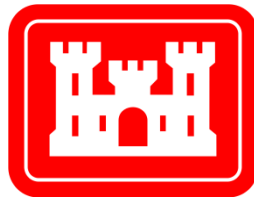


**PROSPECTUS FOR THE
ARDOT FOURCHE CREEK MITIGATION BANK
PULASKI COUNTY, ARKANSAS**



Arkansas Department of Transportation
Environmental Division



March 30, 2020

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I. Project Description

The Arkansas Department of Transportation Department (ARDOT) proposes the establishment of a stream and wetland mitigation bank in Pulaski County, Arkansas. The mitigation bank will be located off of Otter Creek Road approximately 0.6 miles West of Interstate 30 (Figure 1). The property is a 28-acre site located in the Northeast quarter of Section 8, Township 1 South, and Range 13 West. The property was purchased by ARDOT for the establishment of a mitigation bank to compensate for unavoidable impacts to stream and wetland areas associated with highway construction and maintenance projects authorized under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

II. Management Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of this mitigation bank is to enhance function of Fourche Creek and its associated floodplain. This will be accomplished by restoring connectivity between Fourche Creek and its historic flood plain, and the restoration of an unnamed intermittent tributary of Otter Creek. The proposed mitigation area is composed of an area that was historically bottomland hardwood forest located along of Fourche Creek (Figure 2), an EPA Section 303(d) listed impaired stream. Soil surveys are characteristic of bottomland habitats with Amy and Rector silt loam soils with a grade typically of less than one degree.

Management goals for the proposed mitigation bank include: preservation, restoration, and enhancement of riparian stream buffers, wetlands and their associated upland areas. Mitigation efforts will improve connectivity between Fourche Creek and its historic floodplain as well as the enhancement of 100-foot-wide riparian buffers through the planting of bottomland hardwoods.

Stream restoration will reconnect a historical but currently non-functional intermittent stream to Otter Creek whose connection was severed by the construction of a man-made ditch along the southeast property boundary. Hydrology will be restored to the Fourche Creek floodplain by notching the existing levee in four locations. Access to the floodplain will improve flood water storage during flood events and potentially aid in improving stream function to the heavily degraded Fourche Creek. The reconnection will also restore connectivity of two impaired wetlands with floodwaters from the creek that severed by the levee as well.

Recent historical land use of the site was primarily for grazing cattle. Restoration efforts have removed all livestock grazing activities in preparation for restoration activities. Planting of riparian buffers will be conducted through the winter planting of bare root bottomland hardwood seedlings. The remaining open land outside of the buffer areas will also be planted in bare root bottomland hardwood seedlings to reduce habitat fragmentation, which will increase habitat types and maximize the lands value to wildlife.

III. Establishment and Operation

An Interagency Review Team (IRT) would facilitate the establishment of the mitigation bank. The IRT would allow review and facilitate consensus from Federal, state, and public entities on the

Mitigation Banking Instrument (MBI). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Little Rock District (SWL) would serve as Chair of the IRT and make final decisions regarding the terms and conditions of the MBI. Property ownership and sponsorship will be retained by ARDOT. Design, construction, and monitoring associated with the mitigation bank will be conducted by ARDOT.

Agencies invited to participate on the IRT include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VI (EPA); the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region IV (FWS); the Federal Highway Administration, Arkansas Division (FHWA); the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ); the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC); the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC); and the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC).

IV. Proposed Service Area

The geographic service area (Figure 4) would include all or parts of seven sub-basins (8 digit HUCs). This includes a primary service area of the Lower Arkansas Maumelle and secondary service area of the Lake Conway Point Remove and Cadron. These sub-basins all are encompassed by the Lower Arkansas - Fourche La Fave sub-region (HUC 111102). The corresponding United States Geologic Service (USGS) cataloging codes are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. USGS Hydrologic Unit Codes for Sub-Basins in the Geographic Service Area

Sub-basin Name	HUC	Service Area
Lower Arkansas - Maumelle	11110207	Primary
Lake Conway – Point Remove	11110203	Secondary
Cadron	11110205	Secondary

V. General Need and Feasibility

ARDOT is required to mitigate unavoidable losses to streams and wetlands due to highway construction projects. The proposed service area is located in a highly urbanized Sub-basin with regular road construction and maintenance activity and would be a readily available resource for future ARDOT activities in the area. ARDOT has trained staff skilled in the planning and implementation of stream and wetland mitigation instruments, and has working relationships with the state of Arkansas' natural resource agencies.

