the list of conditions which pertain to all GP lands, as detailed in the Cooperative Agreement between the Corps and the Service. If any clarifications in Agreement provisions are required, the source Agreement should be utilized.

5/3/2012
(Date)

Director
Missouri Department of Conservation

APPROVED AS TO FORM ONLY
GENERAL COUNSEL

3.22.12
(Date)

Regional Director, Region 3
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior

Appendix 3. Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

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

Waterfowl hunting, blind allocation, blind location, and access should be greatly improved. The blinds should be allocated by personal attendance at a scheduled drawing 3 months before the season. Allocations should be for two years with half the blinds each year after an initial one year draw for half. Boat blinds are ok but must be left at the site if used. Blinds should be constructed to specs and must not be locked or made untenable. Blinds are open to public one hour after LST or a set time such as 8am.. The area staff should consult with local hunters for deciding on blind sites. Open hunting should not be allowed in areas with blinds. Areas for open hunting should be designated with appropriate regs for distance removal of temp blinds etc.. Adequate access by providing a sufficient number of ramps is essential and area regs should be posted at ramps... Conservation agents must enforce regs and patrol on a regular basis. Littering must be considered an offense and aggressively enforced.
This Conservation area is a large on and im sure very hard to manage. The Mississippi river is a corridor for a large amount of waterfowl. These numbers have been decreasing on this side of the state for the past 10 years. Lets not loose that resource. We need to manage this conservation area for strictly waterfowl the best way we can. I like the Dresser Island results except for the fact that for some reason you guys let people rifle/shotgun hunt on the island while it remains open to waterfowl hunt. THIS IS VERY VERY DANGEROUS and not down at any other waterfowl managed areas. I am surprised that no one has gotten hurt or worse. The Slough starting at Turkey Island needs to be dredged all the way down in the past 5 years there is so much sediment that has washed in that it is virtually impassable not to mention the top of the slough is just about silted/sanded in which means you cannot access the slough. It use to be maintained why is it not now? These are simple things that common knowledge will tell you need to be done. So lets just keep it simple for the next 10 years and get back to the basics. Fix the existing problems then manage for waterfowl b/c it is literally a highway for waterfowl that has existed before we were here.
I just submitted a comment for this conservation area but forgot to mention the fact that will will possibly be loosing hundreds if not thousands to the Lincoln County port that might be built in the next couple of years. Which is not a good idea because it is in the flood plain. It is called a flood plain because it is a plain the floods!! Building up the levees will only disrupt things below and above the so called port. This is right in the heart of the Upper Mississippi CA. So it is imperative that we do what we can to manage the lands around it and keep up with MO tradition to lead in land animal and water conservation.
Regarding the Bi-Annual Blind Drawing for restricted areas, it should be managed as it has been in the recent past with an in-person blind drawing and requirement for construction of compliant

blinds.

The restricted areas of the river represent a very small part of the overall MDC statewide managed areas, and provide the last public areas in which a quality hunt can take place in a duck blind. These duck blinds provide a stable platform and shelter from the unique conditions of the River for hunters of every age and physical condition. These are the only MDC areas in which I can take very young hunters and my disabled father to comfortably hunt with the expectation of a quality experience. The accessible blinds located within the MDC Highly Managed Waterfowl Areas can be demeaning to some and are very restrictive as to the times and locations they are available.

The logic behind the previous in-person draw with requirement for construction of compliant blinds is basic and fundamental. First, it encourages motivated hunters to construct a quality blind which can be utilized by all, while providing the drawer(s) early morning claiming privileges. It's a win/win for blind builders and other non-blind builders to hunt from a desirable blind situation. Secondly; it helps to foster and continue a valuable heritage of friends and family coming together to plan, execute and enjoy the whole experience of what we have come to know as duck-hunting.

