

Fox Hollow: What We Know and Potential Needs Identified

Interested people and Land Between The Lakes staff visited the Fox Hollow area to view the conditions of the area. Staff reviewed previous survey and treatment records. There are opportunities to improve the area based on the site visit observations and these reviews. Dispersed recreation (scenic driving, camping, lake access, and hunting), hardwood and pine forest, open lands, and former fields (1960's) comprise the 560 acres of Fox Hollow. Improvements will provide satisfactory visitor experiences and wildlife habitat.

Recreation

Although there are no built facilities, visitors do recreate in the Fox Hollow. There is evidence of the roads being used to access some lakeside campsites and for boat access to the water.

Evidence of rutting and soil erosion indicates that the lakeshore campsites and lake access in the project area are popular. Land Between The Lakes conducted an inventory of backcountry campsites in 2007 and staff identified four sites visitors use along Roads 220 and 382; two sites are between the Scenic Byway and Lake Barkley and two sites are at the edge of Lake Barkley. Hunting also occurs in the Fox Hollow area. Roads 219, 220, and 382 allow scenic driving and wildlife viewing deeper in the forest than the paved roads. The soils along the Lake are impacted by seasonal water fluctuations. Possible improvements to prevent rutting and erosion are needed to keep the campsites and Lake Barkley accessible yet still protect the watershed and sensitive soil. Erosion of the shoreline will eventually negatively impact fishing opportunities by causing too much sediment deposition. Soil degradation will have a negative impact on vegetation, which will also contribute to an increase in erosion and sedimentation. This will result in a decrease in available high quality wildlife habitat and have visual impacts.

The nearest trail to the Fox Hollow area is the North South Trail approximately two miles west of the Scenic Byway. Visitors to Land Between The Lakes desire more single track trails opportunities; more analysis is needed in Fox Hollow to determine if sustainable trails would be appropriate for the area.

Roads

Three roads border Fox Hollow: Road 219 (Fox Hollow Road-2), Road 220 (Nolan Cemetery Road), and Road 382 (Hollow Road). Road 220 is necessary to reach Nolan Cemetery. All of the roads lead to the lakefront. Visitors desire these back road opportunities. The roads are used for dispersed recreation such as lake access, scenic driving and hunting. Land Between The Lakes needs to continue maintaining roads 219 and 220 at the current level (Level 3) and road 382 at a more rugged level (Level 2). The roads often remain wet after precipitation and might benefit from more sun to dry them quicker to prevent damage to the road bed and impacts to surrounding resources.

Heritage

A review of literature indicates there are no previous heritage surveys of the area and no recorded prehistoric or historic sites. There are approximately 21 known unrecorded historic sites and one known cemetery (Nolan) within the 560 acres of Fox Hollow. There is at least one known home site that may present an opportunity for education and outreach. There is a need to survey the area to identify additional sites and determine if there are other opportunities for heritage related work.

Ecosystem

Fox Hollow is part of a work area TVA managed (Area 54). The records indicate the total number of acres treated in Work Area 54 and not the number of acres within Fox Hollow. There is a hand drawn map identifying the treatment stands in Fox Hollow but the acres are not quantified. Records for Work Area 54 indicate approximately 30-40 years ago TVA planted loblolly pine in six pine stands for erosion control. Some of these pine stands were fields at the time of acquisition. The map illustrates the commercial harvests and the thinning areas in Fox Hollow. A small amount of wildlife habitat improvement projects were also completed during that time.

Fox Hollow contains both hardwood and pine forest stands with some mortality. The loblolly pine is not a native species to Land Between The Lakes and is susceptible to damage. Native species of pine could replace the loblolly to create healthier pine stands in Fox Hollow. The hardwood stands contain oak and hickory with an understory of maples and elms. In shaded environments maples and elms grow better than young, nut producing hardwoods. The oak and hickory stands may benefit from more sunlight which would allow the young hardwoods to survive and replace the unhealthy trees susceptible to dying early. The moist areas of the forest may need treatment to better support wildlife species and prevent insect and disease. An inventory of the forest conditions would identify the areas in most need of treatments and any large, mature trees to keep.

Species such as squirrels, white-tailed deer, turkey, and yellow breasted chats benefit from oak hickory forests with a healthy regenerating component to them. Snags, den trees, and downed wood add to habitat diversity, specifically for bats, owls, squirrels, invertebrates, salamanders and small mammals. Mature and open forests benefit squirrels, bats, bobcats, prairie warblers, Northern bobwhite quail, and great-crested flycatchers. Louisiana waterthrush, wood thrush, acadian flycatcher, along with spectacular wildflowers occur in the riparian (moist) forests.

An active bald eagle nest is located on the Lake Barkley shore of the Fox Hollow project area. Bald eagles need to be considered when work might be done in the area. Surveys are needed to identify if there are any other occurrences of endangered species to take into account in the project area.

Old aerial photographs indicate small fields were scattered across the 540 acres. Small ponds seen on photographs provide habitat and water for a variety of aquatic and terrestrial species. Based on aerial maps a number of areas were fields in the 1960's but are now primarily comprised of maple, sweetgum, elm and black cherry. This area is about 35 years old, on average. Further analysis might indicate a need to open these areas to provide diverse forest conditions in the area.

Land Between The Lakes or its partners and contractors maintain approximately 24 acres of open land fields in Fox Hollow. Approximately 15 acres are planted with native vegetation for supplemental wildlife food. The rest are managed as native grasses, forbs, and riparian corridors. These treatments were evaluated in the Continued Maintenance of Open Lands Environmental Assessment.

Thickets of giant or switch cane, called canebrakes, are important ecologically and historically in the southeast. Canebrakes play an important role in the ecosystem, filtering sediments, controlling erosion and providing food and shelter for many native animal and bird species. Native Americans traditionally used cane for many functions, including baskets and weapons. Cane grows well in moist areas. The moist bottoms of Fox Hollow might be suitable for restoration of more cane in Land Between The Lakes to increase habitat for many birds such as Swainson's warbler and to recognize the heritage of Native Americans who inhabited the area.

Summary

Overall, staff and visitors identified a number of needs in Fox Hollow. These encompass recreation, roads, heritage, and ecosystem opportunities. The 2004 Area Plan, guided by the Land Between The Lakes Protection Act, envisions recreation, environmental education, and wildlife habitat improvements across Land Between The Lakes. Protection and interpretation of heritage sites is important. Addressing the needs in Fox Hollow would move another 560 acres toward the desired conditions and goals in the area plan by providing dispersed recreation and environmental education opportunities, a diversity of habitats, vigorous forests that are resistant to insects and disease, and functioning watersheds. (See the desired prescription for General Forest in the Area Plan.) The Area Plan calls for a variety of structures (open, closed, regenerating, mature, old-growth, etc.) on a variety of site types (dry, transitional, mesic or moist, etc) to benefit a large number of wildlife species.