



**LAD** Foundation  
*Established 1962*

# 2025 Annual Report



# Nature's Beauty

## Letter from LAD Foundation, Inc. President Ted Heisel

I took the photo below last May, using an aerial drone to capture the beauty of the Big Creek Valley on Pioneer Forest in the foggy, early morning hours. The unblemished carpet of trees, the sinuous path of the creek as it heads south to the Current River, and undulating Ozark hills extending as far as the eye can see grant a sense of peace and calm in this chaotic world.

Our modern landscape has been heavily modified by highways, utilities, buildings, and fields. Among the special qualities of Pioneer Forest is its scale, maintaining a vast landscape of relatively natural forest that filters water as it flows to the region's still-clear rivers and provides a home to abundant wildlife. It is the closest thing we retain to Missouri's historic landscape, along with a handful of other areas in the Ozarks with extensive public lands.

Eighty years ago, conservationist Aldo Leopold wrote: "I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. What avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" At a time when there remained many more blank spots than exist today, Leopold already saw the important role wild lands play for the intertwined imperatives of human well-being and ecological integrity.

In the decades since, public health literature has accumulated abundant evidence of the mental and physical benefits of interacting with nature. Time spent in nature has been linked with lower stress, improved focus, lower blood pressure, and greater happiness. Many of us feel a spiritual connection with the Earth as we hike remote trails or paddle lonely rivers.

A core purpose of the LAD Foundation is providing places for the public to get outdoors. As the Foundation works on an updated and expanded plan for outdoor recreation on its lands, we hope it will lead to more people rekindling their connection to nature.

Yours truly,

Ted Heisel  
President

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# A Healthy & Impactful Demonstration Forest

## Promoting Forest Health Through Active Stewardship

In 2025, forest management efforts on Pioneer Forest continued to focus on salvage harvesting dead and dying red oaks. This widespread mortality is referred to as red oak decline, and it stems from a combination of environmental stressors and biological factors. Extended periods of drought followed by short episodes of heavy rainfall have placed severe stress on Ozark forests. These climatic fluctuations weaken trees, making them increasingly vulnerable to pests and disease. Among the most significant contributors to mortality is Armillaria, a native fungus that targets compromised root systems. Once established, Armillaria accelerates decline by feeding on stressed roots,

ultimately killing the tree. In some heavily affected stands, foresters are forced to harvest every red oak to prevent further loss and secure some economic value.

The forest health issue is compounded by the age and density of mature red oak sawtimber across Pioneer Forest. Many stands are overstocked with overmature red oaks, making them highly susceptible to decline. To address this, Pioneer Forest has implemented proactive strategies aimed at reducing stocking levels and regenerating diverse, vigorous native species with a goal of returning to its preferred management approach: uneven-aged, single-tree selection.

During 2025, forestry staff managed 18 contract logging crews to conduct salvage operations and other forest management across 8,200 acres of Pioneer Forest, harvesting nearly 21.5 million board feet of sawtimber—an average of about 2,600 board feet per acre. According to the most recent Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) conducted in 2022, the standing volume of sawtimber on Pioneer Forest is estimated to be over 950 million board feet. Pioneer Forest grows approximately 31.4 million board feet of sawtimber annually, ensuring sustainable harvests despite increased salvage activity.

Chief Forester Brandon Kuhn (r) discusses an active Texas County timber sale with NSF Auditor Jim Johnson (l).



## Adaptive Planning for a Healthy Demonstration Forest

Pioneer Forest maintains a Five-Year Harvest Plan to prioritize areas for harvest. This plan was established to ensure stands remain on a 20-year harvest cycle. However, recent years have required an adaptive

approach, prioritizing stands affected by red oak decline. Forestry staff continuously monitor forest health, adding compromised areas to the plan to ensure timely intervention before timber loses economic viability.

## Improving Stand Quality Through Post-Harvest Treatments

Following salvage operations, some heavily stocked red oak stands are left with a poor-quality understory. To promote healthy regeneration, Pioneer Forest prescribes Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) in the form of post-harvest slashing in these areas. In 2025, a total of 270 acres was treated with

post-harvest slashing. Additionally, eight contracts were awarded to complete 760 acres of TSI in FY26. These treatments focus on removing damaged, suppressed, and undesirable trees to create space for healthier, more vigorous trees and for a desirable species composition to take root.

## Strengthening Sustainable Forestry Practices

In August 2025, Pioneer Forest successfully completed its annual Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) Forest Management Standard surveillance audit, maintaining full certification. Two corrective actions related to logger safety and training were promptly addressed by staff.

In 2026, Pioneer Forest will host Professional Timber Harvester training, ensuring its logging contractors have ample opportunity to maintain proper training. Updated logging contracts and timber sale inspection reports strengthen further adherence to SFI® requirements.



Dead and dying red oak trees against a blue sky.

(Below) NSF Auditor Jim Johnson discusses and active Texas County Timber sale with Pioneer Forest logger Eddie Evans (r).



(Left) LAD managers discuss Leatherwood Creek Natural Area's ecological diversity and active timber management with NSF Auditor Jim Johnson. Jim was hired by SFI® to complete Pioneer Forest's 2025 audit.

# Expanding Old-Growth Forest Reserves for Long-Term Ecological Integrity

Old-growth forests are among the most ecologically valuable landscapes in North America, providing critical habitat, biodiversity, and improved resilience against climate change. Unfortunately, there are few acres left in Missouri that have not been affected by human disturbance, including fire, open-range grazing, and logging.

The Pioneer Forest Management Plan (2019) defines old-growth forests as ecosystems distinguished by old trees and related structural attributes. “Old growth” encompasses the latter stages of stand development, which typically differ from earlier successional stages in ways that may include tree size;

accumulations of large, dead woody material, especially on the forest floor; the number of canopy layers; species composition; and ecosystem functions.

Unfortunately, this definition of old-growth lacks quantitative criteria necessary for land managers to assess potential old-growth sites. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has developed region-specific criteria for old-growth forests, which primarily focus on a combination of minimum stand age, a high density of large-diameter live trees, and significant amounts of large dead wood, with specific age thresholds.

In 2023, Pioneer Forest adopted an Ecological Management Plan that set a clear objective: to designate new forest reserves that preserve old-growth features and strengthen ecological integrity. During the development of this plan, staff identified a significant gap in the representation of old growth across the forest. To address this, comprehensive inventories of forest and natural features were conducted, leading to the establishment and expansion of several forest reserves.

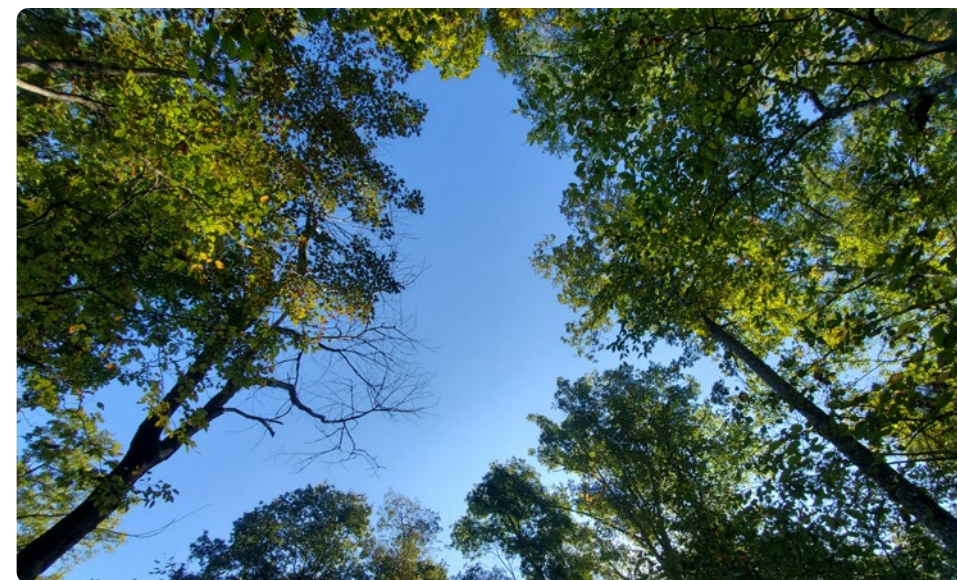
## New Black River Old Growth Forest Reserve (88 acres)

Discovered during the first Natural Features Inventory (NFI) in Reynolds County, this steep, protected north slope along the Black River supports large-diameter red oaks, white oaks,

and hickories on a rich site. This reserve will provide wildlife habitat and a protected viewshed for hikers and floaters on the Black River below.

## New Schoolhouse Hollow/ Kates Hollow Old Growth Forest Reserve (736 acres)

The focal point of Schoolhouse Hollow is the large, old-growth white oaks that our founder Leo Drey purchased back from National Distillers in the 1950s. During the 2024/2025 NFI, Schoolhouse Hollow and Kates Hollow to the south were identified as high-quality mesic forest sites with a rich diversity of herbaceous plants. Kates Hollow also hosts a series of fen/seep communities. Both hollows host at least three plant species of conservation concern.



A canopy gap created by two fallen trees in Schoolhouse Hollow.



A Black River madtom—a small, common catfish species endemic to the Ozarks region—discovered by LAD’s Big Creek Natural Features Inventory team.



(Left) Large downed logs covered in moss can be a feature of old growth forests.

(Above) May rain showers and dim, scattered sunlight contribute to the illumination of limestone particles in this series of beaver ponds in Laxton Hollow.



## Expanded Satterfield Hollow Old Growth Forest Reserve (200 acres)

Current River Natural Area, Missouri’s first Society of American Foresters-recognized Natural Area, was established in 1955. The area is recognized for its old-growth white oaks, some more than 400 years old. The original designation was just 10

acres; in 2005, it was expanded to 265 acres. In 2019, a Forest Reserve of 783 acres was added, and this year, the area was expanded to a total of 984 acres to support further watershed protection and potential for old growth development.

## Expanded Laxton Hollow Forest Reserve (66 acres)

This 167-acre forest reserve includes large old timber and coarse woody debris scattered throughout the protected northeast-facing slopes

surrounding Laxton Cave and Laxton Spring. Sixty-six acres were added to this reserve to further protect the viewshed along the trail to the spring.

## Ongoing Management of Old Growth

Pioneer Forest’s protection of old-growth areas is an important demonstration of sustainable forest management. While timber harvesting remains an essential component of forest management, we recognize the need for balanced strategies that allow for the establishment and maintenance of forest reserves. By permanently setting aside these high-quality forest

types, we safeguard biodiversity, enhance climate resilience, and honor a legacy of conservation that began more than seven decades ago. These expansions reflect Pioneer Forest’s proactive commitment to ecological stewardship, ensuring that old-growth ecosystems remain intact for scientific study, wildlife habitat, and enjoyment by future generations.

## Documenting Rare Breeding Occurrence of Black-throated Green Warblers

LAD Ecological Monitoring Technician and Salem High School Biology teacher Megan Blair detected several singing male Black-throated Green Warblers (*Setophaga virens*) near Satterfield Hollow in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry (Backcountry) in June. This species is usually only observed during migration in Missouri, but some of the males were counter-singing, indicating they were maintaining breeding territories.

LAD's Ecology Team searched the area multiple times for evidence of breeding but failed to find any nests or detect females. The observations, along with photos and audio recordings, were submitted to eBird, the online database and checklist of birds managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Megan was part of a team that documented the first breeding evidence of these birds in the state in 2010 on the Missouri Forest Ecosystem Project (MOFEP) site

in eastern Shannon County. A single singing male was recorded on the Eleven Point River in 1991, and there's been a small pocket of them breeding in the Arkansas Ozarks since 1993. It is unknown how many individuals might be in the state or if their breeding range is expanding permanently into Missouri.

## Maintaining Boundaries and Measuring Forest Change

Pioneer Forest manages 565 miles of boundary lines across its 143,075 acres, following a six-year maintenance cycle. For five years of that cycle, staff repaint approximately 115 miles of boundary

each winter, using orange paint for maximum visibility. The sixth year is reserved for collecting data from the forest's 448 permanent CFI plots.



