
AQUATIC VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

LAKE GASTON

2016 TREATMENT SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



PREPARED BY

PLM LAKE AND LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

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*Lake Gaston Weed Control Council
Treatment Summary and Recommendations
2016 Report*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Description and Purpose of Lake Gaston

Lake Gaston is a 20,300 acre impoundment on the Roanoke River located on the North Carolina and Virginia borders. Gaston Reservoir comprises lands within Warren, Halifax, and Northampton counties in North Carolina, and Brunswick and Mecklenburg counties in Virginia. It is operated by Dominion for power generation and coincidentally serves a flood control role. The high quality water also provides a water source for cities in the region. Gaston has a diverse fisheries population of popular species including largemouth bass, striped bass, walleye, catfish and various pan fish.

The overall goal is to develop and maintain a healthy lake ecosystem based on a diverse plant community dominated by native species. Such a lake would meet the recreational needs of lake users, sustain the local economy and ecosystem, provide desirable water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and ultimately reduce the need for expensive annual control of invasive exotic species.

This goal will be achieved by accomplishing the following objectives:

- Communicate to the public the need for aquatic vegetation and the distinction between desirable native vegetation and infestations of noxious weeds.
- Determine the amount of aquatic and riparian vegetation needed for the development of a healthy Lake Gaston ecosystem.
- Establish and maintain this acreage by re-vegetation with desirable native species while reducing the noxious exotic vegetation that appears in the lake.
- Develop an assessment program for identifying where nuisance plants occur, and how to quantitatively assess management success.
- Develop a long-term aquatic plant management plan that has as a principle goal the removal of *Hydrilla* and other nuisance plants or their maintenance at manageable levels.
- Aggressively manage *Hydrilla* and other nuisance species now to reduce the total population levels. Utilize public input from all stakeholders to establish priority areas for vegetation management.
- Identify other potential nuisance invasive plants either currently in Lake Gaston (e.g., *Egeria* and Eurasian watermilfoil) or that could infest the lake (e.g., giant *salvinia*) and include them in the management plan.
- Determine the specific infestations to be treated and treatments to be utilized. Use cost-effective, leading edge technology and continually evaluate new methods of controlling exotic vegetation.
- Utilize a variety of herbicides and application protocols to minimize the development of genetic resistance in target species.



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- Evaluate the role of grass carp as a management tool in Lake Gaston. Determine and insert the number of grass carp per infested acre that can be introduced and maintained to control invasive species without detrimentally affecting desirable species of native vegetation.
- Develop a prevention program, which might include public education and signage at boat launches, to prevent the introduction of plants into the lake or transporting them to other lakes. Also inform the public of the need to control erosion and nutrient inputs from septic fields and yard runoff.
- Develop an adequate sustainable funding source for the management of aquatic vegetation in Lake Gaston.
- Improve communications with stakeholders to keep them advised of successes, failures and changes in management actions.

B. How Certain Plant Species ("Weeds") Interfere With Management Goals

Recreation users and property owners have become increasingly frustrated at the persistence of the weed problem. Herbicide treatments have been effective in some areas, however funding and flow patterns have limited treatments. Landowners are heavily affected by *Hydrilla*, because it can prevent launching boats, accessing docks, skiing, and bank fishing or swimming in some parts of the lake. Some lake users find the large colonies unsightly which impacts the aesthetic quality of the area for visitors and companies looking for relocation sites. Nuisance aquatic vegetation can also clog industrial water intake screens, potentially reduce local property values, decrease native plant diversity and create mosquito habitat. The problems are most severe in late summer and fall when the vegetation is topped out at the water surface.



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II. 2016 AQUATIC VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

A. General Management Philosophy

Weed control is part of the overall Lake Gaston restoration program. We are focused on the species and communities we want in place of the weed species, rather than on simply eliminating weeds. We have set priorities for the control or elimination of weeds that have already established on the site, according to their actual and potential impacts on native species and communities. We have taken action only when careful consideration indicates leaving the weed unchecked will result in more damage than controlling it with available methods.

We used an adaptive management strategy. First, we established and recorded the goals for the site. Second, we identified species that could block us from reaching these goals and assigned priorities based on the severity of their impacts. Third, we considered methods for controlling unwanted species or otherwise diminishing their impacts and, if necessary, re-order priorities based on likely impacts on target and non-target species. Fourth, we developed weed control plans based on this information, and then implemented them. Fifth, we monitored the results of our management actions and evaluated them in light of the site goals. Finally, this information was used to modify and improve control priorities, methods and plans, starting the cycle again.

B. How Priorities Were Determined

Ultimately, we set priorities in the hope of minimizing the total, long-term impact of noxious aquatic vegetation. Therefore, we act to prevent new infestations and assign highest priority to existing infestations that are the fastest growing, most disruptive, and affect the most highly valued area(s) of the site. We also consider the difficulty of control, giving higher priority to infestations we think we are most likely to control with available technology and resources.

While PLM Lake and Land Management does not have control over research programs, as a stakeholder it is important that we openly communicate with the research teams, assist where possible to use consistent methodology for field data collection, and coordinate our collective resources to provide the best value to Lake Gaston.

For the purpose of this determination, the herbicide Sonar (fluridone) is considered to be the primary herbicide control technology, augmented with the use of contact herbicides.



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C. Summary of Specific Actions

Hydrilla remains the most invasive species that currently threatens the ecological goals for the site. The ultimate goal is to contain the current infestation and eventually reduce it to a level that is ecologically insignificant. Due to the size of the infestation and the economics of the situation, we are not able to manage the lake on a compressive level. Budget dollars are allocated to high value targets while working as part of an integrated management approach using biological, chemical, and mechanical methods. It could take years to achieve the management goal based on current available technology, funding and its long term impact on *Hydrilla*.

