
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN



for

Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve

Caldwell County, TX

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Background Information

The Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve consists of 265 acres of ranch land located in Caldwell County, Texas. The property is owned fee simple by Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBRT) and has been designated as a conservation easement held by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA). The conservation easement ensures the following purposes:

1. Protect, maintain and enhance the wetland, riparian and wildlife habitat on the property.
2. Provide appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting the conservation values of the property.
3. Provide scientific and educational opportunities related to wetlands, wildlife, and conservation.

Maps are provided to familiarize the reader with locations of various features on and around the property, including a topographic map of the property and surrounding area (**Figure 1**) and 2018 high resolution satellite imagery of the property (**Figure 2**).

In 2008, 21 bioretention basins were constructed on the property by the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) as mitigation for road construction activities on SH-130 and in compliance with a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 permit. The property met the mitigation monitoring goals of that permit and has met all requirements of the permit. The property changed ownership after the 5 years of mitigation monitoring were completed.

Purpose and Goal of the Land Management Plan

The purpose of this land management plan is to ensure that the purposes and goals of the conservation land are maintained in perpetuity for the property. The specific goals of this plan include the following:

- To maintain the undisturbed, natural condition of the property;
- To maintain the natural, scenic, open space, ecological, and educational values of the property;
- To maintain and potentially improve habitat for wildlife and plants; and
- To facilitate public outreach and education and allow public access to the front portion of the property.

In an effort to meet these goals, specific natural resources management guidelines are recommended by this management plan. This plan is considered a living document and may be modified over the years as changes occur on the property and its use within the legal restrictions of the conservation easement. The management plan is provided as a guide for managing the natural resources and should not be considered a legally binding document. In the sections that follow, recommended natural resources management procedures to protect the various natural and sensitive features of the property and to continue the current use of the property are described.

Man-Made Features

The Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve is largely undeveloped with the only man-made building being a restroom facility located at the entrance at the northeastern corner of the property (**Figure 3**). Roads traversing the property are two-track pasture roads that are maintained by periodic use. This level of maintenance should be continued, and periodic mowing or clearing of the roads is recommended. Improvements to the road such as addition of fill material or gravel and grading or excavation should be minimal and restricted to areas where repairs are required to allow for passage of vehicles. Use of vehicles off-road should be avoided to

prevent damage to vegetation and wildlife habitat. If the roads are damaged or eroded, they should be immediately repaired to prevent further soil loss and subsequent damage to the natural environment. Repairs may include installation of check dams, placement of fill and gravel, grading, and/or other appropriate measures. One concrete bridge and several concrete low water crossings are present on-site. These structures should be periodically maintained to ensure unobstructed flow of Plum Creek.

Fences surrounding the property should be maintained and repaired, as required. This will assist in the protection of vegetation and wildlife from impacts caused by illegal trespassing, poaching, and hunting. Legal hunting on the property is encouraged to assist in the management of deer populations and removal of feral hog populations.

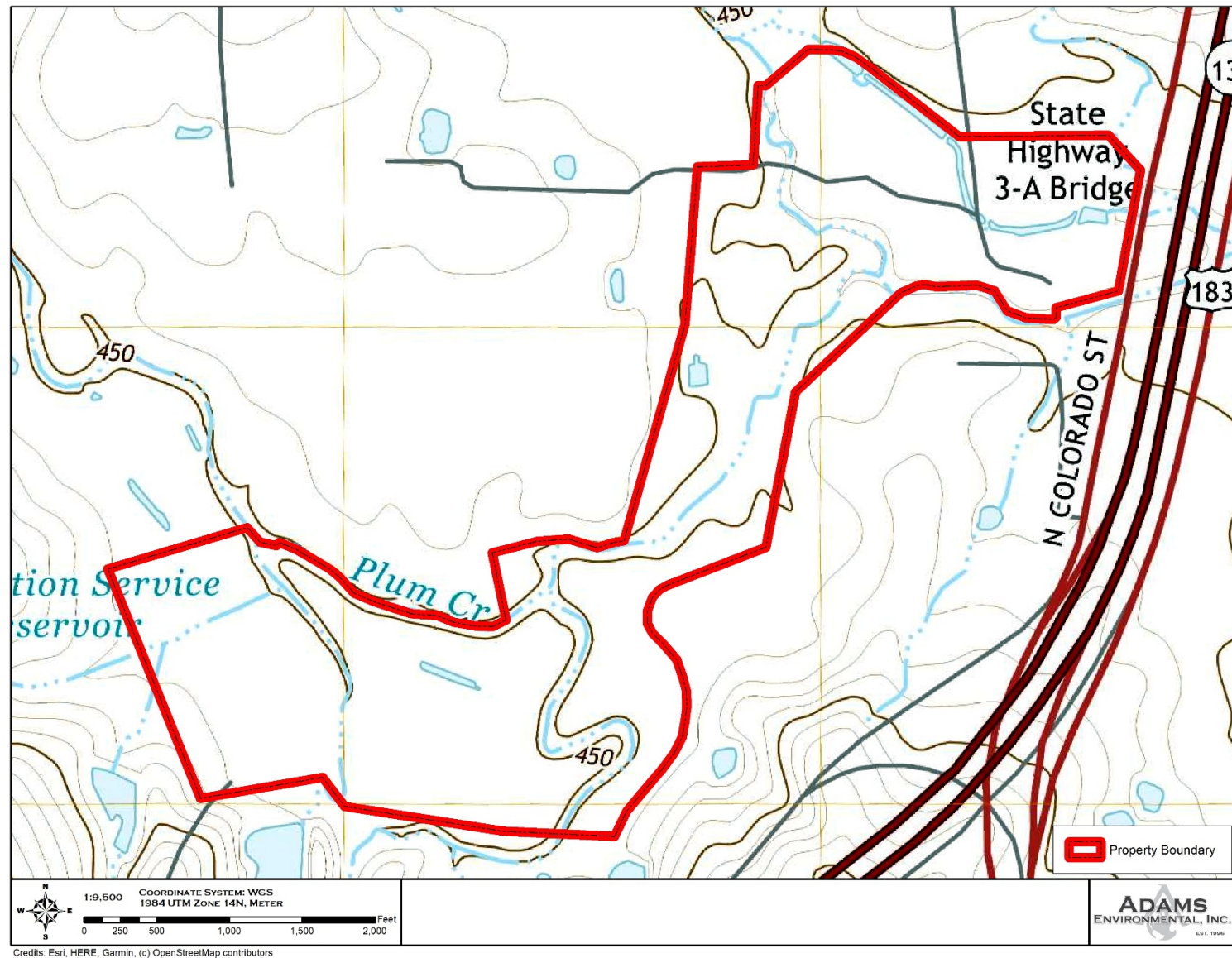


Figure 1. Topographic map of the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve (Source: 2019 Lockhart North USGS Topographic Map)