An example of Pioneer Forest boundary marking.

## New Land Additions and Sales

In 2025, Pioneer Forest completed a significant land exchange with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), acquiring an inholding near Cedar Grove. The 632-acre parcel was nearly surrounded by Pioneer Forest. Acquisition significantly reduces property line maintenance and enables more efficient management in the area.

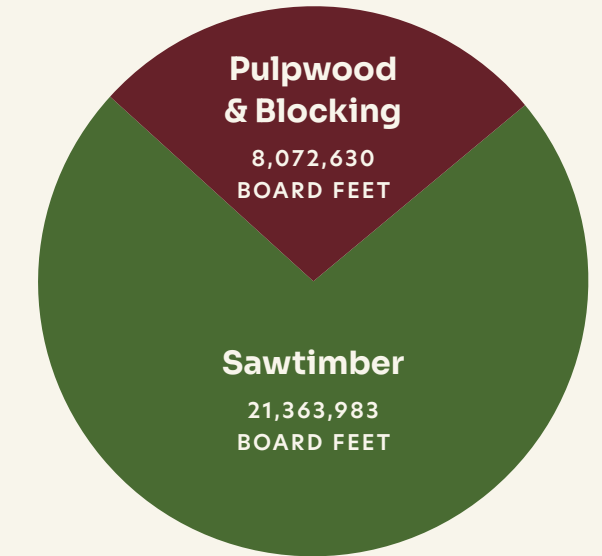
Pioneer Forest also sold an isolated 40-acre parcel in Reynolds County, which reduces administrative costs and a mile of boundary line maintenance. Pioneer Forest continues to focus on strategic consolidation of its land holdings across its ownership.



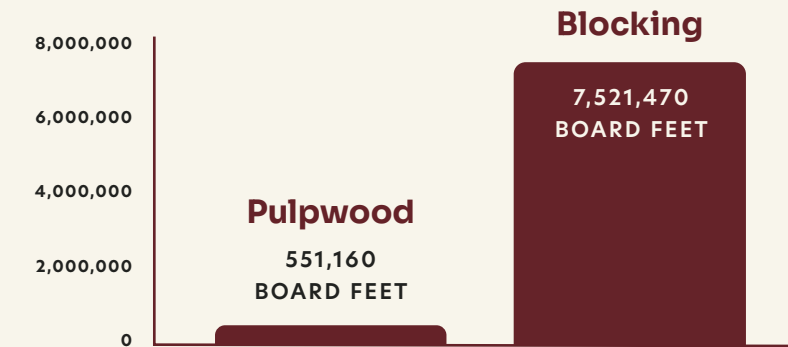
## Goal 1: By the Numbers



### Breakdown of Total Board Feet Harvested:



### Pulpwood & Blocking Volume



### Sawtimber Volume



### Demonstration Forest Tours

- University of Missouri Field Studies
- University of Missouri Extension—Women Owning Woodlands
- Missouri Walnut Council

University of Missouri Extension group Women Owning Woodlands learns about pine woodland management from LAD staff at the Virgin Pine areas.

# Ecological Diversity & Responsible Recreation

## Inventoried Natural Features in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry

Natural features inventories (NFI) are useful for providing information about natural communities, species of conservation concern, and geological features. NFIs also assist in identifying areas for restoration or management. The LAD Foundation's 2023 Ecological Management Plan set a goal to conduct preliminary course-scale surveys on 6,000-10,000 acres each year, with annual, detailed follow-up field surveys on a portion of those acres.

### Big Creek NFI Results

A portion of the Big Creek watershed in the Backcountry was the first site to receive the full course of study. At roughly 10,000 acres, it consists mostly of dry-mesic dolomite forest, dry-mesic chert forest, and some bottomland and riverfront forest where it empties into the Current River. The area was initially surveyed between May and September 2024 by Ecologist Nolan Sipe and former Resource Steward for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Mike Currier. They described

notable natural community types in the watershed and identified eleven sites for more detailed vegetation surveys. Justin Thomas, Director of the Institute of Botanical Training, visited these sites in September 2024, as well as in April and June 2025, and produced plant species lists, focusing on species of conservation concern.

Big Creek has been a focal point for biological monitoring for decades,

having been surveyed for aquatic biodiversity several times, including by the Resource Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) program of Missouri's water resources in the upper reaches of Big Creek from 1997 through 2022. Autonomous recording units were placed in parts of the Big Creek watershed, including Kates Hollow, Schoolhouse Hollow, Birdie Hollow, and the upper reaches of Dugan Hollow in summer 2025 to detect breeding songbirds.

### Highlights of the Big Creek NFI

The dominant natural community in the Big Creek watershed is dry-mesic woodland and forest with dry-mesic bottomland forest notable at the mouth of Big Creek and in Cedar House Hollow. Several degraded Ozark fens were identified in Mash Creek and Warren Hollow, but they still host several important fen indicator species. Old Schoolhouse Hollow hosts a series of high-quality perched fens along a stretch of the headwater stream. Dugan

Hollow has notable dolomite bluffs, glades, outcrops, overhangs, and small canyons. The mesic bottomland forest near the mouth of Field Hollow and Charles Hollow has interesting dry and moist dolomite cliffs bordered by a slough. A new cave was identified in Kates Hollow, and an old root cellar was found in Warren Hollow.

Two areas of mature mesic dolomite forest in Schoolhouse Hollow and Kates Hollow, which have high species diversity of plants and several species of conservation concern, have been designated as a 736-acre old growth forest reserve. Forest reserves do not receive timber harvests. Instead, stable growing conditions can persist, further protecting biodiversity and watersheds that will provide recreational enjoyment for generations of visitors.



Clouds parting over Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry.

### Terrestrial Biodiversity

A total of 574 species of plants was recorded during the NFI, with four species of conservation concern detected: Cumberland Sedge (*Carex cumberlandensis*), Spreading Sedge (*Carex laxiculmis* var. *copulata*), Beechwood Sedge (*Carex laxiflora*) and Elliptic Spikesedge (*Eleocharis elliptica*). There were 127 species of high conservation value, indicating many of these sites provide stable growing conditions that favor species with low tolerance to anthropogenic disturbance. Fourteen invasive plant species were recorded, with nine of those found in Mash Creek with most other sites hosting between zero and four of those species. Over 30 species of breeding songbirds were detected as well as a few species of salamanders, snakes, and a river otter in Big Creek.

### Subterranean Biodiversity

There are 27 caves in the Big Creek watershed that have been inventoried by the Cave Research Foundation (CRF) and others within the last 15 years. Of those, 16 have representative cave biota including Cave salamander (*Eurycea lucifuga*), Dark-sided salamander (*Eurycea longicauda melanopleura*), Long-tailed salamander (*Eurycea longicauda longicauda*), Northern grotto salamander (*Eurycea nerea*; state imperiled), Slimy salamander (*Plethodon albagula*), Southern redback salamander (*Plethodon serratus*), and several species of invertebrates. Bats were observed in 11 of those caves and include the endangered Gray Bat (*Myotis grisescens*), Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*; state imperiled), the endangered Northern Long-eared Bat (*M. septentrionalis*), Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), and Tricolored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*; state imperiled, proposed for federal listing).

### Aquatic Biodiversity

Thirty-three species of fish have been detected in Big Creek since 1997, representing a healthy range of functional groups like benthic feeders, insectivores, and omnivores. The macroinvertebrate diversity is high and fully supports healthy aquatic life.



## Brushy Creek NFI

The first course-scale survey of the Brushy Creek watershed (8,693 acres) occurred in 2025. This highly dissected landscape is made up of three distinct areas: Brushy Creek (upper and lower portions), Middle Prong, and Satterfield Hollow. Between these areas are large tracts of upland forest and woodland communities with south-facing slopes that contain healthy open glades with a rich diversity of plant species. In the bottomlands, an abundance of flowing water, even in dry conditions, produces rich forest and mesic communities. The upper portion of Brushy Creek hosts multiple springs, seeps and fens, including the Mandibulus Spring

and Cave and a cliff overhang with a waterfall. The lower section of Brushy Creek is more open and has carved-out, moist dolomite bluffs that frame the creek. The Middle Prong section of the watershed features steeply inclined bottomlands with waterways that are carved deep into the dolomite bedrock. The water in this area is mainly confined to these main channels, rather than the larger open fens found in the upper portion; mesic plant species can be seen clinging to the sides of the bank in little “fenlets.” Satterfield Hollow is not as open as the majority of Brushy Creek and is not as deeply channeled as the streams of Middle Prong. It contains

rich bottomland forest and fens in some areas with an upland mesic forest on the north-facing slopes where massive old growth white oaks dominate the canopy.

So far, 398 species of plants have been recorded in the Brushy Creek NFI, including three plant species of conservation concern: Beechwood Sedge (*Carex laxiflora*), Wild Sweet William (*Phlox maculata* ssp. *pyramidalis*), and Blazing Star (*Liatris scariosa* var. *nieuwlandii*). A detailed field survey of select focal areas began in September 2025 and will continue in summer 2026, with more flora and fauna lists produced where possible.



An active waterfall in the Brushy Creek watershed.

## Upcoming Blair Creek NFI

A course-scale survey of lower Blair Creek is planned for summer 2026, and subsequent detailed surveys within the Blair Creek watershed will continue through summer 2028.



Staff and partners counting plants at Jerktail Mountain glade.

## Discovering Rare Plants at Jerktail Mountain Ecological Management Area

Missouri Groundcherry (*Physalis missouriensis*), a state endangered and globally threatened plant, was discovered at Jerktail Mountain Ecological Management Area by Dan Drees and LAD Ecologist Nolan Sipe during NFI work. A multi-agency team was assembled to systematically count and map the population when it was in peak flowering to accurately distinguish it from similar species in the area. In total, 454 flowering plants were found on about four acres of

dolomite glade, making this one of the largest populations ever recorded in Missouri. These annual plants sprouted from the seed bank existing in the soil following a prescribed fire where red cedar had been cut and left, resulting in high fire intensity.

Development of the population was monitored to enable seed collection from the population. Fruits were collected in mid-August and submitted to staff at the Missouri Botanical

Garden's Living Collection Management System, where rare plant material is analyzed and stored to conserve globally vulnerable species. About 40,000 Missouri Groundcherry seeds were banked from this effort for conservation use thanks to the Missouri Botanical Garden. An element occurrence record was submitted to MDC, and voucher specimens were collected and submitted to the Missouri Botanical Garden's herbarium.



Missouri Groundcherry (*physalis missouriensis*) plant in full bloom with developing fruits.



Plant community in the glade where the *Physalis* discovery was made.



Missouri Groundcherry fruit collected for the Missouri Botanical Garden.

## Expanding Natural Areas on LAD Foundation Lands

In January 2025, the Missouri Natural Areas Committee (MoNAC), an interagency committee made up of members from Missouri’s primary natural resources organizations (DNR, MDC, Mark Twain National Forest, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service [USFWS] Ecological Services, U.S. Geological Survey, and The Nature Conservancy—Missouri Chapter) voted to approve the nomination of the 1440-acre Leatherwood Creek Natural Area in Shannon County. Leo Drey recognized the ecological and geological diversity of the Leatherwood Creek valley and in 1975, with the help of John Karel, sought out the Webster Groves Nature Study Society to survey the lower portion of Rough Hollow. The area was designated a forest reserve in 1995 due to its rich floral diversity and significant natural communities and geological features. At that point, the acres were removed from the timber harvest plan, though the remote and rugged site had not been effectively harvested in previous decades due to the steep topography. The site has since received thorough botanical and aquatic surveys demonstrating over 20 natural community types and a healthy aquatic community.



MoNAC members hear from LAD President Emeritus John Karel (standing center in white) at the Ball Mill Resurgence.

The area is now listed in MDC’s directory of Natural Areas: <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/places/natural-areas>.

