



**PYRAMID STATE
RECREATION AREA**
STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT
AUGUST 2019



Prepared for
Illinois Department of Natural
Resources

by
Pyramid State Recreation Area Task Force
in partnership with
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Presented August 5, 2019



State Senator Paul Schimpf
58th District



SIU SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CARBONDALE INNOVATION AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Task Force Member Listing	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
History.....	3
Field Trials and Other Sporting Dog Events	6
Illinois Department of Natural Resources Grassland Management Plan Summary	7
Friends of Pyramid State Park.....	8
Strategic Planning Activity	9
SWOT Analysis.....	9
Vision Statement.....	10
Mission Statement	10
Strategic Goals	11
Marketing.....	16
Public Input	19
Appendix	22
Appendix A: Memorandum of Understanding	23
Appendix B: Public Information Session Documents.....	24
Appendix C: Hunting Map - Captain Unit.....	27
Appendix D: Hunting Map – Denmark Unit	28
Appendix E: Hunting Map – East Conant Unit	29
Appendix F: Hunting Map – Galum Unit	30
Appendix G: Horseback Field Trial Courses Map	31

TASK FORCE MEMBER LISTING

Ira Altman SIU – Agribusiness Economics	Evan Engelhardt Friends of Pyramid State Park	Charles Ruffner SIU – Forestry
Bob Appleman IDNR – World Shooting Complex	Wilbur Engelhardt Friends of Pyramid State Park	Paul Schimpf Illinois State Senator
Jeff Ashauer Champion Community Investments	Mady Epplin Senator Paul Schimpf's Office	Stephanie Schroeder Retrievers Unlimited HRC
Deborah Barnett SIU – Economic Development	Edward Graves Field Trial Representative	Rhonda Shubert U of I 4-H Program Coordinator
David Bath Friends of Pyramid State Park	Judy Graves Field Trial Representative	Peggy Sims Pinckneyville Chamber of Commerce
Dennis Bath Friends of Pyramid State Park	Kyle Harfst SIU – Economic Development	Mark Smith Shawnee Hounds
Donald Bigham Friends of Pyramid State Park	Cha Hill IDNR – Pyramid State Recreational Area	Jeff Smyth Friends of Pyramid State Park
Monica Brackman IDNR – World Shooting Complex	Scott Ishman SIU – College of Science	Pete Spittler Pinckneyville Press / E and R Media
Genevieve Brammeier Pinckneyville Chamber of Commerce	Roger Jansen IDNR	Robert L. Spencer Mayor of Pinckneyville
Phil Borsdorf IDNR	Robert Kelly Perry County Commissioner	Karen Stallman SIU Community Relations
Scott Bryant IDNR	Marty Kirby Field Trial Representative	Gretchen Steele Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Terri Bryant Illinois State Representative	Lynn Andersen Lindberg SIU – Economic Development	Brad Tedrick IDNR
Brad Carlson IDNR	Jon McClurken U of I Master Gardener	Mary Jo Trimble Illinois Federation for Outdoor Recreation
Jake Coddington SIU – Economic Development	Kay Morrison Friends of Pyramid State Park & Field Trial Representative	Larry West City of Pinckneyville
Kendra Crews Pinckneyville Press	Logan Park SIU – Forestry	Kent Williamson IDNR
Randall Davis SIU – Masters of Public Administration	Tibretta Reiman Friends of Pyramid State Park	Kathy Wills Senator Schimpf's Office
Kenneth Delahunt IDNR	Lori Rezzardo Friends of Pyramid State Park & Field Trial Representative	Chris Young IDNR
Rex Duncan Champion Community Investments	Bill Roe Friends of Pyramid State Park	Jim Zaczek SIU – Forestry
Mike Eichholz SIU – Zoology		Ed Zwicker IDNR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the largest state park in Illinois, Pyramid State Recreation Area (PSRA) encompasses 19,701 acres of reclaimed surface mine land in southwestern Perry County. Outdoor enthusiasts use the Park for a variety of activities including field trials and other sporting dog events, fishing, hunting, 4-H programs, and re-enactments. A Strategic Planning Task Force met for more than a year to engage in strategic planning for the Park's facilities and recreational uses. The results of the strategic planning process are summarized in this report and also incorporate SIUC students' marketing research and public input. These stakeholders developed vision and mission statements as well as identified strategic goals for the next 12-15 months.

- Identify and Secure Sustainable Funding Sources
- Manage Natural Resources, Compatible with Recreational Activities, as Defined by the *Grasslands Management Plan*
- Maintain Habitat for Support of Field Trials
- Manage Outdoor Recreational Activities
- Expand Hunting Opportunities and Improve Hunting Quality

Strategic goals provide the framework for developing measurable objectives and implementing tasks that get the work done. One of the primary challenges at PSRA is the encroachment of invasive plant species, including autumn olive and shatter cane. Earlier this year, a group of stakeholders identified a funding opportunity and has secured more than \$100,000 to address invasive plant species eradication this year. Success like this is just the beginning of the conversation and initial steps of the work needed to continuously improve the facilities and activities of Pyramid State Recreation Area and its many users and supporters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Illinois State Senator Paul Schimpf for his dedication to the people of the 58th District. Thanks also to Interim SIUC Chancellor John M. Dunn for his commitment to continuously improving the region. Without their leadership, this project would not have come to fruition.

Photos and Images

Rex Duncan, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Bill Roe, and Jeff Smyth

Content and Editing

Friends of Pyramid State Park: Rex Duncan, Bill Roe, Gretchen Steele, and Mary Jo Trimble

Illinois Department of Natural Resources: Cha Hill and Roger Jansen

Pyramid State Recreation Area Strategic Planning Task Force

SIU Carbondale: Deborah Barnett, Kyle Harfst, Scott Ishman, Lynn Andersen Lindberg, and Karen Stallman

HISTORY

It is said that by placing coal under the right conditions, diamonds will result. That may also explain the evolution of Pyramid State Recreation Area (PSRA), a multi-faceted recreational diamond located in southwest Perry County, Illinois. Originally located on the sites of former surface coal mines, Pyramid today comprises the largest state park in Illinois. Its 19,701 acres are lush with lakes teeming with gamefish, verdant grasslands, dense woods, and many species of wildlife.



Early in the 20th century, coal was mined in Perry County and shipped to St. Louis for fuel. Once the coal supply was exhausted, the mines were abandoned as useless spoils. More discerning eyes saw lakes and emerging woodlands.

In 1959, the old Pyramid Coal Company ceased operations in Perry County. The 924 acres of what would become the original Pyramid State Park, was acquired by Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) for research in practical applications of reclaimed mine ground. In 1968, the land was assumed by the predecessor to the current Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Pyramid State Park was born.

Further surrounding land acquisitions swelled the park to over 3,400 acres.

The park at the time featured rocky, dusty roads that led to barely accessible lakes that were created by flooded strip pits. Fish were introduced, wildlife moved in, and as word spread, people converged upon the park to enjoy new fishing, hunting, hiking, and primitive camping opportunities.

The ground on the original Pyramid State Park remains rough and undulating, the result of unreclaimed strip-mining processes that deposited overburden and carbon-laced tailings about the property as heavy machinery removed topsoil from shallow coal seams. The appearance is quite different from the natural contours and topography expected of southern Illinois land. Those hills and crevices also offer ideal habitat for wildlife as well as rugged hiking experiences, horseback riding, mushroom hunting, and wildlife watching.



A few miles to the west of the original Pyramid, Arch Mineral Corporation (Arch) operated some of the largest and most productive coal mines on the planet. When those mines closed in the 1990s, regional

leaders and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) officials worked with Arch management to acquire these properties as well. In 2001, IDNR formally announced the acquisition of an additional 16,245 acres from Arch, forming the Captain, Denmark, Galum, and Conant Units of Pyramid State Recreation Area.

Unlike the original property, the Captain, Denmark, Galum, and Conant Units were recontoured prior to acquisition, and their landscapes more closely resemble that of the region. What does remain, though, are the lakes formed again by flooded strip pits. Also, unlike the original Pyramid, the Arch property was mined by some of the largest mining machinery in the world. As a result, the lakes are much deeper, including the aptly named Super Lake which, at its south end, is nearly 100 feet deep.



Due to the exceptionally deep, clear, and cold water found in these lakes, IDNR Fisheries department has been able to stock a large variety of fish that appeal to a wide cross section of anglers. In addition to the commonly found largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, and catfish, these lakes are now home to smallmouth bass, muskellunge, northern pike, and walleye. As PSRA

fishery continues to evolve and improve, it has become a fishing destination for anglers throughout the Midwest and is becoming a popular fishing tournament site.



