



Daniel Boone Ecosystem Restoration Project

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

FOREST
SERVICE

SOUTHERN REGION

DANIEL BOONE
NATIONAL FOREST

KENTUCKY

Decision Memo

Cumberland Ranger District
Bath and Morgan Counties, Kentucky

May, 2008



Ephemeral wetland constructed in 2005

For Information Contact:

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Decision Memo for
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Decision

I have decided to establish 26 wetlands totaling approximately 4-acres on National Forest System lands in Bath and Morgan Counties. The wetlands will improve wildlife habitat and be constructed to appear and function like natural ecosystems. The project is a partnership effort involving the Gateway RC & D, Quail Forever, Inc., East Kentucky Power Cooperative, Inc., Rowan County Wildlife Club, and the USDA Forest Service.

A mixture of shallow (ephemeral) and deeper (emergent) wetlands will be established. Portions of the wetlands will be designed to contain zones of sedges and rushes. The ephemeral wetlands are likely to dry naturally each fall, while the emergent wetlands, which are deeper, should contain water year round. The wetlands will be built to range from only 10 feet in diameter up to 1-acre in size. No roads will be built for this project, as existing roads provide access to the work sites.

The wetlands will be shaped to physically appear and function like natural wetlands that were once present in the area. They will be built with heavy equipment, such as a dozer, that will be cleaned of soil prior to starting work to avoid the possibility of spreading non-native plants. Water will enter the wetlands naturally from rainfall, not from streams or pumps. Aquatic plants can be expected to grow naturally in the wetlands from seeds that remain viable in the soil, and from seed transported by animals.

Trees will generally not be removed for the project. However, it is possible that a limited number of saplings will be removed for building wetlands within the recently harvested timber harvest units. No trees will be removed that are suitable for roosting by the Indiana bat.

Erosion will be controlled by seeding exposed soils to wheat and mulching with straw. Those soils exposed above the water level in the new wetlands will be seeded to a mixture of native grasses and legumes such as Indian grass, big bluestem, switch grass, wild rye, partridge pea, and Illinois bundle flower.

Purpose of and Need for the Decision

Located within Daniel Boone National Forest Prescription Area 1.K (Habitat Diversity Emphasis), the project helps implement the following Forest Plan Goals:

Goal 1. Maintain a variety of life and recover native and desirable non-native populations that are rare and declining. The project may improve habitat for the rare Indiana bat, Virginia big-eared bat, and Rafinesque big-eared bat.

Goal 1.2. Create and maintain water sources with a mixture of temporary/seasonal and permanent shallow water pools throughout the Forest. A total of 22 wetlands or water sources will be created within Bath and Morgan Counties on the Cumberland Ranger District. A mixture of temporary/seasonal and permanent water pools will be established adjacent to mature forest and woods road corridors. None are located within 5-miles of a significant Indiana bat hibernacula.

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Goal 3. Manage and/or restore watersheds to ensure the quality and quantity of water necessary to protect ecological functions, aquatic species and habitats, and support designated beneficial uses. The small wetlands to be established on Ditney Ridge in Morgan County will improve water quality by capturing runoff that contains sediment before it can reach streams.

In addition, the project is designed to improve habitat for wildlife species that use wetland ecosystems, and to increase public viewing opportunities. The Endangered Indiana bat and Virginia big-eared bat may benefit from the project, along with the eastern small-footed bat, a Forest Service sensitive species. The project can also be expected to provide habitat for the Louisiana waterthrush, spotted sandpiper, wood duck, and hooded merganser. Wood frogs, gray tree frogs, spotted salamanders, marbled salamanders, four-toed salamanders, and many other species will use the wetlands. Logs and branches placed in the wetlands will increase the breeding success of salamanders, and benefit reptiles and birds.

Natural wetlands are uncommon on the Daniel Boone National Forest. Since 1780, over 81 percent of the wetlands have been drained in Kentucky. In many cases, the few remaining natural wetlands have been modified through incomplete drainage, and now appear different from their historic condition.

Rationale for Categorical Exclusion Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Based on the analysis I have reviewed in the project file and the rationale described below, I have determined that this is an action with no associated extraordinary circumstances, which have a significant effect on the human environment.

The Chief of the Forest Service has determined, based on a history of implementing similar activities, that this type of action normally does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and therefore, may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment.

This rationale is derived from the final directive by the Forest Service, USDA No. 1909.15-2004, Effective July 06, 2004; Section 30.3.