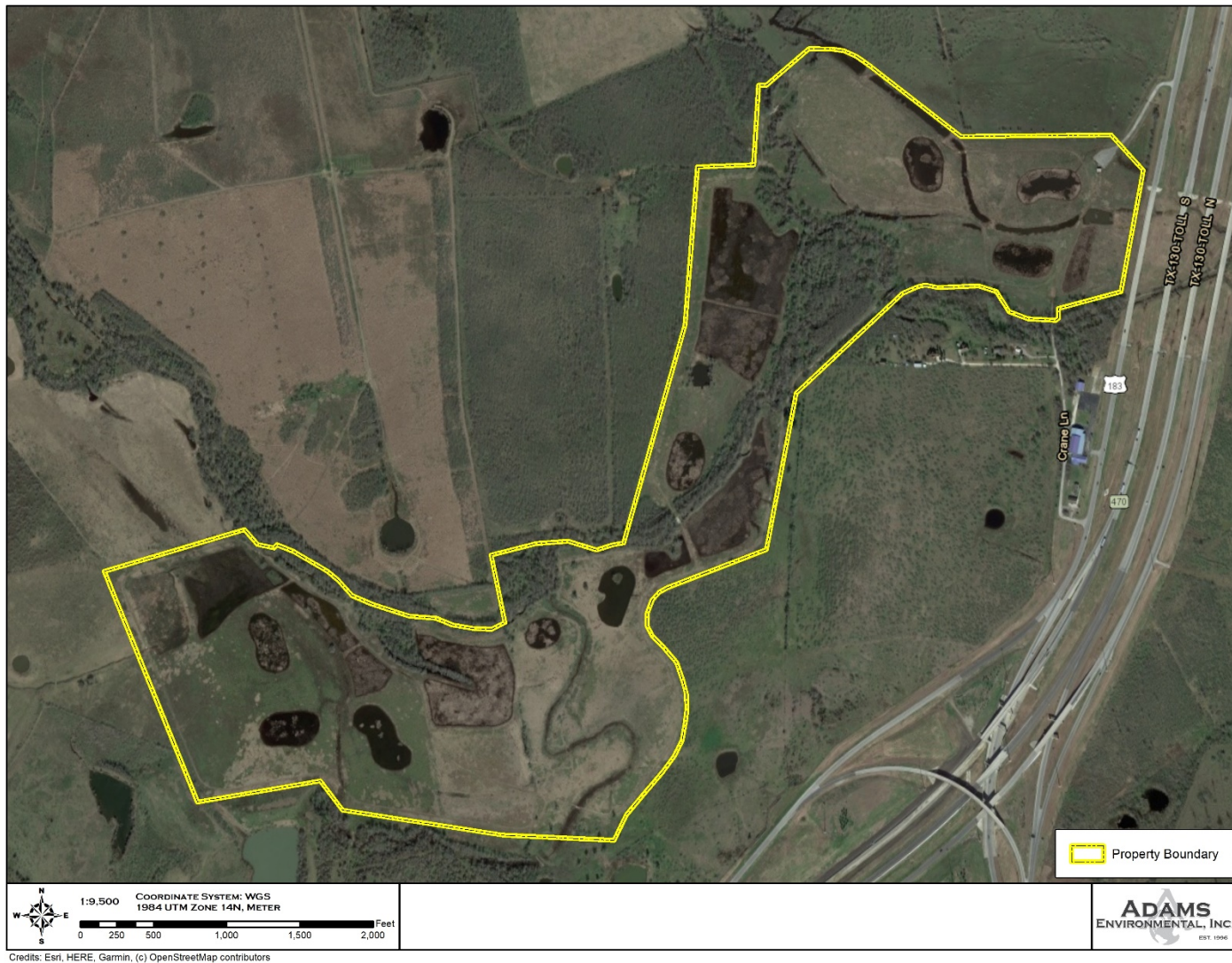


Figure 2. Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve depicted on 2018 high resolution satellite imagery (Source: Esri, 2018)