Pyramid also beckons others who enjoy the outdoors. It has been listed by the Audubon Society as an *Important Bird Area*. Birding enthusiasts regularly descend on the park to spot new-winged species including sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, red-tailed hawks, eagles, barn owls, short-eared owls, cormorants, and white-winged pelicans. The designated Waterfowl Rest Areas, located within Captain and Denmark units, provide food, shelter, and a safe area for migrating waterfowl to rest, refuel and often overwinter. These rest areas allow some of the largest numbers of migrating waterfowl in the state to fill PSRA, resulting in excellent waterfowl hunting opportunities and drawing waterfowl hunters from throughout the Midwest to what is known as the “New Southern Illinois Waterfowl Mecca.”

Over time, new docks were added to several lakes. These docks provide temporary slips for boats and fishing opportunities, and are

accessible to citizens with disabilities. Block restroom facilities have also been added in recent years. Road improvements throughout the park were completed, transforming rock and dirt roads to oil and chip, thus further enhancing accessibility to areas of the park and visitor enjoyment.



Motorists always have to be on the alert, not only for wildlife crossing the roads, but also for sporting and hunting dogs going through their paces. Field trialing and other sporting dog events are growing outdoor activities that attract hundreds of dog owners, family members, and fans to the park each year. Valuable, well-trained pointing and flushing dogs, hounds, and retrievers enjoy the run of the park during field trials.



In 2019, a new and history-centric activity attracted several thousand new visitors to PSRA. A Civil War reenactment of The

Battle of Belmont filled the park with the boom of cannon and the crackle of musketry as blue and gray reenactors converged to simulate this early, Missouri-based battle. Enthusiasts, historians, and students of all ages experience first-hand the sound, feel, and fury of the American Civil War.

PYRAMID STATE RECREATION AREA

FACTS AND FIGURES

Illinois' **largest** state park
More than **19,000 acres**

More than **50 lakes and ponds**

16.5 miles of foot, horse, and
mountain bike **trails**

3 Class C camping areas and
a Class D hike-in campsite

Five Distinct Units:

Original Pyramid – **3,181 acres**
originally known as Pyramid State Park

Captain – **6,105 acres** west
of the original park

Denmark – **4,385 acres** south and
west of the original park

East Conant – **2,824 acres** north and
west of the original park

Galum – **2,520 acres** west
of the original park

Source:

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/Parks/Pages/Pyramid.aspx>

See Appendix for Unit Maps

FIELD TRIALS AND OTHER SPORTING DOG EVENTS

Sporting dog competitions have existed since people began using dogs as a hunting and conservation tool. The desire to find the best dogs for hunting led to competitions to find the best sires and dams for future litters and eventually to a love of the sport itself. Illinois is the home of the *American Field Publication* and the *Field Dog Stud Book* and proudly boasts decades of local and national events. Field trials are a stylized form of hunting with a rich tradition of both walking and horseback competitions.



In 2002, through the support of a proposal from The Conservation Congress and the Illinois General Assembly, Illinois purchased over 16,000 acres of strip mine land to be used to increase the availability and number of IDNR sites for sporting dog events, replace lands lost to trials in Northern Illinois, and serve as a multiple-use area for outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Today, the Captain and Denmark areas of the park are host to championship-quality horseback trials as well as other types of sporting dog events.

Since 2002, much has been done by Friends of Pyramid, Field Trial Clubs of Illinois, assorted sporting dog groups, individuals, and concerned local citizens to improve the

quality of PSRA for sporting dog events. Joint efforts have seen the construction of parking areas, a barn for horses, a field trial headquarters building in the Captain unit, as well as a multi-purpose building with kitchen in the Denmark unit. The multi-purpose building also serves as the draw site for waterfowl hunting stake drawings each day during waterfowl season. Water and electricity have been run to both areas as well as a new concrete outhouse on the Captain side.

In addition to traditional horseback field trials, and trials of the pointing and flushing breeds, PSRA also host multiple types of dog related events throughout the year from providing group training sites for both land and water retriever training as well as a host of different dog-related competitions. The park is utilized by search and rescue dog groups for training sessions as well other dog groups and breeds, such as beagle field trials, upland retriever testing, and the very complex Drahthaar training and testing.

Pyramid State Recreational Area is a mecca for dog related sports and training opportunities that brings dog lovers of all kinds from across Illinois, the Midwest, and the nation to southern Illinois and is recognized as one of the premier locations in the Midwest for dog related activities.



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

Grassland habitat is becoming increasingly rare in Illinois. Of Illinois' original 21 million acres of native prairie, 99.9 percent has been lost. Compounding the problem is the loss of hayland and the reduction of pastureland statewide. Because of these reductions, careful management of existing grasslands is vital.

Grassland birds have shown a more consistent and steeper decline than any other group of North American birds, principally due to the loss of large, contiguous blocks of grassland habitats. Pyramid State Recreation Area provides significant habitat for these species. Pyramid provides habitat for:

- 53 Species in Greatest Need of Conservation, as identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan;
- 13 state listed (endangered or threatened) species;
- 5 area-sensitive grassland species;
- 20 Partners in Flight species of concern;
- 18 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Conservation Concern species;
- 12 National Audubon Watch List species;
- 11 Regional Forester Sensitive Animals; and
- 4 of the 5 true grassland area-sensitive birds, all of which are state listed thus making it the second most important site for grassland birds in Illinois.

The State is focusing on grassland conservation through its Farmland and Prairie Campaign, a component of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) by the development of the Grassland Management Plan. Pyramid State Recreation Area, which contains 16,500 acres of grasslands, is poised to play a critical role in the State's campaign because of the large number and diversity of grassland-dependent species using the site. In fact, Pyramid is one of two sites managed by IDNR being highlighted by the campaign. The conservation philosophy defined in the plan is to "maintain shrub, marsh and lake habitat in an open grassland matrix to manage priority wildlife resources while providing high quality, resource compatible recreation opportunities." Research into grassland management guided the plan's development, including its primary component: the development of a "Core Grassland Unit" and "Grassland Buffer," totaling almost 9,500 acres. The plan also addresses non-native species, which pose the greatest challenge for the management of Pyramid.

Deer, dove, waterfowl, rabbit, squirrel, and quail hunting will remain a vital part of PSRA, as will boating, fishing, wildlife viewing, and horseback field trialing opportunities.



FRIENDS OF PYRAMID STATE PARK

The Friends of Pyramid State Park, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, was developed in 2005 as a result of the Pinckneyville, Illinois strategic planning group. This group was formed to identify projects that would aid in the development of betterment of the community. It was determined that Pyramid State Recreation Area was underdeveloped and had potential to better serve not only Pinckneyville, but also the county, region, and a multi-state area.



The Friends work with management of the park to understand their vision and priorities for projects that provide assistance to achieve designated goals. The Friends provide planning, fundraising, and execution of services for these projects, in addition to financing their maintenance. The overall goal of the Friends effort is to demonstrate that the mined lands that compose Pyramid can be recycled back into the community in ways that benefit wildlife, agriculture, and the economy.

Efforts of the Friends group to date include:

- placed a water line to the Captain area to benefit the Field Trial Association headquarters and the Denmark parking area;
- installed a fire hydrant in the North Pyramid campground, making water available to over 40 campsites;
- established butterfly habitats in conjunction with Saint Bruno's School science class;
- aided in the establishment of a Field Trial Association headquarters in the Captain area;
- developed, served as a major donor, and aided in the construction of a 40'x60' all-purpose building in the Denmark area;
- secured a grant for the development of an E-presence including website and Facebook;
- received a \$35,000 grant from IBEW Local Union 702 for waterfowl habitat; and
- received a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Foundation for invasive species eradication.

For additional information, go to www.friendsofpyramidstatepark.com or Friends of Pyramid State Park on Facebook.

MISSION - FRIENDS OF PYRAMID STATE PARK

The mission of Friends of Pyramid State Park is to assist the Illinois Department of Natural Resources with the development and maintenance of Pyramid State Park. The park is a diamond in the rough that can be cut to brilliance with additional financial and other resources.

STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITY

Pyramid State Recreation Area has seen a number of fiscal, operational and natural challenges this past year. As a result, Illinois State Senator Paul Schimpf (R-58) coordinated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The Memorandum (see Appendix A) was signed May 7, 2018 by both parties and allowed SIUC to facilitate a strategic planning process for the Department of Natural Resources to be delivered by December 2019.