VI. Ownership

ARDOT is the owner of the property and has recorded a restriction on the Warranty Deed to the property. The restriction requires that any activity on the property complies with the terms of a mitigation plan or banking instrument. ARDOT will manage the property for the operational life of the bank. The operational life of the bank terminates when compensatory mitigation credits have been exhausted and the bank site is self-sustaining. Subsequently, ARDOT may enter into a management agreement with an appropriate state or Federal agency or conservation organization provided the selected organization manages the property in accordance with the provisions of the MBI.

VII. Long-term management

ARDOT is responsible for securing adequate funding to monitor and maintain the mitigation bank throughout its operational life, as well as beyond the operational life if not self-sustaining. ARDOT would be responsible for securing sufficient funds to cover contingency actions in the event of default or failure. Additionally, ARDOT would be responsible for providing alternative compensatory mitigation if it is determined necessary by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

VIII. Qualifications of the sponsor

ARDOT is presently the owner and sponsor of nine mitigation banks, totaling 2,709 acres of stream and/or wetland mitigation property managed according to approved banking instruments. The ARDOT Environmental Natural Resource Section has an expert staff of environmental professionals that have been instrumental in the establishment of several mitigation banks.

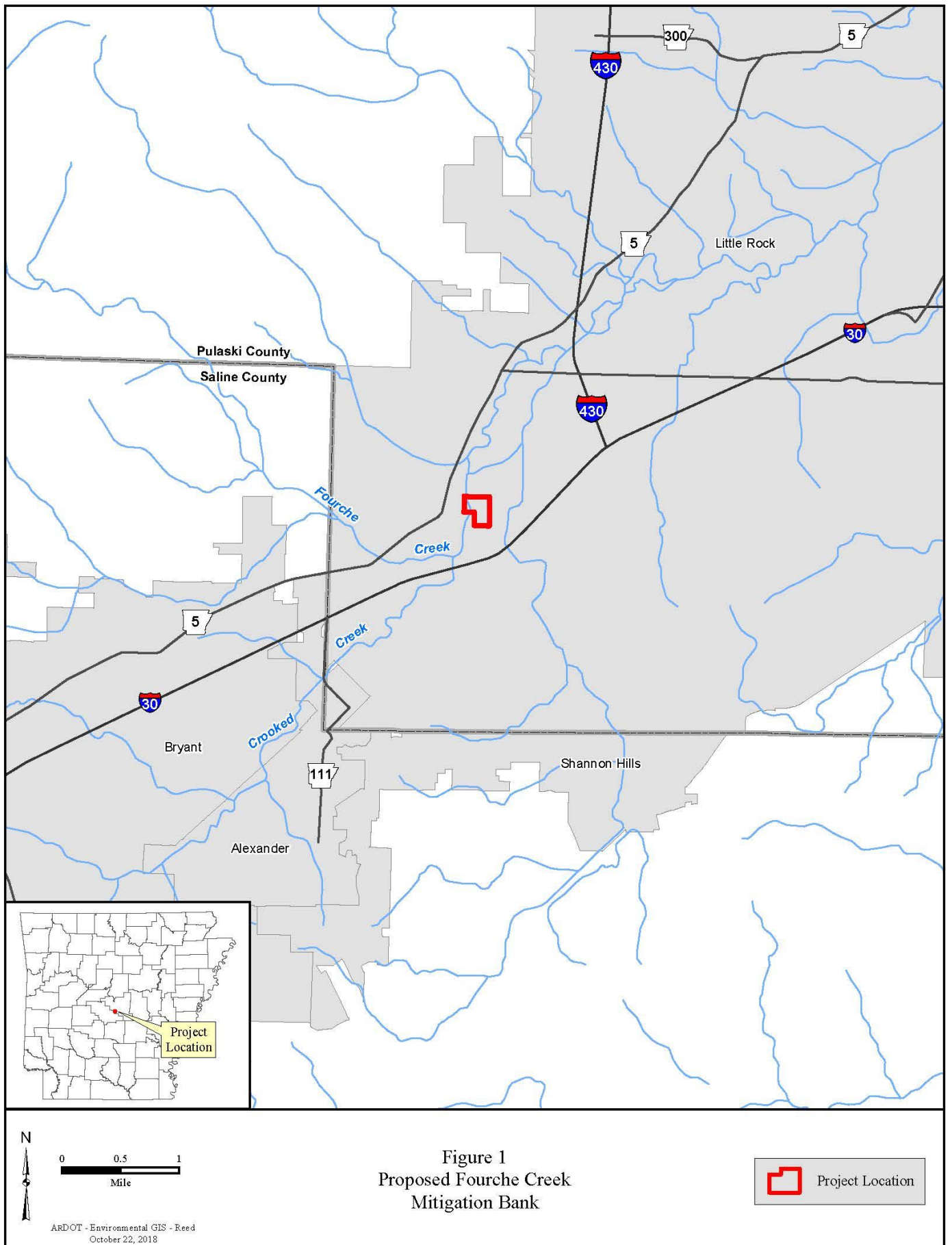
IX. Ecological Suitability

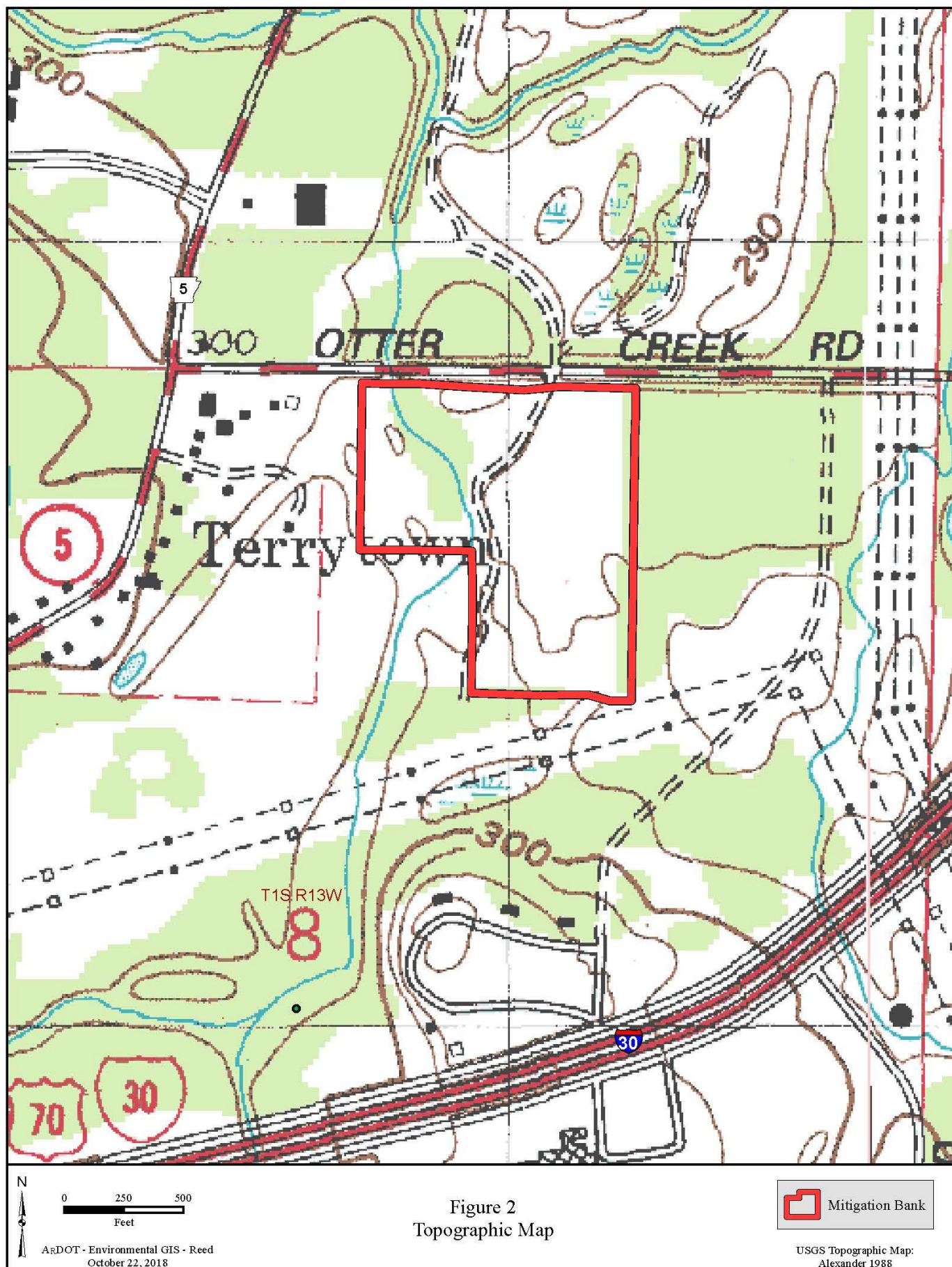
The primary considerations for the selection of this site included: watershed needs and the practicability of establishing an ecologically self-sustaining aquatic resource. This property is suitable for restoring aquatic functionality to a degraded system and has the potential to increase biological connectivity with other natural areas. The Fourche Creek Mitigation Bank is located in southern Pulaski County adjacent to three other mitigation areas. Two of the adjacent areas are owned by ARDOT, the Otter Creek Mitigation Area (10 acres) and the Fourche Creek Mitigation Site (5 acres), and is directly across from approximately 200 acres of Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Mitigation Property. Mitigation of the property will restore historic hydrological conditions to wetlands and an intermittent stream by cutting gaps in the existing levee and planting of wetlands and riparian buffers with bald cypress and bottomland hardwoods.

