

# Honey Creek Conservation Area

## Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2026



  
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Wildlife Division Chief

20 March 2017  
Date

## Honey Creek Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

### PLANNING TEAM

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### NORTHWEST REGION

RCT Chair

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Signature    Date

### WILDLIFE DIVISION

Wildlife Management Chief

*Michael D. Schen*      *3/7/17*  
Signature    Date

## OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Honey Creek Conservation Area, # 6127
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1961
- **Acreage:** 1,448 acres
- **County:** Andrew
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**
  - A. Strategic Direction**

The purpose of the Honey Creek Conservation Area (CA) is to provide quality fishing, deer and turkey hunting opportunities and conserve woodland/forest wildlife and their habitats through sound management.
  - B. Desired Future Condition**

Maintain a healthy and sustainable woodland and forest complex along with compatible recreational opportunities.
  - 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. **Streams/Rivers:** 1.4 miles of the Nodaway River
- E. **Other:** The Mesic Loess/Glacial Till Forest natural community contains mesophytic or mixed hardwood forest with multiple vertical layers. The canopy is typically composed of a few dominant tree species with several tree species co-dominant or in an intermediate position. Canopy dominants range from 90 to 130 feet tall with overlapping and spreading crowns and nearly complete canopy closure. A sub-canopy of short stature trees (15 to 30 feet) is present. The understory is composed of shade-tolerant shrubs, small trees and canopy saplings (5 to 10 feet) and woody vines are often interlaced between canopy trees. The

ground layer consists of shrubs, many vernal herbs, ferns and patchy scatterings of mosses and fungi. Decaying logs and leaf litter debris often covered in mosses, liverworts and fungi characterize the forest floor.

The mesic loess/glacial till forest occurs on lower back slopes, foot slopes, toe slopes and in ravines in breaks and hills associated with landscapes that are highly dissected by streams. They are gently sloping to steep (3 to 35 percent), typically with north and east aspects. Soils are moderately-well to well-drained and very deep (>60 inches) with a strongly acid to neutral soil reaction (5.1-7.3). They have a high fertility and formed in loess glacial till or loess over glacial till. Silty loam and silty clay loam textures dominate soils developed in loess while silty loams and clayey loams dominate glacial till soils. The soils overlay Pennsylvanian-age formations excepting Cretaceous and Tertiary formations in the Crowley's Ridge Subsection (Nelson, 2010).

### III. Existing Infrastructure

- Nine campsites, including nine campfire rings, 11 hitch rails
- One privy, American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible
- Four picnic tables
- Two multi-use (hike/bike/horse) trails: Trail A (5.5 miles) and Trail B (7.5 miles), both rated difficult
- Four fishless ponds (4 acres)
- 10 parking lots, one ADA-accessible

### 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:** None
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

#### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Enhance quality deer and turkey populations on the area.
- 2) Increase diversity of quality native vegetation.
- 3) Remove invasive vegetation.
- 4) Enhance woodland and forest habitats.

**Management Objective 1:** Manage for quality deer and turkey populations on the area.

**Strategy 1:** Provide diverse habitat for deer and turkey populations. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Manage for diverse native vegetation and agricultural food sources. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 2:** Implement annual disturbances to establish and maintain native vegetation.

**Strategy 1:** Implement management practices that provide disturbance and support quality forage. (Wildlife)

**Strategy 2:** Treat invasive vegetation with herbicides, mechanical treatments, and prescribed fire. (Wildlife)

**Management Objective 3:** Manage for a healthy and sustainable mixture of woodland and forest habitats.

**Strategy 1:** Implement the Honey Creek Forest Resource Management Plan (Missouri Department of Conservation, 1995), including forest thinning. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Monitor woodlands and forests for invasive vegetation, diseases, and insects. Treat undesirable vegetation and pests to control spread. (Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Conduct scheduled forest inventory in 2017. (Forestry)

### VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

#### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Manage riparian corridor.

