

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS STATE PARK

PREAMBLE & MISSION STATEMENT

April 2022

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Located in western Taney County, on the north fringe of Branson's city limits, Shepherd of the Hills State Park encompasses dolomite glade covered knobs, savanna and woodland landscapes, springs, and streams. Native vegetation including prairie grasses, sedges, and forbs dominate the rolling landscape. Mature post oaks provide a contemporary oak savanna community, while woodlands and contemporary forests occupy the narrow sides of tributary hollows, with riverbank forests lining major creeks. Visitors to the park will experience the magnificence of the Ozarks in the dolomite glades and bald knobs ascending from the Roark Creek valley.

The property for Shepherd of the Hills State Park was purchased by the State of Missouri, acting on behalf of the public as Trustee for natural resources, in October, 2016. Natural resource damage funds, for the acquisition of the property, were the result of monetary damages recovered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR). Originally named Ozark Mountain State Park, the facility was renamed Shepherd of the Hills State Park in May of 2022, denoting the American novel's historic influence throughout the region.

Through the Statewide Groundwater Restoration Plan, MoDNR seeks to implement restoration projects that directly benefit, restore and/or preserve groundwater resources through the acquisition and protection of groundwater recharge areas, including those containing direct conduits to groundwater such as those found in karst systems. Shepherd of the Hills State Park is a natural resource compensatory acquisition made through the Statewide Groundwater Restoration Plan, the purpose for which is to restore, rehabilitate and preserve the 1,011-acre watershed for the benefit of surface and groundwater flow into the waters of Roark Creek.

Roark Creek is a Class "C" stream that ceases flow in dry periods and maintains permanent pools that support aquatic life. Its headwaters consolidate and fall steeply off the Springfield Plateau into Roark Creek's east and west forks, converging within Shepherd of the Hills State Park, seven stream miles above Lake Taneycomo. Over two miles of upper Roark Creek, including the lower reaches of its East and West forks, flow within Shepherd of the Hills. Their rocky channels wind far below Branson's mountainous skyline of rugged hills and grassy "bald knobs", encased within the thick dolomite bedrock that geologically distinguishes the White River region. Those same bedrock layers, spanning nearly the entire park and most of the surrounding countryside, are the reason that prairie-like glades and dry savanna-like woodlands persist as the park's dominate natural vegetation. This extent of glades across a regional landscape is unique within Missouri, and Shepherd of the Hills State Park sits at its core.

People have been drawn to the waters of Roark Creek for centuries, with human occupation of the area dating minimally to 6,000 B.C. Taney County was once settled by homesteaders that

migrated to the area from 1873 to 1910. One homesteader, Joel Garber, received a land patent in 1895 near Roark Creek. Garber, a preacher, quickly became a leader within the Roark Creek settlement. In 1895, the Garber Post Office was established with Joel Garber serving as postmaster until 1901. William Fronabarger, a homesteader, resumed the role as postmaster, operated one of the first stores in town, and donated land for the community's schoolhouse, which exists within the park's boundaries today. The school was operational in January 1903 and was recognized as the Fronabarger School District until at least 1907, after which it became known as the Garber Schoolhouse. Over the years, the town of Garber moved three times before coming to its final location in 1904, outside of the park's boundaries. In 1905, the nearby railroad was completed, leading to a slow growth in the community. Agricultural exports from the community included fruit, alfalfa, potatoes, corn, wheat, oats, timber, goats, cattle, pigs, and chickens.

The town of Garber and Roark Valley was referenced in the popular 1907 American novel "*The Shepherd of the Hills*" by Harold Bell Wright. The novel exemplified the life, culture, and landscape of the Ozark Mountains in the early 1900s. Thanks to J.K. Ross, known as "Old Matt" in *The Shepherd of the Hills*, life within the town and much of the state park boundaries were well documented between 1905 and 1919.

MISSION STATEMENT:

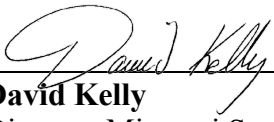
The mission of Shepherd of the Hills State Park is to provide natural resource stewardship that preserves and restores native glades and woodlands; protects the aquatic diversity and water quality of Roark Creek and its groundwater recharge areas; protects cultural resources; and provides outdoor recreation and interpretation opportunities that will enable the appreciation of the natural and cultural resources provided by the area.

