



IN REPLY TO:
1610.RMP

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Dillon Field Office
1005 Selway Drive
Dillon, Montana 59725
<http://www.mt.blm.gov/dfo>



November 25, 2002

Dear Stakeholder/Interested Party/Reader:

Enclosed you will find a copy of an information report that documents the evaluation of 63 areas nominated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) during the scoping process for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Dillon Resource Management Plan (RMP). The evaluations documented in the report assess whether nominations meet the relevance and importance criteria as provided in *BLM Manual 1613—Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*. Fourteen (14) of the 63 areas meet the criteria and will move forward for further consideration. The remainder of the areas are dropped from further analysis as potential ACECs, though management of many if not all of the nominated values will be addressed in the RMP since it is a comprehensive land use planning document.

We are not asking for comments on this information report. If you submitted an area for consideration as a public nomination, this letter and information report provides the notice required in *BLM Manual 1613—Areas of Critical Environmental Concern* as to whether your nomination met the relevance and importance criteria to move forward as a potential ACEC. The opportunity to comment on areas dropped from further consideration occurs when the Draft RMP/EIS is released for review and comment. During that 90-day comment period for the Draft RMP/EIS, the public may comment on any aspect of the ACEC analysis, including the relevance and importance evaluations, the projected need for special management attention, the analysis of impacts of allowable resource uses on the values of proposed ACECs, and the impact of ACEC management prescriptions or limitations on other resource uses.

The next step in our planning process is to identify what management actions or prescriptions are necessary to protect the values that meet the ACEC criteria of relevance and importance. Public workshops will be convened in February and March 2003 to solicit input from the public for BLM to consider as we develop plan alternatives, including suggestions regarding the management of the potential ACECs. Additional information will be distributed in January 2003 regarding meeting locations, dates, and times.

Thank you for your participation in this phase of the planning process. We look forward to your continued involvement in the development of the RMP.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tim Bozorth

Tim Bozorth
Field Manager

Enclosure:
ACEC Information Report



U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Dillon Field Office
1005 Selway Drive
Dillon, MT 59725

November 2002

Relevance and Importance Evaluations of Area of Critical Environmental Concern Nominations

Prepared by the Dillon Field Office
for the Dillon Resource Management Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the evaluation of 63 Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) nominations reviewed as part of the Dillon Resource Management Plan (RMP). Fourteen (14) of the 63 areas will be considered further as alternatives are developed for the plan and the environmental analysis is completed. These 14 areas are referred to as Potential ACECs. To be considered further, areas must be located on public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and meet the relevance and importance criteria described in *BLM Manual 1613–Areas of Critical Environmental Concern* (BLM 1988).

This evaluation does not designate any of the areas as ACECs. Potential ACECs are proposed for designation if the analysis in the RMP/EIS shows that special management is required to protect the relevant and important values. Designation of proposed ACECs occurs when the Record of Decision (ROD) is signed and the RMP is approved.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DFO	Dillon Field Office
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
GIS	Geographic Information System
MFP	Management Framework Plan
RAC	Resource Advisory Council
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision

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INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) states that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will give priority to the designation and protection of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) in the development and revision of land use plans. Land use plans in the BLM are known as Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and the Dillon BLM is currently in the multi-year process of developing such a plan. This RMP will replace a Management Framework Plan (MFP) that was approved in 1979 and predated BLM's current planning system.

The MFP recommended several areas be considered for ACEC status once guidance was developed to conduct the evaluations, since there was no guidance in place in

1979. At the beginning of this new planning cycle for the RMP, BLM also accepted additional ACEC nominations and evaluated any nominations received by August 15, 2002.

This report summarizes the relevance and importance evaluations for 63 nominated ACECs located on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management's Dillon Field Office (DFO). These evaluations have been completed in accordance with guidance provided in *BLM Manual 1613—Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*. Of the 63 nominations, 14 meet the relevance and importance criteria. These 14 will be studied further in the RMP to determine whether they warrant designation as an ACEC.

WHAT IS AN ACEC?

BLM regulations (43 CFR part 1610) define an ACEC as an area "within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards." Therefore, private lands and lands administered by other agencies are not included in the boundaries of ACECs.

ACECs differ from other special management designations such as

Wilderness Study Areas in that designation by itself does not automatically prohibit or restrict other uses in the area. The one exception is that a mining plan of operation is required for any proposed mining activity within a designated ACEC. The ACEC designation is an administrative designation that is accomplished through the land use planning process. It is unique to the BLM in that no other agency uses this form of designation. The intent of Congress in mandating the designation of ACECs through FLPMA was to give priority to the designation and protection of areas containing truly unique and significant resource values.

THE ACEC PROCESS

There are several steps in the identification and evaluation of ACECs. These steps include the nomination of areas that may meet the relevance and importance criteria, evaluation of the nominated areas to determine if they meet the criteria, and consideration of the potential ACECs as alternative management scenarios are formulated and effects are analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. When released, the Draft RMP/EIS contains recommendations on which potential ACECs are proposed for designation and public comment is requested. Public comments are reviewed and considered and adjustments are made as necessary before the Proposed RMP/Final EIS is released. Designation of ACECs then occurs in the Record of Decision approving the RMP. Each of these steps is briefly described below.

Identification/Nomination

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern can be nominated at anytime, but are only designated through the BLM's land use planning process. Nominations from the public are generally solicited as part of the scoping process during development of a land use plan for a particular area. BLM requested that ACEC comments and nominations to be considered in the Dillon planning process be submitted by October 19, 2001. However, ACEC nominations continued to be submitted after this deadline and those received early enough in the process were also reviewed. Nominations received after August 15, 2002 are not being considered in this planning cycle.

Evaluation of Nominations for Relevance and Importance

Nominations are evaluated to determine whether they meet the relevance and importance criteria. The relevance and

importance criteria are detailed in **Appendix A**. A nomination must meet one or more of the relevance and importance criteria to be considered a potential ACEC. Potential ACECs are then considered further in the planning process.

Consideration of Potential ACECs

Potential ACECs are considered as RMP alternatives are developed. Each potential ACEC is proposed for designation in at least one of the management alternatives. The need for special management and the resulting effects from applying such management are assessed in the associated environmental analysis. The Preferred Alternative identifies which potential ACECs are proposed for designation.

Comment on Proposed ACECs

A notice of any areas proposed for ACEC designation is published in the Federal Register along with a Notice of Availability of the Draft RMP/EIS requesting public comment. The public may comment on any aspect of the ACEC analysis at this point in the process. These comments are then considered in preparation of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. After a 30-day protest period, a Record of Decision is prepared and the plan is approved.

Designation

A potential ACEC is proposed for designation if the area requires special management. Special management is defined as management outside of standard or routine practices, and usually includes more detail than other prescriptions contained within the plan. Special management is usually needed when one of the following conditions is met:

- Current management or management activities proposed in the alternative are

not sufficient to protect the relevant and important resource.

- The needed management action is considered unusual or outside of the normal range of management practices typically used.
- The change in management is difficult to implement without ACEC designation.

If analysis determines that special management is required, the area is recommended for designation. Designation of ACECs occurs when the Record of Decision is signed approving the RMP.

BACKGROUND

Upon approval in 1979, the Dillon MFP identified fifteen (15) areas to be considered further for ACEC designation after evaluation procedures became available. A plan amendment was never completed after BLM manual guidance finalized the process for identification and evaluation of ACECs. Thus, the areas nominated within the MFP that are located in the DFO planning area are being evaluated in this RMP effort. Two of the 15 areas nominated in the MFP are located on public lands administered by the Butte Field Office and will not be addressed in the Dillon RMP. These two nominations will be addressed during the revision of the RMP guiding management of public lands in the Butte Field Office. A third nomination submitted by the public is also outside of the DFO planning area and will be referred to the Butte Field Office as well.

In addition, the current RMP effort actively solicited nominations from the public as specified by BLM policy on areas that should receive consideration under the ACEC guidance. Scoping for the Dillon RMP was initiated with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on August 9, 2001. Subsequent mailings and public meetings occurred in the fall of 2001 and comments were solicited from the public on issues and planning criteria as well as nominations for consideration in the BLM's ACEC and Wild and Scenic River

review process. More specific handout information on ACECs and the nomination process and evaluation criteria was distributed at each of the five public scoping meetings held in September and October 2001. Nominators were asked to include a boundary of the area, preferably at a 1:24,000 map scale, and information and rationale as to why the area met the relevance and importance criteria. Written comments were requested by October 19, 2001 for full consideration in the planning process. However, in an effort to be inclusive of public comment and produce a comprehensive plan, several nominations received after the October 19, 2001 deadline were also evaluated within the current RMP process. As the planning process moved beyond the early stages of scoping toward alternative development, the public was notified that nominations received after August 15, 2002 would not be evaluated in the current RMP, but would have to be addressed in a later amendment. As part of the analysis of the management situation, members of the BLM's planning team were also requested to submit internal information for consideration by February 22, 2002.

Due to all of these efforts, 63 ACEC nominations were considered during the relevance and importance evaluations. The list of nominations is summarized in **Appendix B**.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Prior to scoping, the Montana Consensus Council, through a grant with the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, conducted an assessment on how the public wanted to be involved in the development of the Dillon RMP. One recommendation that resulted from this assessment was the formation of issue-based subgroups to seek agreement on elements to be addressed in the RMP. This concept was presented to the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) by the BLM at their January

15, 2002 meeting. As the BLM's official advisory group authorized under FLPMA, the RAC chose to convene subgroups on certain elements of the RMP, including the evaluation of ACEC nominations for relevance and importance. Subgroups under the RAC conduct work sessions and make recommendations back to the RAC for consideration. The formation of an ACEC subgroup provided another opportunity for representatives of the public to be involved in the ACEC process.

OPERATION OF THE RAC SUBGROUP AND BLM ACEC TEAM

The subgroup formed by the Western Montana RAC to assist BLM with relevance and importance evaluations of nominated ACECs included representation across the three RAC membership categories. The group was structured this way to ensure representation of diverse interests as displayed within the full RAC membership. Members of the RAC were encouraged to provide names of potential subgroup members for consideration in makeup of the group. However, because of the interest expressed by RAC members in serving on the subgroup, only two of the subgroup positions were non-RAC members. The following people served on the subgroup:

Category 1 (Permittees)

- Sue Marxer, Permittee (RAC member)
- Jim Hagenbarth, Permittee

Category 2 (Environmental/Conservation Interests)

- Ben Deeble, National Wildlife Federation (RAC member)

- Jack Kirkley, University of Montana Western, Biology Professor

Category 3 (Elected Officials/Public-at-Large)

- Ted Coffman, Madison County Commissioner (RAC member)
- Mel Montgomery, Public-at-Large (RAC member)

Mark Goeden, BLM Assistant Field Manager, served as the BLM liaison to the subgroup to coordinate information dissemination and provide assistance as requested. Kathy van Hook of the Montana Consensus Council facilitated the subgroup.

The subgroup met seven times between February 15, 2002 and May 7, 2002 and had the opportunity to address 62 of the 63 ACEC nominations (one nomination was received after the subgroup stopped meeting and was only considered by the BLM review team). Often, nominations were combined or reviewed in concert if they dealt with the same types of values.

During the subgroup work sessions, BLM resource specialists presented information to the subgroup members and answered questions regarding the nominations being reviewed. The results of the subgroup evaluations are summarized in **Appendix B**.

The subgroup work resulted in the following recommendations on the 62 nominations:

- 7 nominations recommended as potential ACECs by consensus agreement
- 31 nominations recommended not to go forward as potential ACECs by consensus agreement
- 1 nomination withdrawn
- 1 nomination replaced with more specific information
- 12 nominations reviewed but no consensus agreement could be reached
- 4 nominations resulted in no recommendation because the evaluation was initiated but not completed
- 6 nominations resulted in no recommendation because an evaluation was not initiated

Subgroup members presented these recommendations to the full RAC at their June 10, 2002 meeting. The subgroup agreed that additional meetings would not result in additional agreement on ACEC recommendations, and therefore agreed not to continue work as a subgroup. The RAC forwarded these same recommendations to the BLM, and the Dillon Field Manager accepted the RAC's recommendations after reviewing the subgroup work and documentation. Modifications were made to two of the recommendations—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Taylor Mountain nominations—in order to consistently apply the evaluation criteria. In both instances, the subgroup found the nominations relevant

and important but did not move them forward because of existing designations or protections. BLM has moved these nominations forward and will consider the need for special management as alternatives are developed and analyzed. BLM then reviewed the remaining nominations that the subgroup could not agree on, did not complete, or did not review.

The BLM review team was comprised of the following planning team members and management staff:

- Jim Roscoe, Wildlife Biologist
- John Simons, Rangeland Management Specialist
- Mark Sant, Archaeologist
- Rick Waldrup, Outdoor Recreation Planner
- Joe Casey, Forester
- Renee Johnson, Land Use Specialist (RMP Project Manager)
- Rob Van Deren, Beaverhead County
- Jon Raby, Field Manager
- Mark Goeden, Assistant Field Manager
- Rich Maggio, Assistant Field Manager
- Pat Fosse, Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist

Additional participation by other staff identified below was requested when nominations required their areas of expertise:

- Brian Hockett, Rangeland Management Specialist
- Paul Hutchinson, Fisheries Biologist
- Bob Gunderson, Geologist
- Steve Armiger, Hydrologist

The BLM review team met several times between June and October 2002. Relevance and importance evaluations for the nominations not completed by the RAC subgroup and for new nominations received by August 15, 2002 were completed in October 2002.

IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE EVALUATIONS

The information provided below is organized in alphabetical order by name of the nominated area. All legal locations are based on the Montana Principal Meridian and most acreages were calculated using the 1:24,000 scale Geographic Information System (GIS) ownership coverage for lands in the DFO planning area. More precise acreage information based on public land survey information was provided in the Beaverhead Rock and Centennial Sandhills nominations, and was used rather than the less precise GIS calculations based on 1:24,000 scale map coverages.

Maps are included in **Appendix C** for the 14 nominations moving forward as potential ACECs. These include:

- Beaverhead Rock
- Big Sheep Creek Basin
- Block Mountain
- Blue Lake
- Centennial Mountains
- Centennial Sandhills
- Centennial Valley Wetlands
- Everson Creek
- Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area
- Lewis & Clark Trail
- Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek
- Thorium City Site
- Virginia City Historic District
- Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats

Alaska Basin Wildlife Linkage

Description of Area: The Alaska Basin Wildlife Linkage area is located at the east end of the Centennial Valley. This area is comprised of a diverse landscape, which includes mountains, ridges, hills, grasslands, and aspen-sagebrush mosaics. This area includes Hell Roaring, Corral, and Tom Creeks, and several hiking trails. BLM

lands on the south side of the Basin are managed as a Wilderness Study Area. There are approximately 3,200 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 5, 8, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 36, T.14S, R.1E, and portions of Section 6, T.15S, R.1E.

The Centennial Mountains portion of this nomination was evaluated in the Centennial Mountains nomination. The evaluation of the Alaska Basin Wildlife Linkage nomination was completed on the 440 acres of public lands that are outside of the Centennial Mountains nomination.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a natural process or system within the public lands. It is recognized that this area is important for wildlife migration and movement between high security habitats. However, the scattered public land ownership pattern in the Alaska Basin does not allow for any particular wildlife corridor to be defined by public lands administered by the BLM.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a natural process or system and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Axolotl Lakes

Description of Area: The Axolotl Lakes area is located five miles southeast of Virginia City, Montana. The area is a diverse mosaic of sagebrush, aspen, and mixed high elevation timber types, meadows, and marshes, accentuated with

several glacial pothole lakes. Values identified in the nomination of this area include big game and upland game birds, and recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, and camping. One of the lakes within the Axolotl complex is Blue Lake, which provides habitat for Montana's only neotenic axolotl salamander population.

The values pertaining to Blue Lake will be evaluated as part of the Blue Lake nomination.