In June 2018, SIUC assembled a task force of key stakeholders from the region and beyond. Task force members included leaders from the public and private sectors. The purpose of the task force was to complete a strategic planning process as outlined in the MOU. The only requirement of task force members was that they had to be a proponent of Pyramid State Recreation Area and willing to donate time in preparing the plan.

This group met monthly as part of the strategic planning process. From this activity, vision and mission statements were established. Then, strategic goals and objectives were adopted.

SWOT ANALYSIS

On August 14 and September 24, 2018, the Pyramid State Recreation Area Task Force met to conduct a SWOT analysis. SWOT is a strategic planning technique and is an acronym for **S**trengths – **W**eaknesses – **O**pportunities – **T**hreats.

As part of the activity, a modified nominal group technique was utilized with Task Force members. Each Task Force member was provided an opportunity to identify any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats from his or her perspective. After all thoughts were exhausted, members ranked their top four choices in each of the four categories. After both meetings, the facilitator transposed the responses, totaled the scores and categorized them into a number of themes or common areas.

Strengths are characteristics of the PSRA that gives it an advantage over similar organizations or facilities. Highest rankings included PSRA being attractive to multiple interest groups, diversity of habitats, size of the park, grassland management for upland game birds, and current management.

Weaknesses are characteristics of the PSRA that place it at a disadvantage relative to other state parks and recreational opportunities. Highest rankings were the increasing threat of exotic invasive plant species, lack of financial support, limited marketing and promotional activities beyond southern Illinois, and inadequate staffing levels in the park.

Opportunities are those elements in the environment that PSRA could exploit to its advantage. Highest rankings included increase in staffing resources from the state, habitat conservation, additional resources, and increase in state funding.

Threats are elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the PSRA. Highest rankings were state legislation, lack of habit management funding for staff and resources, lack of hotel/motel rooms, and fewer burning days.

The SWOT analysis led to the creation of a vision statement, mission statement, and strategic goals. Previously, PSRA did not have vision or mission statements. While a mission statement is the reason for Pyramid State Recreation Area’s existence, a vision statement is forward thinking – perhaps five to ten years into the future.

VISION STATEMENT

To enhance Illinois’ largest outdoor recreational area, including field trials and hunting activities, constructed on science-based, natural resource management.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a naturally diverse and sustainable, multi-use, destination encompassing recreational, educational, interpretive, and artistic experiences.

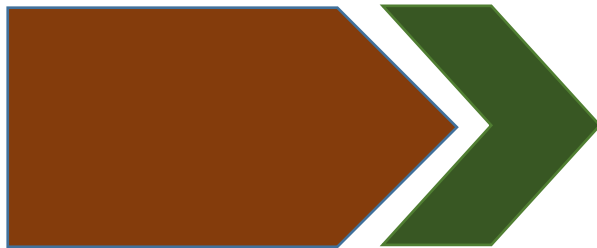
STRATEGIC GOALS

STRATEGIC GOAL # 1

IDENTIFY AND SECURE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING SOURCES

Once the task force was assembled, it was very apparent that the State of Illinois budget impasse contributed to a downsizing of operations. Further discussion indicated that the current funding model would not sustain any type of growth or expansion. Therefore, a number of action items were created to accomplish this goal.

- ACTION # 1:** Request additional funding from the State
- ACTION # 2:** Receive additional revenue from agriculture leases
- ACTION # 3:** Submit proposals to agencies, organizations, and foundations for grant funds (Illinois Clean Energy Foundation grant awarded May 2019)
- ACTION # 4:** Develop three public/private partnerships by 2020
- ACTION # 5:** Charge for usage at Friends-sponsored events
- ACTION # 6:** Establish ongoing process and procedure for tracking and utilizing volunteers

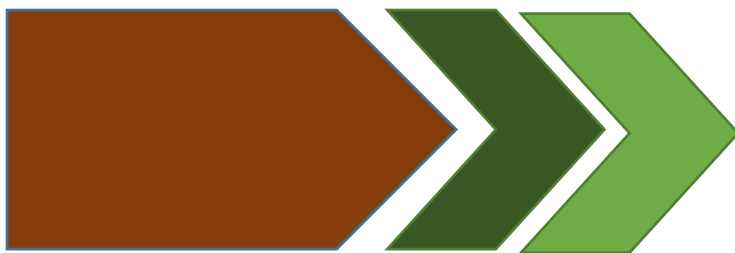


STRATEGIC GOAL # 2

MANAGE NATURAL RESOURCES, COMPATIBLE WITH RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AS DEFINED BY THE GRASSLANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The task force recognized the need to utilize the IDNR grassland management plan to be able to expand operations. Grassland habitats are shrinking and this has an effect on many of the uses at PSRA. The explosion of invasive species, namely Autumn Olive, has significantly altered user groups from being able to enjoy much of the land.

- ACTION # 1:** Communicate multi-year habitat management plan to user groups to maximize coordination of event planning/scheduling
- ACTION # 2:** Engage various groups including boating, hunting, dogs, hiking, and fishing
- ACTION # 3:** Prioritize use and awareness of the importance of natural resources – grassland management, trail management, boat ramps, and more
- ACTION # 4:** Initiate a monthly news blast for better communication
- ACTION # 5:** Coordinate IDNR and user groups with dates, events, tasks, funding, etc.

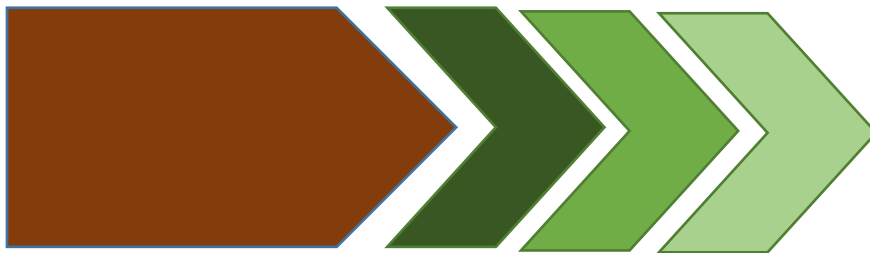


STRATEGIC GOAL # 3

MAINTAIN HABITAT FOR SUPPORT OF FIELD TRIALS

Field trials have been a part of PSRA activities for many years. The Illinois General Assembly enacted Public Act 87-1051 which designated several public sites for hunting dog field trialing. In 2001, the General Assembly strongly encouraged the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to utilize PSRA for championship horseback field trial courses.

- ACTION # 1:** Maintain infrastructure through capital investment
- ACTION # 2:** Increase training opportunities including the establishment of technical training ponds and fields designed specifically for training and competition events
- ACTION # 3:** Create a safe environment for sporting dog event participants through fencing, increased signage, and cautionary reminders on roadways
- ACTION # 4:** Provide enhanced communication through low frequency AM notification, mobile applications, and website



STRATEGIC GOAL # 4

MANAGE OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

While much of the activity at PSRA is dedicated to hunting, fishing, and field trials, other groups frequently utilize the land. Many groups and individuals enjoy primitive tent camping. However, not all campers like the rustic experience. The introduction of cabins and IDNR Class A style facilities for campers will meet the increasing demand of “glamping” or glamour camping.

- ACTION # 1:** Complete campsite infrastructure in 2020
- ACTION # 2:** Construct five (5) cabins by 2022
- ACTION # 3:** Secure funding for a full-time site interpreter for outreach, education/school groups, etc.
- ACTION # 4:** Inform user groups of habitat management plan to ensure event planning/scheduling



STRATEGIC GOAL # 5

EXPAND HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVE HUNTING QUALITY

At 19,701 acres, PSRA is the largest state park in Illinois. Since the abandonment of coal mines on this property, many wildlife and huntable game species have returned in abundance. This increase in both the quality and quantity of huntable game has led to substantially increased number of hunter days afield at PSRA.

- ACTION # 1:** Determine optimal usage by game type, wildlife management plans, and hunter density/pressure
- ACTION # 2:** Strengthen collaborative partnerships with conservation groups
- ACTION # 3:** Identify and make plans for additional opportunities for people with disabilities
- ACTION # 4:** Build new accessible waterfowl blind at Stake 3 by 2020
- ACTION # 5:** Create a plan to raise awareness (website, champions, etc.)



MARKETING

Under the guidance of Dr. Mavis Adjei, associate professor of marketing at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, students enrolled in the spring 2019 Marketing Strategy course prepared strategic marketing plans for Pyramid State Recreation Area. Following is a summary of plans submitted by two separate groups for consideration.