MDC's recent desire to implement an online drawing process without the requirement of constructing a compliant blind (in order to gain early morning claiming privileges) is a mess and will result in a drawing pool which will contain far less motivated blind builders. Ultimately this will result in even fewer opportunities for hunters of all ages and physical condition to hunt the river, especially those very young hunters and those with disabilities who do not want to be relegated to an MDC issued HC duck-blind.

Case in Point, the last Bi-Annual Draw did not required the construction of compliant blinds. As a result there are several locations where blinds have not been built and subsequently experienced lower to no use this past season. Furthermore; there are even fewer blinds that have been constructed for this season, the second year. This is complicated by the fact that some of the constructed blinds have been abandoned from the previous year in their non-camouflaged and unusable state. This unfortunately results for a season's long lost opportunity, not to mention a detriment and distraction to neighboring blinds trying to hunt that same area.

Clarksville Refuge: The Clarksville Refuge should be maintained as a waterfowl refuge and not transitioned into a waterfowl hunting area. It is a significant stop-over destination of many ducks and geese during the fall migration. It is an integral component of the local/regional waterfowl refuge system which includes the Delair USFWS Refuge, Clarence Cannon USFWS Refuge and surrounding private lands. These rest areas are an important resource for the waterfowl by

providing water, food, cover and protection from immediate hunter harassment. They are also daily destinations of waterfowl which travel from refuge to refuge and back again in the same day. These daily travel routines provide excellent opportunity on the river for hunters to engage these ducks and geese in a fulfilling hunting situation.

The Clarksville Refuge also contains water control structures in its southeastern outfall to the river. These structures have not been utilized in years due to the belief they are ineffective because of seep and the water level seeking the river level. Though this is true to some extent, active management of these water gates could facilitate the evacuation of water in the spring, and extend the growing season in the late summer and fall by retarding the filling of the refuge. The active management of these gates to influence the timing of water levels should be used as a tool to encourage the growth of desirable aquatic plant growth to attract more waterfowl.

I have a couple of comments.

1. It is hard to comment on a 10 year management plan for an area that involves waterfowl blinds, when the plan for the waterfowl blind drawing has never been presented to the public, and may not yet even be formulated.

2. As I understand it, siltation is a large part of the problem at the waterfowl blind areas. Siltation worsened when the areas were "protected" by the dikes and the flushing of the silt never really occurs. The flushing mechanism to get silt out would be effective if the river level was controlled at a level that would permit inflow without topping over the dikes, however it appears that when the river is going up it continues to rise, overtops the dikes and dumps even more silt. Those dikes either need to be breached to permit the river to essentially flow in it's natural course, or the areas such as Dresser and Clarksville Refuge need to be pumped to control water levels to the extent possible, just as is being proposed for Bay Island.

3. I am hoping that when "opportunistic wetland" is being used relative to Clarksville Refuge and Dresser Island, it is relative to flooding only, and does not include opportunistic hunting for those areas. That would only result in more disturbance of birds in both locations. Opportunistic hunting at Clarksville would essentially destroy hunting on Pharr's Island, since that refuge area does have substantial duck and goose numbers when it is usable and has adequate food. Opportunistic hunting at either Dresser or Clarksville would more than likely result in crowding since it is hard to keep a 200 yard distance unless one carries a rangefinder, resulting in shooting at greater distances, loss of cripples, and hunter annoyance with other hunters.

Thank you,

I would like to comment on MDCs management for waterfowl hunting in the Upper Mississippi Area. MDC is adopting a new blind draw and build policies on the Upper Mississippi that is going to restrict access to the general public wishing to hunt the river in the designated blind areas. The two major changes MDC is planning to implement are automated blind draws and blind building policies.

MDC is trying to eliminate the blind requirements that are in place today and have been in place for many years. The rivers blinds are one of the last traditional blind hunting areas available to the public. The construction and maintenance of these blinds is the responsibility of the person/persons who draw the blind. This blind is open to the public at no cost to MDC. Many of the youth and older generations are not cable of standing in the water all day or hunched in a boat, these blinds offer a safe, stable and dry platform from which to hunt. I find the MDC stance that eliminating these blinds will create more opportunity for the general public to be misleading unsubstantiated.

