

Honeycomb Buttes WSA

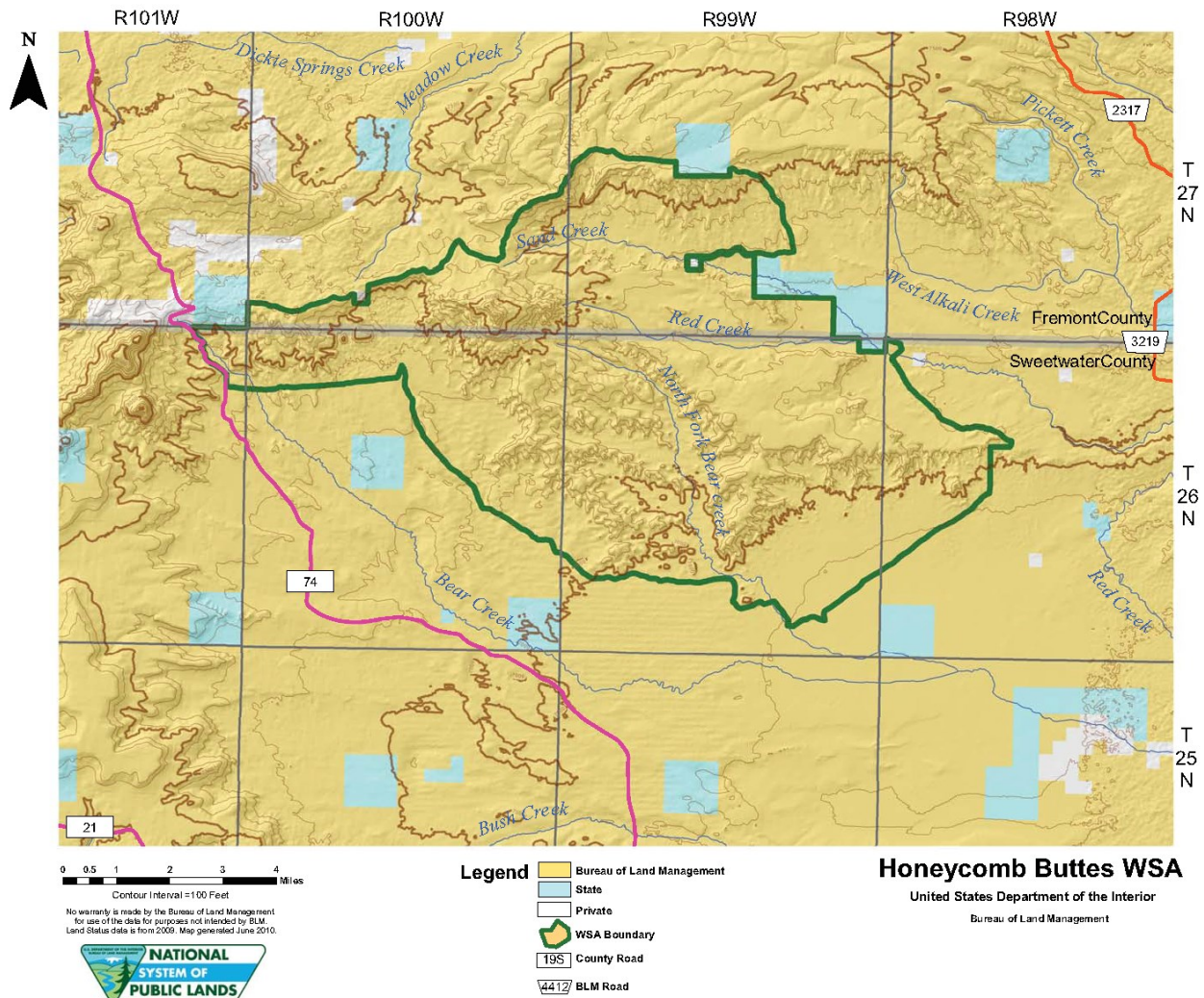
WSA AREA: 41,188 acres



Photo compliments of Wyoming Outdoor Council

Honeycomb Buttes WSA

WSA AREA: 41,188 acres





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Rock Springs Field Office

Honeycomb Buttes WSA

Location: Sweetwater County

Nearest Town: Rock Springs (52 miles)