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APPROVED BY:



David Kelly
Director, Missouri State Parks

4/28/22

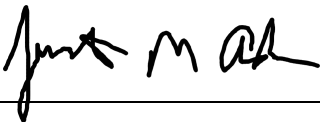
Date



Terry Bruns
Program Director, Planning and Development

04/15/2022

Date



Justin Adams
Regional Director, Ozark Region

04/19/2022

Date



Carl Bonnell
Deputy Regional Director, Ozark Region

4/19/2022

Date

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS STATE PARK

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

April 2022

Location: Taney County
Established: 2016
Size: 1,011.00 Acres

MISSION STATEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Located in western Taney County, on the north fringe of Branson's city limits, Shepherd of the Hills State Park encompasses dolomite glade covered knobs, savanna and woodland landscapes, springs, and streams. Native vegetation including prairie grasses, sedges, and forbs dominate the rolling landscape. Mature post oaks provide a contemporary oak savanna community, while woodlands and contemporary forests occupy the narrow sides of tributary hollows, with riverbank forests lining major creeks. Visitors to the park will experience the magnificence of the Ozarks in the dolomite glades and bald knobs ascending from the Roark Creek valley.

Cultural resources extant at Shepherd of the Hills State Park include artifacts dating minimally to 6,000 B.C. In addition, evidence of homesteading from as early as the 1870s remains intact and present within the park's boundaries, most notably the ca. 1903 Garber Schoolhouse. The long-gone community of Garber and the Roark Valley was referenced in the popular 1907 American novel "*The Shepherd of the Hills*" by Harold Bell Wright; depicting the life, culture, and landscape of the Ozark Mountains in the early 1900s.

The property for Shepherd of the Hills State Park was purchased by the State of Missouri, acting on behalf of the public as Trustee for natural resources, in October of 2016. Natural resource damage funds, for the acquisition of the property, were the result of monetary damages recovered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR). Originally named Ozark Mountain State Park, the facility was renamed Shepherd of the Hills State Park in May of 2022, denoting the American novel's historic influence throughout the region.

SITE GOALS

- Preserve the natural and cultural resources located within the park's boundaries;
- Provide recreational opportunities and public use facilities compatible with the park's mission, resources, and public needs;
- Provide adequate orientation and interpretive facilities to enhance visitor experience; and
- Provide administrative support facilities to ensure successful operation and maintenance of the park.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- Native landscape and wildlife of the Roark Creek valley;
- Pre-European/Native-American history and activity in the area;
- 19th/20th century homesteaders history and activity;
- Harold Bell Wright's 1907 American novel "*The Shepherd of the Hills*"; and
- Natural features and ecosystems of the Ozark Mountains.

SITE STRUCTURES

Shepherd of the Hills State Park encompasses twenty-one structures, at least one of which may have some historical significance*. None of the structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and a fuller assessment of their potential eligibility for inclusion on the NRHP still needs to be completed.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Residence (ca. 1924) | 12. Poultry Shed |
| 2. Smoke House (ca. 1922) | 13. Small Stone Building |
| 3. Pedestrian Footbridge | 14. Work Shed |
| 4. Shelter | 15. Open-sided Shelter/Shed |
| 5. Open-sided Shelter/Shed | 16. Small Open Shed |
| 6. Shed/Barn | 17. Long Open-sided Shed |
| 7. Log Barn | 18. Large Open-sided Shed with lean-to roof |
| 8. Chicken Shed | 19. Garber School House (ca. 1903)* |
| 9. Root Cellar | 20. Log Cabin |
| 10. Equestrian Barn | 21. Outhouse |
| 11. Traditional Barn with Gambrel roof | |

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Shepherd of the Hills State Park's development philosophy should coincide harmoniously with the restoration and preservation of the groundwater recharge areas associated with Roark Creek. Development focus should be put towards enhancing accessibility and ensuring adequate recreational opportunities, while preserving the cultural landscape. Moreover, interpretation of the Ozark Mountains in the early 1900's should be augmented and complimented by future development.

1. South Day-Use Area

Due to limited public access, a day-use area is best suited for development west of the intersection of Noland Road and Sycamore Church Road, residing north of Noland Road. Potential area amenities include but are not limited to: parking, ADA parking, vault toilet, potable water, picnic tables, and interpretive kiosk.