MoNAC also approved the nomination to expand the Ball Mill Resurgence Natural Area in Perry County in October, adding 65 acres along the Blue Spring Branch, bringing the total size to 84 acres. The expansion includes important habitat for the Grotto Sculpin (*Cottus specus*) along more than a mile of Blue Spring Branch frontage. The expansion includes another large resurgence, a smaller resurgence, and several springs that support essential microhabitats encompassing



Leatherwood Creek in Leatherwood Creek Natural Area.

runs, riffles, and pools for feeding, breeding, and shelter for the sculpin. The expansion also provides further protection of the broader karst landscape of the Berome Moore Cave, the second longest in Missouri.

## Restoring Pine-Oak Management and Habitat for the Brown-headed Nuthatch

In October 2024, two to three Brown-headed Nuthatches (*Sitta pusilla*) dispersed over 25 miles from an MDC-led reintroduction project near Fremont, Missouri, where pine-oak restoration has been occurring for two decades, to the Randolph Pine-oak Woodland, where pine-oak restoration has been occurring for over a decade.

This was the first known dispersal from their point of reintroduction, but they did not remain on the site to breed in spring 2025. These birds are primary nest excavators, excavating their own cavity, so they require an abundance of well-decayed dead standing pine trees (snags) for nesting.

Brown-headed Nuthatches are known to be cooperative breeders, where the breeding pair is sometimes helped by offspring hatched in the previous breeding season. Cooperative breeding generally arises from a limit on some resource, and for these nuthatches, that limiting resource is likely pine snags.



LAD crew erecting an artificial snag in the Randolph Pine-Oak Woodland.

In early spring 2025, the seasonal stewardship crew, along with Ecologist Nolan Sipe, erected six “artificial” snags at the Randolph tract as potential nesting sites for Brown-headed Nuthatches. They cut downed pine logs to a length of about 10 feet and propped them upright, securing them in place with t-posts and wire. These snags are in the process of decay and could attract a nesting pair to excavate a nest cavity. This method has been used with some success at the original reintroduction site near Fremont, Missouri. Cedar nest boxes will also be placed at the site to encourage nesting. Ongoing monitoring of the snags, nest boxes, and placement of autonomous recording units at the site will inform managers if the site is occupied by breeding Brown-headed Nuthatches in spring 2026.

### Adaptive Management at Himont and Ben Hollow

The Himont Flat—known locally for its broad, gently rolling ridgetops about 8 miles northeast, as a nuthatch flies, from the Randolph Pine-oak Woodland—stands in contrast to the steep and rugged terrain of the

surrounding Backcountry. This unique landscape supports an abundance of shortleaf pine and is well suited for pine-oak woodland management. In 2020, Pioneer Forest designated a 470-acre tract as the Himont Pine Management Area, with objectives focused on sustaining shortleaf pine regeneration and recruitment, maintaining a 20-year timber harvest cycle and increasing the diversity of understory vegetation. In the years since, woodland restoration prescriptions were successfully implemented, including a timber harvest and an initial prescribed burn. Continued pine woodland management for pine sawtimber at Himont may help support further dispersal of Brown-headed Nuthatches and contribute to the long-term success of its reintroduction in Missouri.

Building on this early success, staff planned an expansion of the Himont Pine Management Area. The adjacent Ben Hollow Unit (encompassing more than 650 acres) shares similar soils, forest structure, and species composition, making it a natural extension to the original unit.



Released shortleaf pine in the Ben Hollow pine-oak woodland habitat restoration expansion.



Prairie warbler nestlings in a nest in an oak sapling at the Randolph tract.

Significant progress toward this expansion was made in 2025. Staff established five new vegetation monitoring plots in the Ben Hollow Unit to document changes in forest structure and composition. In addition to standard CFI measurements, data were collected on understory herbaceous vegetation and tree damage from fire. These new plots, along with two existing CFI plots, were measured in September 2025 and will be sampled every three years to monitor changes in timber volume, species richness, composition, and regeneration.

Timber harvest in the Ben Hollow Unit began in October 2025 and is well underway. Harvest prescriptions emphasize the preferential removal of red oak species while thinning across other species to promote an open woodland structure. Preparations are also underway for prescribed fire in early 2026, with plans including a second entry burn in the original Himont unit, and a first entry burn in the Ben Hollow Unit.



Crew members working to complete Martin Cave gate construction.

## Securing Martin Cave Helps Protect Gray Bat Populations

Martin Cave in Shannon County, Missouri is owned and protected by the LAD Foundation and hosts a large population of the federally endangered Gray Bat (*Myotis grisescens*). The Foundation partnered with the USFWS, MDC, and CRF to erect a gate around the entrance to Martin Cave to restrict entry by unauthorized users that could negatively affect the cave or the Gray Bat colony that uses it, especially from September to May. Bats may abandon or reduce their use of the cave due to repeated human disturbance, and the gate will ensure they have a safe place to roost and rest. The cave gate is a large vertical metal structure surrounding the mouth of the cave, allowing some wildlife to move freely in and out while keeping unwanted human users from entering. An additional benefit of the gate is that it may reduce the potential introduction of pathogens like White Nose Syndrome that can be carried on human gear and clothing from infected caves.

The site is heavily used by migrating bats during the spring and fall seasons and serves as an important stopover resting location for bats that are moving between their summer and winter grounds. The USFWS hopes that once the cave is protected and disturbance is greatly reduced, the cave may become an attractive option for breeding female Gray Bats and eventually become occupied by a maternity colony.

The USFWS recently conducted a 5-year review of the best available science and population trends on Gray Bats and found the species has recovered and no longer meets the definition of an endangered species. The USFWS intends to recommend delisting the species. Protective measures taken to protect major Gray Bat wintering and breeding hibernacula, like the gating of Martin cave, is directly responsible for the recovery of this species from an estimated population of 1.5 million when it was listed in 1976 to over 5

million across its range today. The Foundation is proud to have played a role with countless conservation organizations, state and federal agencies and private landowners in promoting their recovery.



Completed Martin Cave gate.

## Monitoring Missouri's American Ginseng

Collaborating with MDC and former National Park Service Fire Ecologist Dan Drees, the LAD Ecology team has been assisting efforts to locate American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) populations on our forest. American ginseng is a commercially harvested resource

that is protected by an international agreement known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Missouri allows harvest of ginseng on private lands, but to remain compliant with CITES, the state must show that populations are monitored

and harvest levels are sustainable. Several healthy ginseng populations have been recorded, and LAD staff will continue monitoring efforts to ensure the lasting health and protection of these populations.

## Tracking Native Bee Diversity Across LAD's Woodlands

The LAD Ecology team contracted with Ken McCarty, former Natural Resource Management Program Director of Missouri State Parks, to measure the relative abundance of bee populations and bee diversity in managed and unmanaged woodlands and glades on LAD Foundation lands.

Ken spent nearly a decade of his career with State Parks inventorying the bees of Missouri's Ozark woodlands and glades. Staff accompanied Ken on collection trips to eight sites that were sampled through the growing season to capture the range of native bees emerging at different times in order

to coincide with different plant hosts. The data will be used to understand how current woodland management affects biodiversity of bees and their host plants and may be further used to secure grants for further ecological restoration work.

## Lending Expertise to Support Brown-headed Nuthatch Reintroduction

In late September, LAD Chief Ecologist Dana Morris and Ecologist Nolan Sipe participated in a collaborative, multiagency effort to support the reintroduction of the Brown-headed Nuthatch to Missouri. Working alongside partners from MDC, the University of Missouri, USFS, and USFWS, the team conducted field operations near Mena, Arkansas, from September 21-27.

standards. Under her leadership, the team successfully captured 14 Brown-headed Nuthatches slated for relocation to Missouri. These birds will contribute to ongoing restoration efforts aimed at reestablishing this species within its historical range.

As an authorized member of the federal banding permit, Dana served as a capture team lead, coordinating daily efforts and ensuring all handling and data collection procedures met federal



A Brown-headed Nuthatch captured in Arkansas for reintroduction to Missouri.



Chief Ecologist Dana Morris holds a captured Brown-headed Nuthatch while Ecologist Nolan Sipe proudly looks on.

## Expanding Cave Knowledge with Cave Research Foundation

The CRF continued its strong stewardship and scientific work across LAD lands, advancing cave documentation, biological recording, and mapping efforts. Field teams visited 37 caves on LAD property throughout the year which resulted in 73 new faunal records added to the Missouri Cave Database. These observations included species such as Big Brown Bat, Tricolored Bat, Cave Orb Weaver,

Cave Salamander, Slimy Salamander, Eastern Phoebe, Deer Mouse, and Eastern Wood Rat. Notably, a single photograph during an emergence event accounted for 301 Gray Bats. In addition to biological documentation, the CRF completed and submitted 23 finished cave maps to the Missouri Speleological Survey and identified and reported eleven new cave locations.



A Big Brown Bat, just one of several species surveyed during this year's cave monitoring efforts.

## Mitigating Unauthorized Access

The Backcountry is popular for recreationists with a variety of interests. Some visitors enjoy exploring on foot or by bike, while others use motorized vehicles, and all are welcome to do so within established guidelines. Bicycling is allowed on designated trails and county roads, while motorized recreation is permitted only on county roads. Established policies provide acceptable use on LAD lands; these policies are available on our website and are posted throughout the Backcountry.

To increase awareness and curb unauthorized use in the Backcountry, LAD Recreation and Outreach Manager

Sophie Krautmann posted new signs stating our policies directly on gates throughout the Backcountry. These gates block some logging access routes, and this placement creates increased visibility for all users. Additionally, game cameras have been deployed in some areas to detect activity, with signs posted throughout the Backcountry stating that “cameras may be in use.” The cameras have captured folks using the routes in an unauthorized manner but have also captured authorized uses and wildlife. Wildlife sightings include deer, turkeys, bobcats, coyotes, feral hogs, and a bear! These cameras help to gain a better understanding of general recreational use and wildlife trends.

Unauthorized access can have detrimental effects by transferring and spreading invasive species, increasing erosion, and creating disturbances through sound pollution. These adverse effects are especially evident in more sensitive areas like stream crossings. This type of access can also pose safety concerns in the event of an injury. The increase in signage and cameras will reduce unauthorized use and allow staff to monitor ongoing use. Reduction of unauthorized access will help conserve LAD lands.

## Celebrating Our Trail Maintenance Partners

Recreation comes in many forms, and on LAD lands, much of the recreation involves foot traffic. Whether it's backpacking, hiking, hunting, foraging, stargazing, or bird watching, it involves your feet—and often trails. Within the Backcountry alone, there are over 40 miles of trails. Those trails need regular maintenance to remain navigable. With a small staff, the Foundation relies on partnerships to complete this maintenance. Each of our partners

contributes enormously over the course of the year to keep our trails open and useable.

The Eastern Missouri Group of Sierra Club made three trips to the Backcountry and accomplished almost all necessary maintenance of the Blair Creek and Brushy Creek Trails. Members of this group volunteer their time running chainsaws to clear downed trees, lopping branches out of

the path, brush cutting new growth, hanging signs and blazes to clearly mark the route, and more. This is strenuous work, often completed under less-than-optimal conditions. In December, a small group came to the Backcountry for a special (and much appreciated) trip to restore tread along the Laxton Connector Trail. In just two days, the team restored 710 feet of tread! If that doesn't sound like much, you're invited to come along on the next



AmeriCorps St. Louis team members take a break from trail maintenance work to enjoy a view of the Current River from Bee Bluff.