There are approximately 5,440 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 5, 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, T.7S, R.2W, and portions of Sections 13, 24, 25, 26, T.7S, R.3W. This area is included in the Axolotl Lakes Wilderness Study Area and is managed under the BLM's *Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review* (BLM 1987) to protect the area's wilderness characteristics, pending wilderness designation.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for scenic value. The Axolotl Lakes area contains a diverse mosaic of sagebrush, aspen, and mixed high elevation timber types, meadows, and marshes, accentuated with several glacial pothole lakes.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. While the area does contain wide variety of native wildlife species, the habitats here are no more essential or significant than elsewhere, with the exception of the habitat in the Blue Lake area that provides for the axolotl. The wildlife resources in the Blue Lake area will be evaluated in the Blue Lake nomination.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for scenic value. Views from the area are outstanding and the area within the nomination is scenic. However, similar landscapes can be found throughout the region.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for scenic values, but not for a fish and wildlife resource. This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for scenic values and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC. The Blue Lake portion of the nomination is discussed in the Blue Lake section of this report.

Badger Gulch/Reservoir Creek

Description of Area: The Badger Gulch/Reservoir Creek nomination is located twenty miles southwest of Dillon, Montana. This area provides an expansive sagebrush-grassland habitat that is used during the winter period by pronghorn antelope and sage grouse. The area winters an estimated 500-700 head of antelope and it is reported that the area has had use by up to 300 sage grouse. At least four sage grouse strutting grounds are known to occur within this area.

There are approximately 25,000 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. There is heightened concern for the sage grouse range wide and BLM lands provide major sources of habitat for the species. This area provides habitat for up to 300 sage grouse.

The nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. This area

contains several populations of sensitive plant species.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for fish and wildlife resource or as a natural process or system. Although sage grouse habitats are important, the habitat in this area is not more than locally significant when compared to other similar resources across the DFO, the State of Montana, and the region. The sensitive plant species habitat is not linked to any specific feature or specific plant communities in the area nominated. This area is not exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change, since there are similar resources across the DFO, the State of Montana, and the region.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource and as a natural process or system because of the presence of sensitive plant species, but does not meet the importance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Bannack Historic District

Description of Area: The Bannack Historic District is located 15 miles southwest of Dillon, Montana. This area was nominated during the development of the Dillon MFP and re-nominated during scoping for the RMP. Some land ownership adjustments have been made in this area since the original nomination was made. The original MFP nomination contained approximately 950 acres of public land located in portions of Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, T.8S, R.11W, and portions of Sections 1, 12, T.8S, R.12W.

Relevance Criteria: The public lands in this area most likely to contain relevant and important values were transferred to the State of Montana under a Recreation and

Public Purposes action and are now managed by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in conjunction with the Bannack State Park. This transfer included the lands in the historic district and within the viewshed of the townsite of Bannack. The transfer was completed to provide for the protection of the cultural and historic values.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the area is no longer administered by the BLM.

Findings: This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC as none of the lands within the nomination are under the jurisdiction of the BLM.

Beaverhead Rock

Description of Area: Beaverhead Rock is located fifteen miles northeast of Dillon, Montana. While traveling with Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery on August 8, 1805, Sacajawea recognized the point of a high plain. Sacajawea's people knew this prominent landscape feature as "the beavers' head", which is today known as Beaverhead Rock. Recognition of this feature was important to the Corps of Discovery because it informed the company that the land of the Shoshone was not far and they might obtain horses for faster cross country travel. It also told them that the Continental Divide was close at hand where they would encounter rivers that flow into the Pacific. Approximately 70 acres of land adjacent to, and south of, this parcel of public land are owned by the State of Montana and managed by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a primitive state park. Beaverhead Rock is one of a few prominent physiographic features mentioned specifically in the journals of Lewis and Clark and is a prominent and important

feature of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

There are approximately 120 acres of public land in this area. This includes the N½ of the NW¼ and the SW¼ of the NW¼ of Section 22, T.5S, R.7W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for historic value. This area is specifically mentioned in the Lewis and Clark journals and was a very important point in their journey.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for historic value. This area is of national importance due to its relationship to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. This area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as of February 11, 1970.

Findings: This nomination meets both the relevance and importance criteria for historic value and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Big Sheep Creek Basin

Description of Area: Big Sheep Creek Basin is located fifteen miles southwest of Lima, Montana. The sagebrush communities and wetlands in this area provide habitat for a unique assemblage of rare and sensitive plants, animals, and fish. There are approximately 1,000 acres of palustrine persistent emergent and shrub-scrub wetlands within this basin. Very few of these seasonally and temporarily flooded alkaline fens, marshes, and meadows can be found in southwest Montana. These wetlands support some unique and rare plant communities. Low sagebrush and Wyoming big sagebrush habitats winter approximately 350 antelope and provide year-round habitat for pygmy rabbits as well as other sensitive

wildlife species. The area also provides breeding, nesting and brood rearing habitat for a yearlong resident population of about 200 sage grouse, as well as summer habitat for a population that migrates from Idaho. Portions of five streams within the basin support populations of westslope cutthroat trout.

There are approximately 25,990 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Low sagebrush and Wyoming big sagebrush habitats in this area winter approximately 350 antelope, and provide year-round habitat for pygmy rabbits and seasonal habitat for sage grouse. Pygmy rabbits are a BLM species of special concern. Portions of five streams within this area support populations of westslope cutthroat trout, which are also a BLM species of special concern.

This nomination also meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. The habitat in this area maintains species diversity for several sensitive plant species. Wetlands in this area support some unique and rare plant communities.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. This area does contain habitat for pygmy rabbits and sage grouse, but in comparison to other similar resources and habitats, this area is not more than locally significant when taken in the context of southwest Montana and the region. The westslope cutthroat trout habitats in the area will be considered in the nomination for all westslope cutthroat trout habitats.

A portion of this nomination meets the importance criteria for a natural process or system. Specific habitat types in this nomination have importance regarding sensitive plants and habitats. The portion of this nomination that contains the approximately 1,000 acres of palustrine persistent emergent and shrub-scrub wetlands within this basin, including the seasonally and temporarily flooded alkaline fens, marshes, and meadows, meets the importance criteria as a natural process or system. The nomination was refined to those identified habitat types.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource and a natural process or system. This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. The portion of this nomination that contains the approximately 1,000 acres of palustrine persistent emergent and shrub-scrub wetlands within this basin, including the seasonally and temporarily flooded alkaline fens, marshes, and meadows, meets the importance criteria as a natural process or system. This portion of the nomination will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Blacktail Wildlife Linkage

Description of Area: This nomination includes an area of approximately 56,000 acres of public lands ranging from the Gravelly Mountains in the east to the Beaverhead Mountains to the west. These lands are south of Dillon, Montana and north of Kidd, Montana.

This area was nominated as a natural process or system because it provides a portion of a potential link for wide ranging wildlife species between the Greater Yellowstone and the Salmon-Selway ecosystems. This area would provide a link

between the Gravelly Mountains and the Beaverhead Mountains.

This area was also nominated as a fish and wildlife resource because of the potential presence of threatened and endangered species including grizzly bear, lynx, wolves, and bald eagles and sensitive species including wolverine and westslope cutthroat trout. The area is also important habitat for antelope, mule deer, and elk.

Relevance Criteria: The area nominated does not meet the criteria as a natural process or system. While these lands may form a portion of a current or potential wildlife corridor, the scattered land ownership pattern limits the effectiveness of the public lands area as a corridor and other barriers to movement exist.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. The area does contain a wide variety of native wildlife species, but the wildlife values are not more than locally significant when compared to other similar wildlife habitat in the area or region. Although the area contains potential habitat for threatened and endangered species including grizzly bear, lynx, wolves, and bald eagles, no core habitats for these species are identified in the recovery plans for these species in the area nominated.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource or a natural process or system and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Block Mountain

Description of Area: Block Mountain is located fifteen miles northeast of Dillon, Montana. This area demonstrates geologic features, low topographic relief, and easy access. This area also contains a good fold and thrust belt structure. Each year, more than a dozen geology field camps from around the world visit this site.

There are approximately 8,661 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, T.4S, R.8W, and portions of Sections 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, T.5S, R.8W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. This area contains significant geologic features including easily accessible and visible fold and thrust belt structures.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for a natural process or system in that it exhibits an exceptional fold and thrust belt structure, which makes it a premier location to teach geologic field mapping. These values are thus considered exemplary and of special worth with more than locally significant qualities. These areas have limited public access and the values could be lost if access is severely restricted or major site disturbances occur.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for a natural process or system and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Blue Lake

Description of Area: Blue Lake is located twelve miles southwest of Ennis, Montana.

Blue Lake supports the only known population of axolotl in southwest Montana and possibly anywhere else in Montana. The axolotl is a neotenic form of tiger salamander that retains gills and an aquatic lifestyle from living in a cold, relatively sterile environment, with no fish. Research has shown that these animals metamorphose into normal terrestrial adult salamanders when water temperatures exceed approximately 72 degrees F. for more than 30-45 days. No other suitable habitat is present in the Axolotl Lakes area or in the general vicinity where other axolotl populations could be transplanted.

There are approximately 430 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 17, 18, 19, T.7S, R.2W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. This area supports the only known population of the axolotl salamander in southwest Montana and possibly anywhere else in Montana.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Blue Lake's wildlife resource is more than locally significant because the lake supports the only known population of the axolotl salamander in southwest Montana and possibly anywhere else in Montana. This resource also has qualities that make it sensitive because any activity that would contribute to the organic enrichment of Blue Lake or decreased water inflows causing increased water temperature could decimate the axolotl.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Bull Trout Habitats

Description of Area: There are no known or historic bull trout habitats in the DFO planning area.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance and importance criteria because there are no known or historic bull trout habitats in the DFO planning area. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Centennial Mountains

Description of Area: The Centennial Mountains nomination includes the public lands lying south of the Centennial Valley road from Red Rock Pass to the West Fork of Corral Creek. About 55% of the area is included in the Centennial Mountains Wilderness Study Area and is provided protection under BLM's Interim Management Policy for lands under Wilderness review.

This area has outstanding scenic and recreational values. Recreational opportunities include horseback riding, backpacking, and hiking through the Continental Divide Trail. This area provides suitable habitat for listed threatened and endangered species such as grizzly bear, wolf, and lynx. This is a unique, intact habitat with limited evidence of human caused impacts. There is a potential for slumps and landslides in certain areas. This area may provide a wildlife linkage because it is an important route for wildlife migration and movement between high security habitats.

There are approximately 40,715 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for scenic value. The northern portion of the Centennial Mountains rises over 3,000 feet in less than a mile in some places. The area provides a diverse mix of vegetation ranging from sagebrush grasslands in the lower elevations to alpine meadows with scattered stands of subalpine fir and whitebark pine.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. This area provides suitable habitat for grizzly bear, wolf, and lynx, which are all threatened and endangered species.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. This is a unique, intact habitat with limited intrusion. This area may provide a wildlife linkage because it is an important route for wildlife migration and movement between high security habitats. In addition, the Taylor Mountain area contains the only known habitat in Montana for the plant species Whipple's beardtongue.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for natural hazards because portions of the nomination are susceptible to slumping.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for scenic values. The Continental Divide Trail traverses this area and passes through some of the highest quality scenic values in southwest Montana. The landscape has high, rugged, forested mountains. The dramatic 3,000-foot rise of the northern face of the Centennial Mountains is a well-known landmark in the region and is more than locally significant.

This nomination meets the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. This area provides suitable habitat for grizzly

bear, wolf, and lynx, which are all threatened and endangered species. The area has also been recently identified as one of the areas outside of grizzly bear recovery zones where one would reasonably expect to find grizzly use occurring in most years. Several grizzly bear sightings have been made in the area and several BLM species of special concern, including wolverine and northern goshawk, are known to inhabit the area.

This nomination meets the importance criteria for a natural process or system. This area is a potential migration corridor that forms a connection between the Yellowstone and Salmon-Selway ecosystems. Although the area only provides a portion of the corridor, it connects with other federally administered lands that could provide connectivity. The public lands in this nomination are far less scattered than in other linkage nominations. The only known habitat in Montana for Whipple's beardtongue occurs in the Taylor Mountain area, which also provides a good example of avalanche ecology and exhibits a great diversity of plant communities and species within a small geographic area.

This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for natural hazards. Although portions of this area are susceptible to slumping, they do not pose a significant threat to human safety.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for scenic values, a fish and wildlife resource, a natural process or system, and natural hazards. This nomination meets the importance criteria for scenic values, a fish and wildlife resource, and a natural process or system, but not for natural hazards. The Taylor Mountain area has been included within this nomination but is discussed separately as well (see Taylor

Mountain section). This nomination will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Centennial Sandhills

Description of Area: The Centennial Sandhills is located six miles north of Lakeview, Montana. This is one of only two sand dune complexes in Montana. This is the only area in Montana known to contain three special status plant species (sand wildrye, pale evening primrose, and painted milkvetch). There are also rare plant communities in this area. This area supports ecological processes related to sand dune migration, which are necessary for plant survival.

There are approximately 1040 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 21, 22, 23, T.13S, R.2W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. This area contains three special status plant species and supports ecological processes related to sand dune migration. The area also contains rare plant communities that are dependent on this habitat.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for a natural process or system. This area contains one of only two sand dune complexes in Montana. This is the only area in Montana known to contain three special status plant species (sand wildrye, pale evening primrose, and painted milkvetch) that are dependent on sand dune habitat. Loss of sand dune activity could put these values at risk.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for a

natural process or system and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Centennial Valley and Mountains

Description of Area: This nomination includes all public lands in the Centennial Valley from Red Rock Pass to Lima Peaks and was nominated for historical, scenic, and cultural values; for wildlife and fishery values; as a natural process or system; and for natural hazards.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria as a whole. The values were considered in several other more specific nominations regarding the Centennial Valley area. It was determined that the more specific nominations would cover most of the area and the relevant values included in this nomination.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC. See the Centennial Mountains, Centennial Sandhills, and Centennial Valley Wetlands nominations.

Centennial Valley Wetlands (includes Lima Reservoir and Red Rock nominations)

Description of Area: The Centennial Valley Wetlands are located along the Red Rock River in the Centennial Valley. This area provides for waterfowl production and is an important area along a migration flyway. This area contains the largest wetland areas in the planning area. These wetlands support nesting by a wide variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other water birds. This area supports two federally listed and several BLM sensitive wildlife species. Two peregrine falcon territories are present on the reservoir and river that

depend on the productivity of this wetland habitat. Approximately twelve trumpeter swan breeding territories are dependent on these public land wetlands. Canada geese use Lima Reservoir and the Red Rock River every summer and represent the largest molting population in the northern Rocky Mountains. Bald eagles nest in the vicinity and utilize habitat on wetlands. The entire area is included in the Red Rock Waterfowl Habitat Management Plan (HMP). This is one of only three places where trumpeter swans nest in the tri-state area. This population is the “natural” relic population of the trumpeter swan. There are many cultural/paleontological properties eroding along Lima Reservoir.

There are approximately 17,335 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for cultural value. There are many cultural/paleontological properties eroding along Lima Reservoir.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. This area supports two federally listed and several BLM sensitive wildlife species. This is one of only three places in the tri-state area where trumpeter swans nest.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for cultural value. There are important paleontological resources along the shores of Lima Reservoir that are more than locally significant. These resources are susceptible to damage by wave action, eroding the resources from the banks.

This nomination meets the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Two peregrine falcon territories and approximately twelve trumpeter swan

breeding territories are dependent on the wetlands in this area. Activities that reduce the quality and/or quantity of these wetland areas can reduce the value of the foraging habitat for peregrine falcons and the nesting habitat for trumpeter swans.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for cultural value and a fish and wildlife resource and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

City of Butte Big Hole River Diversion

Description of Area: The City of Butte Big Hole River Diversion is one mile west of Divide, Montana on the Big Hole River. This area is outside of the DFO planning area and will be forwarded to the Butte Field Office for consideration in their RMP revision process if there are any public lands located in the area.

Findings: The relevance and importance criteria were not reviewed for this nomination because the area is outside of the DFO planning area. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

City of Dillon Grasshopper Creek Diversion

This nomination is addressed under the Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies section.

City of Lima Municipal Watershed

This nomination is addressed under the Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies section.

Clark Canyon

Description of Area: The Clark Canyon nomination area is located five miles east of Clark Canyon Reservoir. This nomination has areas that are geologically unstable and susceptible to mass soil movement.

There are approximately 6,844 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: Although this area is susceptible to mass soil movement, it does not constitute a natural hazard. This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards.