BLM Acreage: 39,908 acres

Recommended for Wilderness: 37,287 acres

Primitive & Unconfined Recreation:

The Honeycomb Buttes WSA provides outstanding opportunities for various kinds of primitive and unconfined recreation. These opportunities include rockhounding, nontechnical climbing on the clay and rocky buttes, spelunking in the many erosion caves found in the buttes, and wildlife and outdoor photography. Opportunities also exist for backpacking, hunting and horseback riding. The remarkable scenic quality of this WSA greatly enhances the recreational values.

Features:

The Honeycomb Buttes WSA encompasses 39,908 acres of BLM-administered land, 640 acres of split estate and 640 acres of state land. This WSA is one of the best examples of badlands topography in Wyoming with its many colored bluffs, small draws and side canyons. Twisted and contorted erosional features dominate the landscape. The buttes are scattered with petrified wood and fossilized turtle shell.

Naturalness:

The Honeycomb Buttes WSA is essentially natural in character with some minor intrusions. These are primarily found in the form of two-track trails. Much of the area is highly erodible and surface impacts fade relatively quickly. The Honeycomb Buttes proper and the North Fork of Bear Creek drainage, in the core of the recommended area, is a highly colorful and rugged desert badlands area. This area is relatively free of man's activities due to the severe and sharp-edged topography of this terrain. Bladed roads in the area received some reclamation work and have since healed considerably due to the high erosive rate of this area. The headwaters of Red Creek and Sand Creek are relatively wide drainages bounded by rough eroded escarpments on three sides with wide flat benches between the drainages. The large bluffs have stopped most of man's activities in the area, although some intrusions have taken place in the drainage bottoms and on the benches. These are relatively minor and fairly deteriorated to a point where they really do not affect the naturalness of this portion of the unit.

The majority of the non-suitable area consists of draws and drainages in the northern hills section that have allowed man fairly easy access through the area. The accessibility has allowed the area to be more developed with oil and gas activity, higher livestock grazing use and many more roaded areas to the flatter terrain.

Solitude:

The portion of this WSA recommended for wilderness offers outstanding opportunities for solitude. The many cliffs, ridges, draws and secluded grottos provide numerous areas where a person could experience solitude. Topography of this type provides for effective screening of individuals from each other. The superb coloration of the buttes enhances one's appreciation for the undisturbed natural setting of the Honeycombs. This area provides some of the most outstanding opportunities for solitude that can be found in the Red Desert of Wyoming.

The portion of the WSA not recommended for wilderness does not have similar exemplary opportunities for solitude. This portion contains more evidence of man's activities and has gentler terrain, thereby making it difficult to find large expanses where a visitor could avoid the sights and sounds of others.

Special Features:

The Honeycomb Buttes WSA is host to a number of interesting ecological and geological values. Due to the wild nature of the country, relatively rare or shy animals such as mountain lions, bobcats and elk are known to use this area. The many mud caves found in the buttes harbor little brown bats, small-footed myotis (bats) and great horned owls.