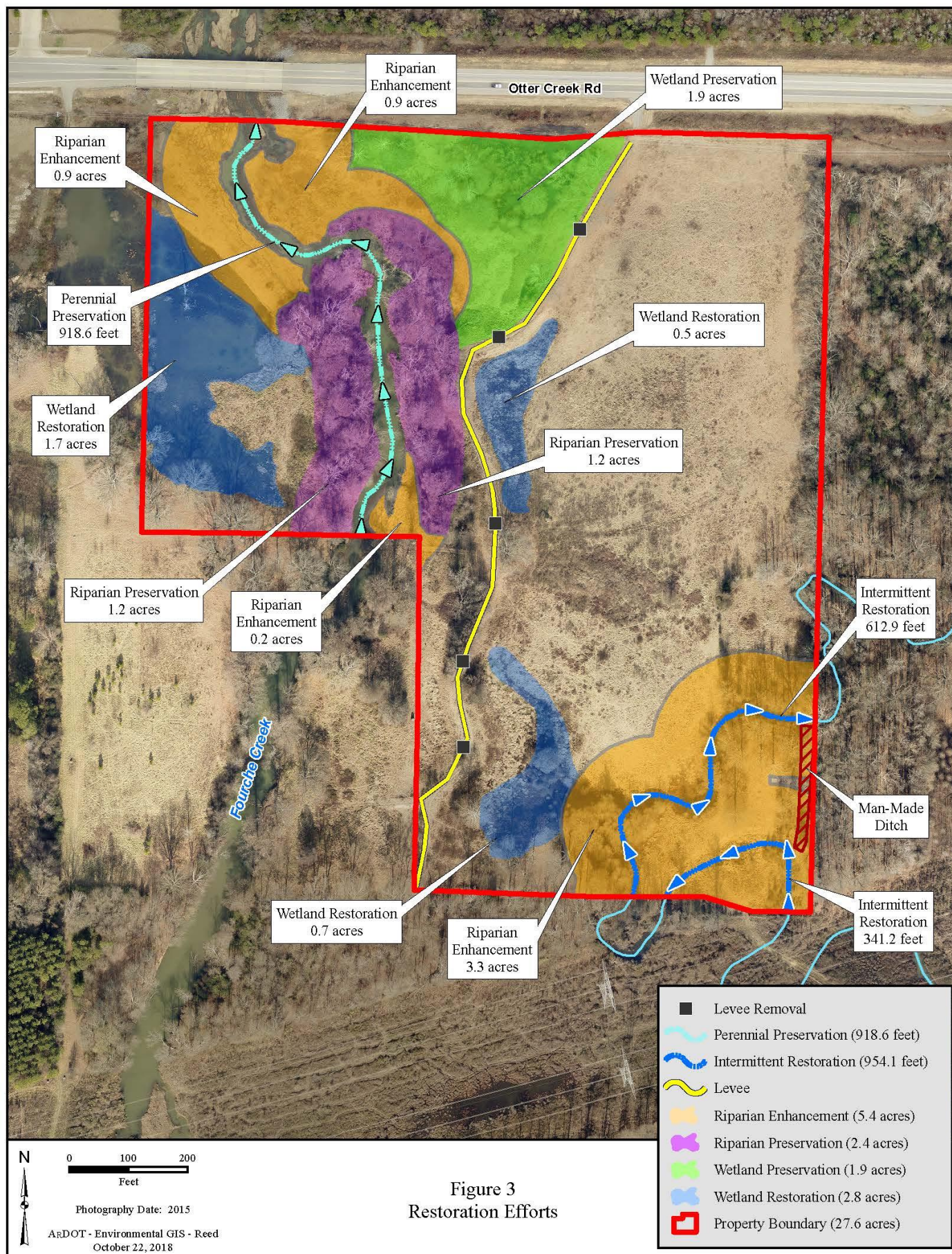
This project would restore bottomland habitat--with wetland and stream functions--to a section of Fourche Creek on a watershed-scale in support of Audubon Arkansas' Fourche Creek Watershed Initiative. According to Audubon Arkansas, the Fourche Creek watershed is arguably the most important urban watershed in Arkansas. The property is located within the Greater Little Rock Metropolitan Area and is currently composed of undeveloped fallow pasture. This property would provide vital connectivity to other adjoining natural areas that currently function as an important biological corridor within the metropolitan area. The site is home to a relatively diverse biological

community including deer, otters, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, swamp rabbits, and 21 species of observed Neotropical migratory birds.