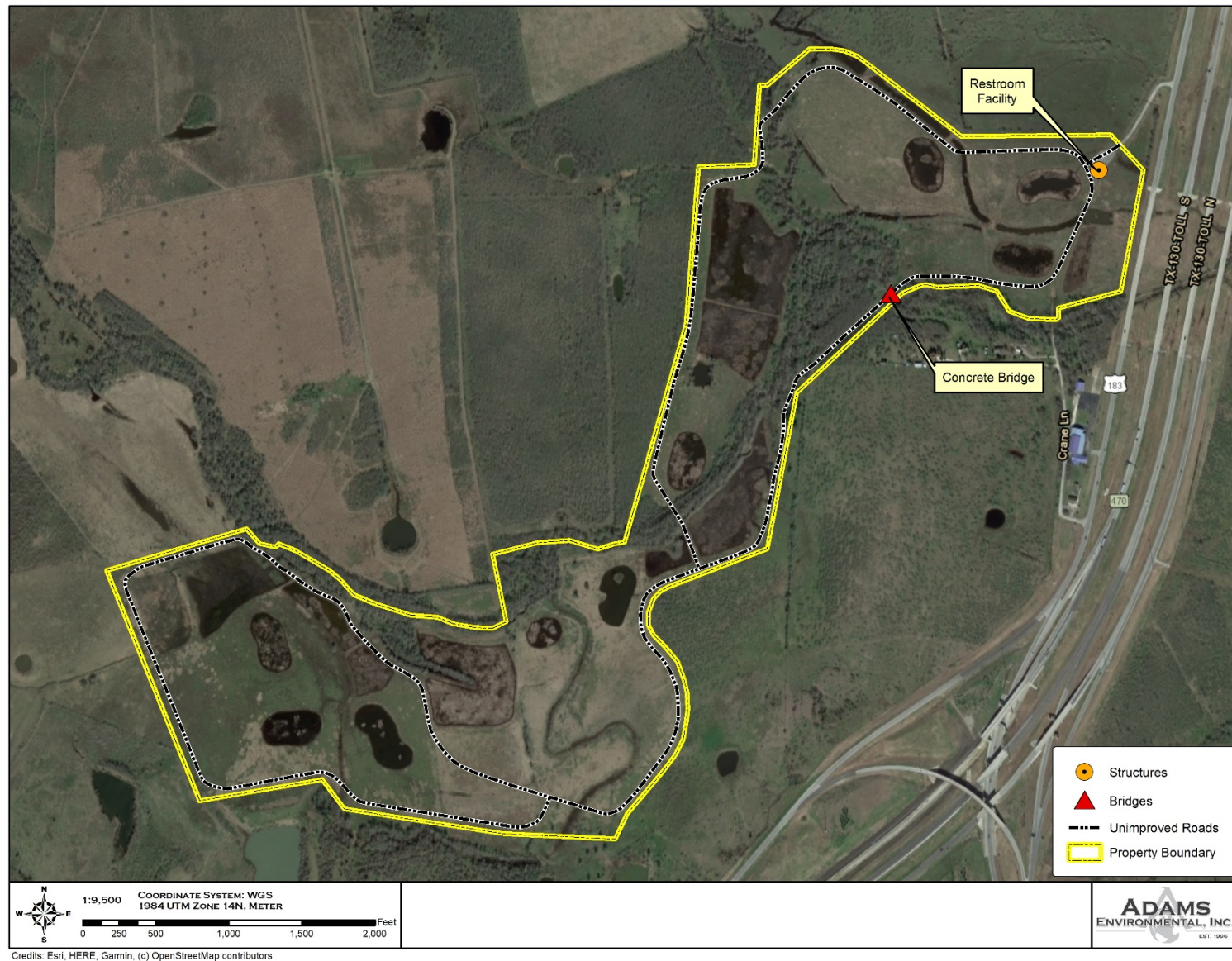


Figure 3. Man-made Structures on the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve

Agricultural Use of the Property

Currently, no improved pastures exist on the property, and no livestock of any type are currently grazing on the property. An agreement exists between GBRT and a lessee of the neighboring property to allow the neighbor to graze cattle on the property in exchange for maintenance of the shared fence and an annual fee. The neighbor has not yet grazed any cattle on the property, which has resulted in some improvement in range conditions. When livestock is placed on the property, grazing rates should be adjusted to encourage succession of plant communities in a positive direction towards reference or climax plant communities as described by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). GBRT is encouraged to coordinate with the NRCS for assistance in setting these grazing rates.

Geologic Features

No sensitive geologic features such as seeps, springs, caves, or karst are found on this property. Geological outcrops underlying the property are described by the University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology as the following:

- Qal – Alluvium
“Floodplain deposits”
- Qt – Fluvatile Terrace Deposits
“Gravel, sand, silt, and clay; adjacent to Edwards Plateau, predominantly gravel, limestone, dolomite, and chert; southeastward in vicinity of Tertiary rocks, increasing amounts of sand, silt, and clay; contiguous terraces are separated by a solid line. On the previous edition of the San Antonio Sheet low terrace deposits composed of gravel, sand, silt, clay, and organic material were shown in a separate color. These low terrace deposits are mostly above flood level along entrenched streams; fluvatile morphology well preserved with point bars, oxbows, and abandoned channel segments; most rivers below Balcones escarpment are entrenched and do not have active floodplains; some exceptions are Nueces River, part of Medina River, and San Antonio River below mouth of Medina.”
- Emi – Midway Group
“Clay and sand; clay, silty, sandy, silt and sand more abundant upward grading to mudstone and sand of Wilcox Group, light gray to dark gray; sand, glauconitic to very glauconitic in lower part, argillaceous, poorly sorted, phosphatic nodules and pebbles common in lowermost part, weathers to yellow and yellowish-brown soil; thickness about 100-400 feet.”
- Kknm – Navarro Group and Marlbrook Marl undivided
“Marl, clay, sandstone, and siltstone; marl and clay, glauconitic, contain concretions of limonite and siderite; sandstone, fine-grained, and siltstone, yellow brown, contain concretions of hard bluish-gray siliceous limestone 2 to 10 feet in diameter; sandstone beds have little lateral continuity and become more abundant westward; thickness up to 580 feet.”

Range Sites

Range sites are excellent tools for monitoring plant succession on the property to ensure that succession is moving in a positive direction towards a climax community. This is an indication of good plant community health. A healthy plant community will provide a healthy wildlife environment.

In the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Survey of Caldwell County (1972), range sites are described in detail. Using this information, the plant communities should be periodically evaluated to determine plant composition. If plant community composition is moving in a positive direction towards climax communities,

the plant species listed as “climax vegetation” should be increasing in dominance on each range site. If the site is degrading, these same species will be decreasing in dominance and even disappearing from the ecosystem. The following is a list of each of the range sites found on this property and the climax species that should be found within those sites. If livestock are not grazed on the property, plant communities should be moving in a positive direction towards climax communities. Otherwise, stocking rates should be adjusted to encourage positive succession on the site.

Clayey Bottomland Range Site (94% of Property)

Climax Community:

- Mixture of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and some trees
- Composition
 - Little bluestem (30%)
 - Virginia wildrye (20%)
 - Switchgrass (15%)
 - Indiangrass (15%)
 - Vine-mesquite (5%)
 - Perennial and annual forbs (5%)
 - Trees and shrubs (10%)
- Community varies based on the location of the soil and the amount of flooding

If degradation occurs:

- Switchgrass and Indiangrass will decrease
- Further degradation is indicated by the establishment and increase of the following species:
 - Vine-mesquite (greater than 5%)
 - Meadow dropseed
 - Buffalograss
 - Annual weeds
 - Annual grasses

Blackland Range Site (5% of Property)

Climax Community:

- True prairie that has a few large live oak, elm, and hackberry trees along the draws and in a few motts
- Composition
 - Little bluestem (50%)
 - Indiangrass (20%)
 - Texas wintergrass (5%)
 - Vine-mesquite (5%)
 - Other grasses (10%)
 - Perennial forbs (5%)
 - Woody plants (5%)

If degradation occurs:

- Little bluestem, Indiangrass, big bluestem, switchgrass, Maximilian sunflower, and Engelmann daisy will decrease
- Further degradation is indicated by the establishment and increase of the following species:
 - Texas wintergrass (greater than 5%)
 - Silver bluestem
 - Tall dropseeds