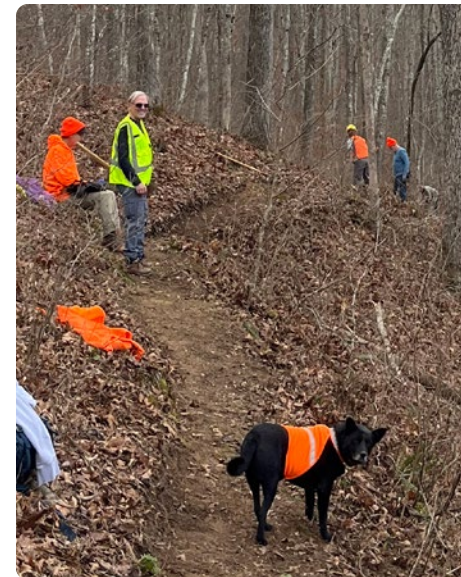
adventure to swing your own Pulaski or McCleod tools. This crew worked hard! They always do, but this year their dedication and enthusiasm blew staff away.

The Ozark Trail Association (OTA) performed maintenance on the Blair Creek Section of the Ozark Trail in the spring. Their visit was coordinated

with a Sierra Club trip to maximize efficiency, and they were able to cover all but a mile of this section of the trail within the Backcountry. OTA stays busy year-round maintaining more than 200 miles of National Recreational Trail in the Ozarks, so LAD is always grateful when they can come to the Backcountry and assist with mutual goals.

Back Country Horsemen of Missouri and members of Missouri State Parks staff at Echo Bluff State Park joined forces to complete maintenance on the Blair Creek Equestrian Trail. Their dedication to the many equestrians in the area is unmatched, and their hard work is what makes the Backcountry equestrian trail great.

This year marked the start of a major project to restore the tread on the Blair Creek Trail. This was the first section of the Ozark Trail completed, and since then, the tread—the surface of the trail itself—has been largely left untouched. Much of it has become more of a turkey track than a trail. Through assistance from a Sierra Club bequest, the Foundation has forged an agreement



Assistant to the Recreation and Outreach Manager and Pioneer Forest mascot Nox inspects Sierra Club's trail improvement work.



Sierra Club members work to improve a section of the Laxton Hollow trail.

with AmeriCorps St. Louis to have their crews visit the trail multiple times over the next few years to complete the work. The first crew arrived in the fall, and we've been impressed with the work they accomplished! They restored 2 miles of tread and cleared many downed and hazard trees from the corridor as well. We look forward to having the next crew down and seeing what magic they work in the woods.

Recreation allows us to create connections and build community. Our trails, those rugged routes through the pines and oaks, are the perfect paths to follow when you want to explore your relationship with nature and fellow recreationalists. However, those trails don't exist without the dedication of our partners, and we are forever grateful for them. We look forward to continuing and expanding our partnerships in the coming year.

See you on the trail!

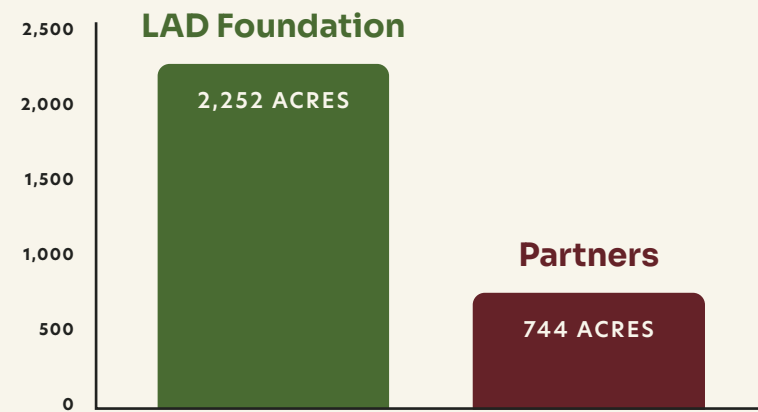
## Goal 2: By the Numbers

LAD completed 6.5 acres of glade clearing, 97 acres of prescribed fire, and 138 acres of woodland timber stand improvement, totaling \$35,977 of in-kind match toward the Landscape Scale Restoration Grant administered by USFS. Continued glade and woodland restoration work will fulfill LAD's full \$60,000 of in-kind match, requirement, which will result in \$60,000 in reimbursement for work completed by June 2029.

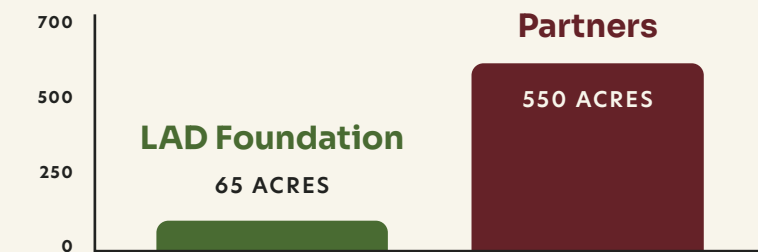
### Stewardship Program Tours

- Missouri Native Plant Society
- Missouri Natural Areas Committee
- Cave Research Foundation

### 2025 Prescribed Fires by Acres



### 2025 Wildfires by Acres



Fire crew members monitoring prescribed fire ignition in the Randolph Pine-Oak Woodland.



Flowering season in a restored glade at Randolph tract.

## Goal 3

# Connected Outreach & Collaboration

## Measuring Darkness in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry

Much of Missouri was gifted with exceptional celestial happenings this year, and LAD lands were no exception. On two nights, we were graced with views of the aurora borealis. It's rare to witness the incredible lights in the sky in Missouri and becoming rarer due to ever-brightening skies.

Sky lightening due to light pollution has been increasing since the Industrial Revolution. The more light humans produce, the brighter the night becomes. There are myriad negative effects of light pollution on wildlife, humans, and plants. Ecosystems as a whole suffer when the natural balance of light and dark is altered.

Natural darkness is quickly becoming a luxury. The counties in which the Foundation has the majority of its landholdings may not be the wealthiest

in the socio-economic sense, but they are rich in natural wonders, including natural darkness. The Backcountry may be home to the darkest skies in southern Missouri—alongside the Irish Wilderness to the south.

To get the data necessary to determine if the Backcountry is the darkest sky in the state, the darkness must be measured and quantified. Through a partnership with DarkSky Missouri, a Sky Quality Meter (SQM) was gifted to the Foundation, allowing staff to measure darkness. When used properly, the SQM delivers a number between 1 and 22, which corresponds to a higher amount (1) or absence (22) of light. A reading of 22 represents complete absence of light, which isn't possible outdoors because of the light from stars.

10 sites in the Backcountry were chosen for SQM data collection and were visited during two nights in October. All readings taken exceeded 19, and the highest recorded average was 21. That's really dark!

This shows that the Backcountry is a refuge. It is a place where the natural balance of day and night remains intact. The lack of light at night not only allows for the natural order to continue, but also for wonderful night sky viewing in forest openings.

Increasingly, people are intentionally seeking naturally dark night skies to see the stars and appreciate natural wonders like the aurora borealis and meteor showers. As natural darkness dwindles, the work of the LAD Foundation to protect the Backcountry and other lands from development and light pollution becomes increasingly important. Conservation is not limited to plants, animals, lands, and waterways; it includes natural darkness, too. Without the dark, we'd never see the light.



Pleiades and Taurus over Virgin Pine area.

## Boosting Detection and Removal of Feral Hogs in 2025

2025 marked another successful year in the ongoing effort to eradicate feral hogs on Pioneer Forest. Collaboration with partner agencies was a key factor in this success. Through the Missouri Feral Hog Partnership—including MDC, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and Pioneer Forest—a total of 273 feral hogs were removed from Pioneer Forest lands in 2025.

A small increase in hog activity was detected on the eastern portion of Pioneer Forest. However, these hogs were identified and removed quickly. Throughout the year, JR Lanham, Pioneer Forest’s Feral

Hog Specialist, spent significant time and effort scouting, baiting, and removing hog populations in the Backcountry and other areas of the forest. His expertise and commitment remain critical to the success of Pioneer Forest’s feral hog eradication efforts.

The continued use and advancement of technology—including drones, remote traps, forward-looking infrared (FLIR), and aerial gunning—have significantly improved detection capabilities and enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of hog removal operations.

## Driving Conservation In Our Communities

In 2025, LAD granted \$55,000 to nine nonprofits supporting the conservation of natural and cultural resources in its 12-county service area. Based in St. Louis, LAD manages Pioneer Forest and holds other land with natural, geologic, cultural, or historic interest in Carter, Crawford, Dent, Madison, Maries, Oregon, Perry, Reynolds, Ripley, Ste. Genevieve, Shannon, and Texas counties. LAD partners with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks to award grants. The Community Foundation of the Ozarks issues LAD’s call for proposals, streamlining the application process. The LAD grants committee reviews and selects proposals, which are then approved by the board.



Earth’s Classroom Co-Executive Director Jody Miles (l), AmeriCorps Member Taelor Vanous (m) receive a grant check from LAD Executive Director Jennifer Battson Warren (r).

## LAD Foundation’s Fall 2025 Grant Program Recipients

**Earth’s Classroom:** \$5,000 to support the tuition-free Field Science Career Experience program that provides hands-on, field-based science education opportunities to junior and senior high school students in Crawford, Phelps, Maries and Dent counties.

**Friends of Hawn Association:** \$3,000 to replace fire rings at Hawn State Park’s backcountry campsites in Ste. Genevieve.

**Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation:** \$5,000 to support the production of the Missouri Forestry for the Birds Silviculture Guide, a comprehensive resource for landowners and land managers to implement silviculture practices for forest and woodland songbirds within the Missouri Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region.

**Missouri Environmental Education Association:** \$7,000 to enhance the Evelyn Marie Dieckhaus Creative Center at the Texas County Library in Houston, a nature-themed children’s area funded by a Houston family who lost their granddaughter in a 2023 school shooting, and to provide programming that cultivates environmental education in Houston schools.

**Missouri Prairie Foundation:** \$1,300 to support the Callery Pear Buyback event in Doniphan, an initiative to reduce these invasive Callery Pear trees and raise awareness about invasive plant control.

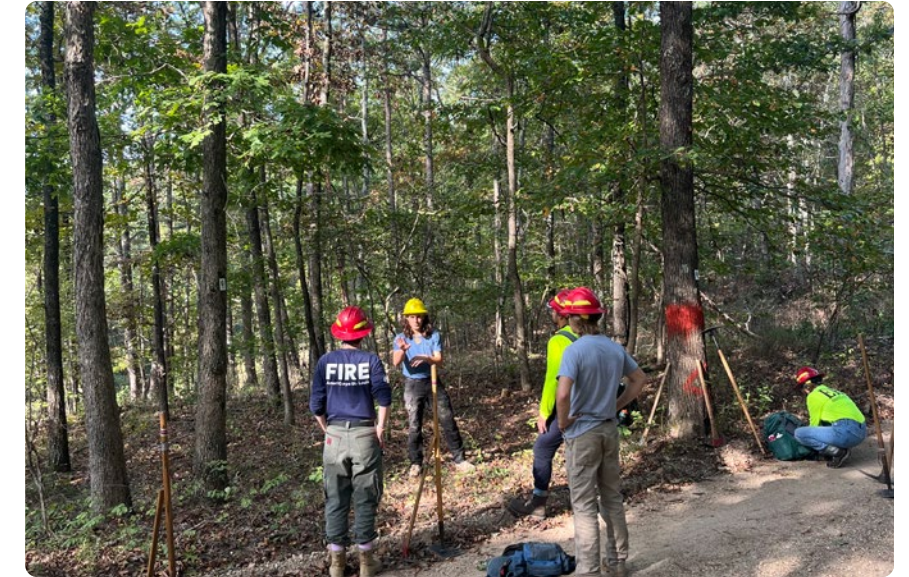
**Ozark Riverways Foundation:** \$5,000 to support the purchase and installation of picnic tables and fire rings at campgrounds and day-use areas within the Ozark National Scenic Riverways that were destroyed during recent flooding.

**Ozark Trail Association:** \$4,700 to support the expansion of trail stewardship capacity, strengthening the association’s ability to care for the 400-plus miles of the Ozark Trail.

**Ozarks Resource Center:** \$6,500 to support a documentary focusing on Devil’s Well and Cave Spring, showcasing the scientific work of Jerry Vineyard and educating viewers about Missouri’s largest underground lake.