Importance Criteria: The unstable soils do not pose a significant threat to human life and safety.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance and importance criteria for natural hazards and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Dillon Field Office

Description of Area: This nomination includes all of the public lands administered by the DFO in Madison and Beaverhead counties.

There are approximately 888,986 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination is too broad to meet the relevance criteria.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC. The general

planning authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the resulting land use planning process is the appropriate tool for the identification of land use allocations and management protocols to be applied to the overall planning area.

Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies (includes City of Dillon Grasshopper Creek Diversion and City of Lima Municipal Watershed nominations)

Description of Area: This nomination includes all of the municipal water supplies contained in the DFO planning area. The description of this nomination was not adequate to determine locations or total acres of public lands.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet any of the four relevance criteria.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: Municipalities are required to develop source water protection plans. If concerns with current management are identified, the DFO will coordinate with municipalities to address those concerns.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek

Description of Area: The East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek is located about 33 miles southeast of Dillon, Montana and is contiguous with the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Blacktail and Robb-Ledford Game Ranges that support 2,000-3,000 elk

during the winter. The area is also a Wilderness Study Area. This nomination has areas that are geologically unstable and susceptible to mass soil movement.

There are approximately 6,231 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 13, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, T.11S, R.5W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for scenic value. This area is located within a Wilderness Study Area and is currently managed as a Class I Visual Resource Management area.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource because there are many wintering elk in the area.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards. Although this area is susceptible to mass soil movement, it does not constitute a natural hazard or a threat to human safety.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. The wildlife resources contained in this area are important locally, but when considered on a statewide or regional basis, they are not more than locally significant. The values do not have qualities that make them or the area threatened or vulnerable to adverse change.

The scenic values in the area, while providing some views of the Snowcrest Range and of some diverse plant communities, are not more than locally significant compared to other areas across southwest Montana and the rest of the state. This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for scenic value.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for scenic value and as a fish and wildlife resource, but not for natural hazards. This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for scenic value or as a fish and wildlife resource. The current Wilderness Study Area status provides additional protection for these resources as part of the BLM's *Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review*.

This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Ermont Mill Site

Description of Area: This area is located fifteen miles west of Dillon, Montana. This is an abandoned mill site that processed ore from mines in the Ermont Gulch area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards. Although there may be hazardous materials remaining on this mill site, they are not part of a natural process.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Everson Creek

Description of Area: This area is located fifteen miles southwest of Grant, Montana. The Everson Creek area contains perhaps the oldest archaeological site in Montana. This area has several quarry sites and contains extensive cultural resources important both to archaeologists and to

Native Americans. This area also contains sage grouse and other wildlife values.

There are approximately 8,608 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for cultural values because of the significant cultural resources found throughout the area.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. The wildlife values contained in this area are no more significant than those located throughout the DFO planning area.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for cultural values. The cultural values in this area are more than locally significant because it is perhaps the oldest archaeological site in Montana. The cultural resources are extremely fragile and susceptible to damage.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for cultural values, but not for a fish and wildlife resource. This nomination meets the importance criteria for cultural values and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area (includes the Lima/Sweetwater Breaks Raptor Area nomination)

Description of Area: This nomination includes three important nesting areas for ferruginous hawks and eight other raptor species often nesting in close association with each other on suitable habitats. These areas are the Sweetwater Hills and Basin, the Lima Breaks, and the Bell-Limekiln Canyon area near Clark Canyon Reservoir. Portions of two of these areas, Lima Breaks and Sweetwater Breaks, are currently listed

by BLM as “Key Raptor Management Areas” where unusually high nesting populations occur, resulting from clustering within or near special habitat features, high prey populations, and/or low levels of human disturbance. This portion of southwest Montana has the second highest density of nesting ferruginous hawks in North America.

Ferruginous hawks are a BLM sensitive species. This species is particularly sensitive to disturbance, especially during the breeding and early nesting periods.

The Sweetwater Breaks ACEC was nominated in the Dillon MFP for the concentration and diversity of nesting raptors, and specifically for ferruginous hawks. An updated nomination for the Lima/Sweetwater Breaks Raptor Area was submitted containing supplemental information and expanding the nomination boundaries.

There are approximately 114,300 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. It contains a significant habitat for ferruginous hawks, a BLM species of special concern and important nesting habitat for eight other raptor species.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. The nest densities for ferruginous hawks are the second highest in Montana and one of the highest densities in all of North America. This makes this area more than locally significant. Ferruginous hawks are also prone to nest abandonment if disturbed. The area also contains nesting habitat for eight other raptor species, but these values are not more than locally

significant and are not substantially different from other similar values in the area and region. The nesting habitat for eight other raptor species does not meet the importance criteria.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource because of the high density of ferruginous hawk nesting and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Glen Tungsten Mill Site

Description of Area: The Glen Tungsten Mill Site is located three miles northwest of Glen, Montana. This is an abandoned mill site that processed ore from mines in the area. The tailings ponds from this mill site have been reclaimed and water quality monitoring has continued.

There are approximately 20 acres of public land in this area. This includes portions of Sections 4, 5, 9, T.4S, R.9W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards. Although there may be hazardous materials remaining on this mill site, they are not part of a natural process.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Grizzly Bear Use Areas

Description of Area: The nominator did not describe any specific locations.

Findings: Grizzly bear habitat is currently managed under the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. No areas within the DFO are identified as core habitats in the recovery plan. There is some grizzly bear use on public lands administered by the DFO, but since grizzly bears are a wide-ranging species, no specific habitats have been identified at this time. The nomination did not specify any areas that should be considered, so it was not evaluated as a formal nomination.

This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Horse Prairie Watershed

Description of Area: The upper Horse Prairie Watershed is located west of Grant, Montana. This includes all of the public lands upstream from Grant.

There are approximately 53,800 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: No values were identified in this nomination that meet any of the four relevance criteria. This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria.

Findings: There were no specific values identified for this nomination, so the relevance criteria were not met. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Jerry Johnson Creek

Description of Area: This area includes the public lands north of the Big Hole River from Divide to the Silver Bow county line in Montana.

Findings: The relevance and importance criteria were not reviewed for this nomination because it is outside of the DFO planning area. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Johnson Gulch

Description of Area: Johnson Gulch is located ten miles southeast of Grant, Montana, east of Medicine Lodge Creek. This area contains a wide diversity of high-quality rangeland communities, including grasslands, shrub lands, and woodlands. The rangeland communities are predominantly in good or better ecological condition. A nearly complete array of the community types involving Idaho fescue and mountain big sagebrush are represented in the nominated area. The high quality examples of curl-leaf mountain-mahogany dominated communities, including the somewhat rare curl-leaf mountain-mahogany/Idaho fescue type are key components of mule deer winter habitat and support upwards of 200 deer. Relatively large populations of Taper-tip desert-parsley and Bitterroot milkvetch, both regional endemic sensitive plant species, are located within this area. Taper-tip desert-parsley is only known to be on eight locations in Montana while Bitterroot milkvetch is common in Idaho, but uncommon in Montana. A lone specimen of Lemhi beardtounge was recorded in Johnson Gulch in 1984, but has not been relocated since. Hoary phacelia, a BLM "watch" species is common in the east-facing limestone scree slope in Johnson Gulch.

There are approximately 7,400 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 15, 17, 18, 29, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, T.11S, R.11W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Although this area contains wildlife habitat, it doesn't contain habitat specifically associated with threatened or endangered species.

Portions of this nomination meet the relevance criteria for a natural process or system because they contain sensitive plants and are good examples of endemic plant communities.

Importance Criteria: This area does contain some sensitive species of plants, but it is not more than locally significant because these plants are relatively common on a regional basis. The area also does not have qualities or circumstances that make it fragile or vulnerable to adverse change. Therefore, this nomination does not meet the importance criteria as a natural system.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system, but not for a fish and wildlife resource. This area does not meet the importance criteria as a natural process or system. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Lemhi Pass

Description of Area: Lemhi Pass is located on the Continental Divide twenty miles west of Grant, Montana. Lemhi Pass is a nationally significant site based on the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Findings: The relevance and importance criteria were not reviewed for this nomination because there are no public lands administered by the Dillon FO located in this area. Any other potential values relating to the Lewis and Clark Trail will be

considered in the Lewis and Clark Trail nomination.

This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Lemhi Pass Wildlife Linkage

Description of Area: Lemhi Pass is located on the Continental Divide twenty miles west of Grant, Montana. Lemhi Pass, and the lands that surround it, contain diverse wildlife habitat, including large blocks of elk, moose, deer, and antelope habitat and important seasonal migration habitat. This area provides some habitat for lynx and wolverine. There have been reports of wolf sightings on BLM lands across the Divide in Idaho. This area also provides important travel habitat for wide-ranging wildlife species. Public ownership is limited on the pass and limits the effectiveness of the public lands in the area as a corridor.

There are approximately 2,400 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 26, 35, T.9S, R.15W, and portions of Sections 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 21, 22, 27, 34, 35, T.10S, R.15W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Although this area contains some wildlife habitat, it doesn't contain any designated habitat for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Public ownership is limited on the pass and this limits the effectiveness of the public lands in the area as a wildlife resource.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. This area is important for wildlife migration and movement along the Continental Divide. However, the scattered public lands ownership pattern in the Lemhi Pass area

does not provide a wildlife corridor to be managed by BLM.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource or a natural process or system. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Lewis & Clark Trail

Description of Area: The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail passes along the Jefferson and Beaverhead Rivers and Horse Prairie Creek. Public lands along the trail were nominated for historical values. This is a Congressionally designated National Historic Trail.

There are approximately 16 miles of the Lewis and Clark Trail that cross public land in the planning area. These lands lie in portions of Section 32, T.1N, R.4W, Sections 1, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23, 27, 34, T.8S, R.12W, Sections 1, 2, 11, 31, 32, 33, T.9S, R.10W, Sections 3, 10, 31, 32, 33, T.9S, R.12W, Section 33, T.9S, R.13W, and Sections 4, 5, 7, T.10S, R.13W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for historic value. The Lewis and Clark Trail is a Congressionally designated National Historic Trail.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for historic value. This trail is of national significance and has qualities that make it unique. As a National Historic Trail, it has been recognized as warranting protection. The BLM is already under the mandate to protect the scenic values of the historic trail

corridors under Executive Order 13195– Trails for America in the 21st Century and under the designation as a National Historic Trail.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for historic value. Because of the designation of the Lewis and Clark Trail as a National Historic Trail, the RAC subgroup recommended this nomination not be carried forward as a potential ACEC as they felt it was already afforded protection under that designation. However, to be consistent in the application of guidance in BLM Manual 1613, the BLM has modified this recommendation and the Lewis and Clark Trail will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Lima/Sweetwater Breaks Raptor Area

This nomination is addressed under the Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area nomination.

Lima Reservoir (included in the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination)

This nomination is addressed under the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination.

Lynx Areas

Description of Area: The nominator did not describe any specific locations.

Findings: Lynx habitat is currently managed under the Lynx Conservation Strategy. No critical habitat has been designated as a result of listing under the Endangered Species Act. No areas within the planning area are identified as core

habitats in the lynx plan, but there is potential lynx habitat on public lands administered by the DFO based on vegetative associations. Since lynx are a wide-ranging species, no other specific habitats have been identified at this time.

This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Madison River Corridor

Description of Area: The area includes the public lands along the Madison River Corridor from Quake Lake to Black's Ford. This area was nominated for recreation values.

Relevance Criteria: Recreation values do not meet any of the four relevance criteria. This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Maiden Rock/Camp Creek/Soap Gulch Bighorn Sheep Habitat

This nomination is addressed under the Melrose/Maiden Rock Bighorn Sheep nomination.

Medicine Lodge Divide Meteorite Impact Site

Description of Area: The Medicine Lodge Divide Meteorite Impact Site is estimated to be over sixty miles across and runs from the Medicine Lodge Divide, south into Idaho. This nomination has some potentially unique geologic values, but no specific locations of importance were identified by the nominator or during the BLM's research of the location. It appears that there is still

no agreement among geologists that this feature was created by the impact of a meteorite.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. The extensive nature of the alleged impact site makes it infeasible to identify any specific geologic features that could be considered rare.

Importance Criteria: The importance criteria were not reviewed since the relevance criteria were not met.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a natural process or system and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn Sheep Habitat

Description of Area: The Melrose-Maiden Rock and Tendoy areas support the only two bighorn sheep populations on public lands in the DFO.

The Melrose-Maiden Rock area is now split between the Butte Field Office and DFO. This area is located near Melrose, Montana. Bighorn sheep were reintroduced into historic habitat around Camp Creek in the mid 1960's and served as the basis for the Soap Gulch ACEC nomination in the 1979 Dillon MFP. The bighorn population has expanded to occupy suitable habitat around this core area, including lands west of the Big Hole River.

Wildlife viewing is also a major regional interest with sheep seasonally present along Interstate 15 and the Big Hole River. A major die off decimated this herd in 1995, but small bands of bighorn have persisted throughout the previously occupied habitat,

and a supplemental reintroduction was made in 2001. Current distribution of bighorns exceeds the original core habitat area, and no overall habitat management plan is in place.

The Tendoy area is located in the south end of the Tendoy Mountains, west of Dell, Montana. Sheep were reintroduced in this area in 1985 and expanded from 50 animals in the core habitat area around Hidden Pasture and Dixon Mountain to nearly 300 animals, with small bands of bighorn distributed from Baker Canyon in the north Tendoy to Little Sheep Creek on the south. A major die off in 1993 destroyed approximately 95% of the herd. A supplemental release in 1996 did not substantially reestablish the herd. Another release was completed in February 2002. Small bands of bighorn are still present in the core area and other isolated locations. A habitat management plan (HMP) is in place for the core habitat area but does not include extensive areas of suitable and occupied habitat elsewhere in the Tendoy.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Bighorn sheep are a priority species for the BLM and they occur in these areas.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. This nomination does not have more than locally significant qualities or circumstances since there are over 40 herds of bighorn sheep in Montana and many others in the western United States. Bighorn sheep themselves are susceptible to adverse change; however, the habitats in the nominated areas are not. The area is not considered fragile nor has it been recognized as warranting special protection under FLPMA.

Findings: Bighorn sheep are a priority species for the BLM. Bighorn sheep themselves are susceptible to adverse change; however, the habitats in the nominated areas are not. These areas are not more or less important than other bighorn sheep areas in Montana or the Intermountain West.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource, but does not meet the importance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek

Description of Area: The original Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek nomination includes the public lands along the Big Sheep Creek drainage from the mouth of the canyon located four miles southwest of Dell, Montana upstream to the confluence of Deadman Creek with Big Sheep Creek, and the all the public lands in the Muddy Creek drainage. The geomorphology along Muddy Creek proper has resulted in deeply stratified buried cultural deposits located on public lands. There is also a high concentration of rock art. Muddy Creek itself contains 100% pure westslope cutthroat trout. Big Sheep Creek has both rainbow and brown trout. The area provides spectacular scenery, characterized by high palisades and timbered peaks that rise dramatically from the canyon floor. The Big Sheep Creek Back Country Byway passes through the area. Elk and mule deer winter in the Muddy Creek drainage. These areas also provide habitat for bighorn sheep and sage grouse.

There are approximately 35,360 acres of public land in the original area nominated in the MFP. The area has been refined to

include approximately 22,829 acres that contain the relevant and important values (see discussion below).

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for cultural and scenic values given that both are considered significant.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Muddy Creek contains a 100% genetically pure population of westslope cutthroat trout, which are a sensitive species. Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek also provides habitat for bighorn sheep and sage grouse, which are priority species for the BLM.

Importance Criteria: A portion of the area meets the importance criteria for the cultural values it contains. The Big Sheep Creek wickiup has more than locally significant qualities as evidenced by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Because of the deeply stratified deposits along Muddy Creek, the geomorphological regime and highly erodible soils, and the density of known archaeological sites in the area, this area has special worth and meaning, as well as qualities and circumstances make it vulnerable to adverse change.

Another portion of the area meets the importance criteria for scenic values. Big Sheep Creek passes through three narrow canyons with intervening open valleys. Steep rubble and scree slopes confine these canyons or cliffs and the different slope aspects support a wide variety of conifer and shrub communities. The scenic values along Big Sheep Creek are not typically found in the planning area and thus are considered to have more than locally significant qualities that give them special worth.