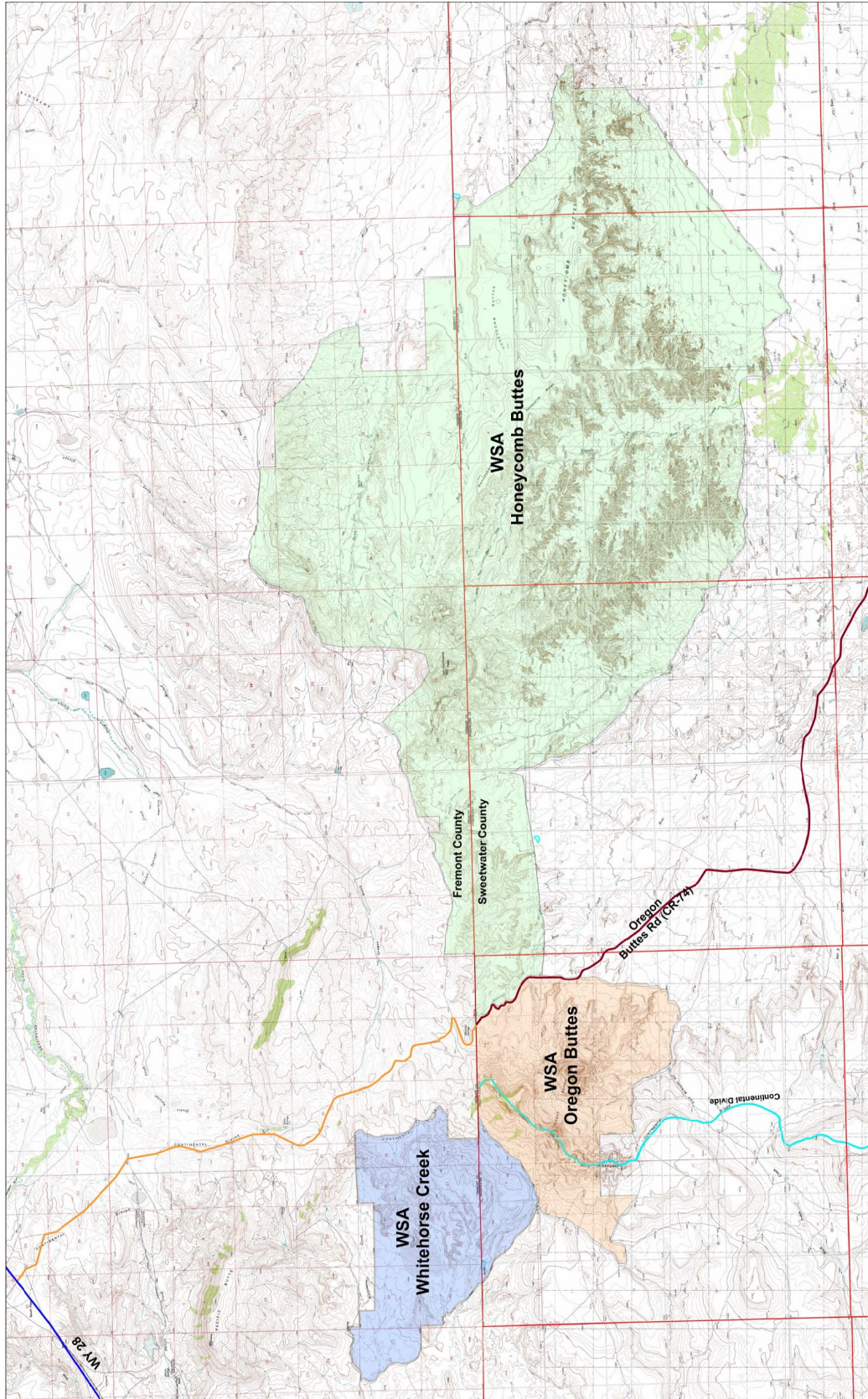
The geologic features of this WSA have spectacular eroded buttes and badlands with unique colors, textures, varieties and forms. It is one of the best fossil and fossil cast bearing formations in the region. Numerous fragments of fossilized turtle shells may be found scattered over the surface of the buttes. In addition, algae, wood and many other fossil casts may be found on the surface.