Our best opportunity is to efficiently manage our herbicide applications to get a projected multiple year control of the target species. This opportunity is complicated by the fact that Sonar (fluridone) requires an extended contact time and the lake is a flowing system. In addition, the growth cycle of *Hydrilla* is such that new plants can grow from tubers. Early season control methods are required to control the plant to reduce overall tuber production thereby reducing the overall population.

PLM and SePRO developed a treatment prescription for the approved 2016 sites. Applications of Sonar (pellet formulations) were split to maintain a low dose concentration for an extended period of time. Multiple applications were necessary based on the amount of water exchange in each treatment area. In addition to water flow, variables such as sediment type and water bathymetry had to be considered.

PLM Management Objectives

- Reduce biomass of noxious submersed vegetation (focus on *Hydrilla*).
- Maintain public boat access and water hydrant site quality.
- Allocate available public funds equitably between states and counties.
- Meet overall aquatic vegetation management objectives of LGWCC as qualified by a third party survey.



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III. Treatment Summary

A . Hydrilla Treatments

A total of two split treatments using Sonar were performed within all areas in June and July. A third treatment was performed within the Poplar Creek Cages and the Beechwood Flat Cages in August.

The following table lists each selected site with the associated acres treated with Sonar during the 2016 treatment season.

2016 Hydrilla Treatment Areas	Acres
Timberline Shores	24
Jimmies Creek	32
Woodland Hurst	6.4
Poplar Creek East Arm	23
Poplar Creek Cages	3
Beechwood Flats Cages	3
Lizard Creek	163
Speckle Cove (Peahill)	40
Beaver Creek (Peahill)	74
Cold Spring Branch (Peahill)	58
TOTAL:	426.4

First 2016 Sonar (fluridone) Treatment Phase

June 8, 2016

Lizard Creek, Speckle Cove, Timberline Shores, Cold Springs Branch, Beaver Creek, Jimmies Creek, and Woodland Hurst completed.

June 9, 2016

Beechwood Flats Cages, Poplar Creek Cages, and Poplar Creek East Arm completed.

Total of 426.4 acre were treated with Sonar fluridone



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Second 2016 Sonar (fluridone) Treatment Phase

Observations at start of second treatment:

1. Water Willow yellowing along the shoreline.
2. Rake toss showed necrosis (effect of fluridone uptake) of *hydrilla*.

July 11, 2016

Lizard Creek, Speckle Cove, Timberline Shores, Cold Springs Branch, Beaver Creek, Jimmies Creek, Woodland Hurst, Beechwood Flats Cages, Poplar Creek Cages, and Poplar Creek East Arm completed.

Total of 426.4 acres were treated with Sonar fluridone

Thrid 2016 Sonar (fluridone) Treatment Phase

August 26, 2016

Beechwood Flats cages and Poplar Creek Cages completed.

Total of 6 acres are treated with Sonar fluridone



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B. *Lyngbya* Treatments

Lyngbya treatments were introduced for the first time in 2015 on Lake Gaston in an initial attempt to research the best combination of algaecides that have the best efficacy. In May 2016, a third application was made within 12.9 acres to complete the 2015 treatment plan.

2016 *Lyngbya* Treatments – by site, acreage and date

Location	Site ID	Acreage	1 st Treatment	2 nd Treatment
Pretty Creek	0	0.5		
	1	2.1	6/2	
	2	2.8	6/2	10/3
	3	0.4	6/2	10/3
	4	0.6	6/2	10/3
	5	0.9		
	6	0.5	6/2	10/3
	7	0.5		
	8	0.8	6/2	10/3
	9	1.0	6/2	10/3 *
	14	1.1		
Pinewood	10	0.3	6/2	
Lake Shores South	11	0.6	6/2	10/3
Woodland Hurst	12	1.8	6/2	10/3
	13	1.5		
Acres Treated			10.8	8.4

* *diquat only*



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Final Herbicide Inventory

Komeen	225 ga	Sonar H4C	8 #
Diguat (Tribune)	2.35 ga	Sonar SRP	50.7 #
Captain XTR	2.00 ga	Defoamer	0.75 qts
Clearigate	19.68 ga		

IV. 2016 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the herbicide treatment program for 2017 in an effort to minimize the potential for *hydrilla* recovery following the past five years of successful reduction of tubers, biomass and acres of infestation.
- Continue to treat early in the *hydrilla* growth season to promote management program for biomass and tuber reduction over time.
- Evaluate sites for multiyear Sonar treatment approach vs. an approximate three year treatment cycle using tuber research studies conducted by North Carolina State University (NCSU).
- Coordinate treatments and monitoring efforts with ongoing re-vegetation research.
- Coordinate private and public treatments to promote overall objective.
- Monitor and continue aggressive treatment plans of *Lyngbya*.
- Integrate management strategies between LGWCC, LGSB (TAG), NCSU, SePRO and PLM.