This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Except for the presence of a 100% genetically pure population of westslope cutthroat trout, the other wildlife resources contained in this area are not more than locally significant and do not have qualities that make them threatened or vulnerable to adverse change. The westslope cutthroat trout habitats in the area will be considered in the nomination for all westslope cutthroat trout habitats.

Findings: A portion of the nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for cultural and scenic value. The boundary has been refined from the original boundary to include those values. The area meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource, but does not meet the importance criteria. Westslope cutthroat trout values are included under the westslope cutthroat trout nomination.

The portion of the nomination that meets the criteria for cultural and scenic values will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Norris Hill Cyanide Leach Site

Description of Area: The nominator did not provide a location for this nomination. There is a known location on Bradley Creek.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards or as a natural process and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Pipe Organ

Description of Area: The Pipe Organ area is located ten miles southwest of Dillon, Montana along Interstate 15. This area has historic values related to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, the Ney

Homestead site, and the Clark campsite at the mouth of Gallagher Creek. The riparian corridor represents one of the only areas where there is federal ownership that has river bottom usage by wildlife. This contains one of the major waterfowl migration corridors in southwest Montana. During the winter, bald eagles utilize this area.

There are approximately 900 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for historic value. This area has historic values related to the Lewis and Clark Trail, the Ney Homestead site, and the Clark campsite at the mouth of Gallagher Creek. The Ney Ranch is an example of early homestead activity in the area. Lewis and Clark Trail values are addressed under the Lewis and Clark Trail nomination.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Although this area provides wildlife habitat associated with a major river corridor, the habitat alone has not been determined critical to meet the needs of threatened, endangered or sensitive species, nor is it essential for maintaining species diversity.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for historic value. The historic values of this area are already protected and not at risk under current management. The Clark campsite area has been severely modified by past railroad and highway construction. Although the Ney Ranch home site contains historic values that may be of significance, the values do not meet the threshold of significance needed to support the importance criteria.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for historic value, but not for a fish and wildlife resource. The area does not meet the importance criteria for historic values; the Lewis and Clark Trail is being addressed under a separate nomination. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Pony Town Dump

Description of Area: This is the old Pony, Montana town dump. This site has been reclaimed twice and no known natural hazards exist.

There are approximately 5 acres of public land in this area.

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Recreational Zones (heavily used)

Description of Area: The nominator did not provide any specific locations for this nomination.

Findings: Recreational use does not meet any of the relevance criteria, so this nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Red Buttes Experiment Station Cyanide Leach Site

Description of Area: The nominator did not provide a location for this nomination (may be Red Bluff).

Findings: This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Red Rock (included in the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination)

This nomination is addressed under the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination.

Rochester Mining District

Description of Area: The Rochester Mining District is located ten miles west of Twin Bridges, Montana. This is a potentially hazardous site containing old adits and materials from past mining activity. There are also areas that may contribute to impaired water quality. Only a portion of this site is on BLM land with the majority of the old mining activity being on private land. This site has historic values, which were not part of the nomination. These include the cemetery and a few foundations on public land.

There are approximately 23,000 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: The historic mining activity, including the old cemetery and foundations of old mining buildings from residences, meets the relevance criteria for historic value.

This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria for natural hazards. Although there may be hazardous materials remaining on this old mining district, they are not part of a natural process.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for historic value. Although the area contains historic values that may be of significance, the values on public land do not meet the threshold of significance needed to support the importance criteria.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for historic value, but not for natural hazards. This does not meet the importance criteria for historic value. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Sage Creek

Description of Area: Sage Creek is located ten miles east of Dell, Montana. The extensive sagebrush-steppe habitat in Sage Creek supports a large number of antelope, sage grouse, and other sagebrush dependent species. Antelope numbers on winter habitat in Sage Creek are not well quantified, but approximate numbers noted in the 1979 MFP were at least 1,000-1,500. The antelope expand into summer habitats throughout the Sage Creek, Blacktail Creek, and Centennial Valley areas. Two major sage grouse complexes are present on Little Sage Creek and Basin Creek. These are the only known leks in the Sage Creek watershed and are widely separated from any other occupied sage grouse breeding areas. These leks also represent some of the largest leks in the DFO. Most use has shifted from the Basin Creek lek to the Little Sage Creek lek since the early 1990's.

There are approximately 35,000 acres of public land in this area.

Relevance Criteria: Because of the special management emphasis for sage grouse, this nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for fish and wildlife resource. The habitat in this area is not more than locally significant when compared to other similar resources. This area is not exemplary, unique, endangered,

threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change, since there are similar resources across the DFO, the State of Montana, and the region.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource, but does not meet the importance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Sage Creek Rest-Rotation Research/Demonstration Area

Findings: This nomination was withdrawn from review by the nominator and was not evaluated.

Sage Grouse Areas

Description of Area: This nomination includes all current and historic sage grouse leks and an eleven-mile (18 kilometer) buffer around them to protect sensitive species and sage steppe habitats (Sage Grouse Management Guidelines under Connelly et. al., 2000, recommends up to an eleven mile radius per lek for migratory populations). Sage grouse in southwest Montana are separated from other populations in the state. Information indicates that the lek attendance in the planning area has declined significantly since the 1960's.

There are approximately 887,000 acres of public land in this nomination.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Sage grouse are a priority species for the BLM.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. There are sage grouse leks and habitat across the State of Montana

and the region and therefore the nominated areas are not of special worth compared to other similar resources. Because of the extent of the area, the habitat does not exhibit qualities that are exemplary, unique, or rare.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria as fish and wildlife resource, but does not meet the importance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Sage grouse concerns are acknowledged as a major issue in the RMP planning process and will be considered in alternative development for the RMP.

Sagebrush Creek

Description of Area: The Sagebrush Creek nomination includes public lands west of Dillon, Montana, approximately bounded by Rattlesnake Creek and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest boundary on the north, Horse Prairie creek on the south, the Big Hole divide on the west, and the Beaverhead River on the east. This area contains one of the highest concentrations of state and regional endemic sensitive plant species in southwestern Montana, including populations of eight sensitive plants. At least six species and three subspecies of sagebrush are present, making it a very diverse sagebrush landscape for southwest Montana. This area is one of the largest relatively intact sagebrush ecosystems on public lands in the DFO. This habitat supports eleven sage grouse leks and major winter and yearlong use areas that sustain an important part of the southwest Montana sage grouse population. One of the highest densities of pygmy rabbits in the planning area also occurs in this area. This area provides major winter and yearlong habitat for large numbers of antelope, mule deer,

elk, five BLM sensitive species, and numerous sagebrush-dependent birds and mammals.

There are approximately 128,524 acres of public land in this nomination.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Sagebrush habitats in this area winter approximately 1,000 antelope, and provide year-round habitat for pygmy rabbits and yearlong habitat for sage grouse. Pygmy rabbits are a BLM species of special concern and sage grouse are a priority species for the BLM.

This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. The habitat in this area maintains species diversity for several sensitive plant species

Importance Criteria: This area does not meet the importance criteria for a natural process or system. This area does contain some sensitive species of plants, but it is not more than locally significant. The sensitive plant populations are not limited to this area and they cannot be linked to any specific plant communities or habitat features. A review of sensitive plant locations in the DFO indicated that there were state and regional endemic sensitive plant species throughout the southwest portion of the planning area and this area did not have any significantly higher concentrations than the rest of the planning area. The area does not have qualities or circumstances that make it fragile or vulnerable to adverse change.

This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. There are sage grouse leks and habitat across the State of Montana and the region and therefore the nominated areas are not of special worth compared to other

similar resources. This area does contain pygmy rabbits, but the area is no more or less important than pygmy rabbit habitats in other portions of the planning area or the region. Because of the extent of the area, the habitat does not exhibit qualities that are exemplary, unique, or rare.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource and for a natural process or system, but does not meet the importance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Standard Creek

Description of Area: Standard Creek is a tributary of the Upper Madison River. The nominator did not suggest any relevance values for this nomination.

There are approximately 80 acres of public land in this area. This includes portions of Section 33, T.10S, R.1E.

Findings: The nominator did not suggest any relevance values for this nomination and the BLM is not aware of any significant values that would meet the relevance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Stone Creek Talc Mine

Description of Area: The Stone Creek Talc Mine is located at the Left Fork of Stone Creek fifteen miles east of Dillon, Montana. Most of this mine site is located on private land. This is an open pit mine and some of the waste material is located on public land.

The area includes portions of Sections 11, 14, T.7S, R.6W.

Findings: There are no known natural hazards at this mine site. This nomination does not meet any of the four relevance criteria and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Taylor Mountain

Description of Area: Taylor Mountain is located between Tom Creek and Odell Creek and is included in the Centennial Mountains Wilderness Study Area. This area has landscape that is of significant ecological interest as proposed by the Montana Natural Heritage Program. This area contains the only known habitat in Montana for one plant species (Whipple's beardtongue). There is a great diversity of plant communities and species in a small geographic area. This area provides a good example of avalanche ecology.

There are approximately 3,800 acres of public land in this area. The area lies within the Centennial Mountains nomination area and is addressed in that section of this report as well.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a natural process or system. This area contains the only known habitat in Montana for one plant species (Whipple's beardtongue). There is a great diversity of plant communities and species in a small geographic area. This area provides a good example of avalanche ecology.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for a natural process or system. This area contains the only known habitat in Montana for Whipple's beardtongue. There is a great diversity of plant communities and species in a small geographic area.

Findings: The area that was nominated for these values is also a portion of the Centennial Mountains nomination. The relevant and important values will be considered in the Centennial Mountains nomination, which will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Tendoy Bighorn Sheep Habitat

This nomination is addressed under the Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn Sheep Habitat nomination.

Thorium City Site

Description of Area: This site is twenty miles southwest of Grant, Montana. This area was explored and developed for thorium, a radioactive substance.

There are approximately 82 acres of public land in this area. This includes a portion of the N1/2 of the N1/2 of Section 28, T.10S, R.15W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for natural hazards if the background radiation level poses a threat to human safety.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for natural hazards if the background radiation level poses a threat to human safety.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for natural hazards if the background radiation level poses a threat to human safety. Additional study is needed to determine what, if any, hazards radioactive thorium poses in this area. Earlier studies indicate that there may be a hazard in some localized portions of the area.

This nomination will be carried forward as a potential ACEC, pending the outcome of a study of the levels of radioactivity in the area.

Upper Centennial Basin Bald Eagle Nesting Area

Description of Area: In 1979, this was the only known bald eagle nest in the planning area. This nest site has been active since before 1979 and has been rebuilt at least three times. The nest is located in a group of Douglas fir trees and is located adjacent to the Red Rock Wildlife Refuge. This parcel is bordered by the Refuge on three sides and by State of Montana School Trust lands on the other side. Bald eagles are still a threatened species, though they are in the process of being delisted.

There are approximately 40 acres of public land in this area. This includes portions of Section 8, T.14S, R.1E.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource since bald eagles are currently listed as a threatened species.

Importance Criteria: This nomination does not meet the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. When this area was nominated in 1979, it was the only known bald eagle nest in the planning area. There are now 25 known nest sites in the planning area and this one is no more unique or significant than any of the other sites. This site is surrounded by the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, which provides some protection for the nest site, making it less threatened or vulnerable to adverse change.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife

resource, but it does not meet the importance criteria. This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Virginia City Historic District

Description of Area: This nomination includes public lands in and near Virginia City, Montana that are within the National Historic Landmark designation. This area adds value to the Virginia City experience. There are historic and cultural values related to the mining and settlement of Virginia City. The potential to mine is still present. The goal of the National Historic Landmark is to enhance and protect the viewshed and the Historic Landmark.

There are approximately 340 acres of public land in this area. These lands lie in portions of Sections 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 34, 35, T.6S, R.3W.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for historic and cultural value because this is a significant historic site.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for historic and cultural value. The designation of a National Historic Landmark recognizes the fact that this area is more than locally significant. Activities on public lands surrounding Virginia City make the area vulnerable to adverse change should the character of the viewshed be impacted.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for historic and cultural value and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Waters on 303(d) List

Description of Area: This nomination includes all streams on the State of Montana's "303(d) list" of water quality impaired waters that cross public lands administered by the DFO.

Relevance Criteria: Water quality does not meet any of the four relevance criteria. This nomination does not meet the relevance criteria.

Findings: Since water quality does not meet any of the relevance criteria, this nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats

Description of Area: Westslope cutthroat trout are the only trout native to southwest Montana. Historic land use practices and development have significantly reduced habitat suitability throughout much of this species range, particularly east of the Continental Divide. Hybridization with rainbow trout and competition from brook trout has further influenced existing populations. Pure populations of westslope cutthroat trout currently occupy approximately 1% of their historic range and are only found in approximately 6% of surveyed habitats (FS/BLM 1996). Intensive inventories and genetic analyses of westslope cutthroat trout in the DFO as of 2000 have identified only 32 populations with genetics of 100% and eight (8) populations with purity greater than 99%. The BLM administers an estimated 64 miles of habitat with 100% populations, 9.5 miles with purity between 99% and 99.9%, and an additional 10.5 miles with unknown genetics, for an estimated total of 84 miles

of westslope cutthroat trout habitat within this nomination.

Data from genetic sampling conducted in 2001 is not yet available, and numbers are expected to change with continued sampling. BLM manages the headwaters and/or significant portions of the occupied habitat for about 15 of these populations. Many of these populations are extremely small and vulnerable to further degradation or extinction.

Relevance Criteria: This nomination meets the relevance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. Westslope cutthroat trout are a sensitive species for the BLM. Only 40 pure populations occur in the planning area.

Importance Criteria: This nomination meets the importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource. There are only 144 streams in the Upper Missouri Drainage that contain westslope cutthroat trout with a genetic purity of greater than 99%. The high number of streams containing pure populations of westslope cutthroat trout in the planning area compared to the number of streams within the entire Upper Missouri Drainage makes this nomination more than locally significant. Many of these populations are extremely small and vulnerable to further degradation or extinction, which makes them vulnerable to adverse changes, even though the habitats of these populations are no more or less vulnerable than other riparian areas.

Findings: This nomination meets the relevance and importance criteria for a fish and wildlife resource and will be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Wildlife/Biological Corridors

Description of Area: No specific areas were identified by the nominator. This nomination was later replaced by site-specific nominations (Alaska Basin Wildlife Linkage and Lemhi Pass Wildlife Linkage). This general nomination was not evaluated.

Findings: This nomination was not evaluated and will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Wolf Areas

Description of Area: The nominator did not describe any specific locations.

Findings: Wolf habitat is currently managed as an experimental nonessential population. No areas within the planning area are identified as core habitats in the recovery plan. There is some wolf use on public lands administered by the DFO, but since

wolves are a wide-ranging species, no specific habitats have been identified at this time. The nominator did not specify any areas that should be considered, so it was not evaluated as a formal nomination.

This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

Wolverine Areas

Description of Area: The nominator did not describe any specific locations.

Findings: There is some wolverine use on public lands administered by the DFO, but since wolverines are a wide-ranging species, no specific habitats have been identified at this time. The nominator did not specify any areas that should be considered, so it was not evaluated as a formal nomination.

This nomination will not be carried forward as a potential ACEC.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A total of 63 nominated areas were evaluated as part of the Dillon land use planning process. These included areas previously nominated in 1979 in the Dillon MFP, nominations received from the public as part of scoping, and areas nominated or expanded by BLM staff specialists. As a result of work completed by a subgroup convened by the Western Montana RAC and a BLM review team, 14 of the 63 nominations meet both the relevance and importance criteria and will move forward for additional consideration as alternatives for the RMP are developed and analyzed. These 14 Potential ACECs are listed in **Table 1**. Potential ACECs will be proposed for designation if special management is required to protect the highlighted values.