Rock Springs Field Office | 280 Highway 191 North | Rock Springs, WY 82901

Phone: 307-352-0256 | Fax: 307-352-0329 | Office hours: 7:45am - 4:30pm, M-F

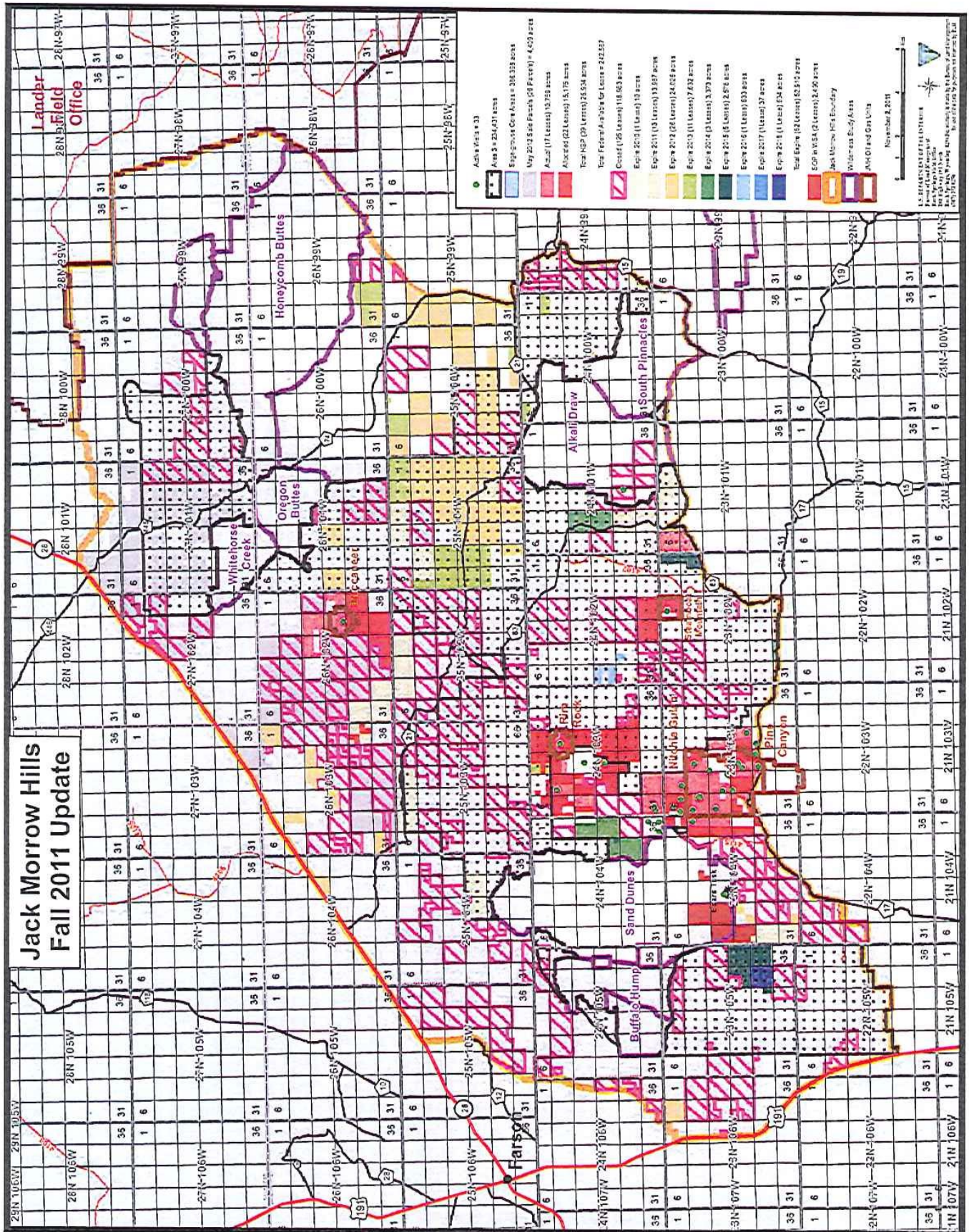
Honeycomb Buttes WSA



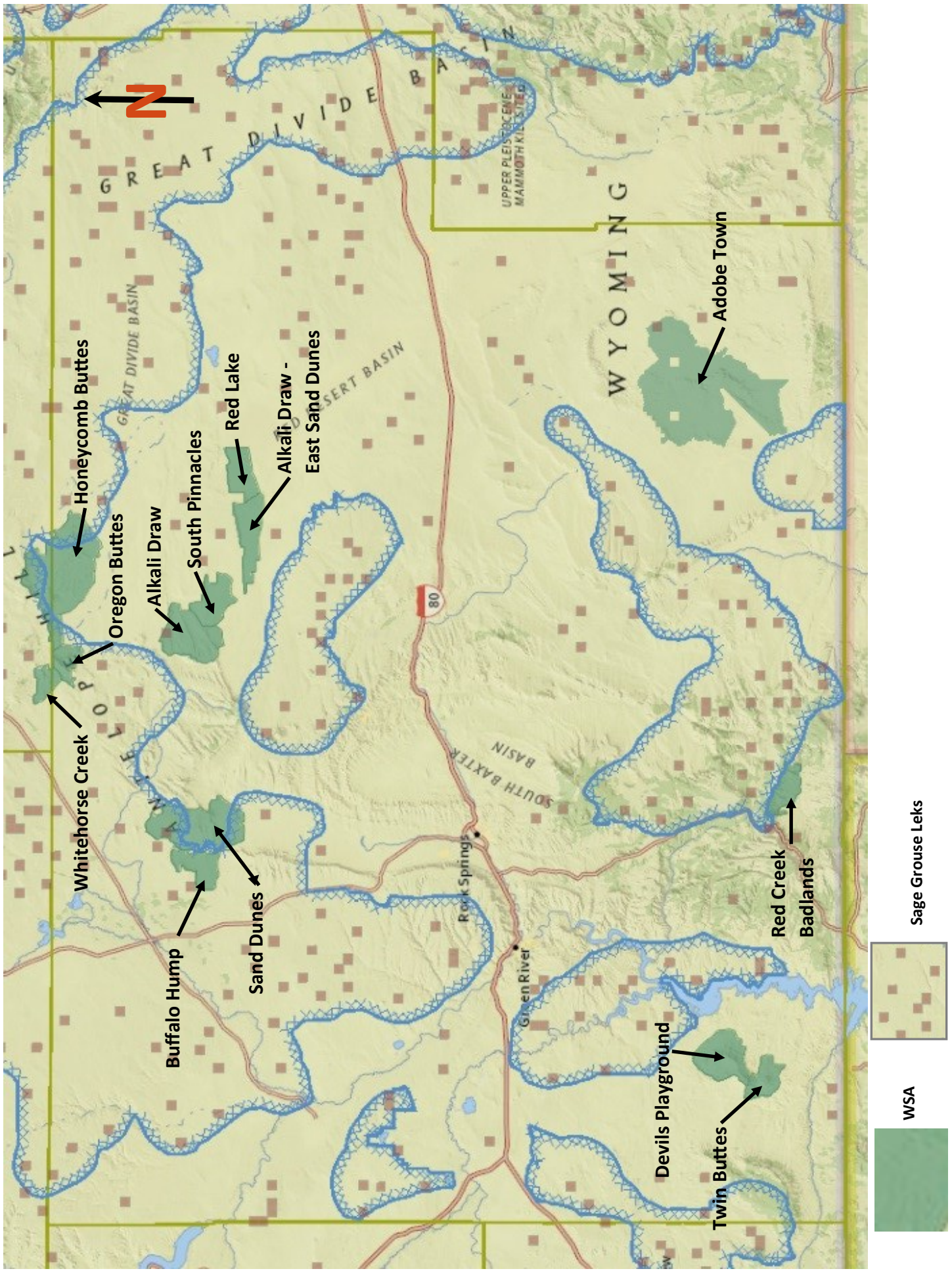