- Side-oats grama
- Buffalograss
- Annual forbs
- Annual grasses

Eroded Blackland Range Site (1% of Property)

Climax Community:

- Tall grass prairie
- Composition
 - Little bluestem (30%)
 - Indiangrass (10%)
 - Big bluestem (10%)
 - Virginia wildrye (5%)
 - Canada wildrye (5%)
 - Florida paspalum (5%)
 - Side-oats grama (5%)
 - Tall dropseed (5%)
 - Silver bluestem (5%)
 - Texas wintergrass (5%)
 - Vine-mesquite (5%)
 - Forbs (5%)
 - Trees and shrubs (5%)

If degradation occurs:

- Big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indiangrass will decrease
- Further degradation is indicated by the establishment and increase of the following species:
 - Tall dropseed (greater than 5%)
 - Texas wintergrass (greater than 5%)
 - Side-oats grama (greater than 5%)

Floodplains

A review of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) data shows approximately 99% (264 acres) of the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve is located within the 100-year floodplain. Some of the constructed bioretention basins and water features will likely be periodically inundated by flooding. The features would likely not require planting of wetland species because the area appears to support a substantial seed bank of these plants. Water features and bioretention basins are excellent attractants for both terrestrial wildlife, wading birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. If GBRT is interested in construction of new surface water features or enhancement of current water features and bioretention basins, coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NRCS, and other agencies is encouraged. Excellent information and assistance are available through these agencies.

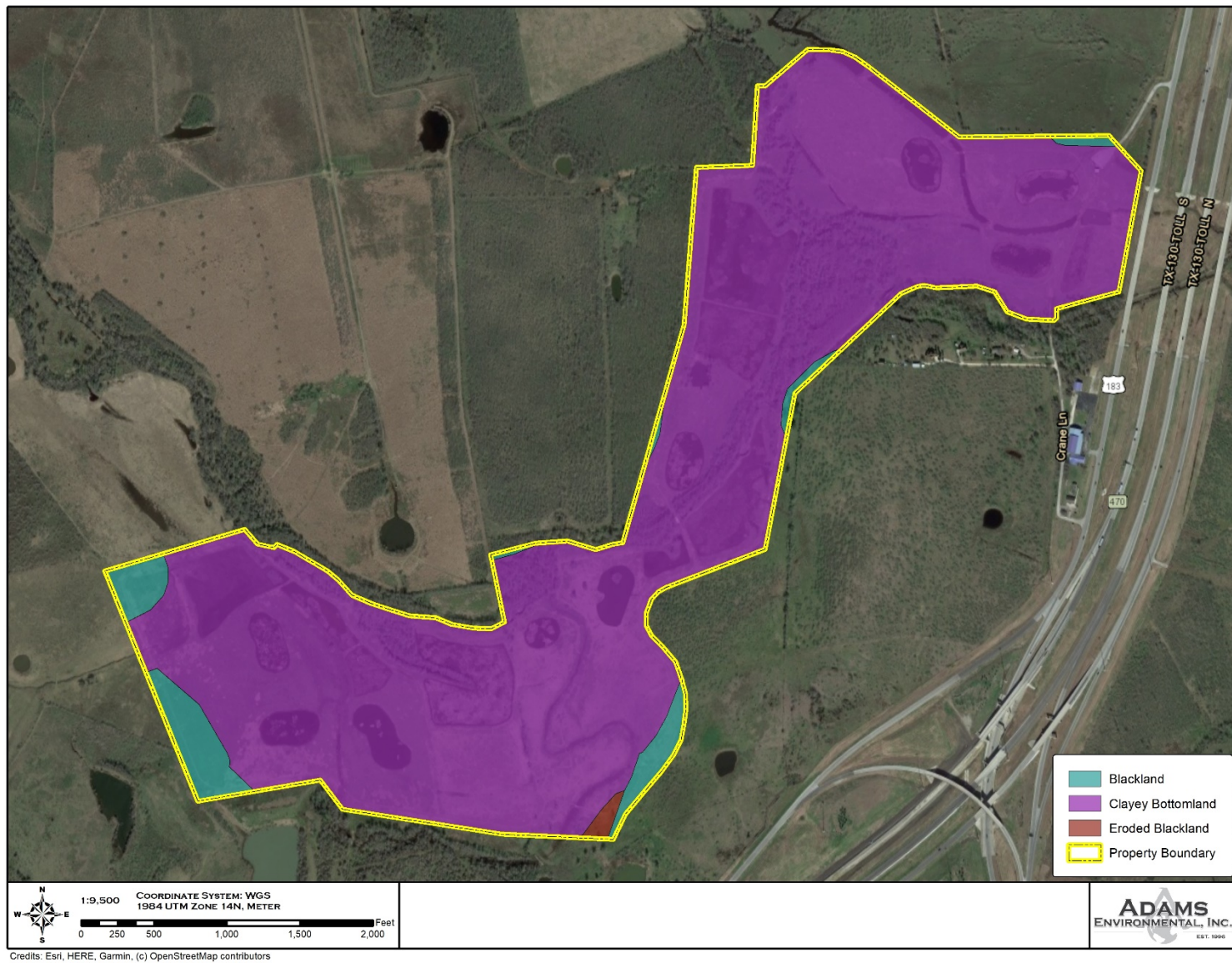


Figure 4. Range sites found on the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve (Source: Web Soil Survey)