**Partnership for Youth Inc./ AmeriCorps St. Louis:** \$9,500 to support the cultivation of fire crew members in Shannon, Reynolds, Crawford, Dent, and Texas counties by providing career pathways, preparing future leaders and expanding partner capacity to achieve environmental objectives through a three-day training program focusing on emergency response and conservation.

**Salem Area Community Betterment Association:** \$8,000 to support the continued renovation and renewal of the Ozark Natural & Cultural Resource Center building and exhibits.



AmeriCorps St. Louis crew members receive a briefing about the day’s trail improvement work.

## Partnering to Encourage Responsible Recreation

In April, LAD became an official partner of Leave No Trace. Through this strategic collaboration, LAD aims to amplify efforts to conserve and protect our natural spaces while encouraging responsible outdoor recreation. By aligning with Leave No Trace, LAD underscores its commitment to sustainability and eco-conscious practices.

Leave No Trace is a non-profit organization renowned for its 7 principles and easy-to-follow guidelines that teach outdoor enthusiasts how to minimize their impact on nature. By integrating these principles into LAD initiatives, both organizations can foster a culture of respect for and

conservation of the great outdoors.

As part of this partnership, LAD will incorporate Leave No Trace into various initiatives, including increasing the sustainability of our campus and day-to-day activities as we continue work to steward the land. We are pursuing the Gold Standard designation from Leave No Trace, aimed at promoting sustainability and responsible recreation practices through hands-on, science- and research-backed education for all.

For more information about Leave No Trace and the 7 principles, please visit [lnt.org](http://lnt.org).

(Left) LAD Chief Ecologist Dana Morris (l) and Ozark Riverways Foundation Board Member-Secretary Ruth Maxwell.



## Creating Opportunities for Curiosity, Conservation & Construction

In November, Chief Ecologist Dana Morris and Recreation and Outreach Manager Sophie Krautmann presented an overview of Pioneer Forest management to 42 students in Salem High School's Conservation Biology and Agricultural Science courses. They provided background about the LAD Foundation and Pioneer Forest, the discovery of the Brown-headed

Nuthatch at the Randolph Virgin Pine area in 2024, and the role students can play in their conservation. A lot of information was presented, but the students were engaged and asked great questions.

Students in the Agriculture Science class cut cedar boards for nest boxes, then the Conservation Biology students

assembled them. Both groups will join staff to install and monitor the nest boxes in the Virgin Pine area, and everybody, including the nuthatch, wins! Staff are excited to see where this project leads and to look for other opportunities to engage with students in the region.



LAD Recreation and Outreach Manager Sophie Krautmann (standing left) has students hold umbrellas to demonstrate individual tree canopy cover and how single tree selection creates canopy gaps for habitat and forest regrowth.

## Collaborating at a National Scale

In October, LAD Foundation board members and staff contributed funding concepts and participated in the National Leadership Forum on Economic Development Through Working Forests, hosted by the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities in Pittsburgh, PA. The forum brought together leaders from forestry, forest industry, investment, and policy sectors to address the economic and environmental challenges facing working

forests and to highlight their role in climate solutions, housing, and rural economic development.

More than 150 participants from 22 states and over 80 organizations attended, including representatives from all major forest products and allied sectors. The gathering strengthened connections between forests, communities, and markets and identified clear opportunities for collaboration, investment, and innovation. Key themes included:

Advancing wood and fiber innovation by scaling new products and technologies.

Building durable, diversified demand supported by aligned policy.

Expanding promotion and marketing to increase awareness of the wood economy.

Deepening ties between communities, conservation, and markets to support forest health and rural prosperity.

Developing a more collaborative investment community that connects capital across the full value chain. Moving forward, impact investments and new financial instruments will be essential to mobilizing meaningful capital and advancing innovative forest-sector initiatives.

Next steps include developing a Forest Investment Road Map to define priority pathways for innovation, investment, and sustainable growth in the working forest sector. The Road Map will be informed by:

Expert input gathered during and after the Forum.

A pipeline of investment projects and funding proposals from stakeholders.

A stakeholder survey to identify challenges and opportunities across the sector.

LAD will continue to monitor the Forum's emerging pathways and identify those most aligned with the



Participants in the RKM Forum included (l-r) Brandon Kuhn, Jennifer Battson Warren, Rick Thom, Adrienne Lauf, Jason Green, & Mike Kromrey.

ecological, economic, and community needs of the Ozarks. By staying engaged in national conversations and evaluating opportunities for practical implementation, the Foundation aims to support strategies that strengthen working forests, benefit local

communities, and advance sustainable stewardship across the region.

## Goal 3: Connecting with Our Community

### Presentations to:

Current River Conservation Opportunity Area Team

Interior Highlands Shortleaf Pine Initiative

Missouri Birding Society

Missouri Consulting Foresters Association

Missouri Forest Resources Advisory Council

Missouri Natural Resources Conference

Powder Valley Nature Center "Conservation Queens" Event

Salem High School Conservation Biology and Agriculture Science Students

Salem Upper Elementary 4th Grade Students at Dent County Beef Days

The Green Center "Pathways Through Nature" Speaker Series

University of Kentucky School of Forestry



Recreation and Outreach Manager Sophie Krautmann quizzes Salem Upper Elementary fourth graders about the benefits of forest management.

## Conference Collaboration:

American Ornithological Society Conference (St. Louis)

Midwest and Northeast Regional Prescribed Fire Workshop (Ava Glades)

Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference (St. Louis)

Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (Columbia)

Missouri Botanical Symposium (Rolla)

Missouri Inter-agency Wildfire Planning Meeting (West Plains)

Missouri Natural Resources Conference (Osage Beach)

Missouri Species of Conservation Concern Workshop (Jefferson City)

National Leadership Forum on Economic Development through Working Forests (Pittsburg, PA)

## Peer-to-Peer Collaborations:

Chief Ecologist Dana Morris accepted a role on the board of the Central Hardwood Joint Ventures that meets twice yearly to coordinate management and research on migratory birds in the Central Hardwoods.

She is also a member of the board for the Scenic Rivers Invasive Species Partnership, a cooperative partnership seeking to provide a common framework and goals for addressing short- and long-term effects of non-native invasive species across a nine-county region of the Missouri Ozarks.

Dana participates in the Perry County Karst Committee, a partnership of multiple federal, state, and local agencies and civic organizations that coordinate management, monitoring, outreach and education activities in the Perry County Karst region.

In addition, Dana is working with a team of avian ecologists to create the Missouri Forestry for the Birds guidelines for landowners and resource managers to create appropriate habitat conditions for forest birds using silviculture treatments.

Fire and Stewardship Manager Neal Humke serves as a Missouri Prescribed Fire Council founding board member.

Neal also worked with the Oak Woodlands & Forests Fire Consortium on an article about Shortleaf Pine Restoration at the Randolph Virgin Pine Ecological Management Area which is available at [oakfirescience.com/wp-content/uploads/filebase/2025/OFS-NL-04\\_2025.pdf](https://oakfirescience.com/wp-content/uploads/filebase/2025/OFS-NL-04_2025.pdf).

Field Supervisor Clay Jensen serves as Pioneer Forest's liaison to the Missouri Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee (SIC).

Land Stewardship Director Jason Green serves on the board of the Missouri Forest Products Association.

Executive Director Jennifer Battson Warren serves on the board of the Conservation Federation of Missouri.

Chief Forester Brandon Kuhn Serves on the Missouri Master Logger Certifying Board.

## A Community Built on Collaboration

NEIGHBORS & COMMUNITIES

CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS

CONSERVATION POLICY MAKERS

OUTDOOR RECREATIONISTS

LAND MANAGERS

SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES



Land Stewardship Director Jason Green uses a tree caliper to measure the "diameter" of a Salem Upper Elementary fourth grader.

## Goal 4

# Sustain Organizational & Mission Perpetuity

## Highlighting LAD Foundation's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

In 2024, the LAD Foundation Board and staff undertook a comprehensive review of the organization's 2020 Strategic Plan, reaffirming the values and vision established by founder Leo A. Drey while charting a clear path for the next five years. The resulting 2025–2030 Strategic Plan strengthens our commitment to exemplary forest stewardship, ecological integrity, meaningful community engagement, and long-term organizational sustainability.

### Strengthening Our Demonstration Forest

A central focus of the updated plan is enhancing the role of Pioneer Forest as a national model for uneven aged, mixed species forest management. The plan advances efforts to maintain forest health, increase research capacity, share knowledge broadly, and demonstrate the financial viability of sustainable forestry for other landowners. Key initiatives include continuing selective harvest practices, expanding field-based education, enhancing SFI® certification efforts, and increasing forest monitoring and research partnerships.

### Advancing Ecological Stewardship and Responsible Recreation

The Foundation remains committed to protecting biological diversity across Pioneer Forest and LAD lands. The plan outlines expanded ecological monitoring, stronger invasive species control, climate adaptation planning, and deeper collaboration with state and federal partners. It also prioritizes responsible public access through an updated recreation and outreach plan that emphasizes trail improvements, cultural resource protection, and enhanced interpretation of Pioneer Forest's natural and cultural heritage.

### Growing Partnerships and Community Impact

Recognizing the importance of collaboration, the plan elevates outreach to neighboring landowners, local communities, agencies, universities, and conservation partners. Strategic priorities include developing a unified brand identity, strengthening engagement in Ozark communities, expanding policy leadership, and preparing for Pioneer Forest's 80th oak anniversary in 2031. These actions will help amplify the Foundation's influence and foster shared stewardship across the region, time, expertise, and resources to the center.

### Ensuring Mission Perpetuity

Sustaining the Foundation's work for generations to come is a core pillar of the plan. Key components include strengthening governance, enhancing board engagement, investing in staff development, expanding campus facilities, and building long-term financial resilience. The plan also outlines new approaches to organizational performance, reserve policies, endowment growth, and long-term protection of Pioneer Forest. Together, these measures support a flexible, future-ready organization capable of meeting emerging challenges.

### Looking Ahead

The 2025–2030 Strategic Plan reflects LAD's continued dedication to the land, people, and communities of the Ozarks. Guided by Leo A. Drey's enduring values, the Foundation will work with partners across the region to advance sustainable forestry, ecological health, and public benefit—ensuring that the Missouri Ozarks remain a place of biological richness, cultural heritage, and responsible stewardship for generations to come.



LAD Directors pause during a tour of Leatherwood Creek Natural Area. (l-r) Directors Rick Thom, Jim Guldin, Mike Kromrey, David Stokely, Jody Eberly, Ted Heisel, Janet Fraley, Steve Mahfood, and Nikki Krawitz.

## Honoring Susan Flader as Master Conservationist

In September, MDC and the Missouri Conservation Commission honored LAD President Emeritus Susan Flader for her lifetime commitment to conservation during a special ceremony at the Stoney Creek Hotel in Columbia. Flader was honored with the Department's Master Conservationist Award.

The MDC Master Conservationist Award was created in 1941 to honor living or deceased citizen conservationists, former commissioners of the Department, and employees of conservation-related agencies, universities, or organizations who have made substantial and lasting contributions to the fisheries, forestry, or wildlife resources, including conservation law enforcement and conservation education-related activities in the state. Learn more at [mdc.mo.gov/about-us/awards-honors/master-conservationist-award-nomination](https://mdc.mo.gov/about-us/awards-honors/master-conservationist-award-nomination).

The award acknowledged Flader as a professor emerita of American western and environmental history at the University of Missouri-Columbia where she wrote extensively about Aldo Leopold—considered by many to be the father of wildlife ecology and modern conservation—and served as board chair of the Leopold Foundation. Flader is also a founder and past president of the American Society for Environmental History and the Missouri Parks Association (MPA).

Flader is best known for her scholarship on Aldo Leopold. In addition to numerous articles, she has authored or edited 10 books including her seminal book, *Thinking Like a Mountain: Aldo Leopold and the Evolution of an Ecological Attitude toward Deer, Wolves, and Forests* (1974), which established her as a leading voice in environmental history.