Honeycomb Buttes WSA



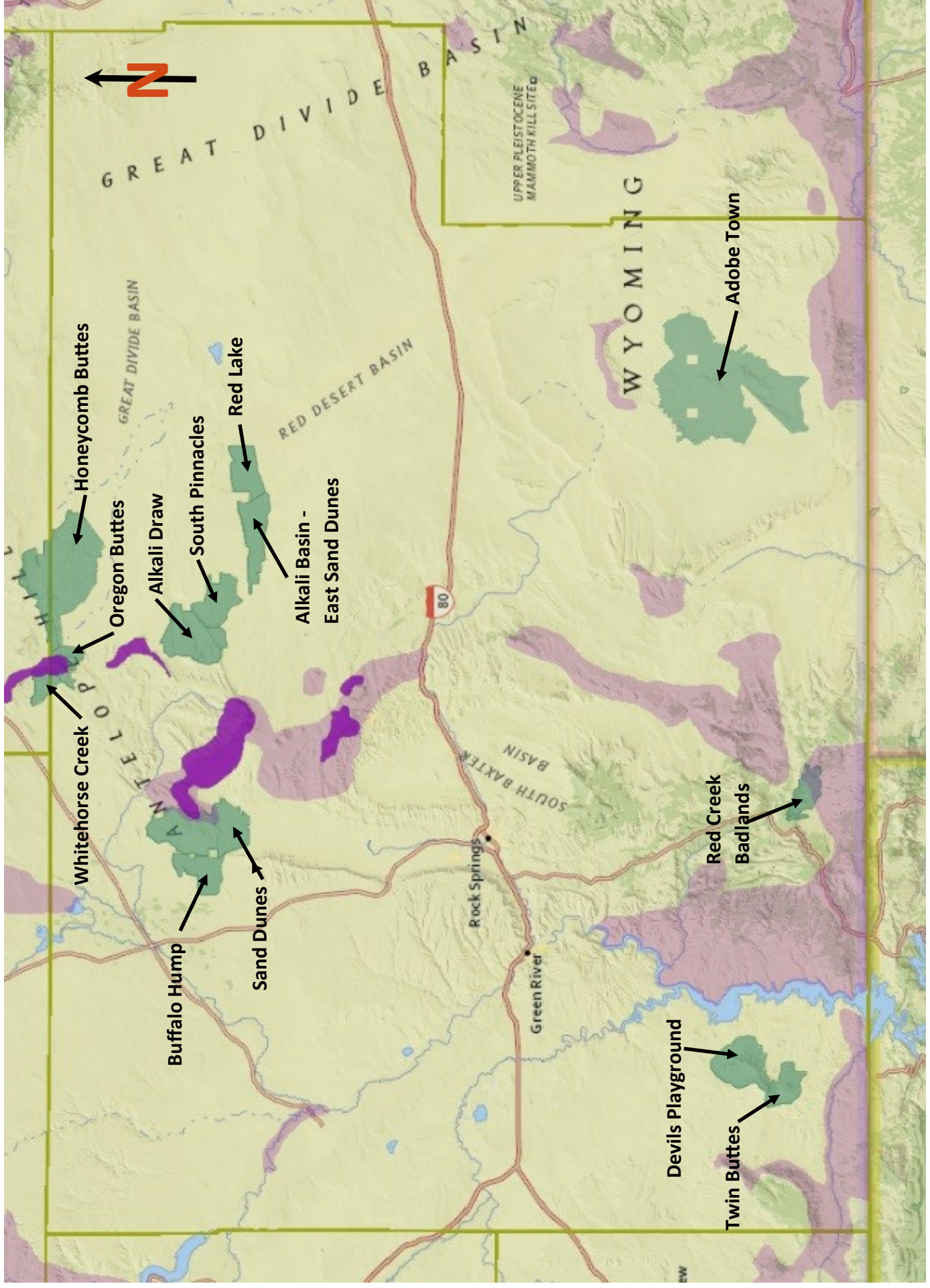
Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (WSAs within Plan Area)