**Management Objective 1:** Manage a healthy and sustainable riparian corridor along the 1.4 miles of the Nodaway River.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain the current 100-foot riparian buffer on the Nodaway River. (Wildlife)



## APPENDICES

### Area Background:

Honey Creek Conservation Area (CA) is located approximately 20 miles north of St. Joseph and 65 miles north of Kansas City in Andrew County. Honey Creek CA was purchased by the Department in 1961.

Currently, farming and haying complement more intensive habitat development such as tree, shrub, and grass plantings, prescribed burning, disking, and timber management.

The area provides good fishing opportunities along approximately 1.4 miles of the Nodaway River on the southwest corner of the area. The Honey Creek CA is managed for multiple wildlife species as well as numerous recreational uses because of its large size and diversity of habitats.

Numerous woodland species of wildlife can be found on Honey Creek CA, including turkey, squirrel, raccoons, deer, foxes, and numerous bird species.

Approximately 75 percent of Honey Creek CA is currently covered in trees (mixed oak-hickory). Two percent of the area includes black walnut and other tree plantations. The remaining acres are old fields, wildlife food plots, open ridge-tops, agriculture, and watering holes.

The area is open to the public from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Special facilities include the multi-use trail and foot paths leading through the lush forest and to overlooks of the Nodaway River floodplain.

### Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Forest/Woodland	1,098		76
Cropland	250		17
Old Field	60		4
Other: Roads, Parking Lots, Trails, Campground	40		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,448</b>		<b>100</b>
Stream Frontage		7,392	

### Public Input Summary:

The draft Honey Creek Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period March 1–31, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from five respondents (Appendix A). The Honey Creek Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief

summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through the Honey Creek Conservation Area public comment period

**Suggests converting smaller crop fields to green fields.**

The area resource team identified this as a need last year and agreed that some of the smaller agriculture fields were not benefiting the wildlife on the area. This past winter we identified some of the fields that could be converted and maintained as green browse in addition to the forest and woodland resource available on the area. In response, this past spring 40 acres of smaller agriculture fields were planted to perennial green browse for whitetail deer and turkey use. We plan to maintain and rotate these green browse fields around the area in the coming years in addition to the other wildlife resources available on the area.

**Suggests planting deer specific food plots.**

This past spring 40 acres of smaller agriculture fields were planted to green browse for the purpose of whitetail deer and turkey management. In addition to these fields, 20 acres of standing corn and soybeans are left on the area annually for wildlife use.

**Would like to see more bucks on area.**

Honey Creek CA receives a high level of deer hunting pressure through the various available hunting methods. We have maintained a moderate deer population on the area by restricting the antlerless harvest in conjunction with the four-point restriction on antlered deer. Our goal is to provide deer hunting opportunities with emphasis in maintaining deer populations at a level that provides area users a reasonable opportunity to observe and/or harvest a deer. Specifically, providing opportunity to harvest a legal buck while maintaining the antlerless population for future years. In close proximity (within 30 miles) to Honey Creek CA there are numerous public hunting areas with various deer hunting regulations ranging from statewide seasons and limits to only archery methods. Varying regulations on several conservation areas provides the opportunity for the public to choose areas and regulations that suit their hunting methods.

**Curious about what is meant by compatible recreational opportunities. Concerned this might mean adding cabins to area.**

Compatible recreational opportunities is a general statement referring to various outdoor activities related to hunting, fishing, multi-trail use, wildlife viewing, and other activities that do not conflict with the intended use of the area. Honey Creek CA's primitive campground will remain at the same level of infrastructure that is currently present. There are no plans to add cabins or any facilities that are not currently present.



**Enjoys area for horseback riding. Suggests providing information that water is not available.**

The area planning team has agreed to list on the Department's website that Honey Creek CA campground amenities do not include public drinking water.

**Concerned that some areas of the multi-use trail have loose rocks. Offers to help maintain trails.**

The area planning team understands and appreciates the efforts of volunteers that have assisted in mitigating current and potential problems on the multi-use trail. Any groups or clubs interested in assisting with trail maintenance or area cleanups would be welcomed by area staff and benefit area users. Contact the area manager to discuss or plan any maintenance or cleanup opportunities. The area planning team will continue to monitor existing trails for negative impacts to natural resources.