Table 1
Potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Area Name	Values of Concern	Acres/Miles
Beaverhead Rock	Historic resources	120 acres
Big Sheep Creek Basin	Wetland habitats and associated sensitive plant species	1,000 acres within 25,990 acres
Block Mountain	Geologic features	8,661 acres
Blue Lake	Axolotl habitat	430 acres
Centennial Mountains	Scenic values, grizzly bear, lynx, wolf habitats, wildlife migration, Whipple's beardtongue, avalanche ecology	40,715 acres
Centennial Sandhills	Sand dune complex and associated plant species of special concern	1,040 acres
Centennial Valley Wetlands	Wetland habitats, peregrine falcon, trumpeter swan, and other migratory bird habitat, paleontological resources	17,335 acres
Everson Creek	Cultural resources	8,608 acres
Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area	Ferruginous hawk nests/habitat	114,300 acres
Lewis & Clark Trail	Historic resources	16 miles
Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek	Scenic values, cultural resources	22,829 acres
Thorium City Site	Radioactivity as a natural hazard	82 acres
Virginia City Historic District	Historic resources	340 acres
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats	Westslope cutthroat trout populations with greater than 99% purity	84 miles

REFERENCES CITED

BLM. 1979. Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP). Approved September 1979. Manuscript on file, Dillon Field Office, Dillon, Montana.

BLM. 1988. BLM Manual 1613—Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Manuscript on file, Dillon Field Office, Dillon, Montana.

Connelly, J.W., M.A. Schroeder, A.R. Sands, and C.E. Braun. 2000. Guidelines to manage sage grouse populations and their habitats.

FS/BLM. 1996. Technical Report: Extinction Risk for Westslope Cutthroat Trout on Federal Lands Within the Upper Missouri River Basin in Eastern Montana. October 1996.

BLM 1987. BLM Manual H-8550-1. Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review.

APPENDIX A

Relevance and Importance Criteria

Relevance

An area meets the relevance criteria if it contains one or more of the following:

- A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to native Americans).
- A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
- A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).
- Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the RMP process that it has become part of a natural process.

Importance

The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described in the relevance section must have substantial significance and values to meet the importance criteria. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

- Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.
- Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.
- Has qualities that warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.
- Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

APPENDIX B
List of Nominations by Alphabetical Order

Nomination	Nominator*	Acres/Miles of Public Land	RAC Recommendations on ACEC Nominations	Potential ACEC by BLM ? (Yes/No)	Comments
Alaska Basin Wildlife Linkage	External	3,200 acres	No Consensus	No	Evaluation was completed on 440 acres outside of the Centennial Mountains nomination.
Axolotl Lakes	MFP External	5,440 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Badger Gulch/Reservoir Creek	MFP External	25,000 acres	No Review Completed	No	
Bannack Historic District	MFP External	950 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	There are no public lands administered by BLM remaining in this area.
Beaverhead Rock	Internal	120 acres	Potential ACEC	Yes	
Big Sheep Creek Basin	Internal	25,990 acres	No Review Initiated	Yes	Approximately 1,000 acres containing wetlands within the 25,990 acre area will be considered further as a potential ACEC.
Blacktail Wildlife Linkage	External	56,000 acres	No Review Initiated	No	
Block Mountain	External	8,661 acres	Potential ACEC	Yes	
Blue Lake	Internal	430 acres	Potential ACEC	Yes	
Bull Trout Habitats	External	0	Not a Potential ACEC	No	There are no known bull trout habitats in the DFO planning area.
Centennial Mountains	MFP External Internal	40,715 acres	No Consensus	Yes	
Centennial Sandhills	Internal External	1,040 acres	Potential ACEC	Yes	

*Nominations were received from the following sources:

MFP: Area was identified in the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for further consideration as an ACEC when evaluation guidelines were available.

External: Area was identified by the public during the scoping period. Nominations received through August 15, 2002 are addressed in this planning process.

Internal: Area was identified by BLM staff specialists during work on RMP. Older MFP nominations were often expanded/modified as a result of these nominations.

Nomination	Nominator*	Acres/Miles of Public Land	RAC Recommendations on ACEC Nominations	Potential ACEC by BLM ? (Yes/No)	Comments
Centennial Valley and Mountains	External	Not calculated	No Review Initiated	No	The relevant values were addressed as part of the Centennial Mountains, Centennial Sandhills, and Centennial Valley Wetlands nominations.
Centennial Valley Wetlands (includes Lima Reservoir and Red Rock nominations)	External Internal	17,335 acres	No Consensus	Yes	
City of Butte Big Hole River Diversion	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	This nomination is located outside of the DFO planning area and will be referred to the Butte Field Office.
City of Dillon Grasshopper Creek Diversion	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	This nomination is included in the Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies nomination.
City of Lima Municipal Watershed	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	This nomination is included in the Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies nomination.
Clark Canyon	MFP External	6,844 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Dillon Field Office	External	888,986 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies (includes City of Dillon Grasshopper Creek Diversion and City of Lima Municipal Watershed nominations)	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek	MFP External	6,231 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Ermont Mill Site	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Everson Creek	MFP External	8,608 acres	Potential ACEC	Yes	

*Nominations were received from the following sources:

MFP: Area was identified in the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for further consideration as an ACEC when evaluation guidelines were available.

External: Area was identified by the public during the scoping period. Nominations received through August 15, 2002 are addressed in this planning process.

Internal: Area was identified by BLM staff specialists during work on RMP. Older MFP nominations were often expanded/modified as a result of these nominations.

Nomination	Nominator*	Acres/Miles of Public Land	RAC Recommendations on ACEC Nominations	Potential ACEC by BLM ? (Yes/No)	Comments
Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area (includes Lima Breaks Raptor nomination)	MFP External Internal	114,300 acres	No Consensus	Yes	
Glen Tungsten Mill Site	External	20 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Grizzly Bear Use Areas	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Horse Prairie Watershed	External	53,800 acres	No Review Initiated	No	
Jerry Johnson Creek	MFP External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	This nomination is located outside of the DFO planning area and will be referred to the Butte Field Office.
Johnson Gulch	Internal	7,400 acres	No Review Initiated	No	
Lemhi Pass	External	0	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Lemhi Pass Wildlife Linkage	External	2,400 acres	No Review Initiated	No	
Lewis & Clark Trail	External	16 miles	Not a Potential ACEC (See Comments)	Yes	The RAC subgroup found the trail met the relevance and importance criteria but did not need protection based on its current designation. To be consistent with application of the criteria at this stage of the evaluation, this nomination will move forward as a potential ACEC since it meets the relevance and importance criteria.
Lima/Sweetwater Breaks Raptor Area	Internal	Not calculated	No Consensus	No	This nomination is included in the Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area nomination.
Lima Reservoir	MFP External Internal	Not calculated	No Consensus	No	This nomination is included in the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination.

*Nominations were received from the following sources:

MFP: Area was identified in the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for further consideration as an ACEC when evaluation guidelines were available.

External: Area was identified by the public during the scoping period. Nominations received through August 15, 2002 are addressed in this planning process.

Internal: Area was identified by BLM staff specialists during work on RMP. Older MFP nominations were often expanded/modified as a result of these nominations.

Nomination	Nominator*	Acres/Miles of Public Land	RAC Recommendations on ACEC Nominations	Potential ACEC by BLM ? (Yes/No)	Comments
Lynx Areas	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Madison River Corridor	MFP External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Maiden Rock/Camp Creek/Soap Gulch	MFP External	Not calculated	No Consensus	No	This nomination is included in the Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn nomination. Some of these lands are outside the current DFO planning area. Those portions will be referred to the Butte Field Office.
Medicine Lodge Divide Meteorite Impact Site	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn (includes Maiden Rock/Camp Creek/Soap Gulch and Tendoy Bighorn nominations)	External Internal	Not calculated	No Consensus	No	
Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek	MFP External	22,829 acres	No Review Initiated	Yes	
Norris Hill Cyanide Leach Site	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	No location was provided for this nomination.
Pipe Organ	External	900 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Pony Town Dump	External	5 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Recreational Zones (heavily used)	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	No location was provided for this nomination
Red Buttes Experiment Station Cyanide Leach Site	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	No location was provided for this nomination
Red Rock	Internal	Not calculated	No Consensus	No	This nomination is included in the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination.
Rochester Mining District	External	23,000 acres	No Consensus	No	

*Nominations were received from the following sources:

MFP: Area was identified in the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for further consideration as an ACEC when evaluation guidelines were available.

External: Area was identified by the public during the scoping period. Nominations received through August 15, 2002 are addressed in this planning process.

Internal: Area was identified by BLM staff specialists during work on RMP. Older MFP nominations were often expanded/modified as a result of these nominations.

Nomination	Nominator*	Acres/Miles of Public Land	RAC Recommendations on ACEC Nominations	Potential ACEC by BLM ? (Yes/No)	Comments
Sage Creek	MFP External	35,000 acres	No Review Completed	No	
Sage Creek Rest-Rotation Research/Demonstration Area	External	Not calculated	Withdrawn	No	This nomination was withdrawn from review by the nominator.
Sage Grouse Areas	External	887,000 acres	No Review Completed	No	
Sagebrush Creek	Internal	128,524 acres	No Review Completed	No	
Standard Creek	External	80 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Stone Creek Talc Mine	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Taylor Mountain	Internal	3,800 acres	Not a Potential ACEC (See Comments)	No	The RAC subgroup identified the values as important and relevant, but then recommended the area not go forward as a Potential ACEC. To be consistent with application of the criteria at this stage of the evaluation, this nomination will move forward as a potential ACEC since it meets the relevance and importance criteria. Rather than a separate nomination, the values in this nomination are discussed under the Centennial Mountains nomination.
Tendoy Bighorn Sheep Habitat	Internal	Not calculated	No Consensus	No	This nomination is included in the Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn nomination.
Thorium City Site	External	82 acres	Potential ACEC (See Comments)	Yes	The RAC subgroup recommended the nomination go forward if further work/information determined that background radiation posed a threat to human safety.

*Nominations were received from the following sources:

MFP: Area was identified in the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for further consideration as an ACEC when evaluation guidelines were available.

External: Area was identified by the public during the scoping period. Nominations received through August 15, 2002 are addressed in this planning process.

Internal: Area was identified by BLM staff specialists during work on RMP. Older MFP nominations were often expanded/modified as a result of these nominations.

Nomination	Nominator*	Acres/Miles of Public Land	RAC Recommendations on ACEC Nominations	Potential ACEC by BLM ? (Yes/No)	Comments
Upper Centennial Basin Bald Eagle Nesting Area	MFP External	40 acres	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Virginia City Historic District	MFP External	340 acres	Potential ACEC	Yes	
Waters on 303(d) List	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats	External Internal	84 miles	No Review Initiated	Yes	Habitats that contain populations that have genetic purity of 99% or greater are included in this nomination.
Wildlife/Biological Corridors	External	Not calculated	Replaced	No	This nomination was replaced with other specific nominations. See Alaska Basin, Blacktail, and Lemhi Pass Wildlife Linkage nominations.
Wolf Areas	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	No location was provided for this nomination.
Wolverine Areas	External	Not calculated	Not a Potential ACEC	No	No location was provided for this nomination.

*Nominations were received from the following sources:

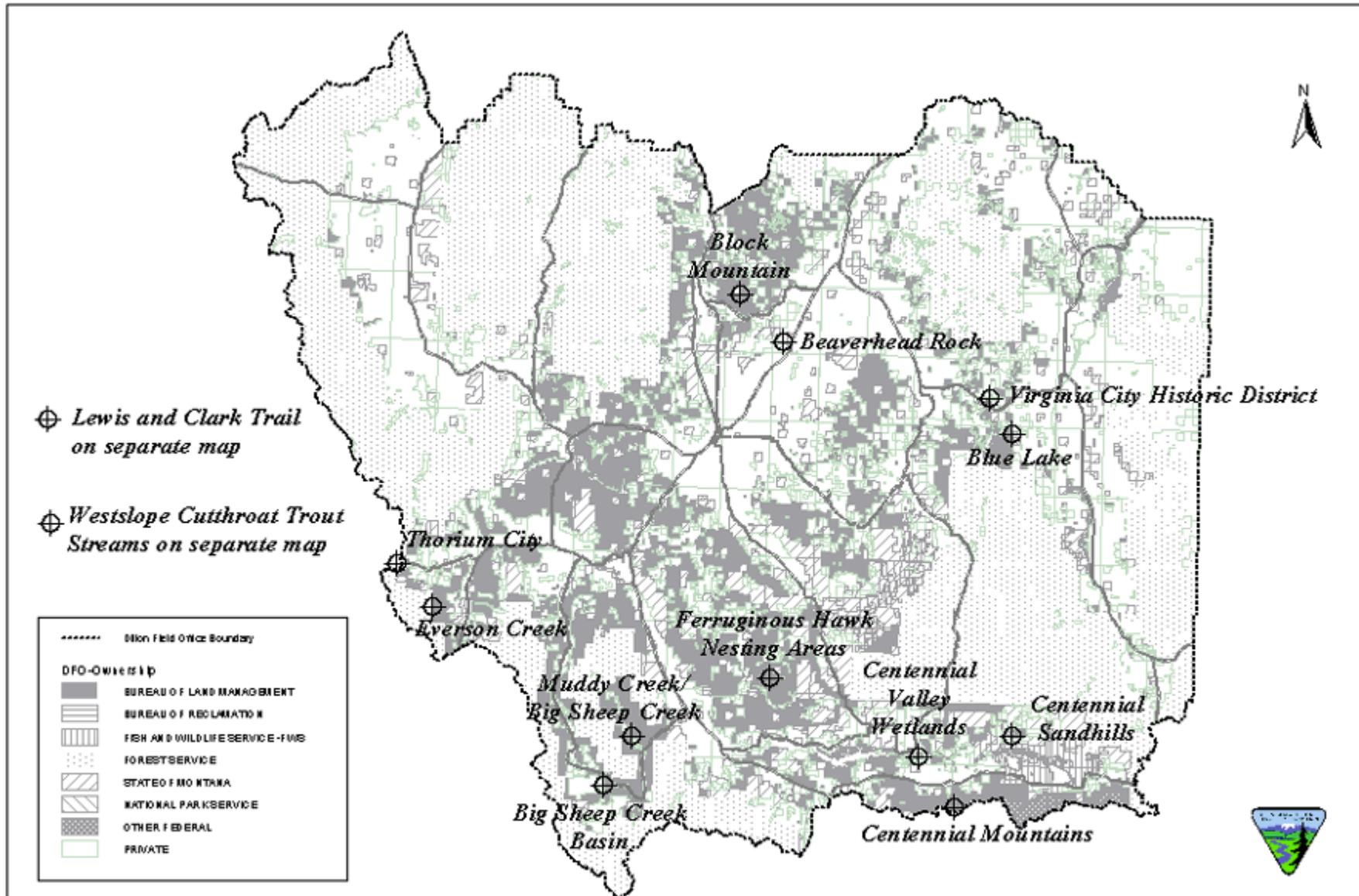
MFP: Area was identified in the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) for further consideration as an ACEC when evaluation guidelines were available.

External: Area was identified by the public during the scoping period. Nominations received through August 15, 2002 are addressed in this planning process.

Internal: Area was identified by BLM staff specialists during work on RMP. Older MFP nominations were often expanded/modified as a result of these nominations.

