

Planning Criteria

C. PLANNING CRITERIA

Guidelines need to be established for evaluating land use alternatives. In the case of public lands in the study area the land use alternatives include mining, mine reclamation, prairie preservation, and prairie restoration. The recommended land uses outlined in the stewardship plan are based on the following criteria:

- Identify aggregate deposits that will supply the county's gravel needs for current and future needs.
- Maximize aggregate mining in severely degraded or non-prairie habitat and where it is most economically feasible.
- Avoid further fragmentation and loss of the prairie habitat:
 - prioritize restoration efforts to establish corridors or reduce fragmentation;
 - establish a mining and reclamation sequence that will minimize habitat fragmentation.
- Avoid any action that would impact the calcareous fens.
- View public lands with the same expectations and requirements as private lands.
- Address local and regional concerns along with post mining use.
- Extend the planning horizon beyond the aggregate supply in the current Clay County pit.

Based on the committee's analysis of aggregate and biological resources, land use recommendations were developed for the parcels identified in Figure 35. Areas with important biological resources such as mesic prairie, but without significant gravel were labeled "preserve" and recommended for permanent protection. Areas with both gravel and sensitive biological resources were labeled "preserve" but for a length of time based on the parcel's proximity to the current footprint and the desirability of the aggregate resource. Timeframes ranged from 35 years when the county would have nearly depleted the aggregate accessible to a dragline in the current footprint to 75 years when the footprint and proximate parcels would likely be depleted. These environmentally sensitive aggregate reserves should be preserved by lease, easement, or other protection agreement similar to Bicentennial Prairie SNA.

Areas identified for mining are either existing mines or disturbed land with economically viable aggregate resources. These require mining and reclamation plans not included in this document. The remaining parcels were designated restore or reclaim. "Reclaim" areas are exhausted gravel pits or spoil piles. Vegetation used in the reclamation process should be native species of local origin. "Restore" refers to areas of non-native vegetation such as abandoned agricultural fields. Some of these should be given a priority in restoration because they could serve as valuable links between larger patches of habitat. Other observations are included with each parcel recommendation including an assessment of habitat and species, estimated aggregate resource and quality, impacts to the fen if aggregate were mined below the water table, and general observations on the condition of the parcel. Figure 34 illustrates a composite view of land use designations and boundaries. Below is a summary of those designations:

Mine and Reclaim,	232 acres, 8% of study area
Reclaim abandoned mines & spoil piles,	63 acres, 2% of study area
Restore,	681 acres, 23% of study area
Preserve,	1502 acres, 52% of study area
Preserve or Transfer,	431 acres, 15% of study area

Each land use recommendation covers several discrete parcels. These are identified in Figure 35 by codes for the landowner(s) or management units, the recommended use, and a number. Codes for landowners are C: Clay County, DNR: Dept of Natural Resources, St: State Trust Fund, TNC: The Nature Conservancy. Use codes are MR: Mine and reclaim, PT: preserve or transfer, P: pre-serve or already protected, RS: restore, and RC: reclaim.

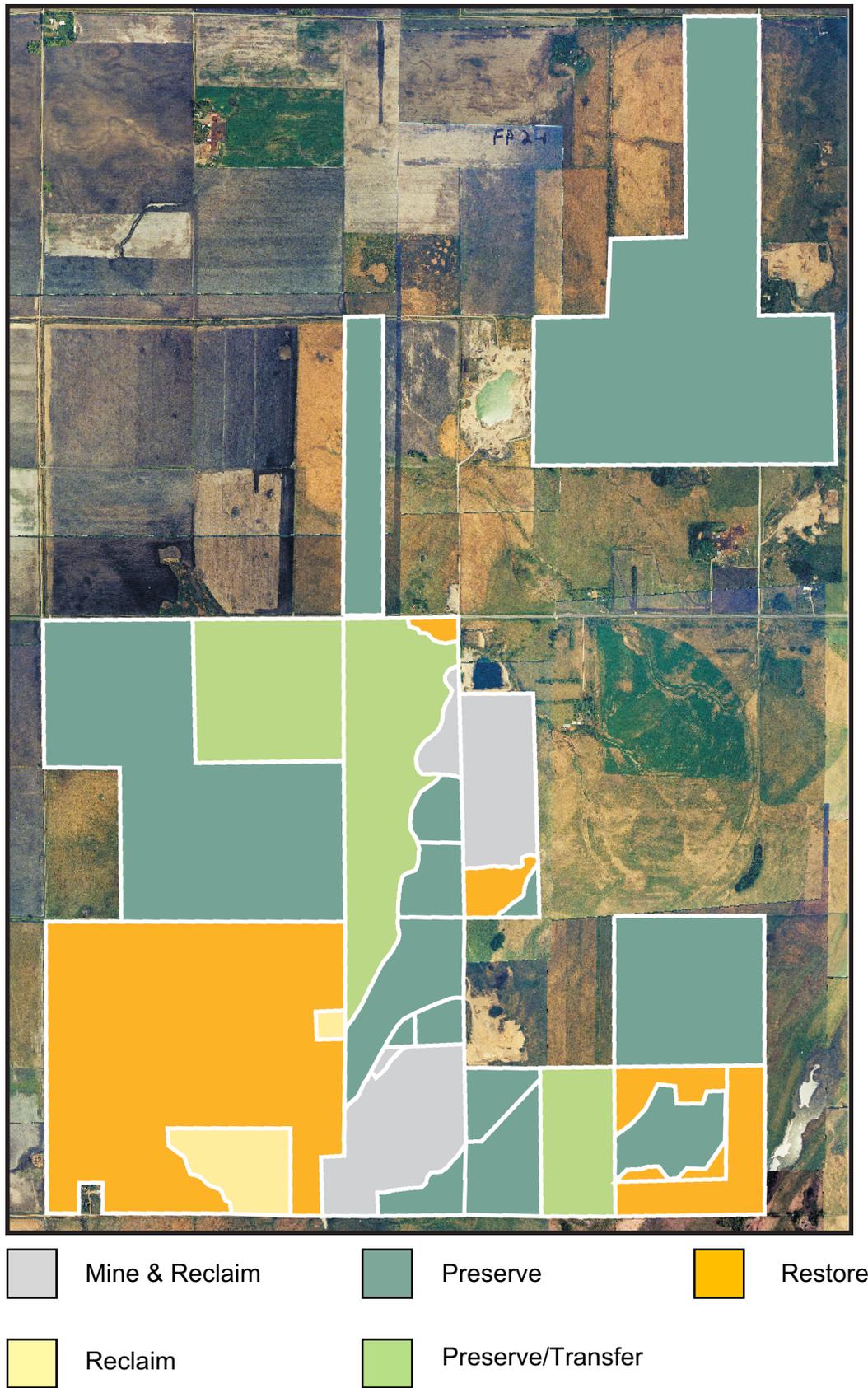


Figure 34: Composite view of land use recommendations for parcels in study area.