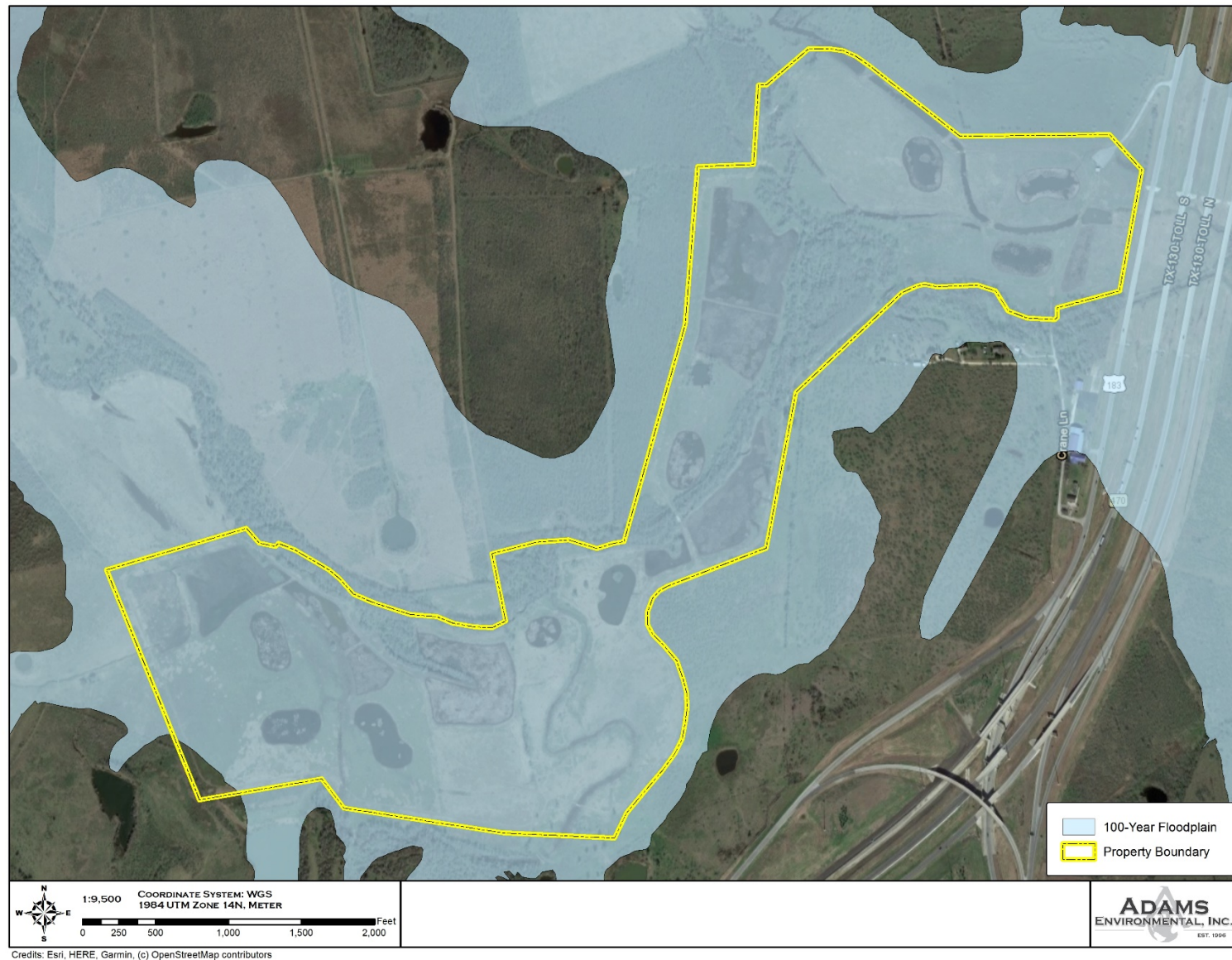


Figure 5. 100-year floodplain as mapped on the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve (Source: FEMA)

Surface Waters

Surface water features on the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve include Plum Creek and six (6) intermittent tributaries. Soil disturbing activities should be minimized around these streams as well as any other minor water features on the property, including the constructed bioretention basins. This will decrease the movement of sediments and soil into Plum Creek. The twenty-one (21) bioretention basins constructed on the property by TXDOT remain present. In a typical year, these depressions hold water and support hydrophytic vegetation communities. Growth of native vegetation, especially woody and aquatic plants should be encouraged on these water features. Any invasives or undesirable species such as chinaberry, Chinese tallow, cattail, giant ragweed, and giant cane should be removed. No individual species should constitute more than 30% of the vegetative community.

Wildlife

The property supports a diverse wildlife population. Allowing the vegetation to continue to grow naturally will attract native wildlife species to the site. Continued monitoring and maintenance of the bioretention basins and surface waters will enhance wildlife habitat, attracting a variety of birds, reptiles and mammals.

Feral hogs are a major problem in this area. In general, feral hogs decimate important and fragile habitats such as springs, seeps, riparian areas, wetlands. They degrade stream water quality, alter topography and runoff/collection patterns, and degrade vegetation community composition. Hogs move through areas individually (in the case of boars) or large sounders that often disturb the ground by rooting, leaving bare, excavated patches of ground that often take years to recover and are susceptible to infestation by invasive plants. Management of this property should include an intensive program to control this nuisance species by hunting and/or trapping. Because feral hogs are not a game or protected species, they may be hunted year-round.

Management of white-tailed deer populations is important in drought-susceptible states like Texas. Historically, herds were managed naturally by predators; however, predator control in Texas has reduced the number of available predators necessary to curtail white-tailed deer populations. Presently, proper management ensures that the overall population is healthy and genetic diversity is maintained. Management of the population reduces the potential for starvation during drought as well as limits the spread of diseases in dense, malnourished herds.

Vegetation

Field surveys conducted during the establishment of baseline monitoring conditions indicate that the site was impacted by grazing and other activities in the past and is slowly recovering from those activities. Invasive woody species such as chinaberry should be removed by mechanical or chemical methods. Additionally, herbaceous invasives such as great ragweed should be manually removed or controlled by judicious application of herbicides. This species tends to be very aggressive and can form dense populations that compete with desirable species and provide little protection for soil erosion.

Giant Ragweed is the predominant weed problem on this property. In many areas, the species is nearly a monoculture stand that outcompetes the native grasses and other desirable species. Chemical control methods and seeding with native species will be necessary to bring the plant community back to a near climax community and for removal of giant ragweed. The optimal planting method for the grasses would entail using a grain drill at 6-inch row spacing. In an effort to obtain the best control method, trial treatment plots in two or more areas of the property should be established. These plots could be as small as 10 ft. x 30 ft. or as large as 1 acre.