**Hopes to use trail cameras at Honey Creek CA.**

The use of trail cameras is not permitted on any Department area.

**References:**

Missouri Department of Conservation. (1995). *Honey Creek forest resource management plan*.

Nelson, P. W. (2010). *The terrestrial natural communities of Missouri*. Jefferson City, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

**Maps:**

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Mesic Loess/Glacial Till Forest Map

Figure 3: Current Land Cover Map

Figure 4: Soils Map

**Additional Appendices:**

Appendix A. Honey Creek Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

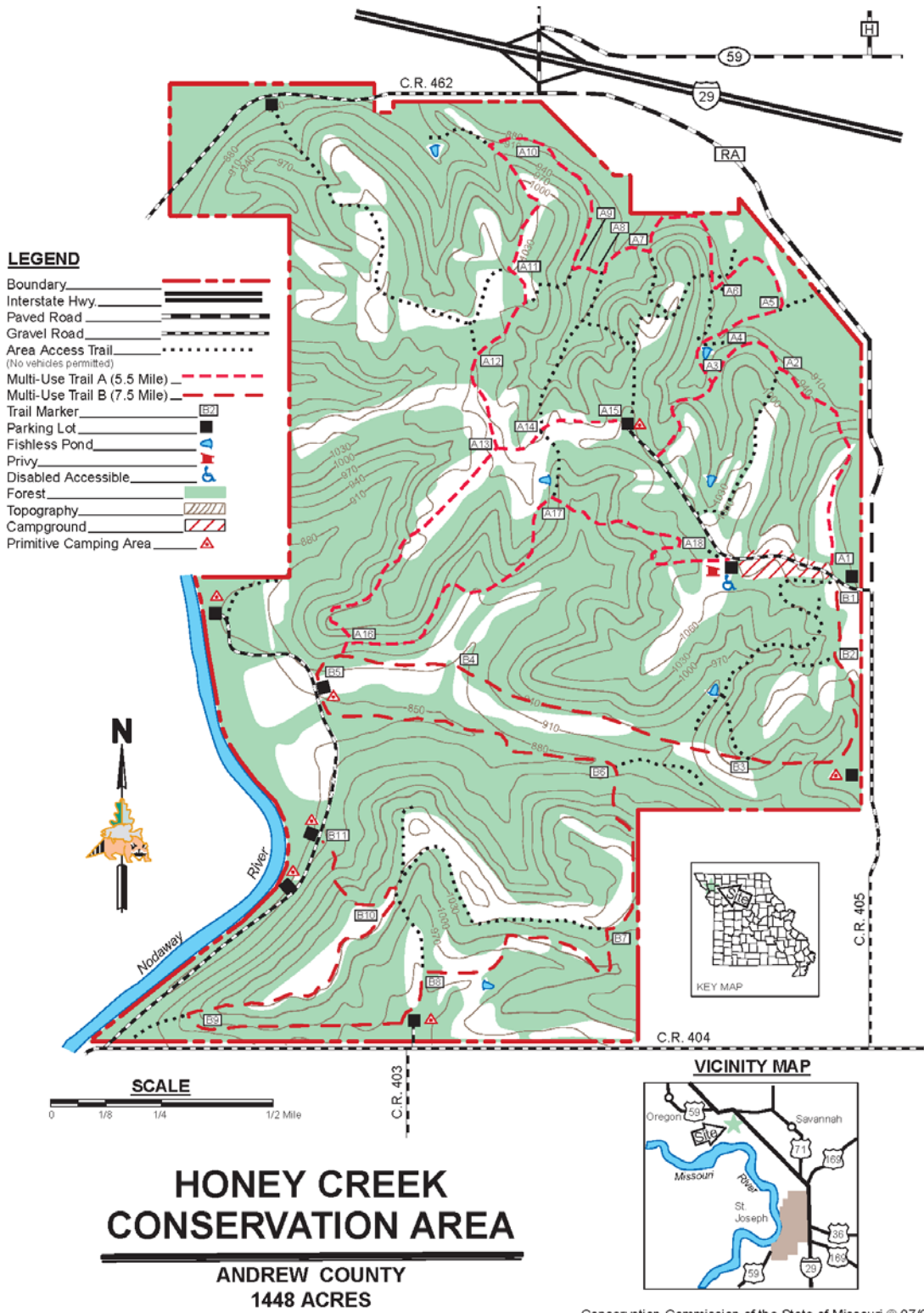


Figure 2: Mesic Loess/Glacial Till Forest



Legend

-  Mesic Loess/Glacial Till Forest
-  outline

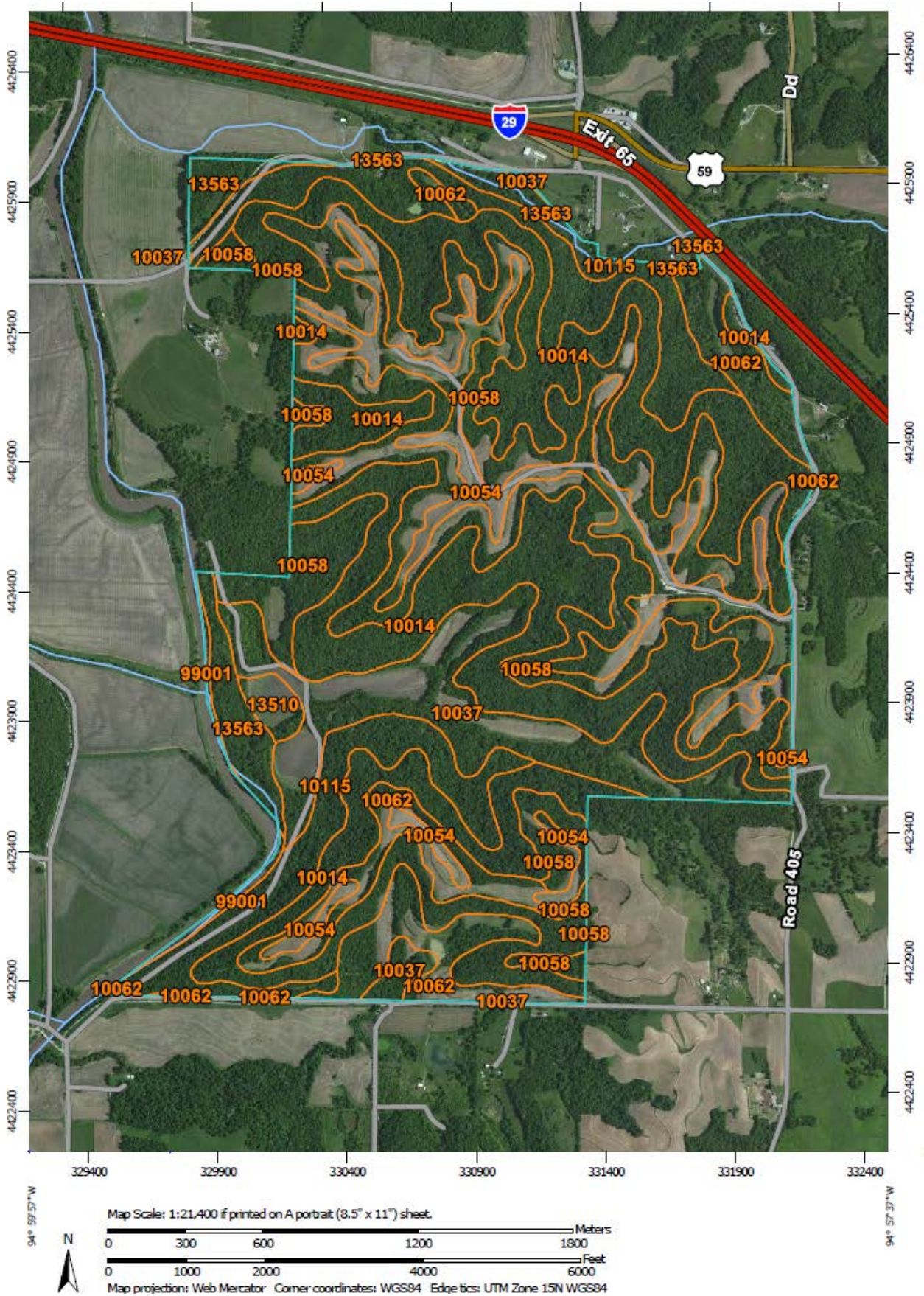


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Figure 3: Current Land Cover Map