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V. Treatment Area Maps

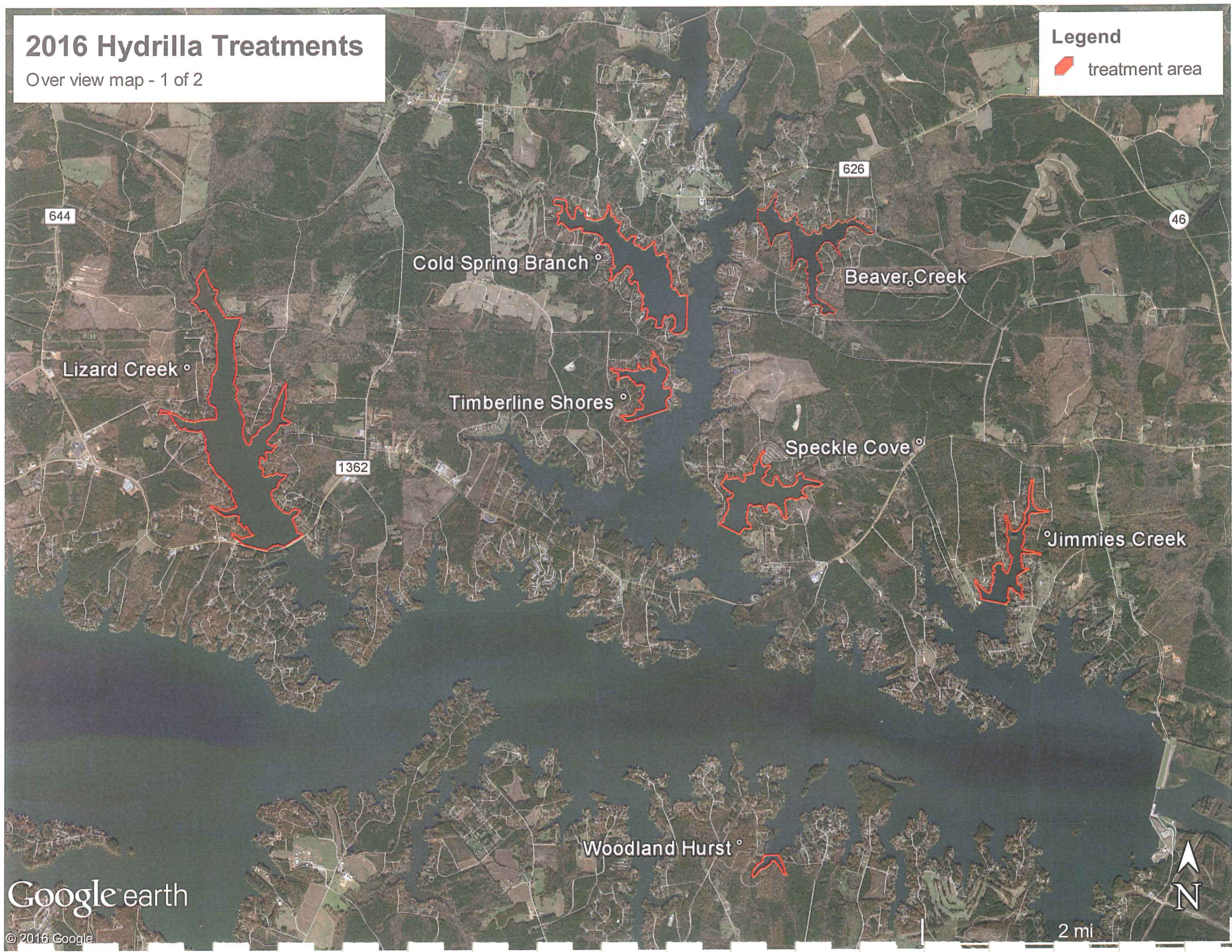


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Over view map - 1 of 2

Legend

 treatment area

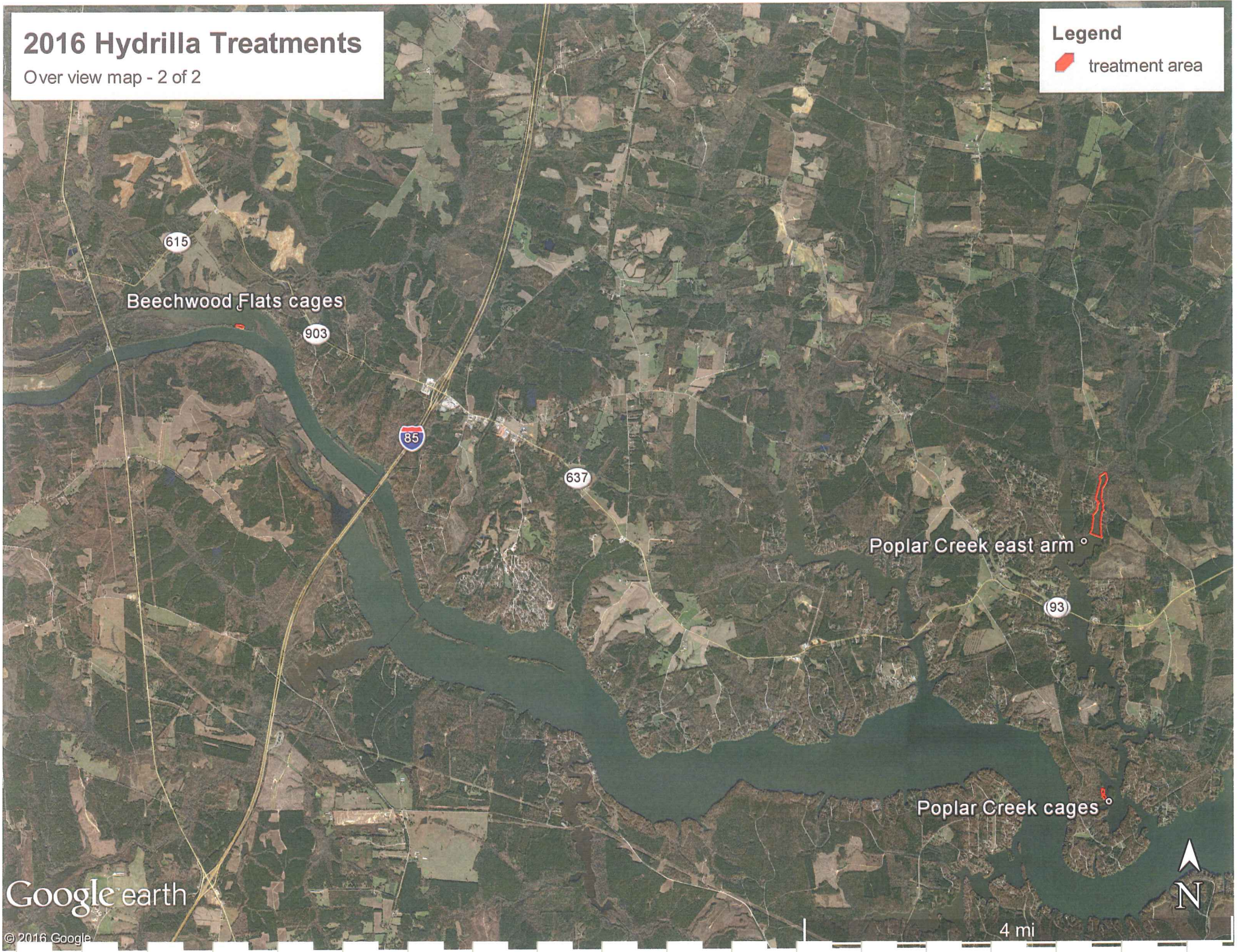