Todays current blind process requires a person to have nothing more than a boat and often they will not even need decoys. They will not require a boat blind, they will not be required to build a temporary blind, and the blind is brushed and ready to hunt. As someone who spends a large portion of the season hunting these blinds on the river, I can state with fact that nearly every day there are blinds open to the public and are no being utilized. So who is not getting the opportunity to hunt? Why are some of the MDC personnel promoting the idea that there's not enough public access available?

These blinds are on a small portion of the river, and the remaining portion of the river is open to anyone who wants to set up a permanent blind, hint from the bank or hunt from a boat. So with today s process all facets of the public are accommodated and have ample opportunity and access on the upper Mississippi.

To compound the issue, MDC wants to go to an electronic draw. This is going to create a situation where folks from all over are going to claim blinds, decline to build them resulting to even fewer blinds being built on the river. Having fewer blinds is not conducive to creating more opportunity. I support the current in person blind draw process, the process requires some effort on the hunters part to show up and participate. Without active blind builders many of the spaces will be first come first server, anyone who has participated in this type of hunt area knows it will become a morning race and cause conflict.

There are many out there who like to have some open discussion in regards to these changes, but the person/persons in charge seem to have little interest and do no more than send a canned

commented that's not truly reflective of the facts.

One final note, the Clarksville refuge has not been actively managed by MDC for the last few years. MDC has left it on its own to a self-maintained area. This has resulted in less marsh and wetlands in this area for waterfowl. This is a low maintenance area as its sole water source is via a gated pipe with flow based on the water level of the river. This takes minimal resources to manage.

(In an email sent to Amy Buechler)

Amy

I have seen and read the conservation plan for the Upper Mississippi Conservation Area and have some concerns. I believe there are some major MDC changes that impact the public in this area and do not see them included.

I know there are concerns with these changes yet there has not been much process getting these concerns voiced within MDC.

We have sent emails and tried to engage some of the MDC personnel. These folks do not seem interested in anything other than their own agenda.

Who can we address these concerns, or how does one engage the conservation commission?

Heres comments concerns I have

I would like to comment on MDCs management for waterfowl hunting in the Upper Mississippi Area. MDC is adopting a new blind draw and build policies on the Upper Mississippi that is going to restrict access to the general public wishing to hunt the river in the designated blind areas. The two major changes MDC is planning to implement are automated blind draws and blind building policies.

MDC is trying to eliminate the blind requirements that are in place today and have been in place for many years. The rivers blinds are one of the last traditional blind hunting areas available to the public. The construction and maintenance of these blinds is the responsibility of the person/persons who draw the blind. This blind is open to the public at no cost to MDC. Many of the youth and older generations are not cable of standing in the water all day or hunched in a boat, these blinds offer a safe, stable and dry platform from which to hunt. I find the MDC stance that eliminating these blinds will create more opportunity for the general public to be

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These blinds are on a small portion of the river, and the remaining portion of the river is open to anyone who wants to set up a permanent blind, hint from the bank or hunt from a boat. So with today s process all facets of the public are accommodated and have ample opportunity and access on the upper Mississippi.

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One final note, the Clarksville refuge has not been actively managed by MDC for the last few years. MDC has left it on its own to a self-maintained area. This has resulted in less marsh and wetlands in this area for waterfowl. This is a low maintenance area as its sole water source is via a gated pipe with flow based on the water level of the river. This takes minimal resources to manage.

Please feel free to contact me either by email or phone 314-406-7368

Thanks

There's not many good blinds to hunt. Blinds are not getting brushed at all which makes that spot un huntable .some of them need to be removed so you can hunt from a boat.

The Upper Mississippi Conservation Area is an important part of the restoration of our great river. More funding should be provided to restoration projects on these Conservation Areas. I would suggest that MDC provide increased viewing opportunities on these Conservation Areas by providing more trails and boat launches.