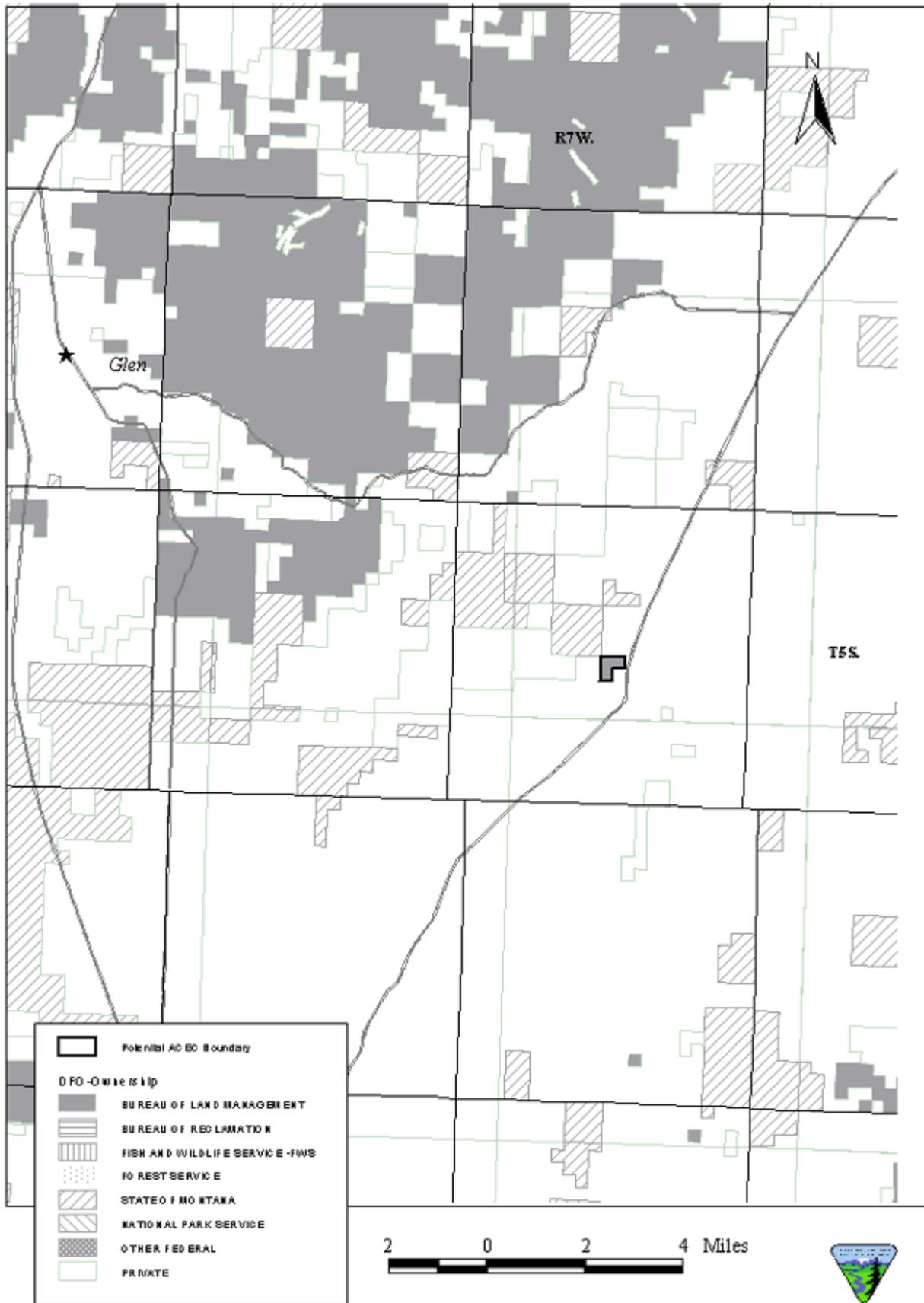
APPENDIX C
Maps

General Location of Potential ACEC's

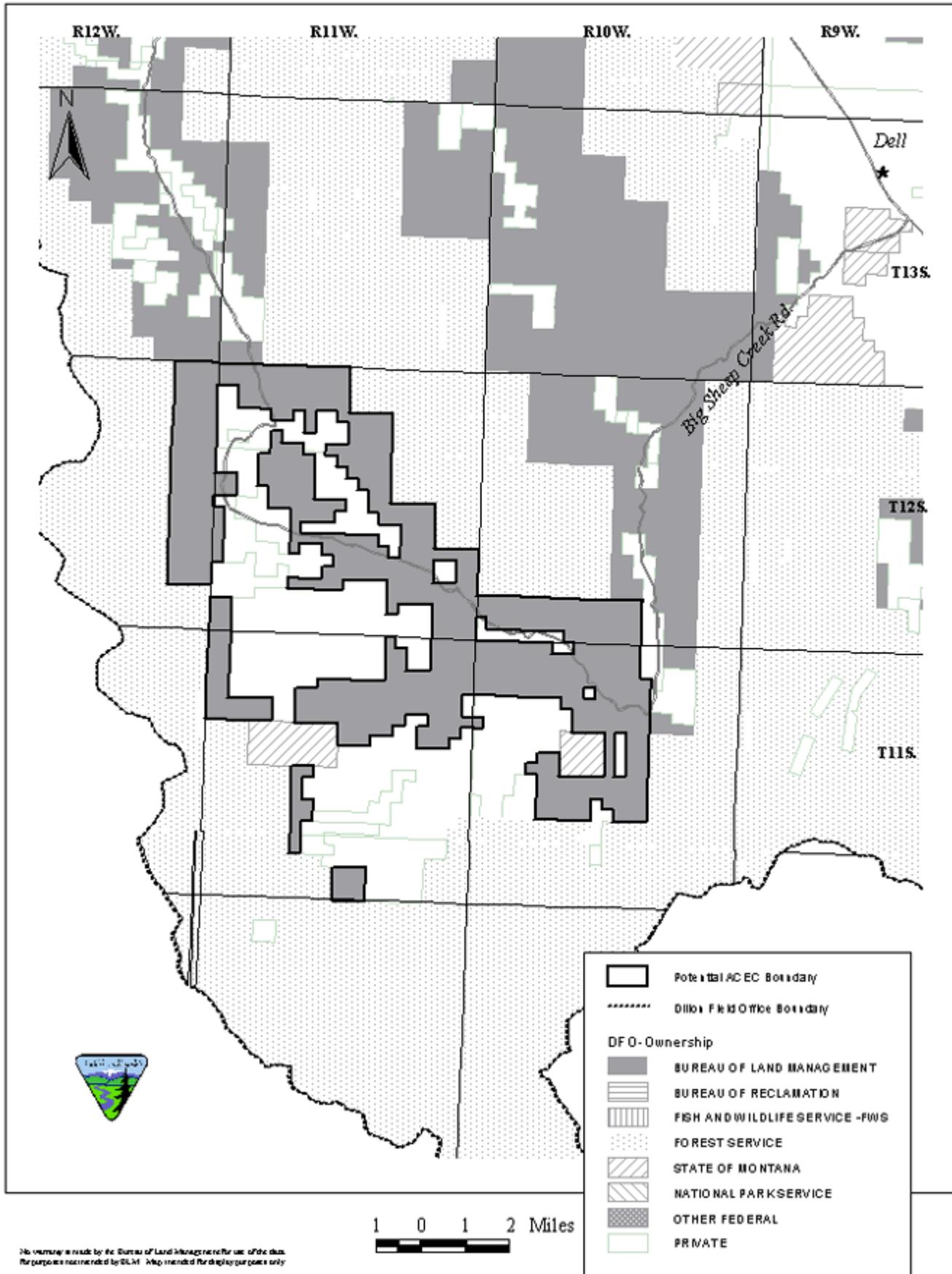


Dillon Field Office

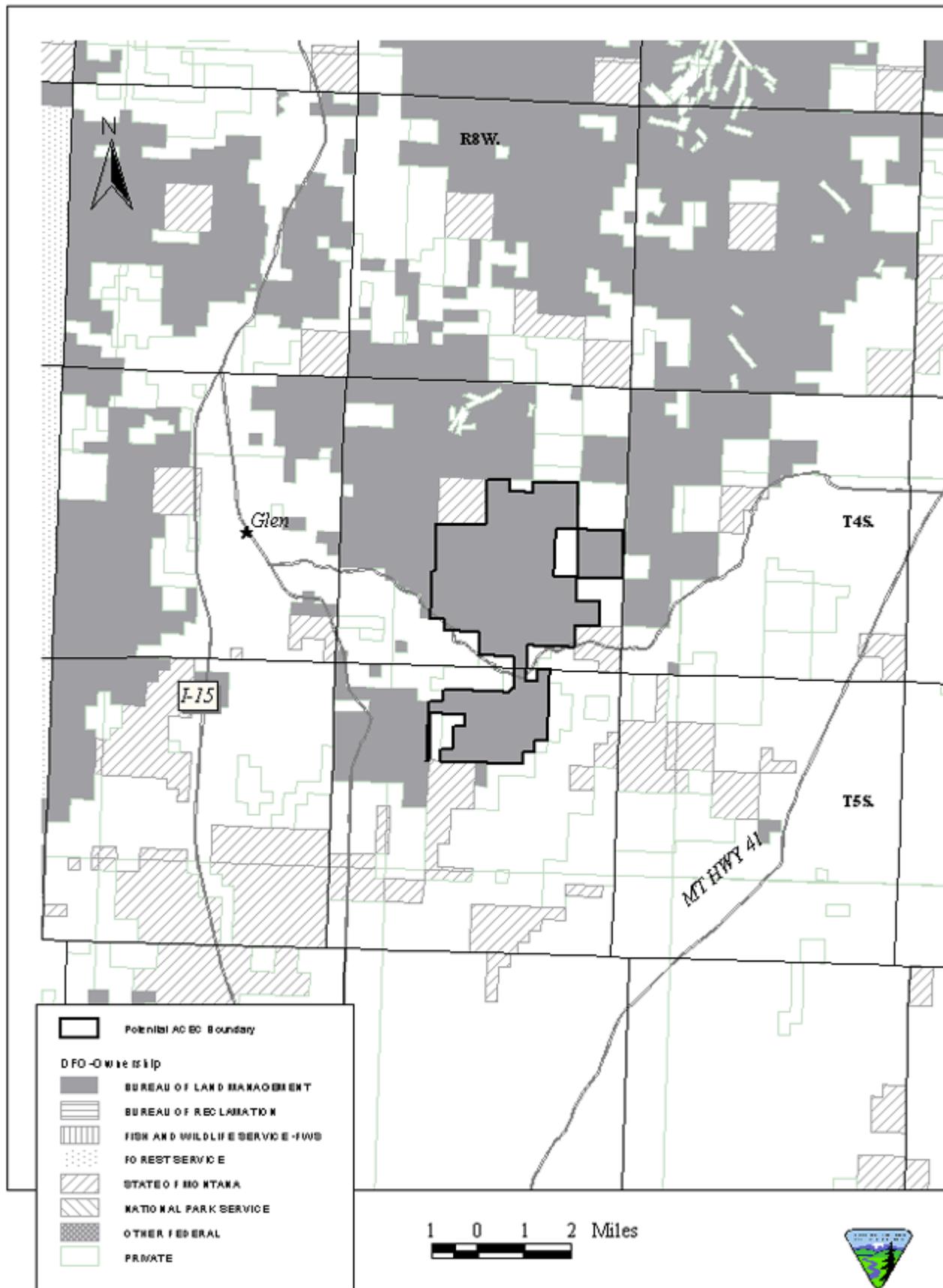
Beaverhead Rock



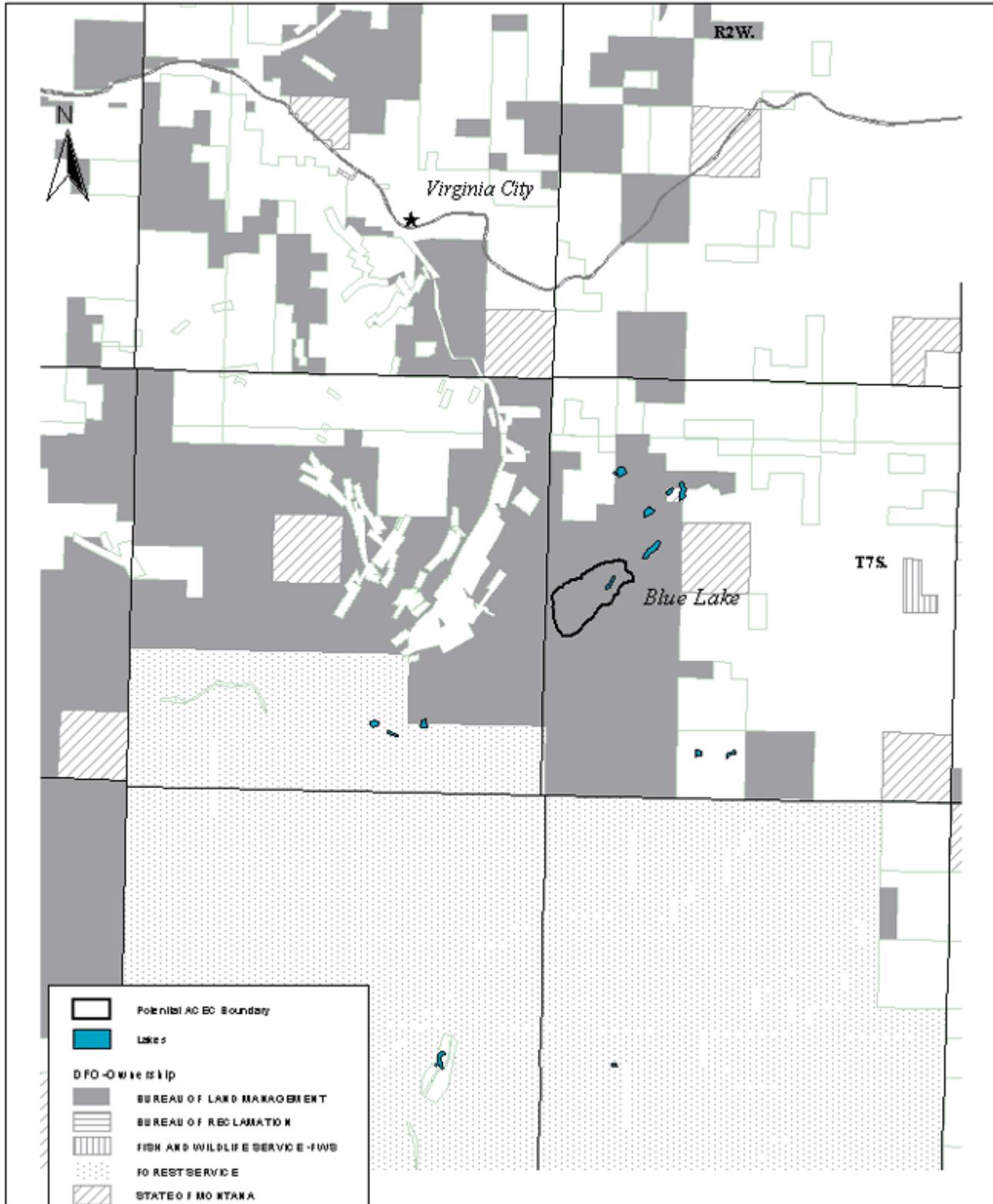
Big Sheep Creek Basin



Block Mountain



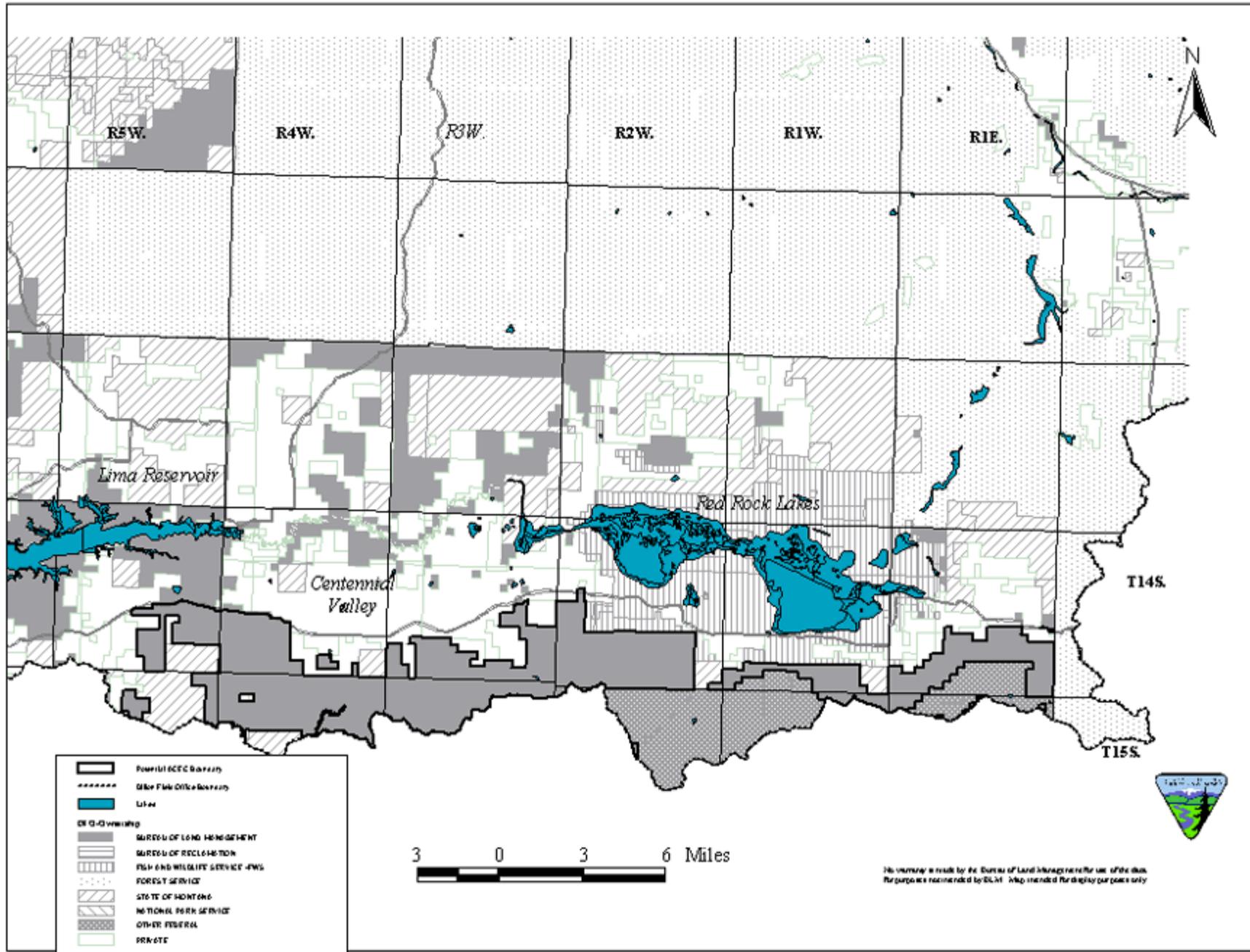
Blue Lake



1 0 1 2 Miles

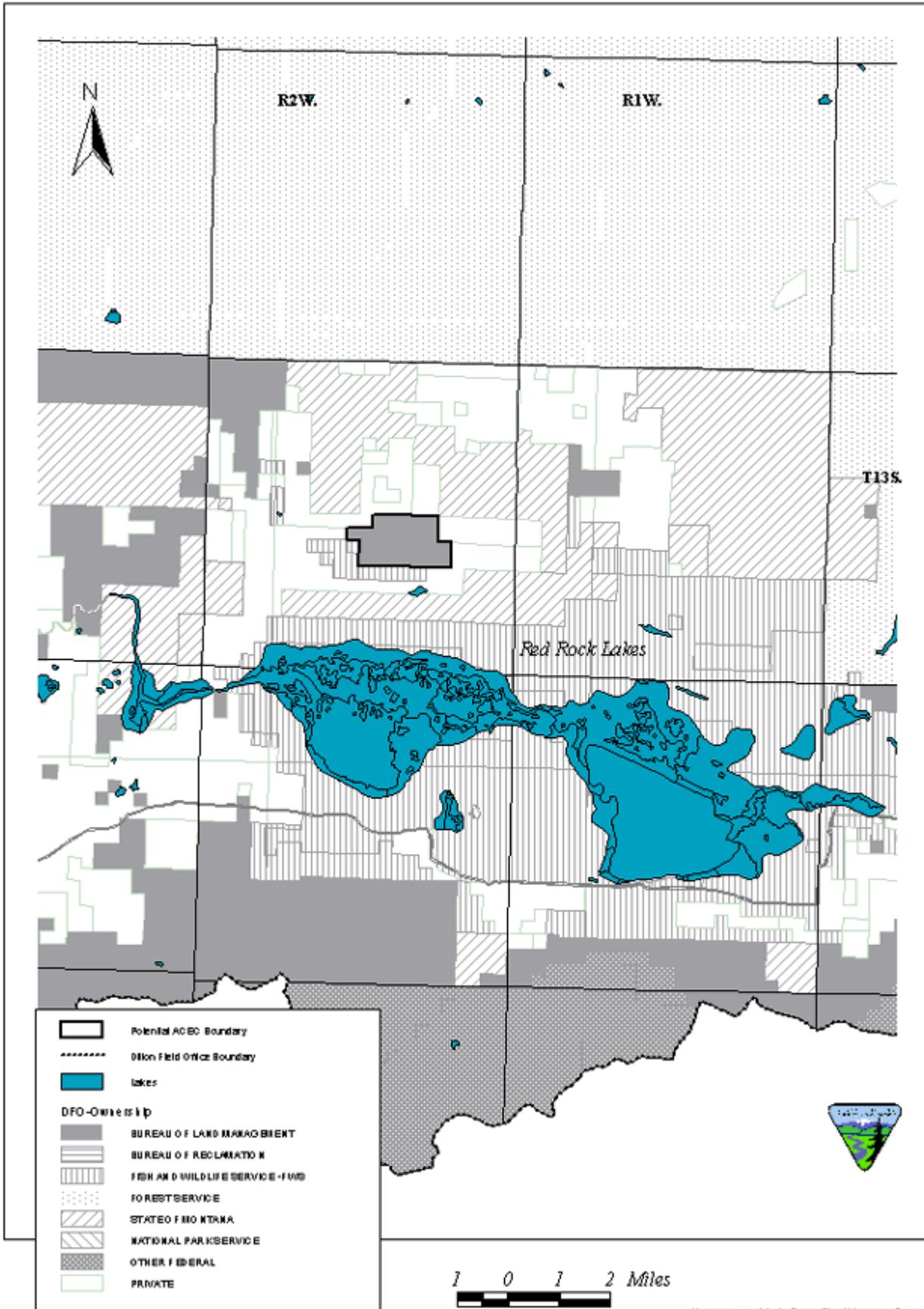