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if:

- a. The proposed action is within one of the categories in the Department of Agriculture (USDA) NEPA policies and procedures in 7 CFR part 1b, or
- b. The proposed action is within a category listed in section 31.1b or 31.2

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The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist.

I have determined that this action is within the following category: FSH 1909.15, chapter 30, section 31.2, category 6 – “Timber stand or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56).”

I have considered the following resource conditions in my determination of the presence of extraordinary circumstances and whether the extraordinary circumstances that are related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement:

A. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species: Federally listed threatened or endangered species may occur or have the potential to occur in the project area. Forest Service sensitive species may occur or have the potential to occur in the project area. The potential effects of this project on each of these species were analyzed in a biological assessment/evaluation (BAE) prepared by a qualified professional wildlife biologist. This report found that the project would have no effect or is not likely to adversely affect federally listed species, and would have no impact, beneficial impact, or may impact individuals but is not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of viability for Forest Service sensitive species.

B. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds: The project does not affect floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

C. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas: The project does not occur in such named congressionally designated areas.

D. Inventoried roadless areas: The project does not take place in designated roadless areas.

E. Research natural areas: The project does not occur in a research natural area.

F. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites: Based upon interaction with tribal officials and review of existing survey records, the project will not take place in any religious or cultural sites

G. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas: The Forest Service determined that the project will not affect Cultural Resources. A letter and Archaeological Survey Report documenting this finding was mailed to the State Historic Preservation Office for concurrence. The State Historic Preservation Officer reviewed the letter and provided written concurrence with the Forest Service recommendations contained in the report.

Public Involvement

The Morehead News published a description of the project on February 15, 2008.

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The Forest Service explained details of this specific project and invited public comment at the following meetings and events:

- Rowan County Wildlife Club Meeting, 10 individuals, December 20, 2007.
- Wildlife Federation - 8th District, meeting, 40 individuals, January 17, 2008.
- Morehead Woman's Club Meeting, April 1, 2008
- Morehead State University students and faculty, 20 individuals, April 9, 2008)
- Eastern Kentucky PRIDE planning meeting, 63 individuals, April 16, 2008.
- Forest Magazine Article Development, April & May, 2008.
- Rowan County Wildlife Club Meeting, 8 individuals, April 24, 2008.

The project was reviewed by Forest Service professionals with expertise in wildlife management, visual management, hydrology, forestry, recreation and archeology. The Forest Service did not receive written comments concerning the project, or verbal comments that identified concerns with implementing the project.

Findings Required by Other Laws

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act)

This project is consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Daniel Boone National Forest, and is located within Prescription Area 1.K (Habitat Diversity Emphasis). The following paragraphs document my reasons for this finding: Specifically, the project is consistent with these applicable forest-wide standards and guidelines:

DB-VEG-27: Resource management activities that may affect soil and/or water quality must follow applicable Kentucky Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control and Kentucky's Best Management Practices for Forestry (BMP) as a minimum to achieve soil and water quality objectives. When Forest Plan standards exceed Kentucky BMP's or water, Forest Plan standards will take precedence.

Vegetation Manipulation (National Forest Management Act)

Because this project does not involve management practices associated with the manipulation of vegetation, the seven requirements of 36CFR 219.27(b) do not apply.

Endangered Species Act

See the above section "Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under NEPA" and the discussion of A. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670)

See the above section "Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under NEPA" and the discussion of A. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

Clean Water Act

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See the above section “Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under NEPA” and the discussion of B. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. The Project complies with the Act by using Best Management Practices. This decision incorporates Best Management practices to ensure protections of soil and water resources.

Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)

The project implements direction contained in Executive Order 11990 for Federal Agencies to “to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands”. On Earth Day 2004, President Bush announced his Wetlands Initiative, which set a goal of moving beyond the Federal policy of “no net loss” of wetlands, and called for a new commitment to attain an overall increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands in America. To achieve this objective, President Bush set an aggressive goal to restore, improve, and protect at least three million acres of wetlands over the next five years. This project responds to the Initiative.

Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)

See the above section “Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under NEPA” and the discussion of B. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

National Historic Preservation Act, Archaeological Resources protection Act, native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

See the above section “Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under NEPA” and the discussion of F - American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites and G - Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

This decision complies with this Act. Public involvement occurred for this project, the results of which I have considered in making this decision. Public involvement did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations. This decision is not expected to adversely impact minority or low-income populations.