Additionally, the site is adjacent to two other ARDOT owned mitigation properties, the Otter Creek Mitigation Site, and the Crooked Creek Mitigation Site, which would establish permanent habitat connectivity between the ARDOT owned sites (Figure 5). This site will establish a 28-acre natural area in a watershed that is under continued development and will also provide vital connectivity to other adjoining natural areas that currently function as a biological corridor within the metropolitan area.







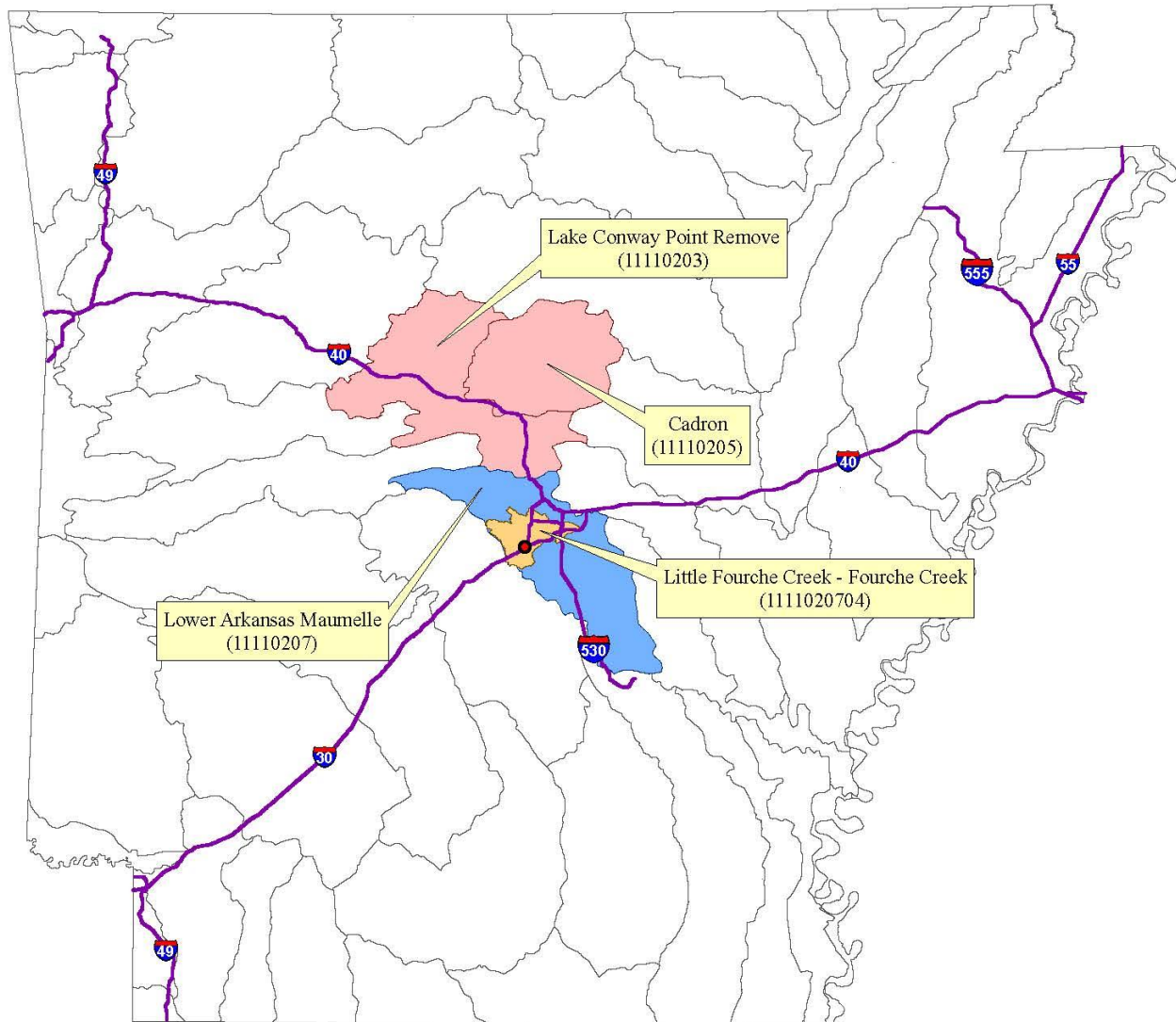


Figure 4
Proposed Service Area Watershed