Centennial Mountains



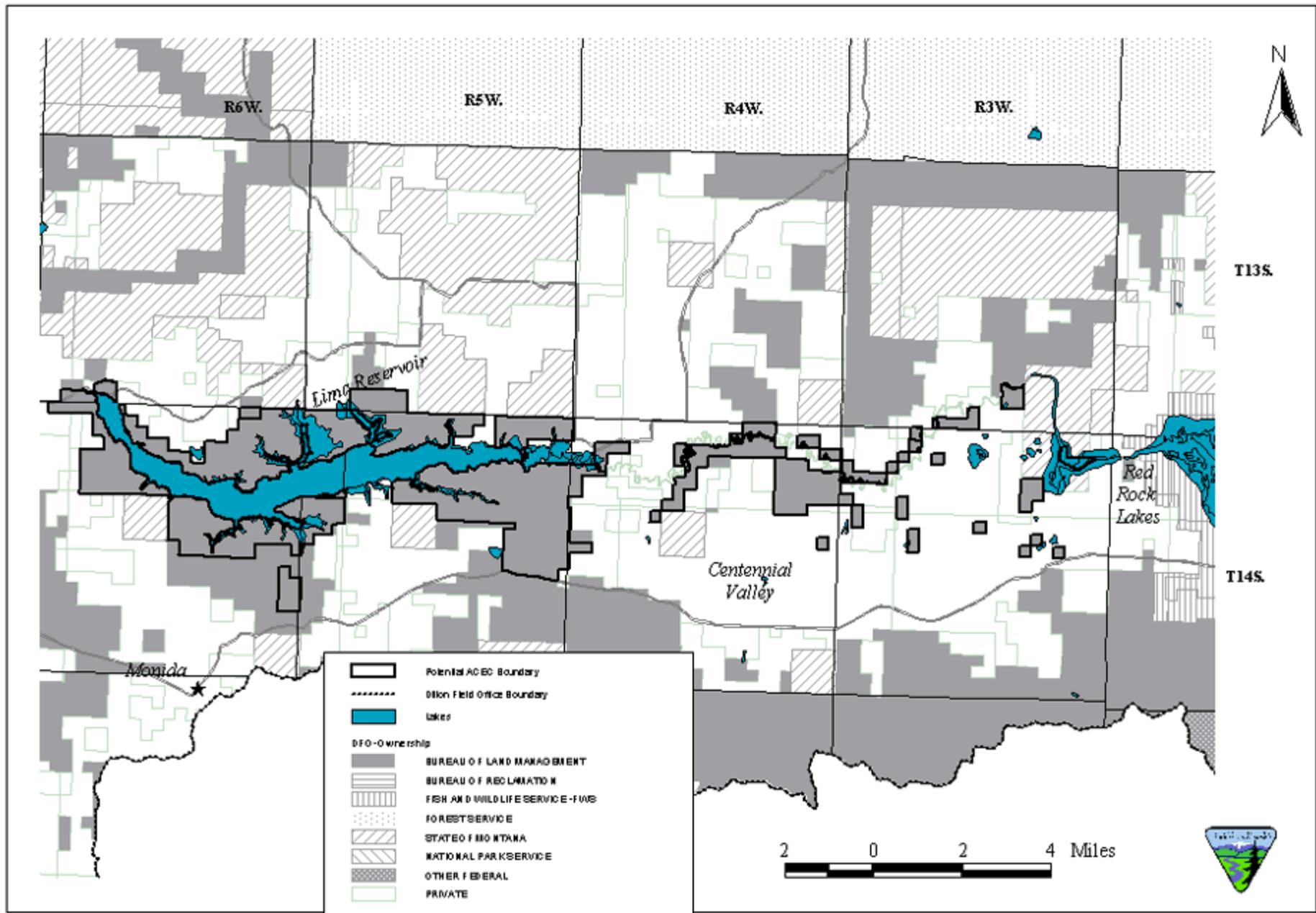
This map was made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data. The purpose is to provide a map intended for display purposes only.

Centennial Sandhills

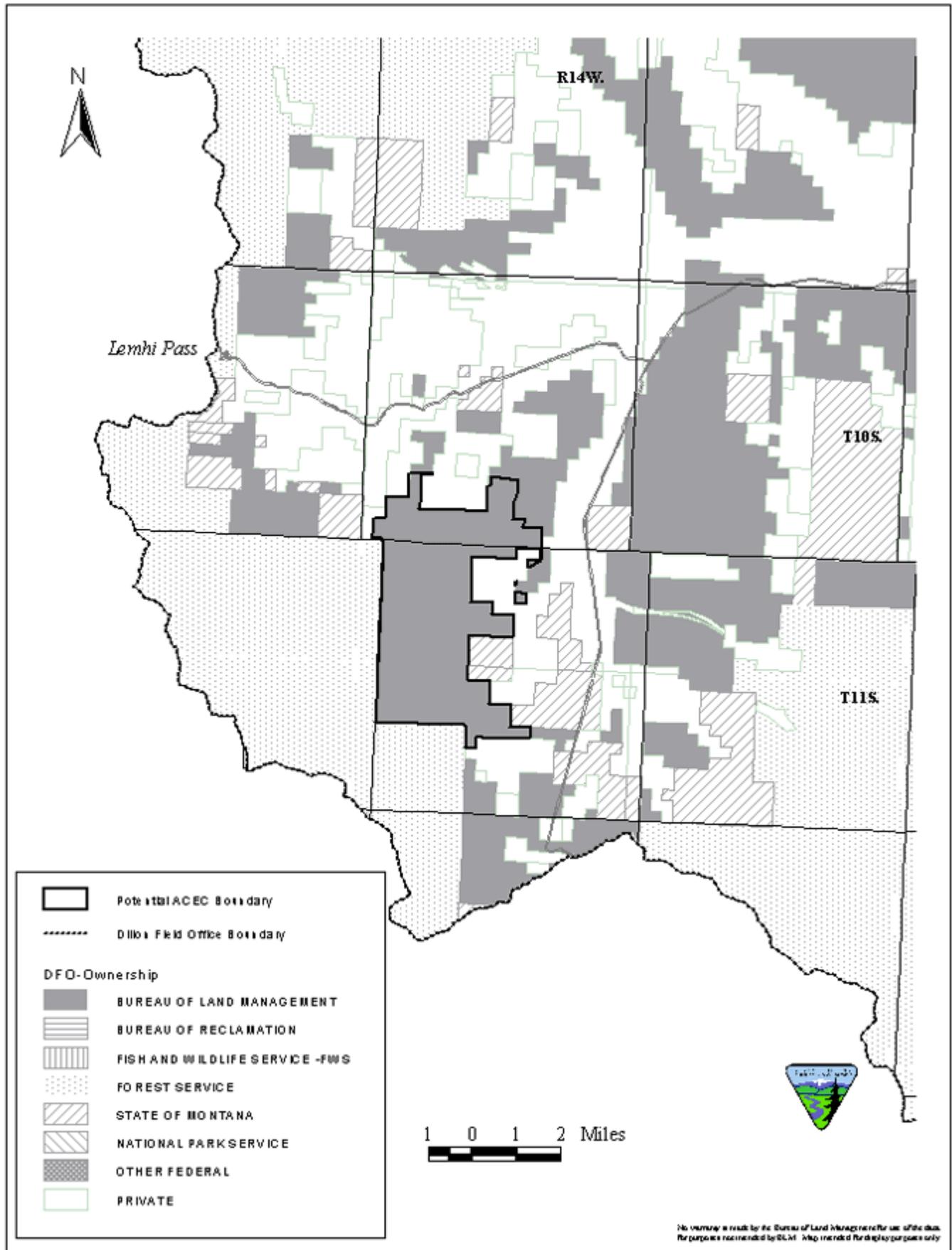


No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of this data for purposes not intended by BLM. Map is made for display purposes only.