Consultation and/or teaming with local county extension agents (Texas A&M AgriLife), Texas A&M Range Science Department, Texas State University Range Department, and/or Texas Parks and Wildlife is highly recommended to finalize potential treatment lists and to obtain necessary equipment, materials, personnel, and funding. This provides an outstanding opportunity for GBRT to team with these agencies to research range management methodologies. Potential treatments include the following:

- Application of glyphosate (Roundup) at 1-1.5 lb/acre in April when ragweed is no more than 6 inches tall. Drill native grass seed mix within 1-2 weeks of the herbicide application (can be done at the same time). The depth of drilling should be determined by the recommended planting depth of the species. Broadcast application of 2,4-D at 1-2 qt./acre as needed when escape ragweed germinates and grows. Apply a mixture of 1-2 qt. 2,4-D and 0.5-2 pt. dicamba/acre the following spring when ragweed is 3-6 inches tall. A second application may be required.
- Application of picloram (Tordon) at 1 lb/acre in April when ragweed is no more than 6 inches tall. Drill native grass seed mix within 1-2 weeks of the herbicide application (can be done at the same time). The depth of drilling should be determined by the recommended planting depth of the species. Broadcast application of 2,4-D at 1-2 qt./acre as needed when escape ragweed germinates and grows. Apply picloram at 1 lb/acre the following spring before ragweed is 3-6 inches tall (can be applied before the ragweed germinates).
- Mow vegetation to a height of approximately 1 inch when ragweed is 6-12 inches tall. Drill native grass seed mix at the same time as mowing. Broadcast application of 2,4-D at 1-2 qt./acre as needed when escape ragweed germinates and grows. Apply a mixture of 1-2 qt. 2,4-D and 0.5-2 pt. dicamba/acre the following spring when ragweed is 3-6 inches tall. A second application may be required.
- Thoroughly disk the area. Ideally, the area should be disked, invasive plants allowed to germinate, and then disked a second or even third time before native grasses are seeded. Drill native grass species immediately after the last disking. Broadcast application of 2,4-D at 1-2 qt./acre as needed when escape ragweed germinates and grows. Apply a mixture of 1-2 qt. 2,4-D and 0.5-2 pt. dicamba/acre the following spring when ragweed is 3-6 inches tall. A second application may be required.
- Thoroughly disk the area. Ideally, the area should be disked, invasive plants allowed to germinate and then disked a second or even third time before native grasses are seeded. Broadcast spread native grass species immediately after the last disking. The grasses could be spread as seed only or could also be sprayed as an organic mulch mixture similar to the methods used by the Texas Department of Transportation. Broadcast application of 2,4-D at 1-2 qt./acre as needed when escape ragweed germinates and grows. Apply a mixture of 1-2 qt. 2,4-D and 0.5-2 pt. dicamba/acre the following spring when ragweed is 3-6 inches tall. A second application may be required.

All areas will require additional weed management in future years until native grasses are well established. Periodic application of 2,4-D and/or dicamba may be required. Controlled burns are also an option if proper measures are used to prevent encroachment of fires onto neighboring properties.

In the marshland vegetation, removal or management of cattail is encouraged. This species is extremely prolific and can colonize and establish dense monocultures that eventually fill and potentially destroy wetlands/bioretenion basins. Cattail can be cut manually but tends to grow back in denser populations. Directed application of herbicides such as Rodeo applied per label instructions can successfully manage this species. Please note that Rodeo (other tradenames include Aquamaster, Eraser AQ, Touchdown Pro, and AquaNeat), not Roundup, should be used in aquatic areas because Roundup contains a surfactant that is

lethal to many fishes. A registered surfactant should be added to the Rodeo for optimal results. Note that these herbicides result in death of the cattails within 1-2 weeks and accumulation of the dead organic matter can deplete oxygen in the pond causing death of fish and other aquatic wildlife. If this is an issue, the organic matter should be removed from the pond when it begins to degrade.

Removal of these invasives and careful monitoring of the vegetation should encourage the establishment of a healthy, near climax plant community on this property. This will, in turn, attract an excellent diversity of wildlife.

Additionally, it is highly suggested that during vegetation maintenance activities, GBRT staff/volunteers/contractors should clean and disinfect any pruning tools or equipment, including mowers, in between work with invasive species. This should help reduce the spread of invasive species throughout the property and onto the next jobsite. This also aids in reducing the spread of disease among native vegetation.

Conservation Easement Monitoring

An important procedure for the conservation easement is annual monitoring. The next step in the process is to conduct annual monitoring visits to ensure that the property is being properly managed as a conservation easement and no major human-induced impacts or disturbances have occurred. It is important to carefully monitor vegetation composition in an effort to determine if range conditions are degrading or improving. If climax species appear to be increasing over time, this indicates that the site is improving in quality. If invasive or increaser species become dominant, the site may be impacted by changes in climatic conditions (drought/wet seasons), soil disturbance, fire, human activities, livestock, wild hogs or deer. Modification of wildlife management techniques and/or restoration/replanting of impacted vegetation may be warranted. In the case of climatic changes, fire and other large scale natural impacts, the area will likely be allowed to naturally recover without intervention. In most cases, human impacts are remedied by removal of the source of the impact and allowing for natural recovery of the area. If necessary, the area may be replanted with native plant species.

Annual monitoring will include visiting established monitoring points and driving routes on the property and making observations. It is highly recommended that monitoring be conducted in the timeframe from mid-April to mid-June when plants are flowering and can be easily identified. Future monitoring events should be used to create a comprehensive list of plant species at the property. Information collected at the property each year specific to the management plan should include the following at a minimum:

- An overall impression of the current condition of the property.
- Any obvious disturbances to plant communities.
- Significant changes in dominant species within each plant community.
- Observation of any development activities that may have disturbed soils or resulted in runoff.
- New plant species that may have been observed.
- Identification of all observed wildlife species including mammals, reptiles, and birds.
- Overall impression of the vegetation management of the property with recommendations for changes, if required.

Other annual monitoring documentation may be included per the requirements of the conservation easement. The final annual monitoring report should summarize observations at each point and along the driving routes (depicted in **Figure 6**). Photographs should also be included with the report. If changes are observed, comparison photographs between years should be provided. Baseline monitoring point observations are presented in below.