Figure 4: Soils Map



### MAP LEGEND

<b>Area of Interest (AOI)</b>		 Spoil Area	
 Area of Interest (AOI)		 Stony Spot	
<b>Soils</b>		 Very Stony Spot	
 Soil Map Unit Polygons		 Wet Spot	
 Soil Map Unit Lines		 Other	
 Soil Map Unit Points		 Special Line Features	
<b>Special Point Features</b>		<b>Water Features</b>	
 Blowout		 Streams and Canals	
 Borrow Pit		<b>Transportation</b>	
 Clay Spot		 Rails	
 Closed Depression		 Interstate Highways	
 Gravel Pit		 US Routes	
 Gravelly Spot		 Major Roads	
 Landfill		 Local Roads	
 Lava Flow		<b>Background</b>	
 Marsh or swamp		 Aerial Photography	
 Mine or Quarry			
 Miscellaneous Water			
 Perennial Water			
 Rock Outcrop			
 Saline Spot			
 Sandy Spot			
 Severely Eroded Spot			
 Sinkhole			
 Slide or Slip			
 Sodic Spot			

### MAP INFORMATION

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:24,000.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 Web Soil Survey URL: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>  
 Coordinate System: Web Mercator (EPSG:3857)

Maps from the Web Soil Survey are based on the Web Mercator projection, which preserves direction and shape but distorts distance and area. A projection that preserves area, such as the Albers equal-area conic projection, should be used if more accurate calculations of distance or area are required.

This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Andrew County, Missouri  
 Survey Area Data: Version 12, Dec 12, 2013

Soil map units are labeled (as space allows) for map scales 1:50,000 or larger.

Date(s) aerial images were photographed: Apr 5, 2011—Mar 25, 2012

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.

**Appendix A. Honey Creek Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments**

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

Take some of those smaller fields scattered around and plant them in green fields instead of crops yearly.

I don't know if I would have much to offer. I think it is a well managed area, decent populations of several different animals. I wouldn't mind seeing more deer in the area, bucks that is. There seems to be a good sized population of does' in this area. I'll have a better idea after I put up a few trail cameras. I love hunting up there. Maybe putting in a deer specific food plot in a secluded area would bring in some more.

Other than that, I think the Department is doing a good job. Thank you.

Hello,

I'm not sure what is meant by Strategic Direction and Desired Future Condition and if they are in conflict with one another. I enjoy spring turkey hunting at Honey Creek and turkey hunting is mentioned in the Strategic Direction. In Desired Future Condition, it talks of compatible recreational opportunities. What is meant by compatible recreational opportunities? Could this mean putting cabins at Honey Creek that to me would interfere with the natural beauty and wildlife that exist? It is just hard to comment on something that is stated so general without the specifics.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

A great place to stop over with horses, just let people know water isn't available.

First, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Honey Creek CA Draft Management Plan. Equestrian trail riders in Andrew, Buchanan, and Holt Counties are fortunate to be served by the nice trails on the Honey Creek CA. We at Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen commend MDC for providing this quality outdoor experience opportunity.

Trail riders who ride on Honey Creek are complimentary of the job the Department does of maintaining parking and camping areas, hitching rails, and other infrastructure associated with equestrian use of the trails. They also speak well of Department personnel as being friendly and helpful.

I understand that a creek crossing can be quite soft, causing some riders to avoid the area at times. The trails in some spots have a few loose rocks that could cause a horse to lose footing. SMMBCH offers our services (availability of volunteers permitting) to assist the area manager to assess any trail safety or maintenance issues and develop plans to address them. We further offer, if none currently exists, to assist the Area Manager to develop a partnership with local trail users to assist with maintaining the trails and associated infrastructure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment, and thank you for providing this opportunity to the trail community.