Plan One

A marketing and promotional audit indicated that lack of public knowledge of the park and its opportunities for nature enthusiasts was the primary marketing challenge to be addressed. It was determined that little to no marketing of PSRA has been done due to state budget issues and lack of a dedicated marketing representative. The plan noted that PSRA events are typically promoted through the Friends of Pyramid State Park website and by independent user groups.

Recommendations included increasing the PSRA's existing Facebook presence and expanding to other social media sites to help the park gain more exposure. Although multiple target market segments were identified, it was noted that the population of people aged 35-54, who are registered avid hunters and fishers in Perry County, represents the highest age percentage in Perry County and could be considered a primary target market. It should be noted that additional markets exist well beyond Perry County.

Included in the plan was a competitive analysis that noted other state parks located in southern Illinois - the Shawnee National Forest and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge - that might attract similar visitors. Additionally, indirect competition might include other recreational activities that occupy a potential visitor's free time. However, as the largest IDNR-managed site in Illinois, PSRA's vast land and variety of activities are features that set it apart from others. Events such as a community 5K, and a camping weekend, with possible collaboration with the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in nearby Sparta, IL, were noted as other ways to attract additional visitors. Additionally, an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was conducted and included in the plan. The SWOT analysis results are consistent with the PSRA task force analysis presented throughout this report.

Strategic Objectives noted in the marketing plan were to:

1. Increase awareness of PSRA by 15% by May 2020;
2. Increase the number of hunting and fishing events held at PSRA by 10% by May 2020;
and
3. Reposition PSRA as the premier state park in southern Illinois by increasing the number of visitors by 20% by May 2020.

Promotional Tactics to grow brand awareness and increase foot traffic at PSRA included:

1. Traditional media advertising – Placing radio advertisements and DJ live reads on local southern Illinois radio stations was suggested as a strategy to reach specific target audiences. Sample advertisements and live reads were provided in the plan.
2. Internet marketing – Creating a business Facebook page for PSRA and running paid search ads at different times of the year, ideally before each hunting season to generate interest, was listed as a strategy. Allocating funds for paid searches to increase the search engine optimization and increase the Google search ranking was also suggested.
3. Sponsorships – Developing partnerships to help with camper inflows at PSRA. Suggestions included a discounted camping weekend aligning with events such as the Marion Gander Outdoors opening, and sponsoring fishing tournaments for local fishing teams (university, high school, etc.).
4. Public relations – Creating a monthly newsletter to be distributed through email and Facebook posts with the purposes of staying connected with the community and user groups. Responding to Facebook reviews was also suggested as a strategy to engage users.

Throughout the promotional strategy section, it was noted that a marketing director would be needed to pursue traditional advertising opportunities, create and monitor daily social media activity, develop partnerships, create the proposed monthly newsletter, and determine overall marketing effectiveness. In total, it was suggested that PSRA designate a \$50,000 budget to cover the costs of advertising by May 2020. A breakdown of anticipated cost by media/promotion type was provided in the plan along with suggested measures of promotional success.



Plan Two

A marketing and promotional audit indicated that, other than event marketing, little to no promotion of PSRA has been attempted. It was noted that indirect marketing by IDNR exists but is generic to promotion all parks in Illinois. Although multiple target market segments were identified, it was noted that the population of hunters in the counties surrounding PSRA, as well as SIUC students, could be considered primary target markets.

Included in the plan was a competitive analysis that noted other state parks in southern Illinois that might attract similar visitors. It was noted that PSRA differentiates itself with the hunting opportunities that are not typically offered elsewhere. Additionally, an analysis of strengths,

weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was conducted and included in the plan. The SWOT analysis results are consistent with the PSRA task force analysis presented in this report.

Strategic Objectives noted in the marketing plan were to:

1. Increase promotion of all hunting opportunities by 90% through social media by November 2019;
2. Increase sustainable funding sources by 20% by April 2020; and
3. Increase public awareness by 50% by January 2020.

Promotional Tactics to grow brand awareness and increase foot traffic at PSRA included:

1. Internet marketing – Creating relevant social media for PSRA was noted as the top priority and served as the basis for the rest of the marketing plan. A sample social media posting calendar was included with anticipated social media time allocation. Suggested promotional tools and strategies included establishing an official PSRA Facebook page, scheduling regular posts to include PSRA pictures and activities, and encouraging users to interact by sharing activities they participate in when visiting PSRA, and providing a visitor review. Future social media platforms might include Twitter and Instagram to raise awareness among various age groups.
2. Sponsorships and placement – Seeking sponsorship opportunities that highlight PSRA’s fishing opportunities was suggested as a very marketable feature. Recommendations included partnering with local fishing teams to utilize PSRA and feature the PSRA logo on event gear to promote word-of-mouth marketing.
3. Paid social media advertising – In addition to no-cost social media posts, a Facebook advertising campaign was suggested. It was noted that a specific budget should be established and analytics should be tracked to determine ad effectiveness as measured by cost/audience reach.
4. Sales promotion/experiential marketing – Suggestions included offering a particular day each month during peak seasons where usage fees are waived with the goal of increasing awareness by attracting more visitors, creating a new user experience, and expanding PSRA’s social media presence.

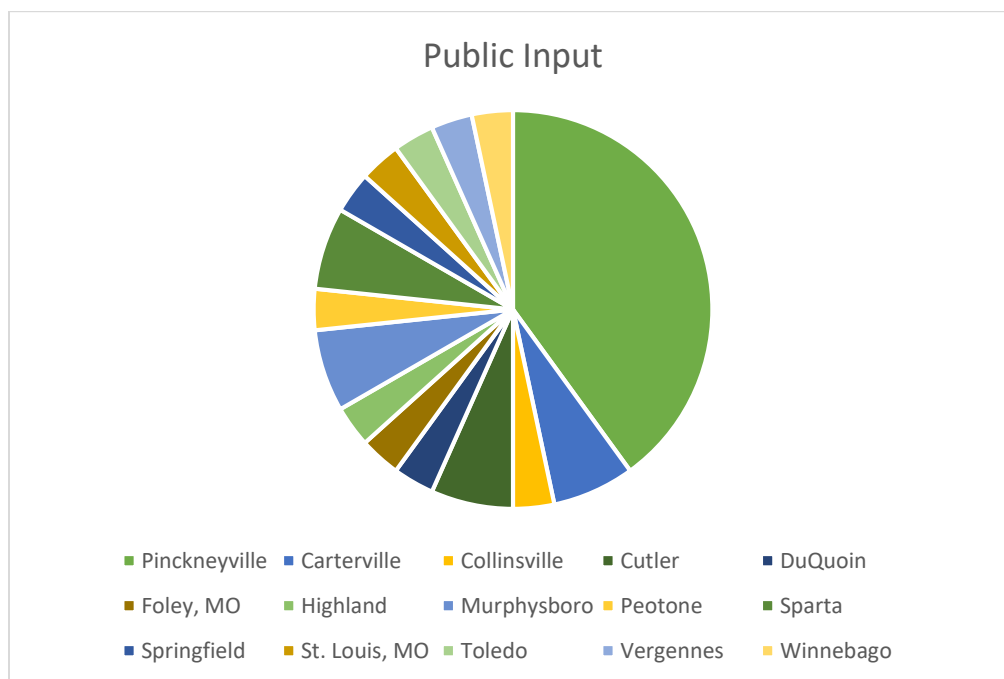
A table of promotional tools and strategies, along with suggestions on timetables, costs, and individual responsibilities, was included in the plan. The recommended measure of promotional success was increased visitors.

Of the four strategies, it was noted that social media marketing was the only tactic with financial cost; the rest are opportunity costs. The goal of these strategies is to raise brand awareness of PSRA, increase patronage, and establish user loyalty. Increased patronage should also assist in securing grants or other funding. Recommendations included designating 5% of the total annual budget to marketing and promotion opportunities.

PUBLIC INPUT

It is essential that the public be informed of this strategic planning activity. Additionally, input from the public, beyond task force members, is collected. On June 13, 2019, a public information session was held at the Perry County Grandstand facility in Pinckneyville, Illinois. Task force members provided information to attendees. There were 54 individuals in attendance and 33 participants provided written comments at the public information meeting. Additionally, 10 individuals provided comments by mail or email submission to SIU's Office of Innovation and Economic Development following the June 13th session.

Of the 43 respondents, nearly 70% (30) provided contact information resulting in representation from 13 Illinois communities and responses from 2 Missouri residents.