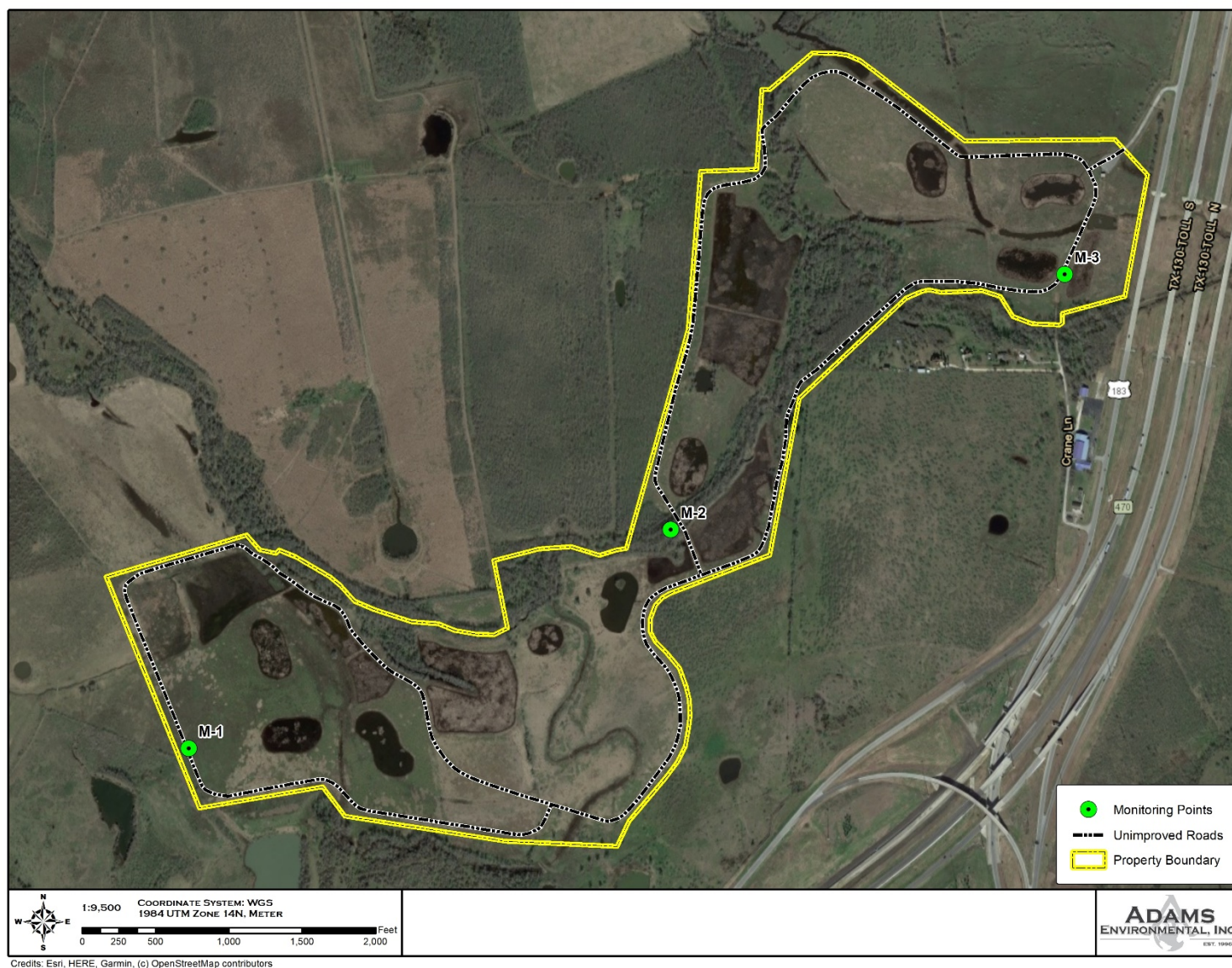


Figure 6. Monitoring Routes and Monitoring Points on the Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve

Monitoring Point 1

Location (Northing/Easting UTM WGS84 Zone 14N): 3310136 N; 625677 E

Geologic Formation: Navarro Group and Marlbrook Marl

Soils: Heiden clay, 3 to 5 percent slopes, eroded

Range Site: Clayey Bottomland

Vegetative Cover: 90%

Site Description: Monitoring Point 1 is a coverage point located on the western portion of the property.

Grasses Observed:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Bermudagrass	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	30

Herbaceous Broadleaf Vegetation Observed (within the stream channel):

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Wood Sorrel	<i>Oxalis drummondii</i>	20
Giant Ragweed	<i>Ambrosia trifida</i>	15
Plains Horsemint	<i>Monarda citriodora</i>	15
Other	--	10

Woody Vegetation Observed:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Shrubs		
Retama	<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>	5
Honey Mesquite	<i>Prosopis glandulosa</i>	2
Trees		
None observed at this point		

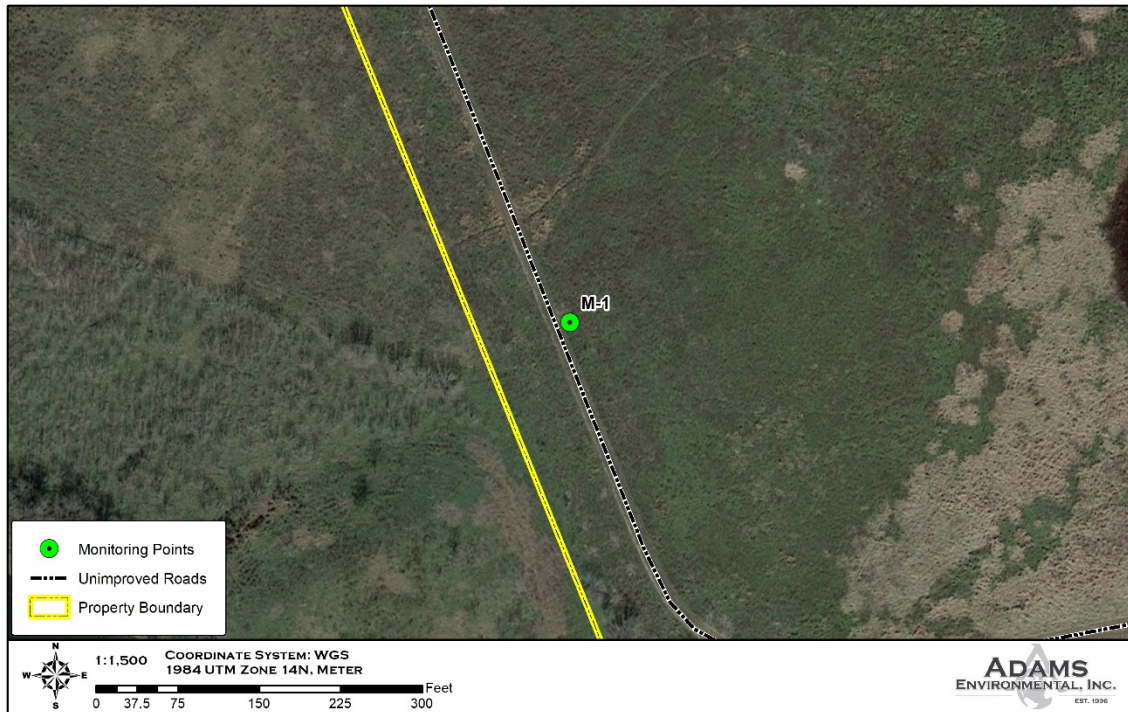


Figure 7. Location of Monitoring Point 1 on a 2018 aerial photograph



Photo 1. View from Monitoring Point 1 at a bearing of 0 degrees



Photo 2. View from Monitoring Point 1 at a bearing of 310 degrees



Photo 3. View from Monitoring Point 1 at a bearing of 250 degrees



Photo 4. View from Monitoring Point 1 at a bearing of 130 degrees



Photo 5. Ground view of Monitoring Point 1 and the surrounding vegetative community