2. Service Area

The service area will encompass the existing equestrian barn, which will also house the park's office.

3. North Day-Use Area

A second day-use area, accessible by foot-only, is desired west of the Garber School House where the cluster of existing farm structures reside. Potential area amenities include picnic tables and interpretive panels.

4. Basic Camping Area

A basic camping area is preferred on the knob south of Sycamore Church Road, northeast of the fen. Development in the camping area should remain minimal in nature, consisting of walk-in platform tent sites with parking near Sycamore Church Road. Amenities in the camping area may include but are not limited to: fire ring, picnic tables, potable water, and vault toilet.

5. Special-Use Camping Area

Located north of the railroad tracks and Ralstin Road, a primitive special-use camping area is to be developed in the open pasture, providing primitive camping opportunities for appropriate user groups.

6. Hiking-Only Trails

Trail-use should be limited to hiking-only, ensuring the protection and preservation of the vulnerable Roark Creek watershed and dolomite glades; eliminating the likelihood of social trails and land disturbance/erosion across the open landscape; and safeguarding trail-use compatibility with the Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area. In addition, multiple backpack overnight sites (basic and/or three-sided structures) may be available for added recreational opportunity.

7. ADA Trail

To provide accessible recreation, ADA trail development should be considered extending from the south day-use area to the fen. Depending on parking location, it may be appropriate for the trail to replace a portion of the existing farm road.

8. Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area Connector Trail

A connector trail to the Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area is proposed to enhance recreational opportunity, increasing available trail mileage amongst the two facilities. The Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area consists of approximately 4.5 miles of hiking-only trail, with no camping allowed. The connector trails exact location will be determined in cooperation with MDC and DNR staff.

9. Backpack Overnight Cabin

The log cabin in the northern portion of the park, near the pond, should be rehabilitated for overnight backpack reservations. Continued glade restoration will improve operational access to the structure.

10. Overlook

An overlook is to be developed atop of a bald knob, providing picturesque views of the Ozark Mountain landscape. Overlook amenities may include wayside exhibits and benches. Due to nearby burn units, an overlook platform is not recommended.

11. Footbridge Across Roark Creek

To address public access constraints from the south day-use area to the northern portion of the park, a footbridge should be constructed across Roark Creek. The location should direct the public away from the nearby low-water crossing and structures designated for operations.

12. Structures of Interest

According to a 2016 Structure Inventory and Assessment, approximately twenty one structures are present on site. The following structures should be considered for preservation and/or rehabilitated for their cultural, recreational, interpretive, and/or operational value.

1. Residence
2. Smoke House
3. Pedestrian Footbridge (relocate)
6. Shed/Barn
7. Log Barn
10. Equestrian Barn
19. Garber School House
20. Log Cabin

The remaining structures should be considered for demolition to mitigate public safety risks and operational concerns. However, cultural clearances, research/documentation, and public input will be sought before demolition determinations are confirmed.

Special Consideration

The existing low-water crossing is in serious disrepair with visible signs of scouring and should be replaced. Development will require collaboration amongst multiple stakeholders including Taney County, Missouri Department of Conservation, and US Army Corps of Engineers.

PROJECT PHASING

- Phase 1
 - South day-use area
 - Footbridge over Roark Creek
 - Hiking-only trails
 - Overlook
 - Service area
 - Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area connector trail
- Phase 2
 - North day-use area
 - Special-use camping area
 - ADA trail
 - Hiking-only trail expansion
- Phase 3
 - Basic camping area
 - Backpack overnight cabin
 - Low-water crossing replacement

Cultural and natural resource clearances will be required before on-site modifications and development occur.

PLANNING AND RESEARCH GOALS

- Continued documentary research and exploration of cultural and natural resources.
- Completion of the General Management Plan.
- Continued planning for improved public access to northern portion of park.