National Environmental Policy Act

This Act requires opportunity for public involvement and consideration and disclosure of potential environmental effects. The entirety of documentation for this decision supports compliance with this Act.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunity

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12

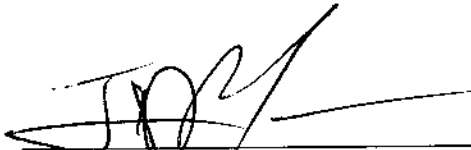
Implementation Date

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

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Contact Person

For questions or additional information related to this decision, contact Tom Biebighauser, Wildlife Biologist, US Forest Service, 2375 KY Highway 801 South, Morehead, KY 40351, (606) 784-6428 ext. 102, tombiebighauser@fs.fed.us.

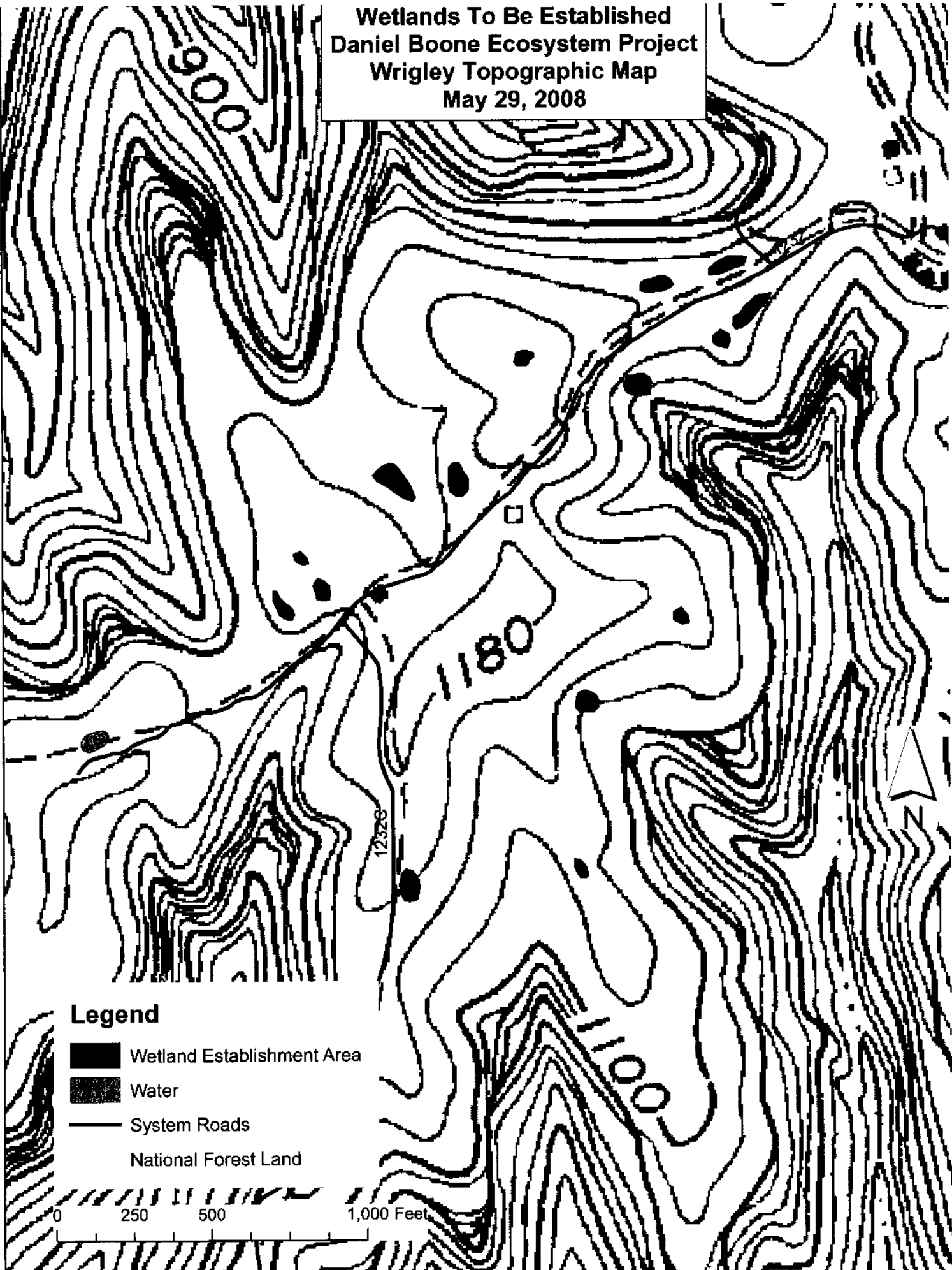


JAMES DAVID MANNER
District Ranger

6/2/08

Date

Wetlands To Be Established
Daniel Boone Ecosystem Project
Wrigley Topographic Map
May 29, 2008