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Over view map - 2 of 2

Legend

 treatment area

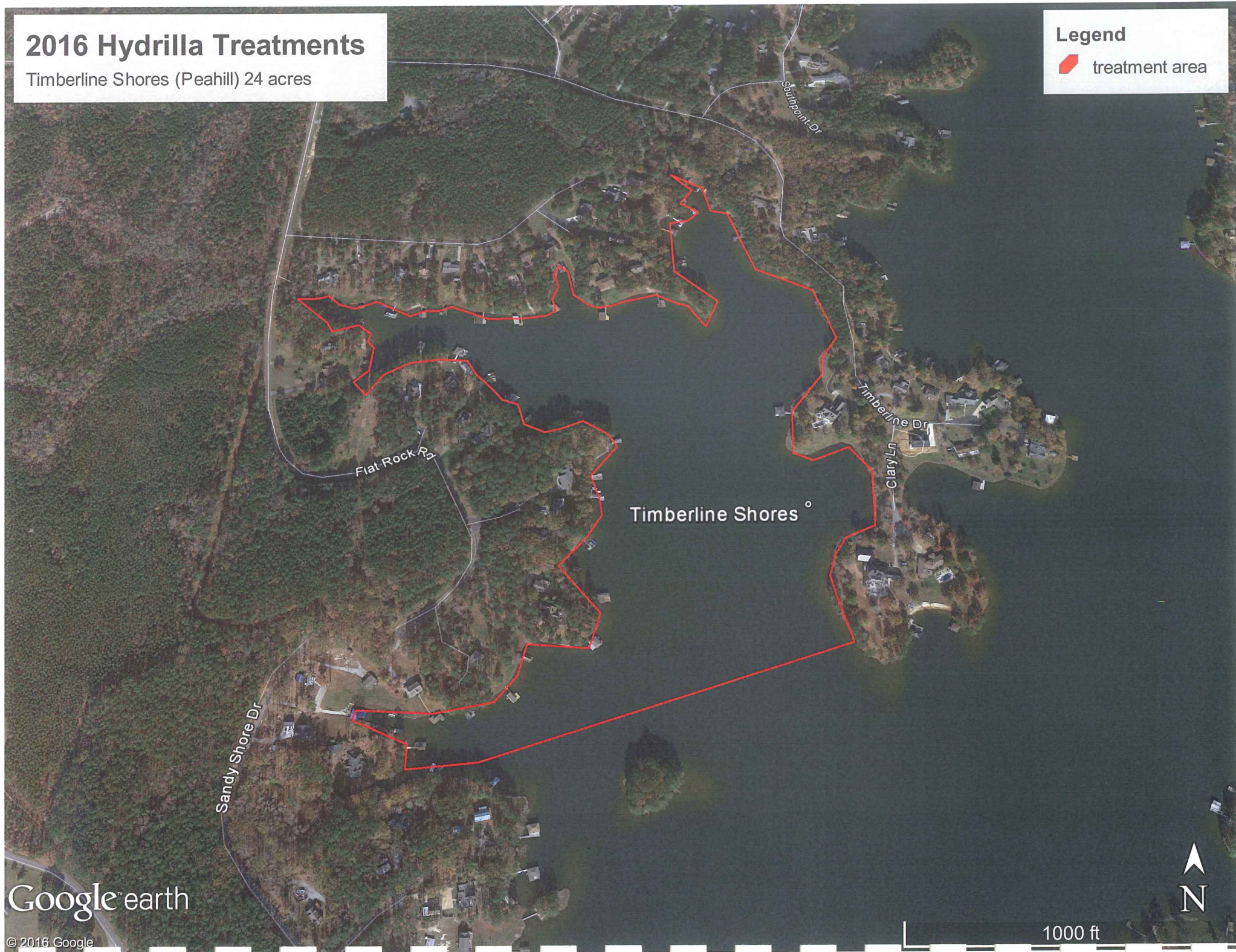


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Timberline Shores (Peahill) 24 acres