Sweetwater County WSA and Sage Grouse Core Areas Version



Sweetwater County Mule Deer Parturition Areas and Crucial Winter Range



Data and map shapes from NREX.
SWCO May 23, 2017

Mule Deer Crucial Winter Range



Mule Deer Parturition Areas

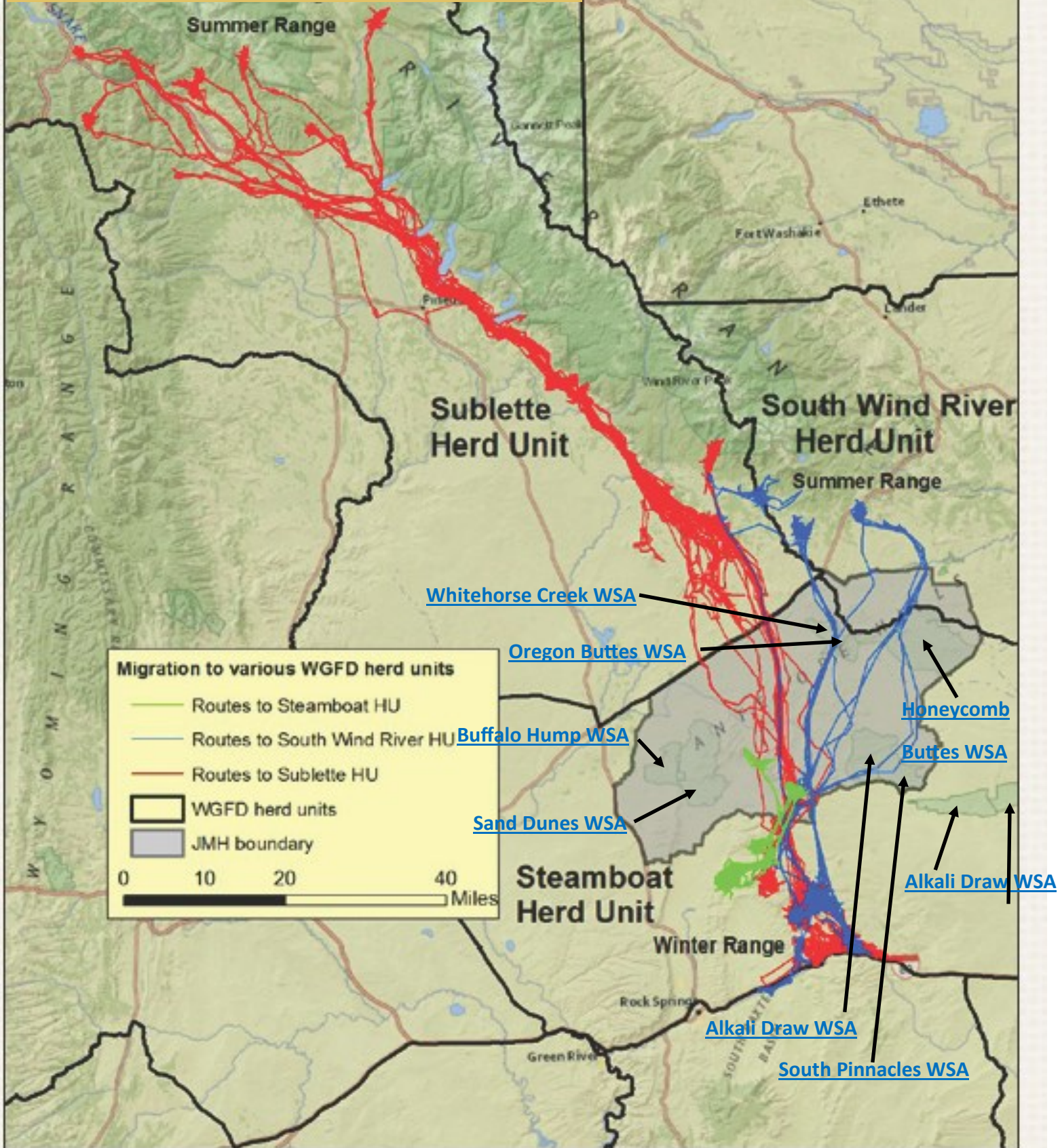


WSA