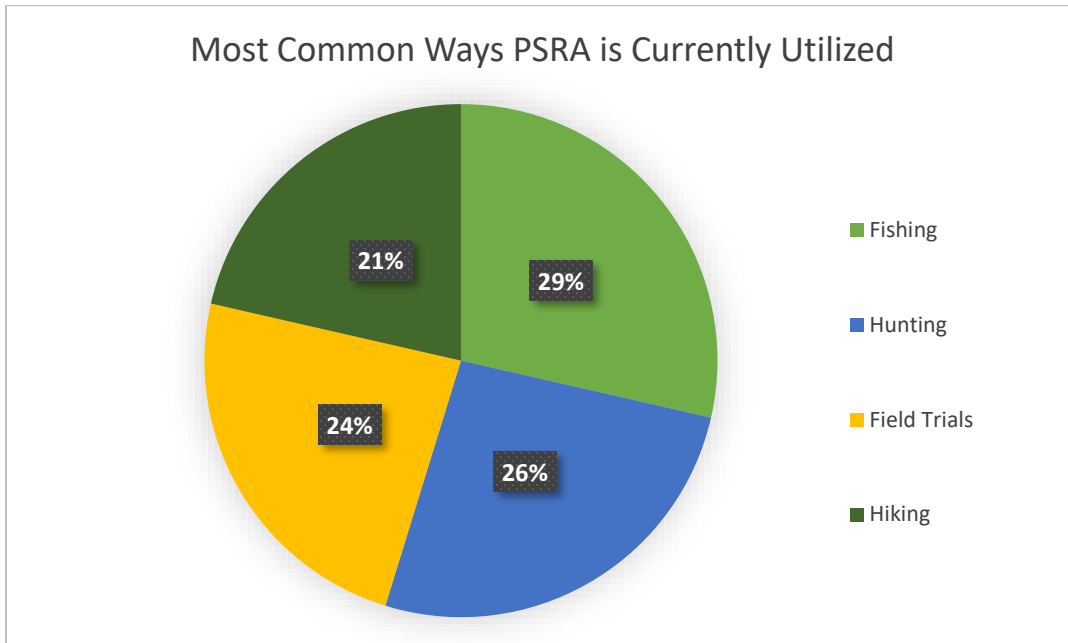
The following comments and themes emerged from the written comments.

What do you like best about PSRA?

The PSRA features most commonly noted were location (centrally located not only in southern Illinois, but in the United States), vast size of the land, trails, hunting, and fishing venues. Several also referenced the land's natural beauty, accessibility, climate, and wide range of activities. Additionally, recent upgrades to the site and amenities, such as a meeting building, electric RV hookups, and campsites, were listed as best features. Several commented on how well maintained PSRA is and that it serves as a wonderful place for horseback field trials. Feedback related to the site crew was positive and was included in what some liked best about PSRA.

Do you currently utilize PSRA? If so, in what capacity?

Respondents indicated that PSRA is a multi-use site with fishing, hunting (waterfowl, mushroom, etc.), field trials, and hiking being the most common activities. Other ways people enjoy PSRA is through kayaking, birding, sightseeing, archery, school field trips, and events such as the Civil War Reenactment.



What would you like to build upon at PSRA?

Camping and related facilities were the most commonly cited areas respondents would like to see built upon at PSRA. Full-service RV camping, cabins, bathrooms, shower house, grills/firepits, and playground area were listed. Enhanced fishing opportunities, an archery range, and improved trails were also noted. Several expressed a desire to build upon and improve the field trials areas including crossing safety, improved creek crossings, habitat conservation, habitat development for native gamebirds, and wildlife feed strips.

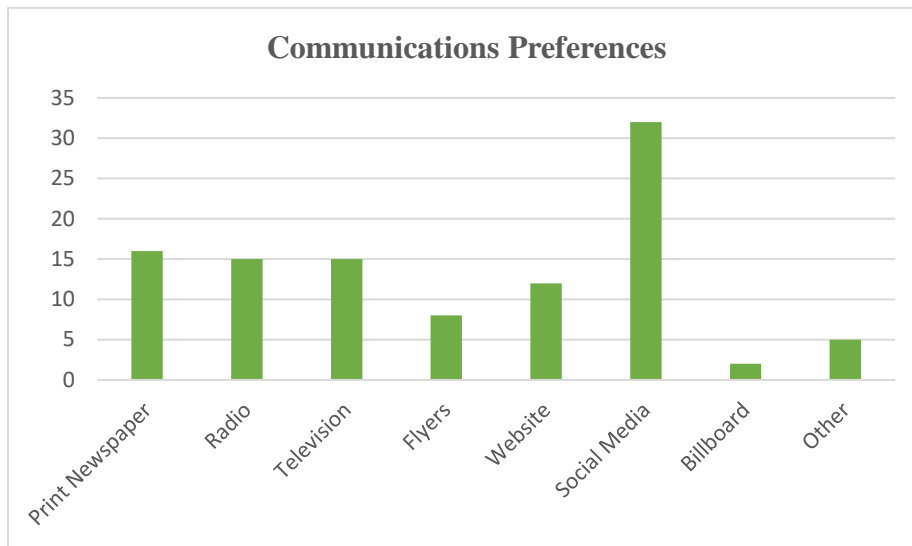
What additional activities would you like to see at PSRA?



The most common activity that respondents would like to see more of were related to exposing youth to PSRA through outdoor programs and events. Respondents emphasized that, when adding activities, priority should be placed on protecting the existing flora and fauna, as well as maintaining compatibility with current activities such as field trials, hunting, and fishing as it relates to the grounds and scheduling.

What are the best ways to let others know what is happening at PSRA?

Social media was noted as one of the best ways to communicate about PSRA events and other happenings. Next, in order of preference, were print newspaper, radio/television, and website. Other suggestions included sharing information with organizations including the Illinois South Tourism Bureau, National Vizsla Association, and other PSRA user groups.



Would you be interested in volunteering time, donating to, or joining the Friends of Pyramid State Park?

Nearly half of respondents expressed interest in volunteering with, donating to, or joining the Friends of Pyramid State Park group.

Are there other ways we can improve PSRA?

A number of comments were submitted as ideas to continue to improve PSRA. Suggestions included: more fishing regulations signs; additional volunteer opportunities/work days; enhanced, informative website (including photographs of trails, lakes, etc.); improved deer management; more signage to promote lakes and services. Similar to other questions on the comment sheet, camping was commonly noted as a way to improve PSRA. The idea to develop a Class A campground was presented as a way to not only enhance PSRA, but to meet an overall growing need for RV campsites in the region.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Memorandum of Understanding



Memorandum of Understanding between Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Regarding Strategic Planning Studies for Pyramid State Park and World Shooting and Recreational Complex

Preamble

WHEREAS both Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) both desire to maximize economic growth in southwestern Illinois.

WHEREAS both Pyramid State Park, located in Perry County, Illinois, and the World Shooting and Recreational Complex, located in Randolph County, Illinois, represent sources of economic activity and quality of life enhancement for inhabitants of the region.

WHEREAS SIUC and IDNR agree that both Pyramid State Park and World Shooting and Recreational Complex will benefit from a comprehensive assessment of the facilities' current strengths, infrastructure requirements, and potential growth.

THEREFORE, SIUC and IDNR (the Parties) enter into the following Understanding with the below expectations for each Party.

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Convey respective stakeholders for each facility to develop a mission statement and evaluate potential activities.

Produce separate strategic planning studies for both Pyramid State Park and World Shooting and Recreational Complex which will:

- Assess the current capability of each facility to fulfill its mission
- Identify infrastructure, staffing, and promotional needs of each facility
- Explore how each facility can serve as an economic driver for the region

Keep Illinois elected officials and IDNR apprised of the progress of the strategic planning studies.

Alert Illinois elected officials and IDNR when economic impact modeling may require funding for the studies to move forward.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Provide to SIUC all relevant, non-protected information on Pyramid State Park and World Shooting and Recreational Complex that is necessary for the completion of the strategic planning studies.

Make IDNR personnel available to participate in the respective facility stakeholder meetings and respond to requests for information from SIUC.

Provide SIUC personnel with access to Pyramid State Park and World Shooting and Recreational Complex as necessary to complete the strategic planning studies.

Work with elected officials to ensure that SIUC receives the necessary resources to complete the strategic planning studies and account for out-of-pocket costs not anticipated.

Limitations

This Understanding is not dependent on any promises or understandings beyond what is contained in this document.

This Understanding shall not create any legal liabilities or obligations upon the Parties.

This Understanding does not create a basis for the transfer of funds between the Parties.