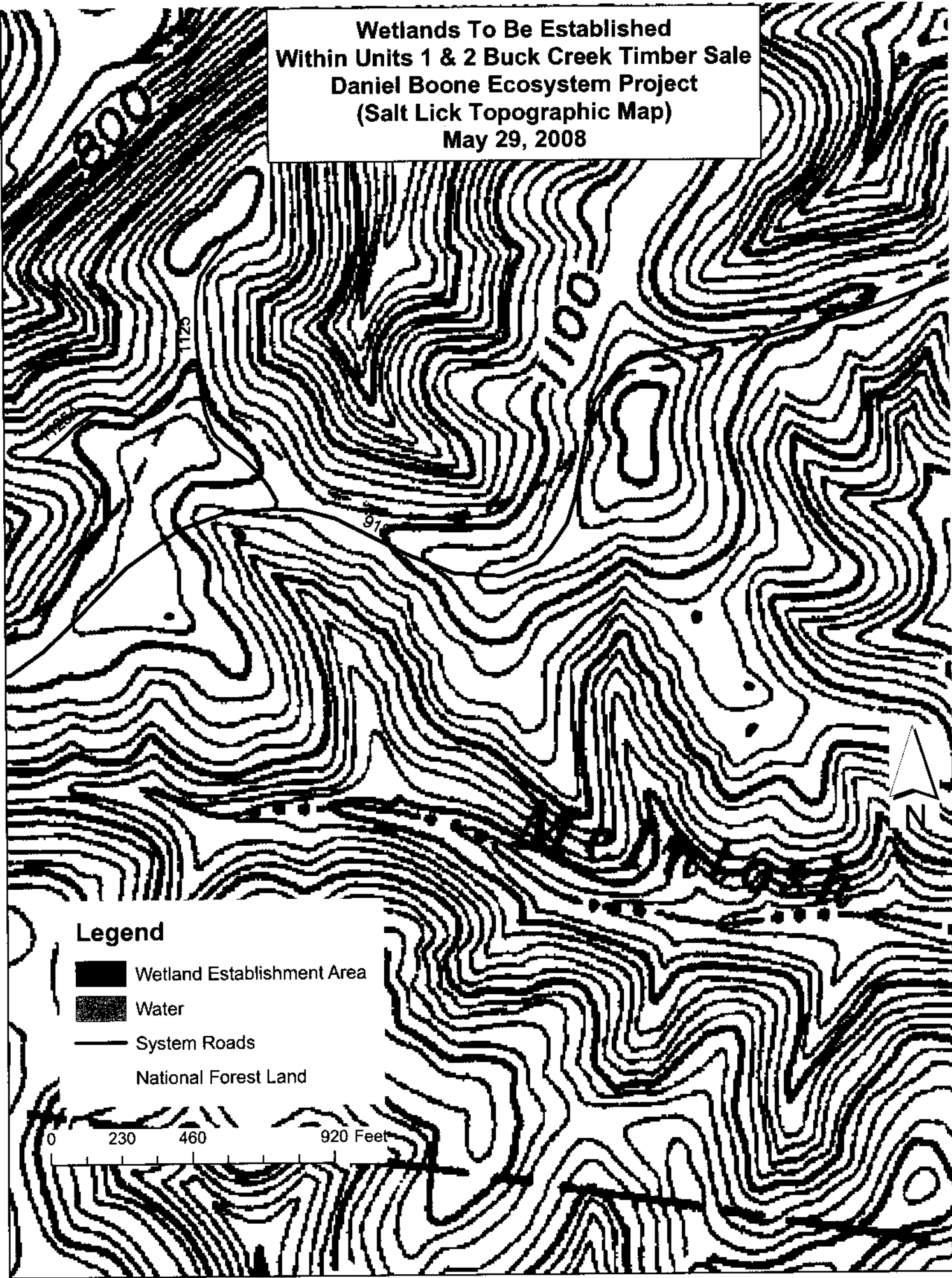


Legend


-  Wetland Establishment Area
-  Water
-  System Roads
-  National Forest Land

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

**Wetlands To Be Established
Within Units 1 & 2 Buck Creek Timber Sale
Daniel Boone Ecosystem Project
(Salt Lick Topographic Map)
May 29, 2008**