Legend

 treatment area

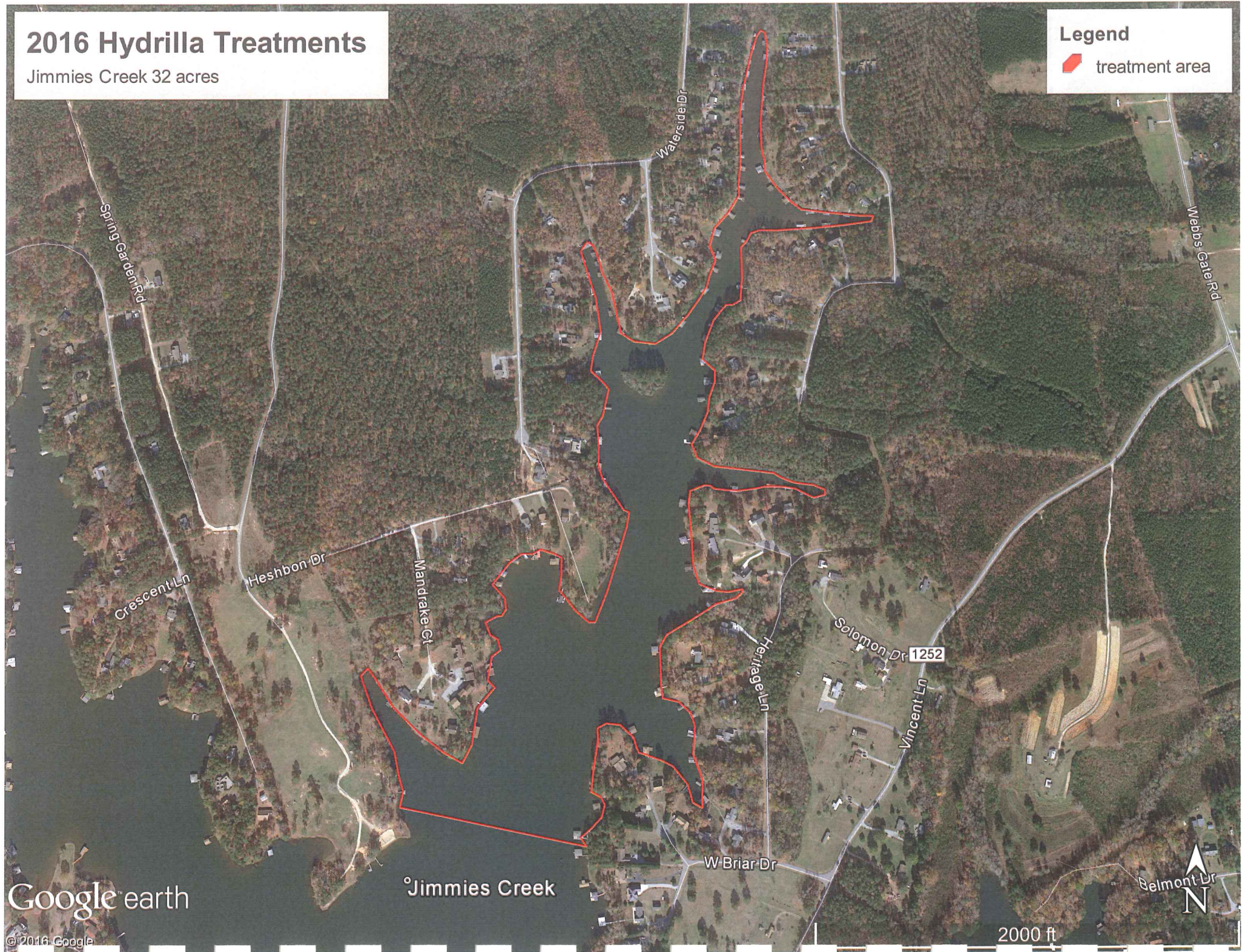


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Jimnies Creek 32 acres

Legend

 treatment area

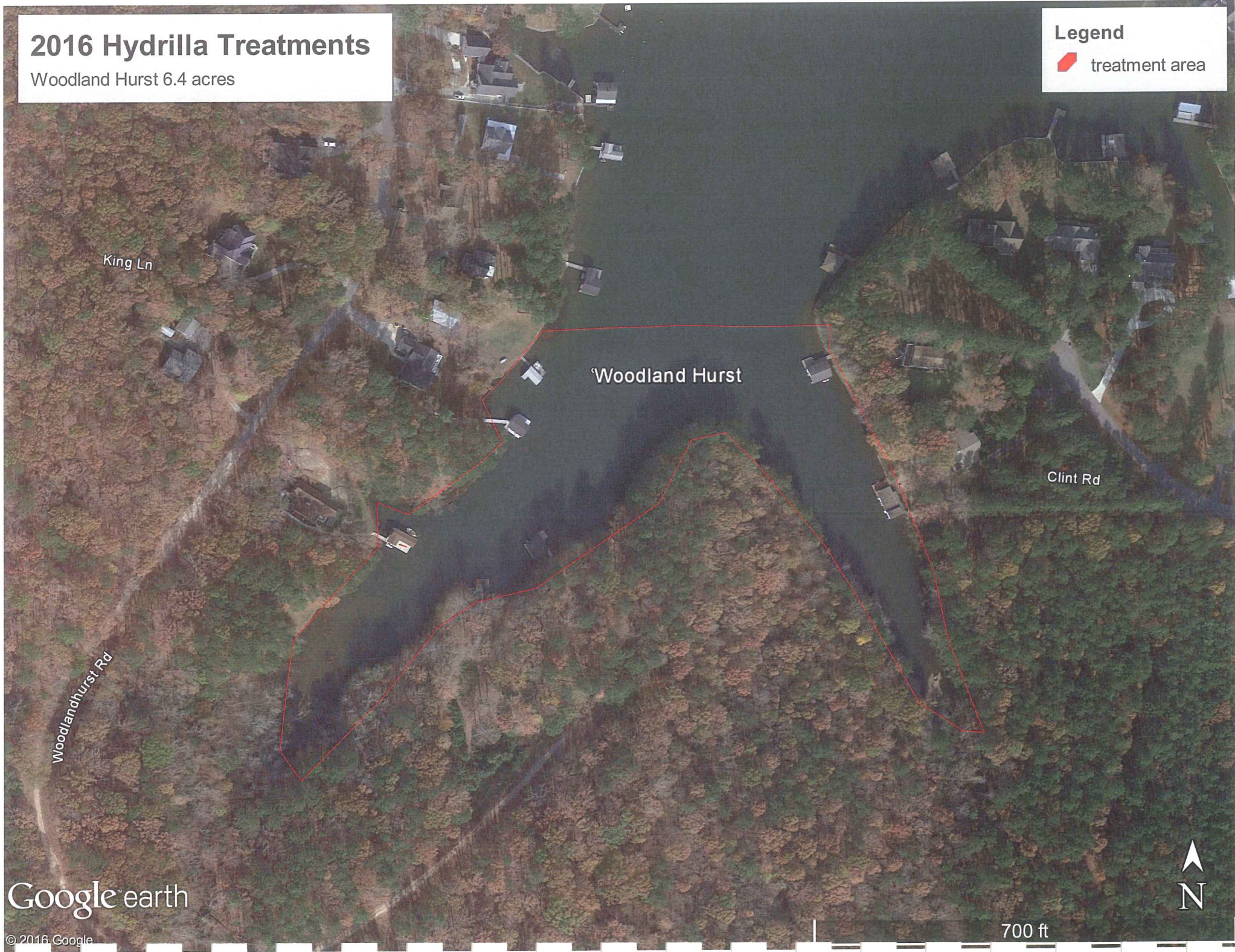


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Woodland Hurst 6.4 acres

Legend

 treatment area



2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Poplar Creek east arm 23 acres

Legend

 treatment area



2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Poplar Creek cages 3 acres

Legend
treatment area

Poplar Creek cages °

Google earth

© 2016 Google

600 ft



2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Beechwood Flats cages 3 acres