This Understanding does not create a basis for revealing protected personal information.

This Understanding shall expire upon completion of the said studies or on December 31, 2019, whichever occurs sooner.

This Understanding may be extended or amended upon the mutual agreement of the parties.

Ratification

Signed this 7th day of May, 2018.

Carlo Montemagno
Chancellor, SIUC

Wayne Rosenthal
Director, IDNR

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

5-7 p.m., June 13, 2019

Perry County Fairgrounds Grandstand



Key stakeholders have been developing a strategic plan for the Pyramid State Recreation Area in Perry County since May 2018. Strategic goals and objectives have been established by this task force.

Join us to view the strategic plan, and provide input to the task force.

- We want and need your input
- Vision and mission statements will be available for review
- Task force members and officials from IDNR will be available to answer questions
- No pre-registration required
- Call **536-4451** for more information



**Pyramid State Recreation Area
Public Information Session
June 13, 2019**

Strategic Plan

Pyramid State Recreation Area (PSRA), located in Perry County, Illinois has seen a number of fiscal, operational and natural challenges the past several years. As a result, Illinois State Senator Paul Schimpf coordinated a Memorandum of Understanding between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC). The Memorandum was signed May 7, 2018 by both parties and allows SIU to prepare a strategic plan for the Department of Natural Resources to be delivered no later than December 2019.

In June 2018, SIU assembled a task force of key stakeholders from the region and beyond. Task force members included leaders from the public and private sectors. The sole purpose of the task force was to create a strategic plan prior to the end of the calendar year. The only requirements of task force members were that they had to be a proponent of Pyramid State Recreation Area and willing to donate time in preparing the plan.

Initial task force meetings lead to the creation of a vision statement, mission statement and strategic goals. Previously PSRA did not have vision or mission statements. While a mission statement is the reason for Pyramid State Recreation Area's existence, a vision statement is forward thinking – perhaps 5-10 years into the future.

Vision Statement

To enhance Illinois' largest outdoor recreation area, including field trials and hunting activities, constructed on science-based natural resource management

Mission Statement

To provide a naturally diverse and sustainable, multi-use destination encompassing recreational, educational, interpretive, and artistic experiences.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal # 1: Identify and secure sustainable funding sources

Strategic Goal # 2: Manage natural resources compatible with recreation activities as defined by the grasslands management plan

Strategic Goal # 3: Maintain habitat for support of field trials

Strategic Goal # 4: Manage outdoor recreation activities

Strategic Goal # 5: Expand hunting opportunities and improve hunting quality

Pyramid State Recreation Area (PSRA)
Public Information Session
June 13, 2019

Public Comments

Do you currently utilize PSRA? If so, in what capacity?

What do you like best about PSRA?

What would you like to build upon at PSRA?

What additional activities would you like to see at PSRA?

(please continue on other side)

Pyramid State Recreation Area (PSRA)
Public Information Session
June 13, 2019

Public Comments

What are the best ways to let others know what is happening at PSRA?

(Check up to three)

- Print newspaper
- Radio
- Television
- Flyers
- Website
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Billboard
- Other _____

Would you be interested in volunteering time, donating to, or joining the Friends of Pyramid State Park? (please circle; if yes, please provide contact information below)

Yes _____ No _____

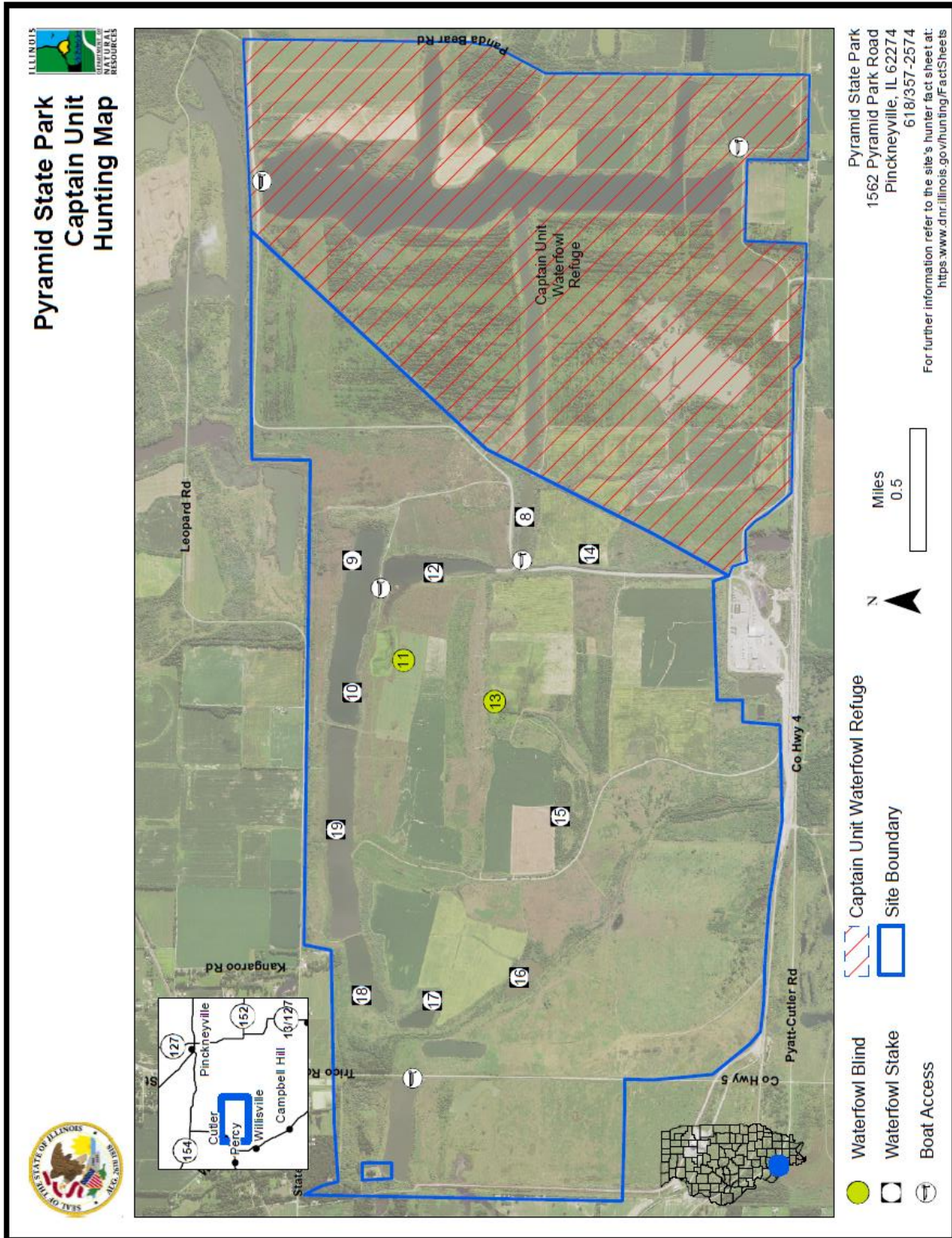
Are there other ways we can improve PSRA?