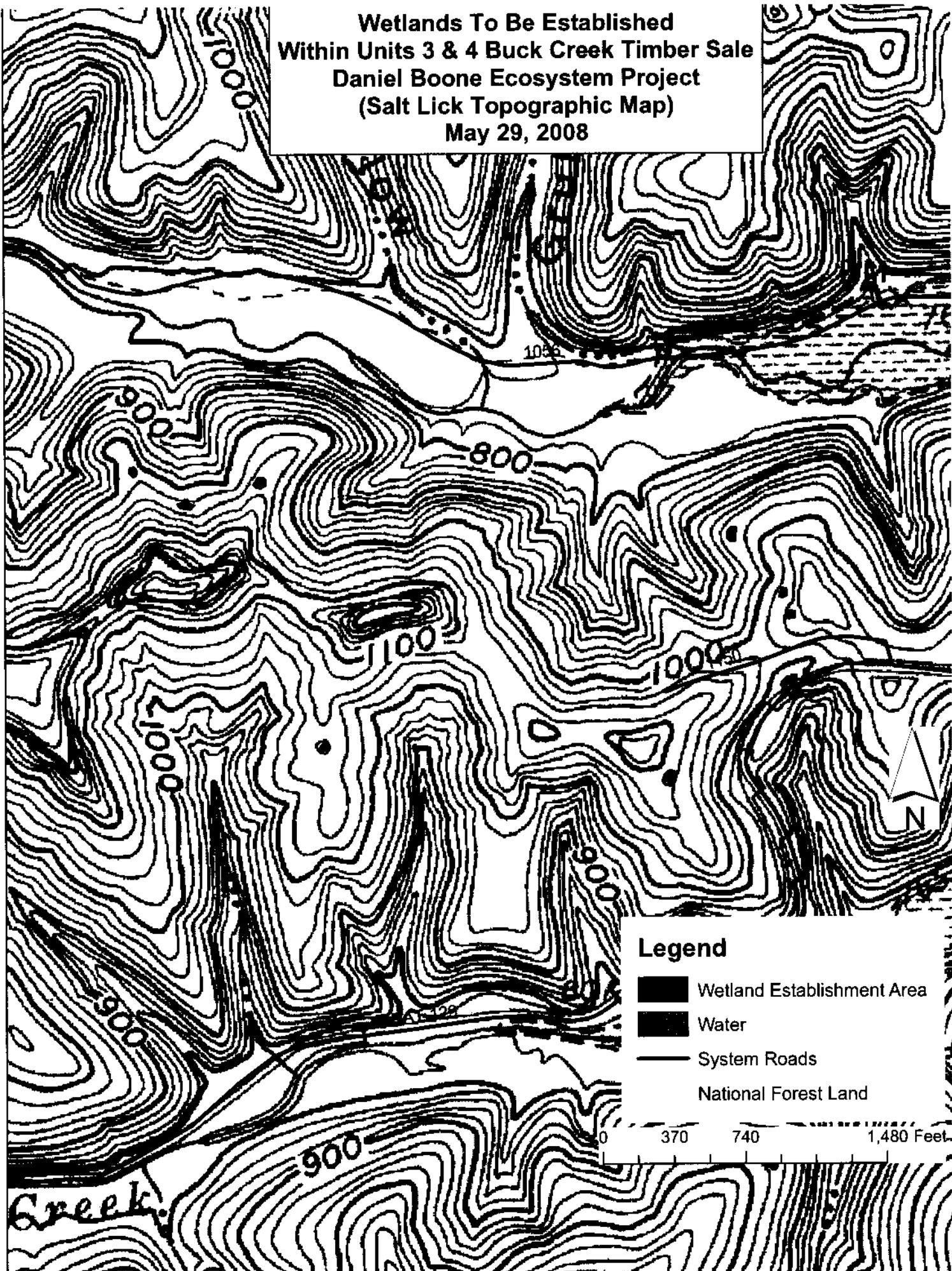


Legend

-  Wetland Establishment Area
-  Water
-  System Roads
-  National Forest Land

0 230 460 920 Feet

**Wetlands To Be Established
Within Units 3 & 4 Buck Creek Timber Sale
Daniel Boone Ecosystem Project
(Salt Lick Topographic Map)
May 29, 2008**



Legend

- Wetland Establishment Area
- Water
- System Roads
- National Forest Land

0 370 740 1,480 Feet