Legend
treatment area

Beechwood Flats cages

Google earth

© 2016 Google

900 ft

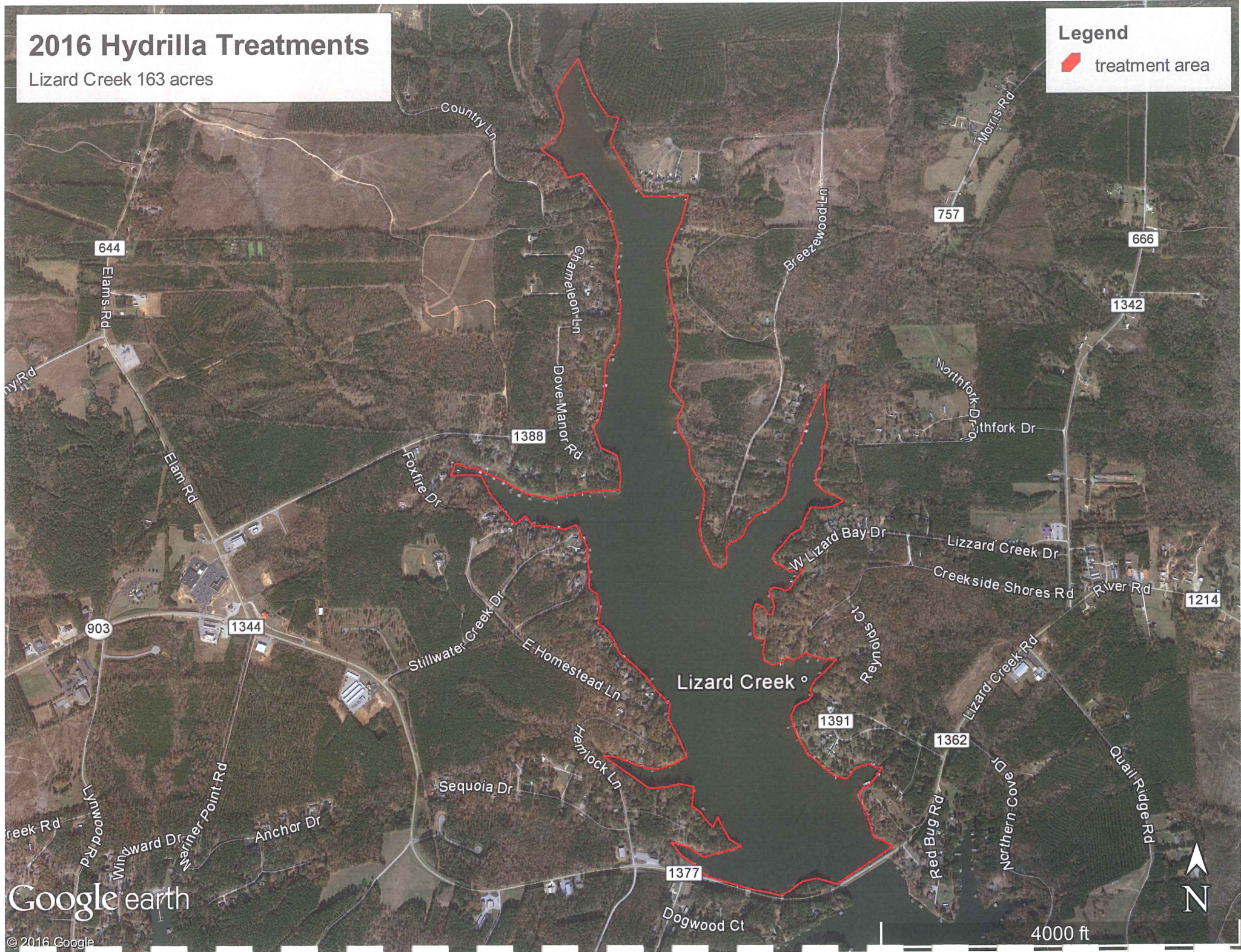


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Lizard Creek 163 acres

Legend

 treatment area

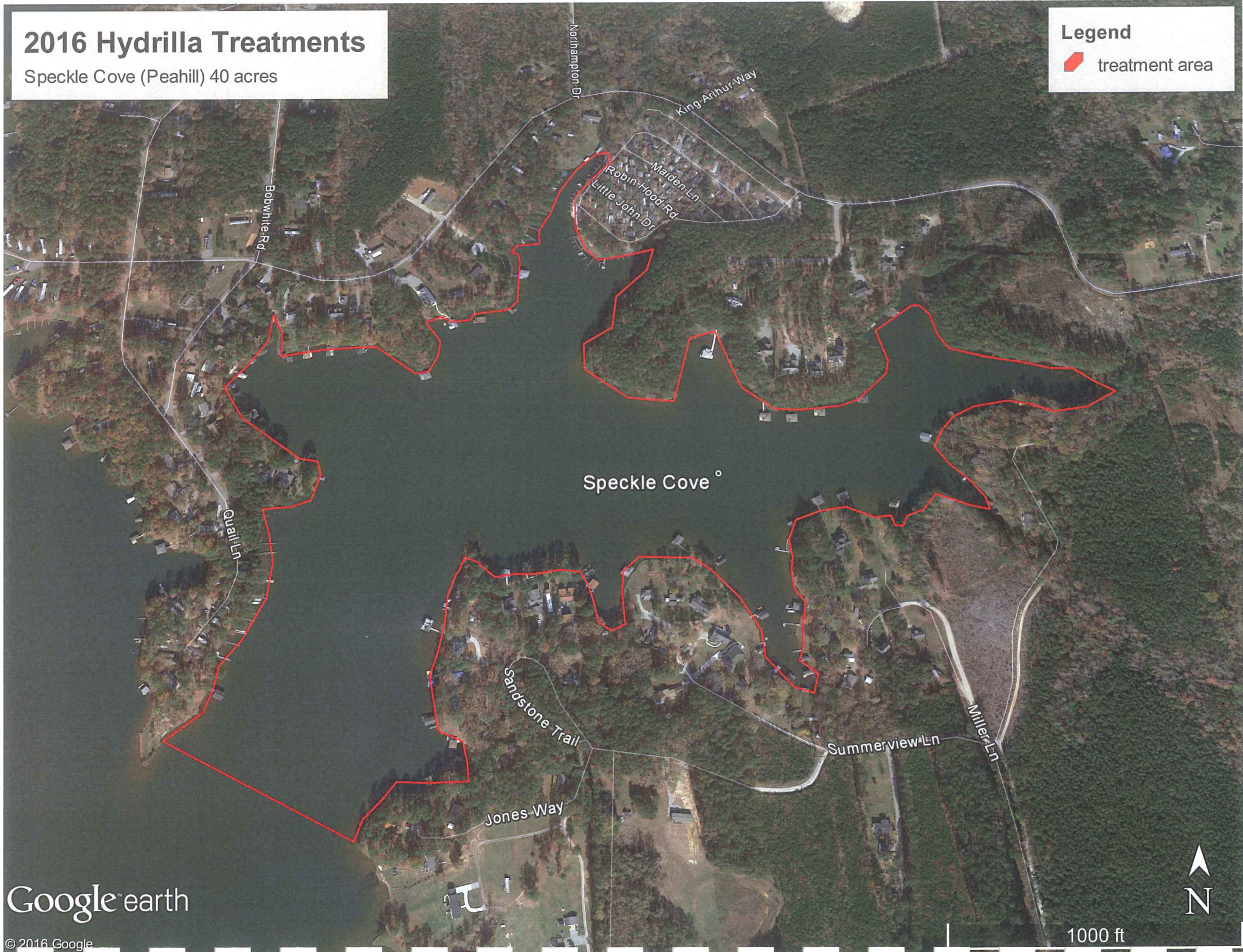


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Speckle Cove (Peahill) 40 acres