OPTIONAL

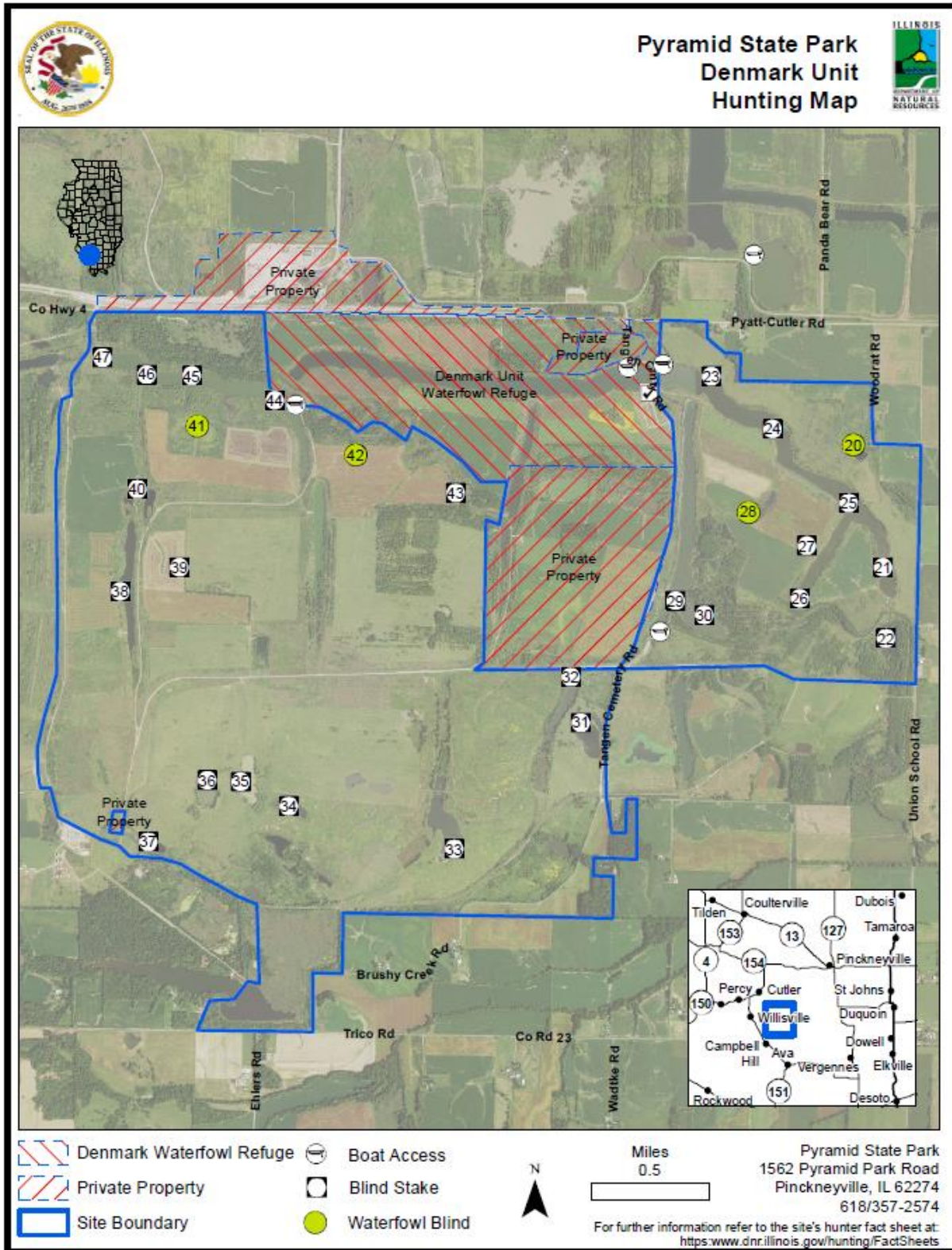
Name _____
Street Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Email address _____

Visit [econddev.siu.edu](mailto:innovat@siu.edu) to submit comments electronically or email to innovat@siu.edu by Friday, June 21, 2019.