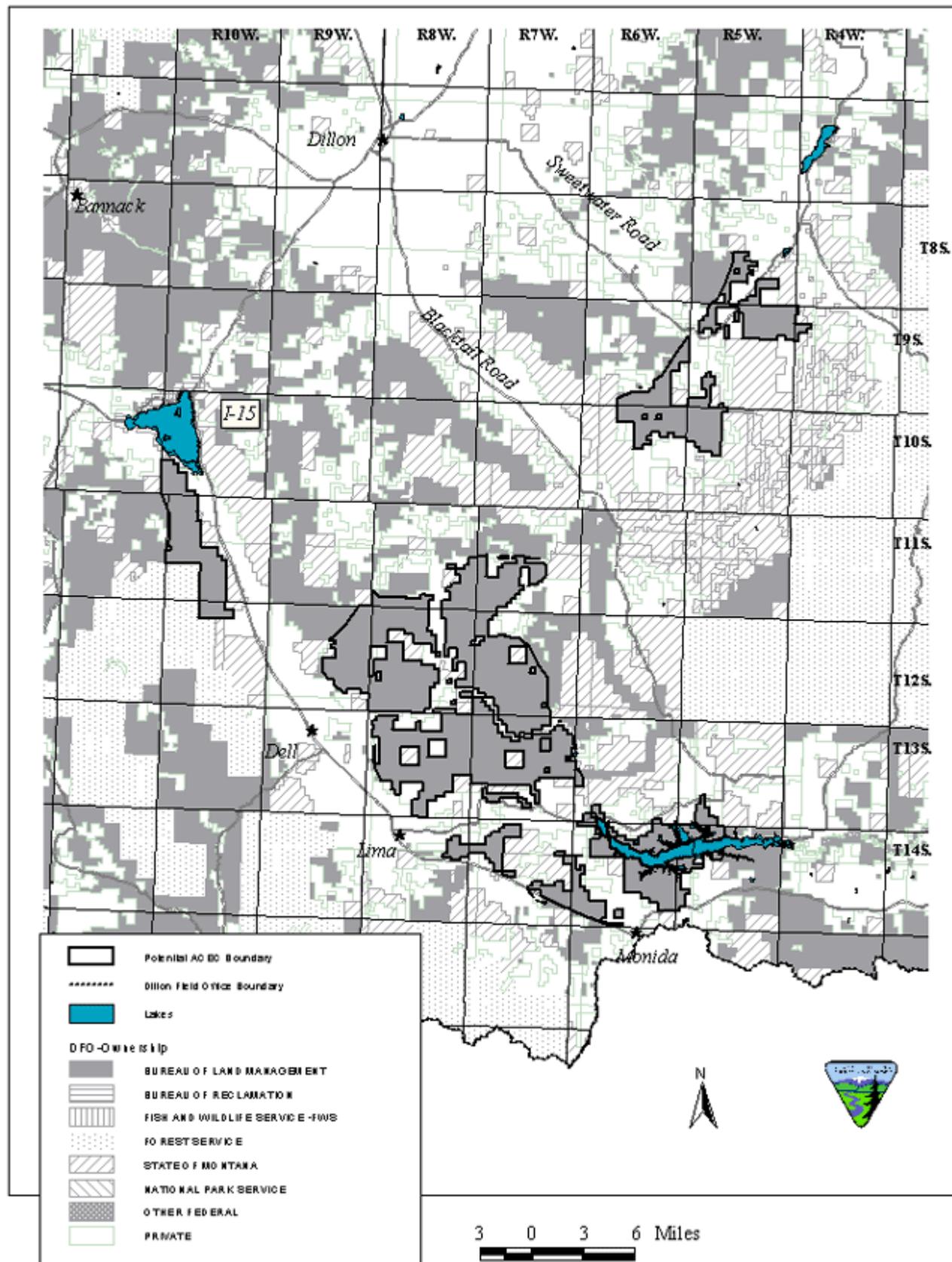
Centennial Valley Wetlands



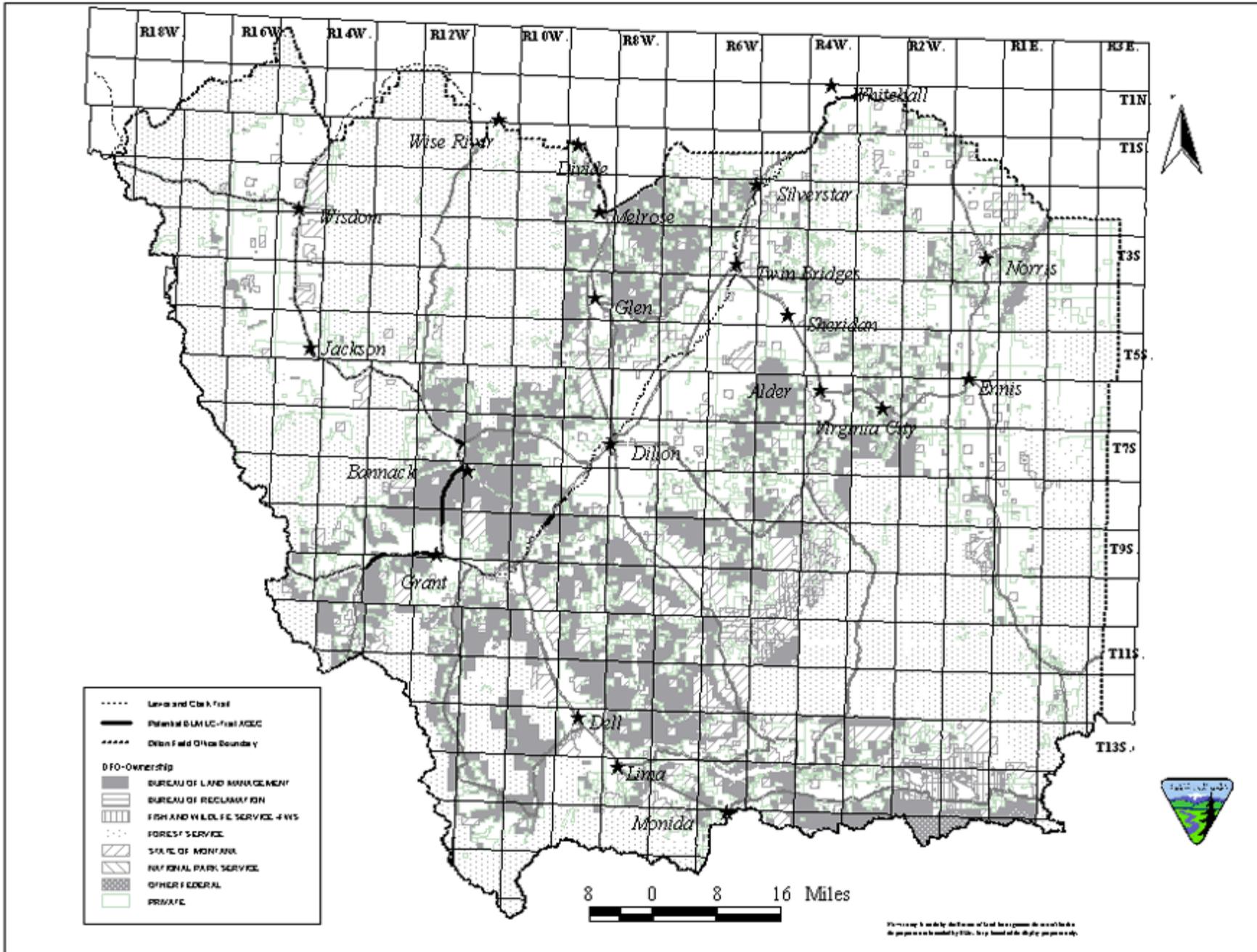
Everson Creek



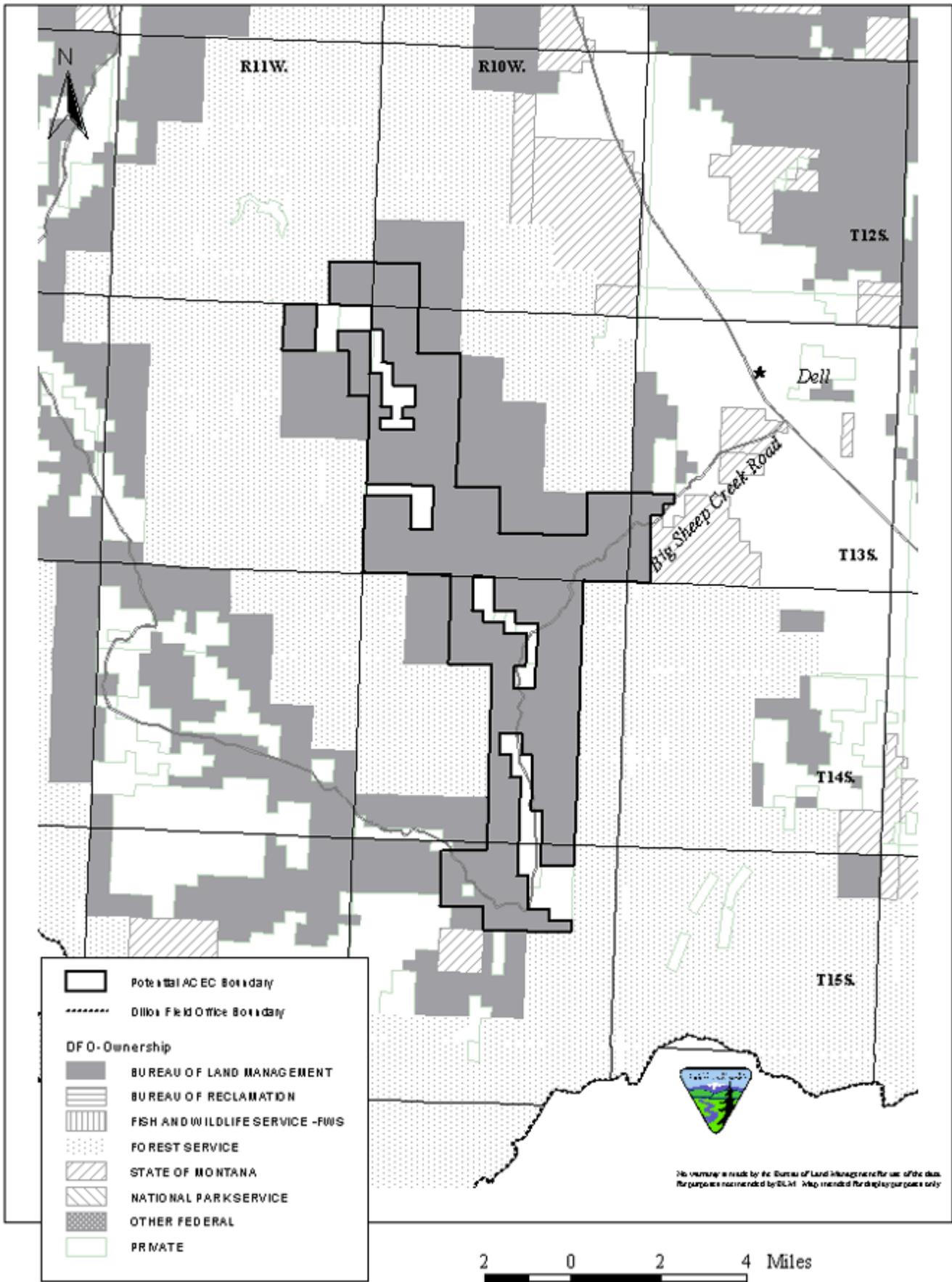
Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Areas



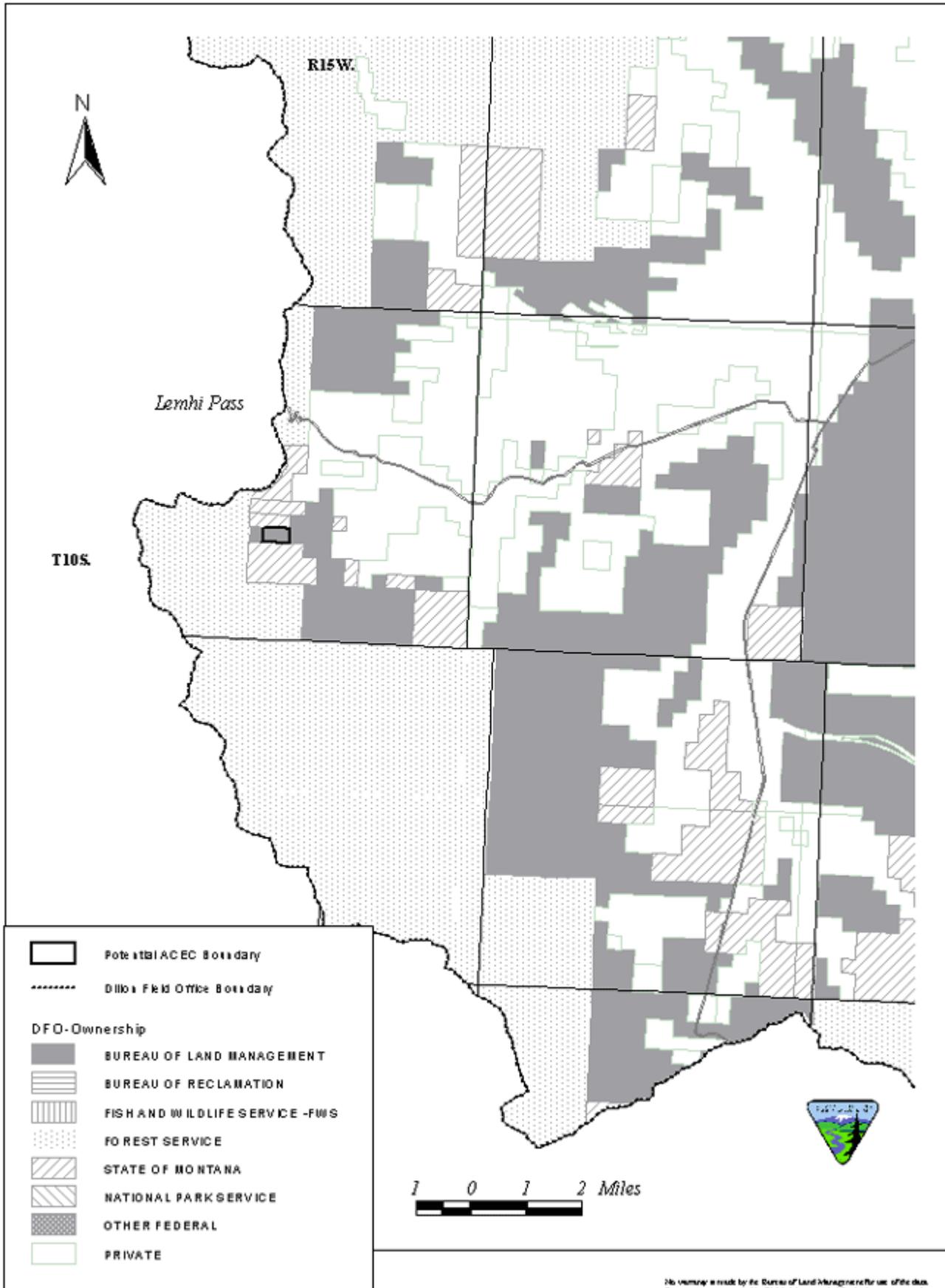
Lewis and Clark Trail



Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek

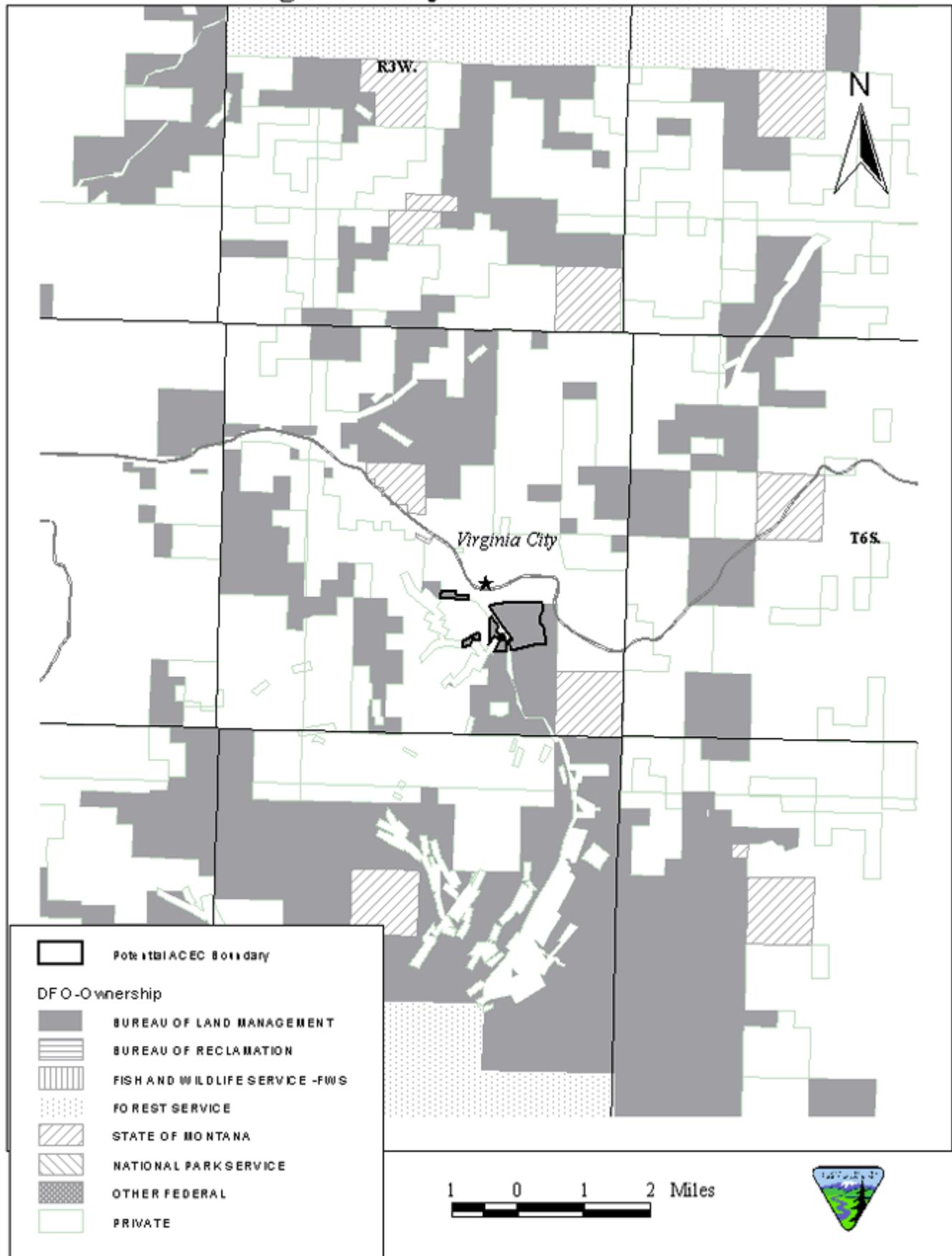


Thorium City



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Virginia City Historic District



Westslope Cutthroat Trout Streams