She has combined her academic work with conservation advocacy, taking on leadership roles in organizations such as the MPA and teaching at the University of Missouri.

“Susan Flader has played pivotal roles in advocating for the preservation of our state’s natural landscapes through her involvement with the MPA and the Missouri Department of Conservation,” said MDC Director Jason Summers. “Her efforts have raised awareness about sustainable forest management, water quality, and public land conservation.”

Summers added that as an influential educator at the University of Missouri, Flader has inspired generations of students in environmental history and policy.

“Her leadership has extended beyond academia into public service where she has served on numerous conservation boards and commissions, advocating for policies integrating scientific research with conservation practice.”

Flader’s research focuses on the relationship between people and natural ecosystems, and the evolution of conservation thought and practice. Key areas of her research include Aldo Leopold and ecological thought, Missouri conservation history, public lands and park preservation, and conservation policy and water resources.



Conservation Commission Chair Margy Eckelkamp (l), Master Conservationist Susan Flader (m), and MDC Director Jason Summers (r) after the awards ceremony at Stoney Creek Hotel in Columbia.



“Her research provides a historical lens for understanding contemporary conservation challenges to help policymakers and citizens make more informed decisions regarding natural resource management,” Summers said.

Flader has also been involved with the LAD Foundation since the 1970s where she has had significant leadership roles in the organization that owns and manages the 146,000-acre Pioneer Forest and a dozen natural areas and parks in the Missouri Ozarks. She recently ended a seven-year term as board president.

She has also served in leadership roles on the National Audubon Society

board of directors and the Audubon Missouri board of directors. As an Audubon Missouri board member, she championed the establishment of the Audubon Center at Riverlands in the St. Louis metro area to engage urban and underserved communities in conservation. She is currently on the Audubon Center at Riverlands advisory board and continues to contribute her time, expertise, and resources to the center.

She has lectured extensively across the United States and internationally, served on numerous professional and environmental boards, and received many awards for her publications and conservation efforts.

“Susan Flader is a distinguished historian and conservationist whose work has significantly impacted natural resource conservation in Missouri,” said Summers. “Her efforts have preserved Missouri’s natural heritage and fostered public appreciation for conservation. Through her scholarship, advocacy, service, and education, she has made a lasting impact on Missouri’s conservation landscape.”

*This article was adapted from “MDC honors Susan Flader as a Master Conservationist” by Joe Jerek, originally published by the Missouri Department of Conservation on September 12, 2025.*

## LAD Foundation’s Evolving Brand

In an effort to align the Foundation’s brand identity with its rich heritage and ambitions for the future, LAD engaged Darling Brand Makery, a St. Louis advertising agency, to lead a brand evolution process.

Phase one involved an audit of the brand architecture. The output of this process has established how the parent LAD brand would relate to Pioneer Forest as well as the many lands under the Foundation’s purview—an effort to organize and unify our efforts.

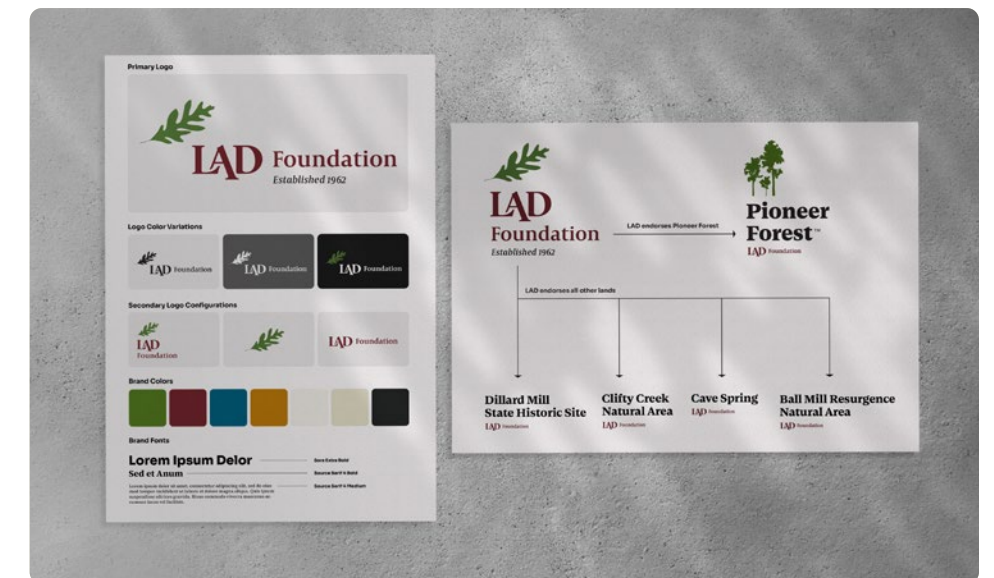
The refreshed LAD Foundation logo has retained the iconic oak leaf and a familiar color palette, but the wordmark has been modernized for legibility and visual impact.

The Pioneer Forest logo has received a similar treatment with a complementary logomark depicting the silhouettes of three trees which

represent the growth stages that define much of the forest. A uniform type treatment has been established for the remaining lands and the LAD wordmark has been appended to each land’s logo.

This suite of logos, colors, fonts, and the appended LAD wordmark help to unify Pioneer Forest and the other lands under the LAD banner.

The annual report that you are holding serves as an early iteration of the refreshed LAD brand, and we are excited to unveil a redesigned website later this year.



LAD Foundation’s updated visual standards and brand architecture.

## Building for the Long Term, LAD Foundation Planning Campus Expansion

Over the past 20 years, the LAD Foundation and Pioneer Forest have undergone significant growth and transformation. The Forest has expanded its ecological work and adapted its forest management in a changing landscape, and with that, our staff has more than doubled. Workspace at the Salem campus is tight, and storage for supplies, tools, and equipment is limited. To meet these needs, the Foundation is excited to announce a major building expansion at the Salem campus.

A new facility, designed in partnership with Hellmuth + Bicknese architects of St. Louis, is planned for the Salem campus—a much-needed improvement. Our staff has grown from eight team members in 2008 to 18 as of 2025. Meanwhile, the existing warehouses, though historically significant, have outlived their usefulness. Currently, they store some equipment but are largely unused due to their elevated floor construction. These structures will be removed, but much of their material will be repurposed for the new project.



Rendering of planned campus site layout.

The expansion will include a modern Pioneer Forest Outreach Center, designed to comfortably host up to 100 people for events and educational programs. The building will feature a second level with flexible workspaces for employees, researchers, and board members. Its exterior will incorporate reclaimed wood from the old warehouses, preserving a connection to the campus' history.

Inside, visitors will experience a warm, visually striking environment. As part of the Hybrid Mass Timber Structure, the first-floor ceiling will feature Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) panels constructed from shortleaf pine harvested from Pioneer Forest—highlighting Missouri's native species and the use of wood harvested directly from the forest. Additionally, the second-floor ceiling, as well as the building's exterior, will showcase salvaged wood from the deconstructed

Rendering of planned meeting and classroom space in the Pioneer Forest Outreach Center.

warehouses. The building will pursue Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, ensuring excellence in energy efficiency, material use, indoor environmental quality, and water conservation. Solar panels installed on the roof will further reduce the facility's energy footprint.

In addition, the project includes a modern maintenance building equipped with heating and cooling, significant storage, and tall doors to accommodate trucks and equipment. This upgrade will significantly improve operational efficiency and provide space for equipment maintenance. Like the Outreach Center, the maintenance building will also feature rooftop solar panels to offset energy use.



## Welcoming New Team Members

### Forester Pat Curtin

Pat began his role as a Forester with the LAD Foundation on July 7, 2025. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Bridgewater State University and has built a diverse field background through seasonal forestry and natural resource technician positions across multiple regions of the United States. He later earned a Master of Science in Forestry from the University of Missouri, where his research focused on recruitment dynamics and uneven-aged silviculture in longleaf pine woodlands.

Pat previously served as a Forester with the Missouri Department of Conservation, leading forest management activities across a three-

county area in southwest Missouri on both public and private lands. Before joining LAD, he worked with the USFS Southern Research Station, studying regeneration challenges and restoration practices in hardwood forests of the southern Appalachians.

Since joining the LAD team, Pat has taken on sale administration responsibilities for multiple timber sales and has played a key role in implementing ongoing and new forest inventory and research projects on Pioneer Forest. His strong technical background and practical field experience strengthen LAD's ability to manage Missouri's forest resources with care and precision.



### Stewardship Technician Carolyn Phillips

Carolyn Phillips joined the LAD Foundation as one of two new Stewardship Technicians on August 18, 2025. A native of southeast Georgia, she graduated from Shorter University in 2023 with a B.S. in Ecology and Field Biology and a minor in Chemistry. During her undergraduate years, she volunteered with local conservation groups such as the Rome Floyd E.C.O. Center and the Satilla River Keeper, supporting education, outreach, and ecological monitoring.

Prior to joining LAD, Carolyn gained broad field experience through seasonal positions with organizations including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, The Nature Conservancy,

The Orianne Society, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her work ranged from herpetological monitoring in the Sonoran Desert and Georgia sandhills to prairie vegetation surveys in the Nebraska sandhills. She also developed significant prescribed fire expertise, having participated in nearly 100 prescribed burns across Georgia and Alabama.

Carolyn brings a well-rounded ecological perspective, strong field skills, and a passion for hands-on habitat management. In her work on Pioneer Forest, she is contributing to the restoration and improvement of native Missouri ecosystems, supporting healthy conditions for local flora and

fauna. Her commitment, technical ability, and "can-do" approach make her a valuable member of the LAD Foundation's stewardship team.



## Stewardship Technician Kyla Schneider

Kyla Schneider joined the LAD Foundation as a Stewardship Technician on October 20, 2025. Originally from the East Coast, Kyla grew up in Maryland and attended Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, where they earned a B.A. in Spanish, Latin American, Caribbean, and Latine Studies, along with coursework in plant and health sciences. Their academic interests took them to Peru for a semester, where they conducted anthropological research on the role of oral history in preserving generational knowledge of traditional plant medicine in the Peruvian Amazon.

Over the past decade, Kyla has lived, traveled, and worked in Mexico and Taiwan; studied languages and cultures; interned on an organic farm; volunteered as an EMT; and taught

English as a second language. Their broad life experience reflects a long-standing curiosity about people, landscapes, and the relationships between communities and natural resources.

In 2025, Kyla served with the Student Conservation Association as a fire and fuels team member, sparking a renewed passion for land management and fire ecology. This experience led them to pursue a career in prescribed fire and conservation.

Kyla is excited to call rural Missouri home and to contribute to LAD's stewardship mission. Their adventurous, multidisciplinary background makes them a valuable addition to the team and to the work taking place on Pioneer Forest.