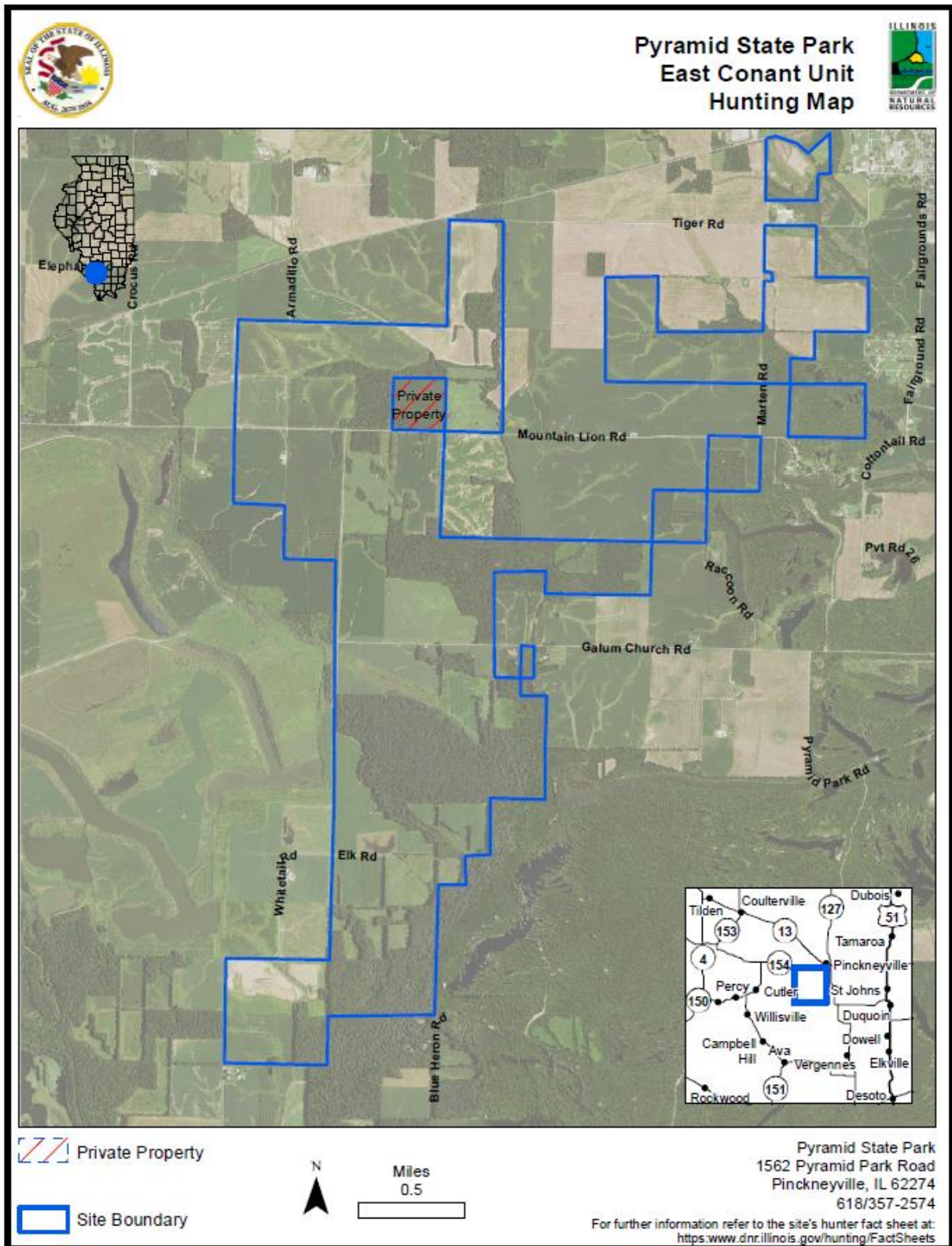
Appendix C: Hunting Map - Captain Unit



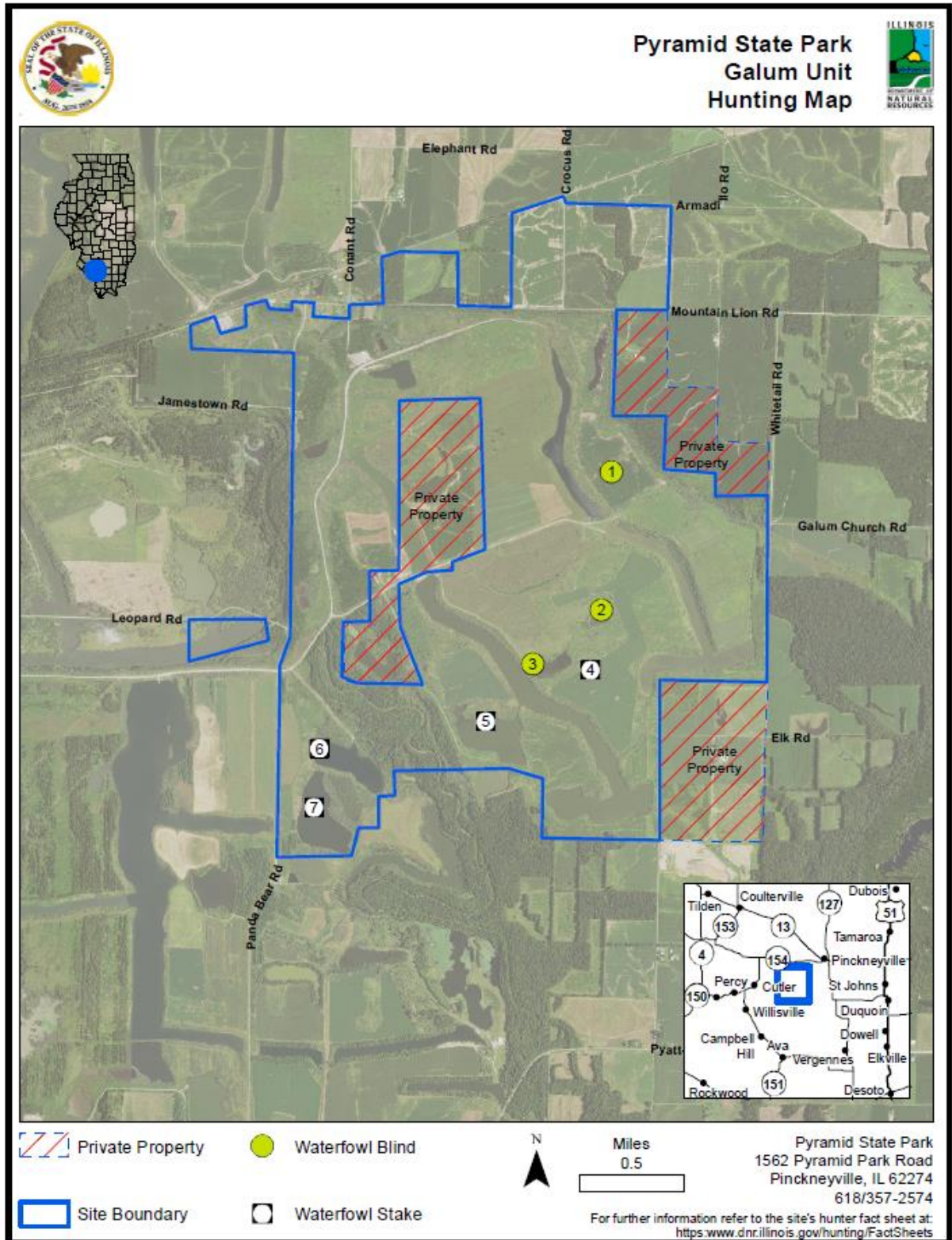
Appendix D: Hunting Map – Denmark Unit



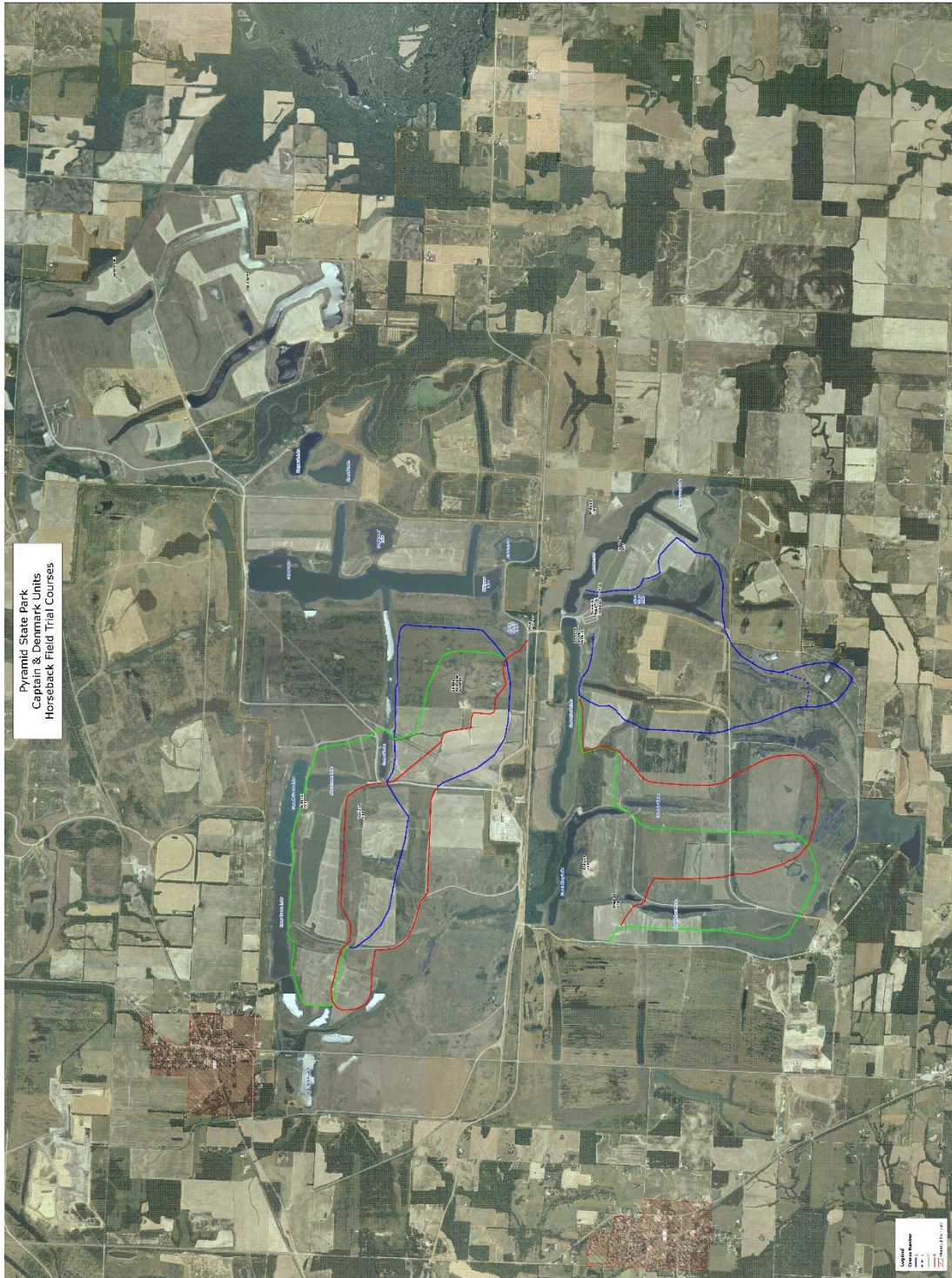
Appendix E: Hunting Map – East Conant Unit

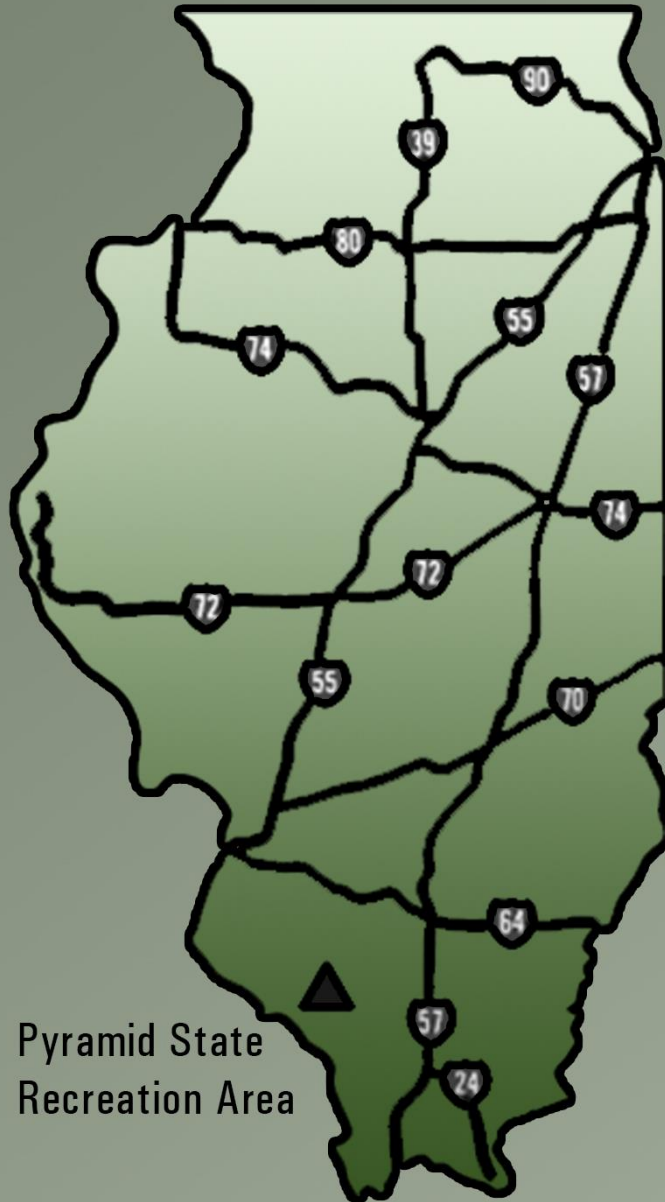


Appendix F: Hunting Map – Galum Unit



Appendix G: Horseback Field Trial Courses Map





Pyramid State
Recreation Area

Pyramid State Recreation Area
1562 Pyramid Park Road
Pinckneyville, IL 62274
618.357.2574

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/Parks/Pages/Pyramid.aspx>