ACQUISITION UNITS

If offered, acquisition of adjacent property may be pursued only through willing sellers or donors. To be considered, units should enhance the mission of Missouri State Parks through one of the following categories:

- Resource preservation and protection
- Recreational access and opportunity
- Management facilitation

CONTEXTUAL PLANNING INFORMATION

Public Input

Public input is an integral part of the CDP process. The following includes input opportunities throughout the planning process:

- 1. Public Meeting #1, June 27, 2019 – 1:00 pm**
 - a. Shepherd of the Hills, equestrian barn
 - i. Comment card
- 2. Public Meeting (CDP update), October 24, 2019 – 4:00 pm**
 - a. Dewey Short Visitor Center
- 3. Public Meeting #2, November 2, 2021 – 5:30 pm**
 - a. Branson Area Chamber of Commerce
 - b. Public input received November 3, 2021 to December 2, 2021
 - i. Comment card & online survey
- 4. Public Meeting #3, May 4th, 2022 – 11:00 am**
 - a. Shepherd of the Hills, equestrian barn

CDP Team Members:

- David Kelly – Division Director
- Brian Stith – Division Deputy Director
- Laura Hendrickson – Division Deputy Director
- Justin Adams – Ozark Regional Director
- Carl Bonnell – Ozark Region Deputy Director
- Caylen Cantrell – Park Superintendent
- Ken McCarty – Natural Resource Program Director
- Chris Crabtree – Natural Resource Ecologist
- Dr. Mike Ohnersorgen – Cultural Resource Management Program Director
- Kim Dillon – Cultural Resource Management Section Chief
- Rachel Campbell – Archeologist
- Terry Bruns – Planning and Development Program Director
- Don Stier – Design Section Chief
- Ryan Dunwoody – Planning Section Chief
- Jeremey Robinson - Planner
- Rebecca Young – Outdoor Recreation Management Section Chief
- Ben Nagy – Trail Coordinator
- Zane Price – Real Estate Manager
- Alison Dubbert – Interpretive Resource Coordinator

APPENDIX

- CDP Map
- Public Meeting #1 Survey Results
- Public Meeting #2 Survey Results

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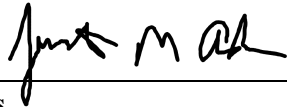
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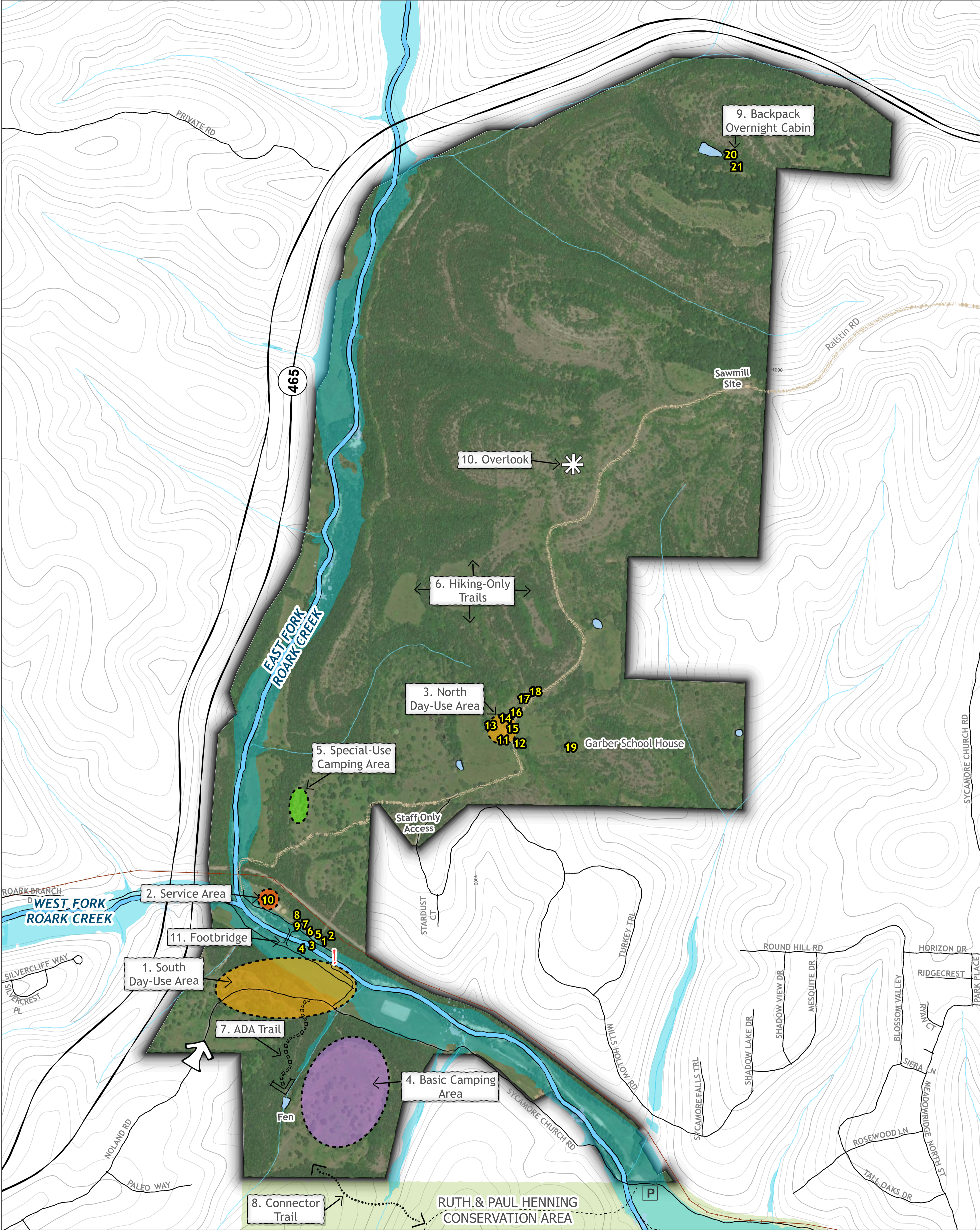
Date