## LAD Foundation Leadership

### Board of Directors

Ted Heisel, President  
Josh Reeves, Vice President  
Janet Fraley, Treasurer  
Steve Mahfood, Secretary  
Jody Eberly  
Susan Flader  
Peter W. Goode III  
Jim Guldin  
Nikki Krawitz  
Mike Kromrey  
Adam Saunders  
David Stokely  
Rick Thom

### Drey Family Advisory Council

Kay Drey  
Laura Drey  
Leonard Drey  
Eleanor Drey



### Mission

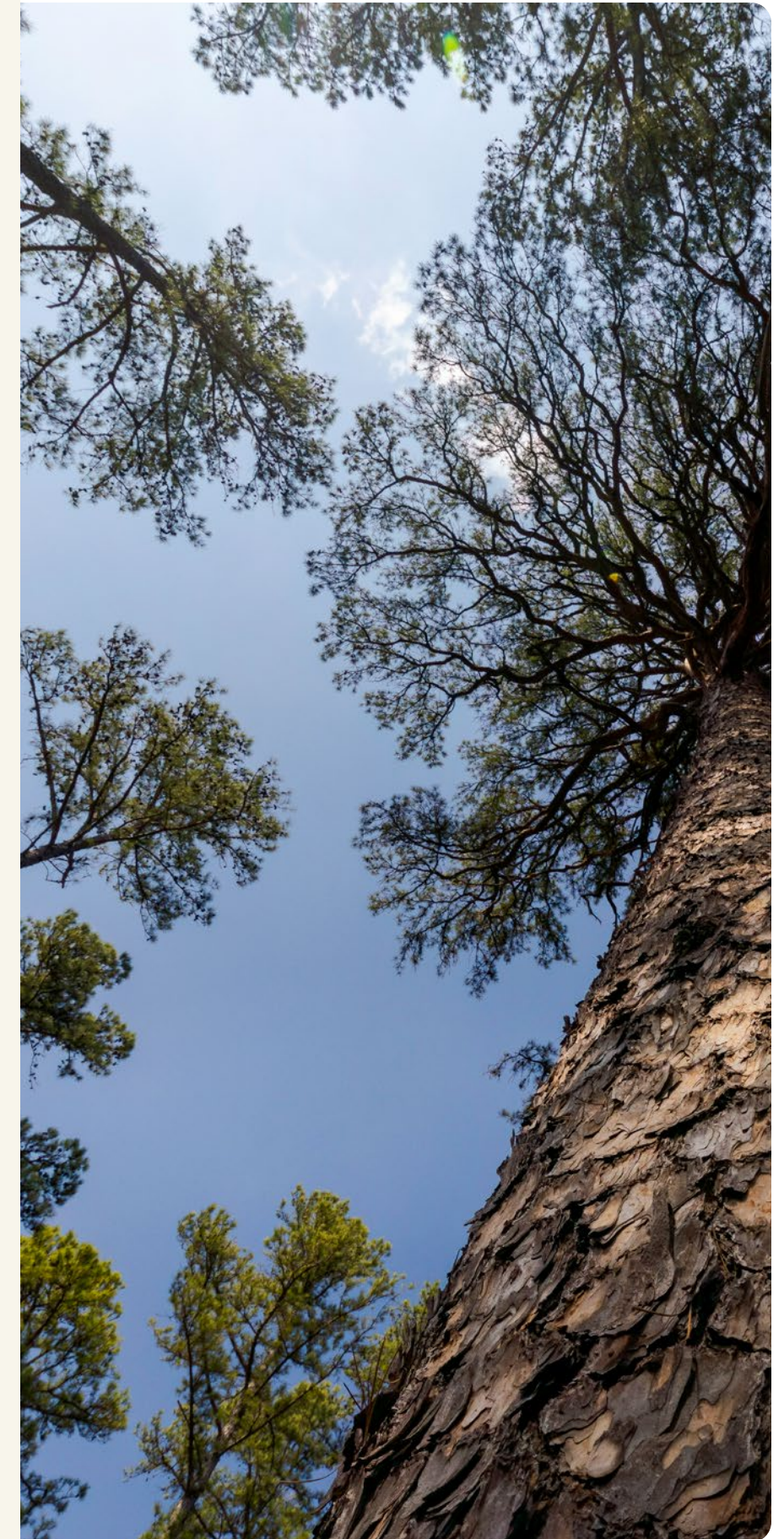
LAD is a Missouri-based private operating foundation committed to exemplary stewardship of Pioneer Forest and other natural and cultural areas. The foundation is dedicated to scientific research, education, public recreation, and the promotion of projects and policies that positively impact the Missouri Ozark region and beyond.

### Vision

LAD envisions a future where the values of its founder, Leo A. Drey, guide every action. Through its efforts, the foundation aims to demonstrate exemplary forest and ecological management, ensuring the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Missouri Ozarks for future generations.

### Values

The LAD Foundation is built upon the values of its founder, Leo A. Drey. The foundation affirms and strives to emulate his personal qualities and vision throughout the organization and with its partners: being ethical, humble, respectful, a bridge-builder, generous, and pursuing its mission with an independence of thought and firmness of purpose. Rooted in the ecology and community of the Missouri Ozarks, the foundation also affirms its dual purpose of exemplary forest management and natural areas protection, pursued in a pragmatic fashion on behalf of the land and people of this special place.



# Appendix i: LAD Lands

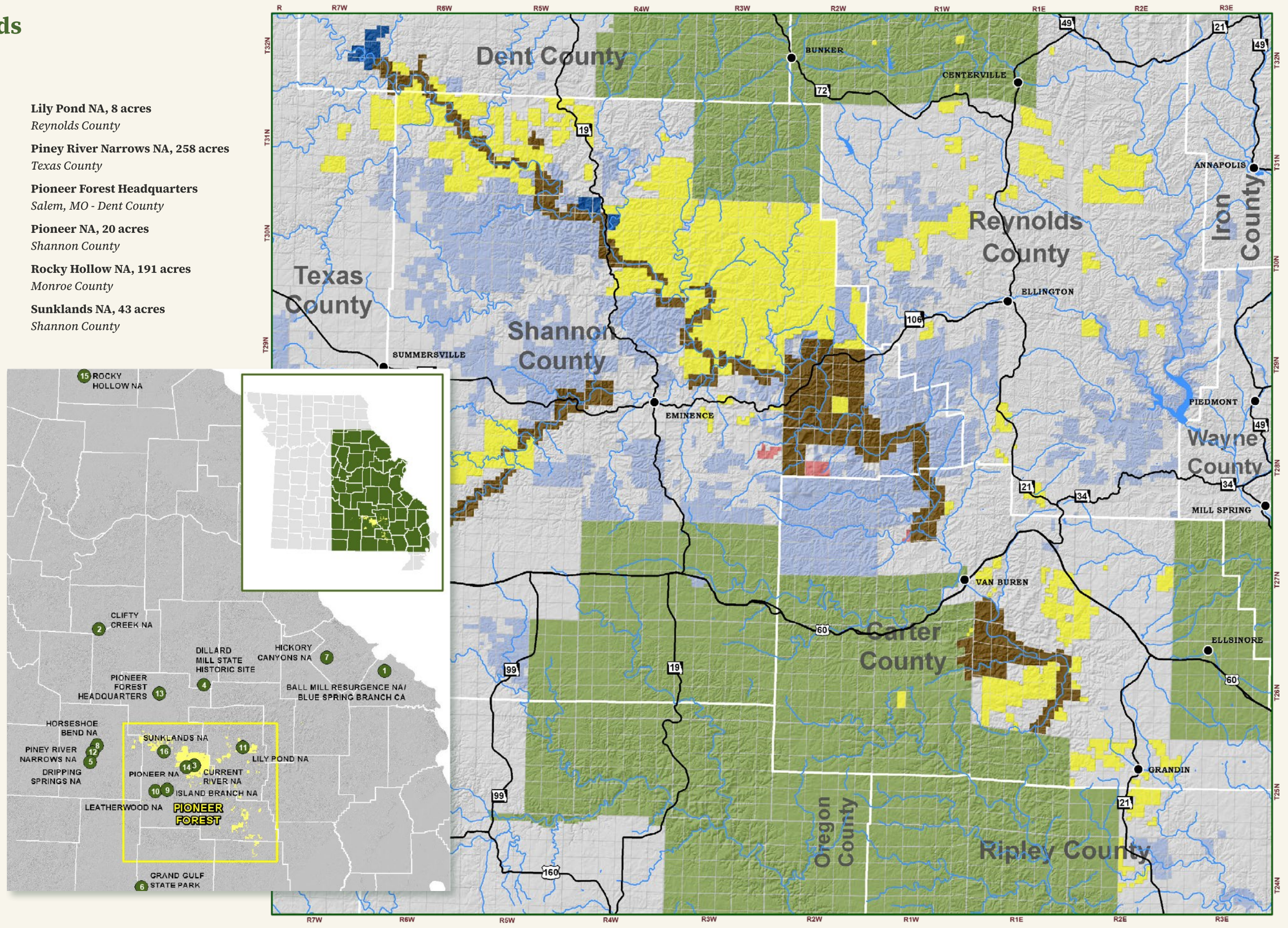
## Map Legend

- Ball Mill Resurgence NA, 84 acres**  
*Texas County*
- Blue Spring Branch CA, 207 acres**  
*Texas County*
- Clifty Creek NA, 230 acres**  
*Maries County*
- Current River NA, 265 acres**  
*Shannon County*
- Dillard Mill SHS, 130 acres**  
*Crawford County*
- Dripping Springs NA, 9 acres**  
*Texas County*
- Grand Gulf SP, 159 acres**  
*Oregon County*
- Hickory Canyons NA, 1,143 acres**  
*Ste. Genevieve County*
- Horseshoe Bend NA, 233 acres**  
*Texas County*
- Island Branch NA, 88 acres**  
*Shannon County*
- Leatherwood Creek NA, 1,440 acres**  
*Shannon County*

- Lily Pond NA, 8 acres**  
*Reynolds County*
- Piney River Narrows NA, 258 acres**  
*Texas County*
- Pioneer Forest Headquarters**  
*Salem, MO - Dent County*
- Pioneer NA, 20 acres**  
*Shannon County*
- Rocky Hollow NA, 191 acres**  
*Monroe County*
- Sunklands NA, 43 acres**  
*Shannon County*

- Pioneer Forest**
- Mark Twain National Forest**
- MO Dept of Conservation**
- MO State Parks**
- Ozark Nation Scenic Riverways (OZAR)**
- The Nature Conservancy**

NA - Missouri Natural Area  
 CA - Missouri Conservation Area  
 SP - Missouri State Park  
 SHS - Missouri State Historic Site



## Appendix ii: LAD Foundation Lands Table

### Pioneer Forest and its Special Areas: 143,075 Acres

SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS	COUNTY	SPECIAL DESIGNATION	TOTAL SIZE
Black River Old Growth	Reynolds	Forest Reserve, 2025	88 acres
Blair Creek Hanging Fen	Shannon	Forest Reserve, <sup>1</sup> 2011	25 acres
Bluff School, Medlock Cave	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 1995	56 acres
Capps Hollow Glades & Fens	Shannon	Ecological Management Area, 2019	297 acres
Chalk Bluff	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 2019	65 acres
Cookstove/Squaredance Cave	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 2015	12 acres
Cunningham Sink	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 2011	24 acres
Current River NA	Shannon	SAF Natural Area, <sup>2</sup> 1955, and State Natural Area, <sup>3</sup> 1977, 10 acres; Addition, Natural Area, 2005, 255 acres	265 acres
Fishtrap Hollow & Marshy Spring Hollow Fens	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 1995	60 acres
Himont Shortleaf Pine	Shannon	Ecological Management Area, 2020, 470 acres; Expanded 2025, 670 acres	1,140 acres
Jerktail Mountain	Shannon	Ecological Management Area, 2015	1,160 acres
Laxton Hollow	Shannon	Forest Reserve; expanded 2025	233 acres
Leatherwood Creek	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 1995; designated State Natural Area, 2025	1,440 acres
Lily Pond NA	Reynolds	State Natural Area, 1975	8 acres
Old Schoolhouse Hollow	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 1995	140 acres
Randolph Pine-Oak Woodland	Shannon	Ecological Management Area, 2015	1,095 acres
Pineknot Shortleaf Pine	Carter	Ecological Management Area, 2015	330 acres
Pioneer NA	Shannon	SAF Natural Area, 1964, and State Natural Area, 1977	20 acres
Satterfield Hollow Old Growth	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 2019; Expanded 2025	984 acres
Sinkhole Ponds Complex	Reynolds	Forest Reserve, 1995	34 acres
Schoolhouse/Kates Hollow Old Growth	Shannon	Old Growth Reserve, 2025	736 acres
Sutton School Hollow Fens	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 1995	60 acres
Tall Larkspur	Shannon	Ecological Management Area, 2015, 85 acres; Addition, 2019, 56 acres	550 acres
Thompson Creek Glade & Fens	Shannon	Ecological Management Area, 2019	125 acres
Triple Sink/ Sunklands NA <sup>4</sup>	Shannon	State Natural Area, 1980, 23 acres; Sunklands NA4 Addition of 19 acres included as part of Sunklands Natural Area in 1999	42 acres
Tufa Creek	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 2011	116 acres
Woods Hole	Shannon	Forest Reserve, 2019	58 acres

