

**Conservation Federation of Missouri
2015 Resolutions**

Committee: Natural History, Parks & Wildlands
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18

Extend Missouri Department of Conservation Area's Trail Access for General Public Use

WHEREAS, many conservation areas, especially near population centers, were acquired with funds provided through the Design for Conservation (the 1/8 cent conservation sales tax enacted in 1976) with the understanding that they would be available for use by the general public; and

WHEREAS, there has been general acceptance of the policy to close trails in these areas to the general public during the primary 11 day deer firearms season in November, for reasons of public safety; and

WHEREAS, since the acquisition of many conservation areas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there has been a gradual extension of special hunting seasons for deer, wild turkey and other species with resulting closure of trails in these areas to non-hunters, to the point where, currently, as many as 30 areas totaling over 125,000 acres are closed to the general public on 12 weekends and additional weekdays from fall through spring; and

WHEREAS, many in the general public supported enactment of Design for Conservation and acquisition of these areas and would like to use them for hiking, birding and other activities particularly in fall, winter and spring; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the general public use, there are certain conflicts of special hunting seasons with regularly scheduled non-hunting activities, such as the Audubon Christmas Bird Count from mid-December to early January and the Migratory Bird Count in early May; and

WHEREAS, the Mark Twain National Forest also allows hunting but does not prohibit access to the general public during hunting seasons; and

WHEREAS, some conservation areas are lightly used for hunting during special seasons but the general public is still prohibited from using them, as revealed, for example, by MDC user surveys of Three Creeks Conservation Area during fall and winter 2014-2015, when hunter use was minimal whereas on the weekend of January 17-19, when there was no prohibition on general public access, some 80 separate vehicles were observed using parking lots at the area; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City, MO, this 22nd day of March, 2015, does hereby request the Missouri Conservation Department and Conservation Commission to conduct further user surveys or studies of conservation areas, and if needed, to consider amending regulations governing these areas to permit more access by the general public during more of the fall, winter and spring periods.