Monitoring Point 2

Location (Northing/Easting UTM WGS84 Zone 14N): 3310591 N; 626680 E

Geologic Formation: Alluvium

Soils: Tinn clay, 0 to 1 percent slopes, frequently flooded

Range Site: Clayey Bottomland

Vegetative Cover: 100%

Site Description: Monitoring Point 2 is a coverage point on the central portion of the property overlooking Plum Creek.

Grasses Observed:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Virginia Wildrye	<i>Elymus Virgincus</i>	90

Herbaceous Broadleaf Vegetation Observed (within the stream channel):

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Giant Ragweed	<i>Ambrosia trifida</i>	2
Bedstraw	<i>Galium aparine</i>	2
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	2

Woody Vegetation Observed:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Shrubs		
None observed at this point		
Trees		
Cedar Elm	<i>Ulmus crassifolia</i>	50
Sugarberry	<i>Celtis laevigata</i>	10



Figure 8. Location of Monitoring Point 2 on a 2018 aerial photograph



Photo 6. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 0 degrees



Photo 7. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 45 degrees



Photo 8. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 90 degrees



Photo 9. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 135 degrees



Photo 10. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 180 degrees



Photo 11. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 225 degrees



Photo 12. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 270 degrees



Photo 13. View from Monitoring Point 2 at a bearing of 315 degrees



Photo 14. Ground view of Monitoring Point 2 and the surrounding vegetative community

Monitoring Point 3

Location (Northing/Easting UTM WGS84 Zone 14N): 3311122 N; 627499 E

Geologic Formation: Alluvium

Soils: Tinn clay, 0 to 1 percent slopes, occasionally flooded

Range Site: Clayey Bottomland

Vegetative Cover: 90%

Site Description: Monitoring Point 3 is a coverage point located on the eastern portion of the property. The point is located between two constructed bioretention basins.

Grasses Observed:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Bermudagrass	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	40

Herbaceous Broadleaf Vegetation Observed (within the stream channel):

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Giant Ragweed	<i>Ambrosia trifida</i>	20
Carolina Geranium	<i>Geranium carolinianum</i>	10
Broomweed	<i>Amphiachyris dracunculoides</i>	5
Wood Sorrel	<i>Oxalis drummondii</i>	5
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	5
Rain Lily	<i>Cooperia pedunculata</i>	2
Cocklebur	<i>Xanthium sp.</i>	2

Woody Vegetation Observed:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Foliar Cover (%)
Shrubs		
None observed at this point		
Trees		
None observed at this point		

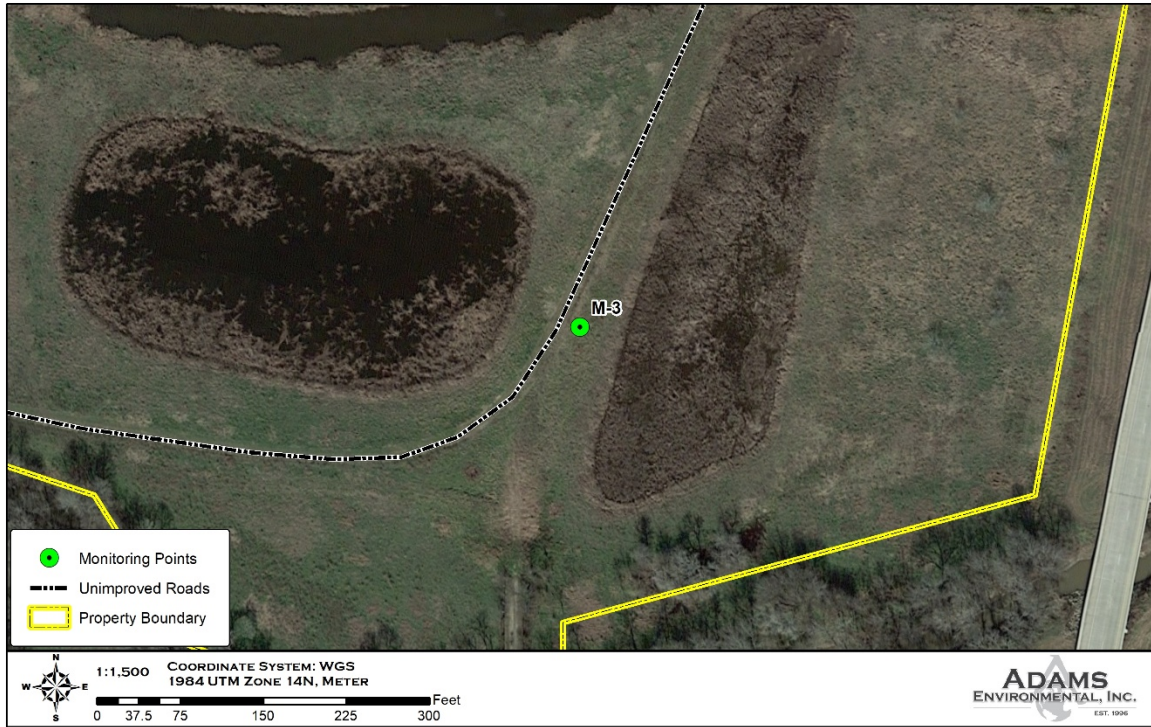


Figure 9. Location of Monitoring Point 3 on a 2018 aerial photograph



Photo 15. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 0 degrees



Photo 16. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 45 degrees



Photo 17. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 90 degrees



Photo 18. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 135 degrees



Photo 19. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 180 degrees



Photo 20. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 225 degrees



Photo 21. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 270 degrees



Photo 22. View from Monitoring Point 3 at a bearing of 315 degrees



Photo 23. Ground view of Monitoring Point 3 and the surrounding vegetative community