Legend

 treatment area

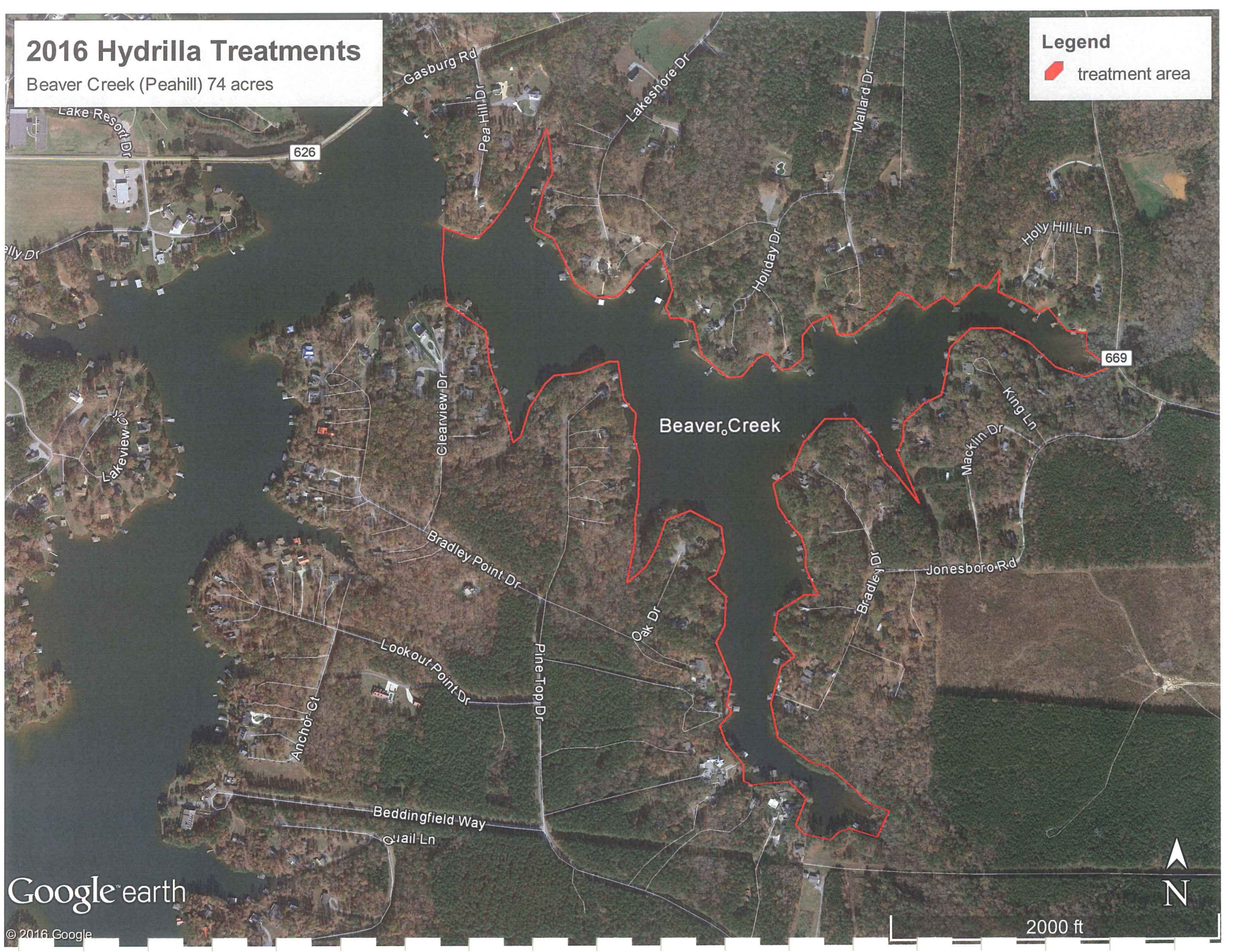


2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Beaver Creek (Peahill) 74 acres

Legend

 treatment area



2016 Hydrilla Treatments

Cold Spring Branch (Peahill) 58 acres

Legend

 treatment area

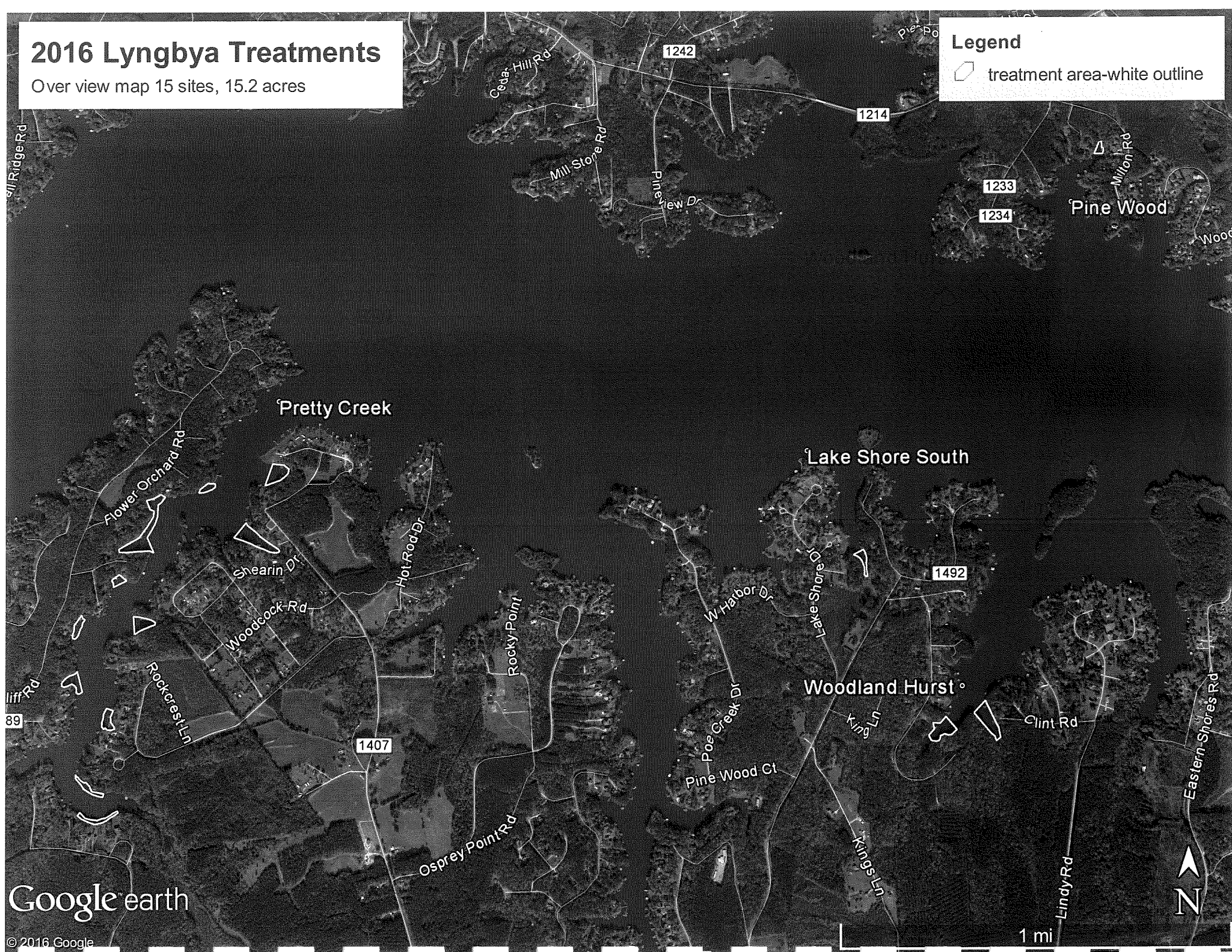


2016 Lyngbya Treatments

Over view map 15 sites, 15.2 acres

Legend

 treatment area-white outline



2016 Lyngbya Treatments

Pretty Creek 11 sites, 11.04 acres

Legend

 treatment area-white outline



2016 Lyngbya Treatments

Pinewood 1 site, 0.34 acres

Legend

 treatment area-white outline



Google earth

© 2016 Google

400 ft

N

2016 Lyngbya Treatments

Lake Shore South 1 site, 0.55 acres

Legend

 treatment area-white outline



2016 Lyngbya Treatments

Woodland Hurst 2 sites, 3.27 acres

Legend

 treatment area-white outline