### Riverways Corridor Lands: 1,018 Acres

SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS	COUNTY	SPECIAL DESIGNATION	TOTAL SIZE
Scenic Easements	Shannon, Carter	National Park Service, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, 1970	845 acres
Cave Spring	Shannon	Adjacent to the Current River	172 acres

### Lands Leased to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC): 2,344 Acres

SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS	COUNTY	SPECIAL DESIGNATION	ACRES UNDER LEASE
Ball Mill Resurgence/ Blue Spring Branch CA	Perry	State Natural Area, 1979, 19 acres, addition of 65 acres in 2025 for total of 84 acres. Blue Spring Branch CA total acreage is 428.	280 acres
Clifty Creek	Maries	State Natural Area, 1971	230 acres
Dripping Springs	Texas	State Natural Area, 1974	9 acres
Hickory Canyons	Ste. Genevieve	State Natural Area, 1973, 420 acres; addition of 561 acres in 1979; addition of 18.68 acres in 2013; addition of 95 acres in 2014; addition of 40 acres in 2016	1,143 acres
Horseshoe Bend	Texas	State Natural Area, 1973, 69 acres	233 acres <sup>5</sup>
Piney River Narrows	Texas	State Natural Area, 1971, 50 acres	258 acres <sup>5</sup>
Rocky Hollow	Monroe	State Natural Area, 1973, 188 acres; National Register of Historic Places, 1974	191 acres <sup>5</sup>

### Lands Leased to Missouri Department of Natural Resources: 289 Acres<sup>6</sup>

SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS	COUNTY	SPECIAL DESIGNATION	ACRES UNDER LEASE
Dillard Mill	Crawford	State Historic Site, 1977	130 acres
Grand Gulf State Park	Oregon	National Natural Landmark, <sup>7</sup> 1971 and State Park, 1984, 159 acres; State Natural Area, 1986, 60-acre portion	159 acres
Trails and Trailhead of the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry	Shannon	Lease to Missouri State Parks, 2014; More than 65 miles of trails existing or under construction	

### Other Lands: 267 Acres

SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS	COUNTY	SPECIAL DESIGNATION	TOTAL SIZE
Lower Rock Creek	Madison	Wild land	226 acres
Virgin Pine	Shannon	Scenic remnant corridor	41 acres

### Total LAD Foundation Land Ownership: 146,985 Acres

<sup>1</sup> The concept of Forest Reserves was initially discussed by Pioneer Forest staff in 1994. In 1995 the management plan for each of these areas was described along with its boundaries. Following Leo Drey's agreement and the endorsement of the Foundation Board, the program was adopted. Additions were made in 2011 and 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The Society of American Foresters' Committee on Natural Areas was organized in 1947.

<sup>3</sup> The Missouri Natural Areas System began in 1971 with the first areas owned or leased by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Beginning in 1977, the Missouri Natural Areas Committee was established by agreement of the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to review and approve natural areas throughout the state under a variety of public and private ownerships.

<sup>4</sup> Originally designated as a Missouri Natural Area in 1980 under the ownership of the Frank B. Powell Lumber Company; acquired by the LAD Foundation in 2006. This area is now included as part of the 6,295-acre Sunklands Natural Area.

<sup>5</sup> The foundation's Ball Mill Resurgence/Blue Spring Branch, Horseshoe Bend, Piney River Narrows, and Rocky Hollow each include designated Missouri Natural Areas within a large LAD purchase that is now leased.

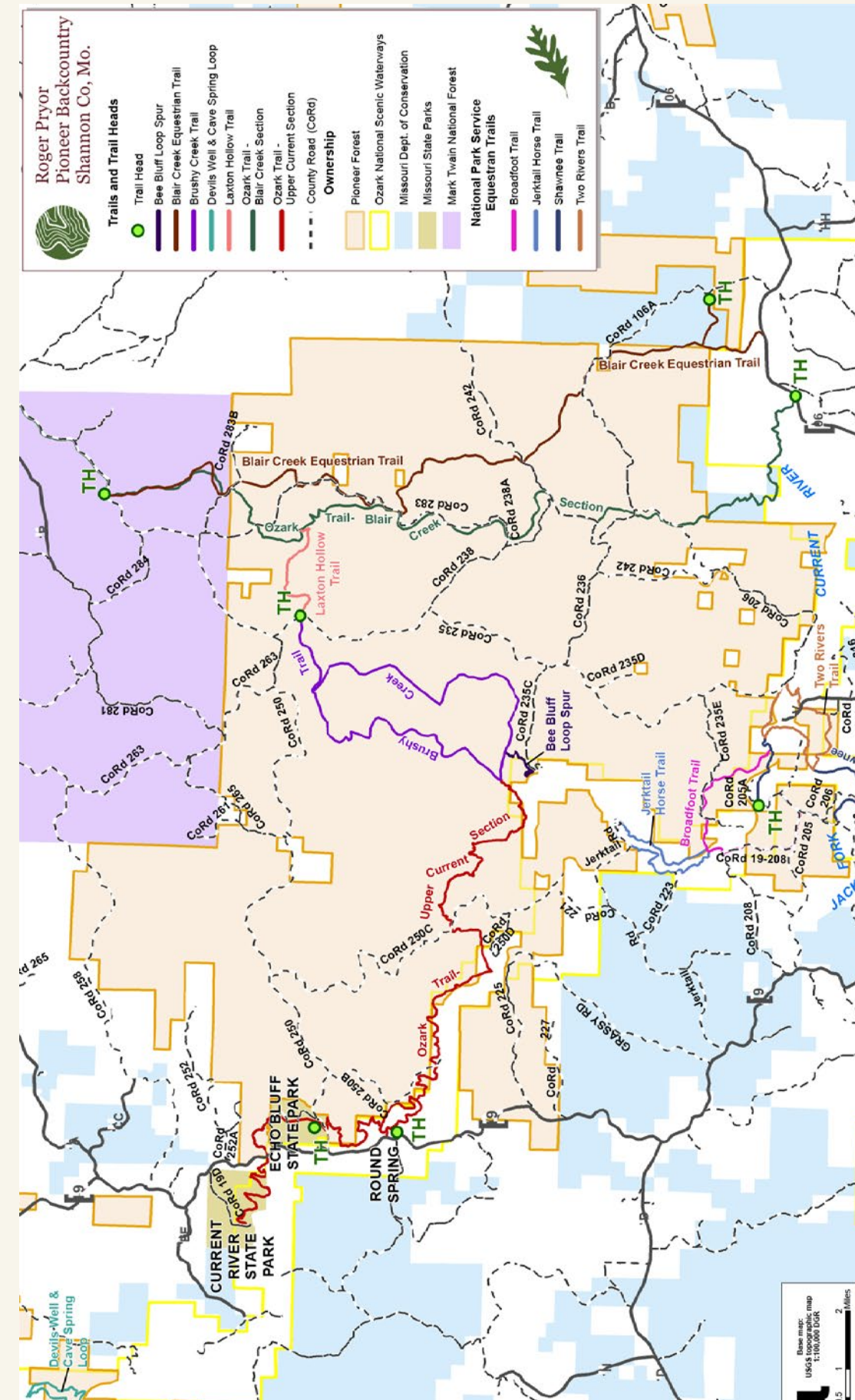
<sup>6</sup> State Historic Sites and State Parks are managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks. The Trails of the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry are leased to the MoDNR and are part of Pioneer Forest.

<sup>7</sup> The National Natural Landmarks program is administered by the National Park Service. Grand Gulf is among fewer than 600 sites designated in the United States.

## Appendix iii: LAD Foundation Trails

TRAIL NAME	COUNTY	DESCRIPTION
Ball Mill Resurgence Trail	Perry	A one-mile trail loops from a small parking lot into the Blue Spring Branch valley and the resurgence.
Blair Creek Section, Ozark Trail	Shannon	The 12.5-mile route through Pioneer Forest was the very first section of the well-known Ozark Trail to be completed in the late 1970s.
Blair Creek Equestrian Trail	Shannon	This 11.7-mile trail provides equestrians a route through the Backcountry, connecting Mark Twain National Forest and Missouri Department of Conservation lands.
Brushy Creek Trail	Shannon	A 21.4-mile loop trail, including a 1.9 mile spur leading to Bee Bluff, provides access to the interior of our Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry. Access to this trail is from the Himont Trailhead on County Road P-235 in Shannon County.
Cave Spring Trail	Shannon	A 4.6-mile moderately difficult round-trip hike connects Devils Well and Cave Spring, crossing Pioneer and National Park Service lands with access at Devils Well.
Clifty Creek Natural Area Trail	Maries	A 2.5-mile walk with scenic overlooks across the Clifty Creek valley, near the creek junction with the Gasconade River.
Current River Trail	Shannon	This 12-mile hiking route connects Echo Bluff State Park via Round Spring on the west side of Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry with the Brushy Creek Trail farther east.
Current River Trail Extension	Shannon	A one-mile segment of this trail crosses through the Backcountry connecting Current River and Echo Bluff state parks.
Dillard Mill State Historic Site Trail	Crawford	A 1.5-mile trail winds through a hillside of oak, hickory, and pine, with benches for visitors to stop and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Huzzah Creek valley.
Grand Gulf State Park Trails	Oregon	From the parking lot, several short paths top the gulf and overlook the collapsed cave system. A short boardwalk/stairway (0.25 mile) leads to a viewing platform at the bottom of the gulf. A loop trail (0.80 mile) takes visitors across the natural bridge, alongside the gulf, and then through a very interesting mature oak woodland on the plateau.
Hickory Canyons Natural Area Trails	Ste. Genevieve	There are two trails through this beautiful area. One is an easy quarter-mile walk to a waterfall, and a second is a one-mile loop through the La Motte sandstone canyon.
Horseshoe Bend Natural Area Trail	Texas	A one-mile route leads from a small parking area across a scenic ridge that overlooks the Big Piney River and proceeds to the river bottom.
Laxton Hollow Trail	Shannon	A 2.3-mile route begins at the Himont Trailhead and leads near Laxton Spring before connecting with the Ozark Trail at Blair Creek.
Pioneer Forest Interpretive Drive	Shannon	A two-mile interpretive drive through Pioneer Forest shows visitors the half-century tradition of Pioneer's careful and conservative method of selectively harvesting trees. The drive starts along the east side of Highway 19 near the Virgin Pine Walk.
Sugar Tree Hollow Trail (to be constructed)	Shannon	A 5.3-mile route exploring a small side hollow to Sinking Creek. Access is from Echo Bluff State Park.
Virgin Pine Walk	Shannon	From a parking area 0.1 miles off Missouri Highway 19 along County Road 225, visitors can view an old growth shortleaf pine stand with trees more than 200 years old. A path located about 350 feet southeast of the parking area offers an opportunity to get a closer look at some of the stand's oldest trees.

NOTE: The NPS Ozark National Scenic Riverways equestrian trails are shown on the south side of the Backcountry map (see next page). The Broadfoot Equestrian Loop Trail shown in purple connects riders between Griggs Ford and the Broadfoot Ford. A small piece of Two Rivers Equestrian Trail crosses Pioneer on a route parallel to the Current River.



The Laxton Hollow Trail, middle segment of the Brushy Creek Trail, and the Current River Trail have been named as the Upper Current Section of the much longer Ozark Trail. Access a digital map or review a larger image here: <https://ladfoundation.org/pioneer-forest/roger-pryor-pioneer-backcountry/>



**LAD** Foundation  
*Established 1962*

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“I value every day that that I’ve worked for him (Leo Drey)—  
his values, his long term vision, and his dedication to the  
natural resources of Missouri have made this one of the most  
enjoyable experiences I could ever have had.”

CLINT TRAMMEL (1940–2018),  
RETIRED PIONEER FOREST MANAGER