Carl Bonnell
Deputy Regional Director, Ozark Region

4/19/2022

Date



SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS STATE PARK

Projected Coordinate System:
NAD 1983, UTM Zone 15N
Contour Interval: 20 Feet
Absolute Scale: 1:6,800

CDP: April 2022

NORTH

0

305

610

1,220

1,830

2,440

Feet

Use Area

Day-Use Area

Basic Camping Area

Service Area

Special-Use Area

Landscape & Features

Roark Creek

Pond

1% Flood Hazard

MDC Land

Stream

Park Entrance

P

Parking

Road

Ralstin Rd

MDC Trail

Railroad

Development

Contour

Footbridge

Overlook

ADA Trail

Connector Trail

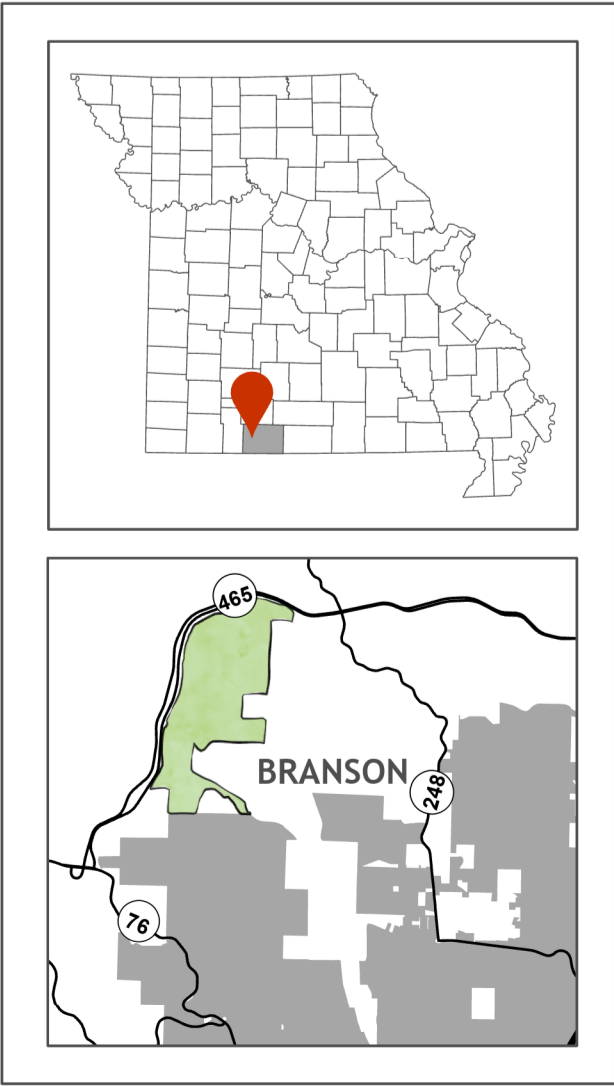
Development Objective

1-21

Structures

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Special Consideration



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