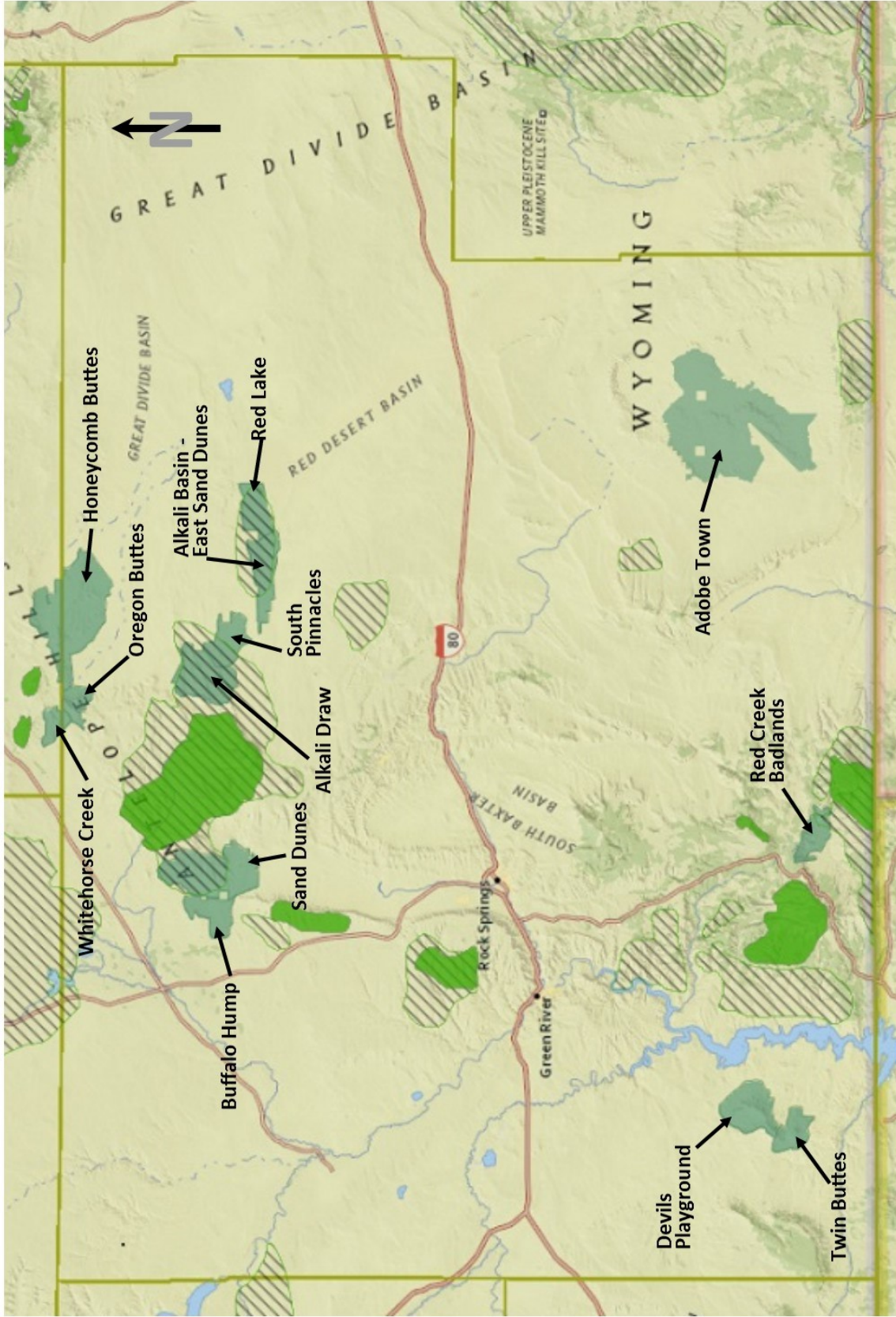


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Mule Deer Migration and WSAs



Sweetwater County WSA Elk Parturition and Crucial Winter Range



Data and map shapes from State of Wyoming Natural Resource and Energy Explorer. SWCO - May 22, 2018

Elk Crucial Winter Range



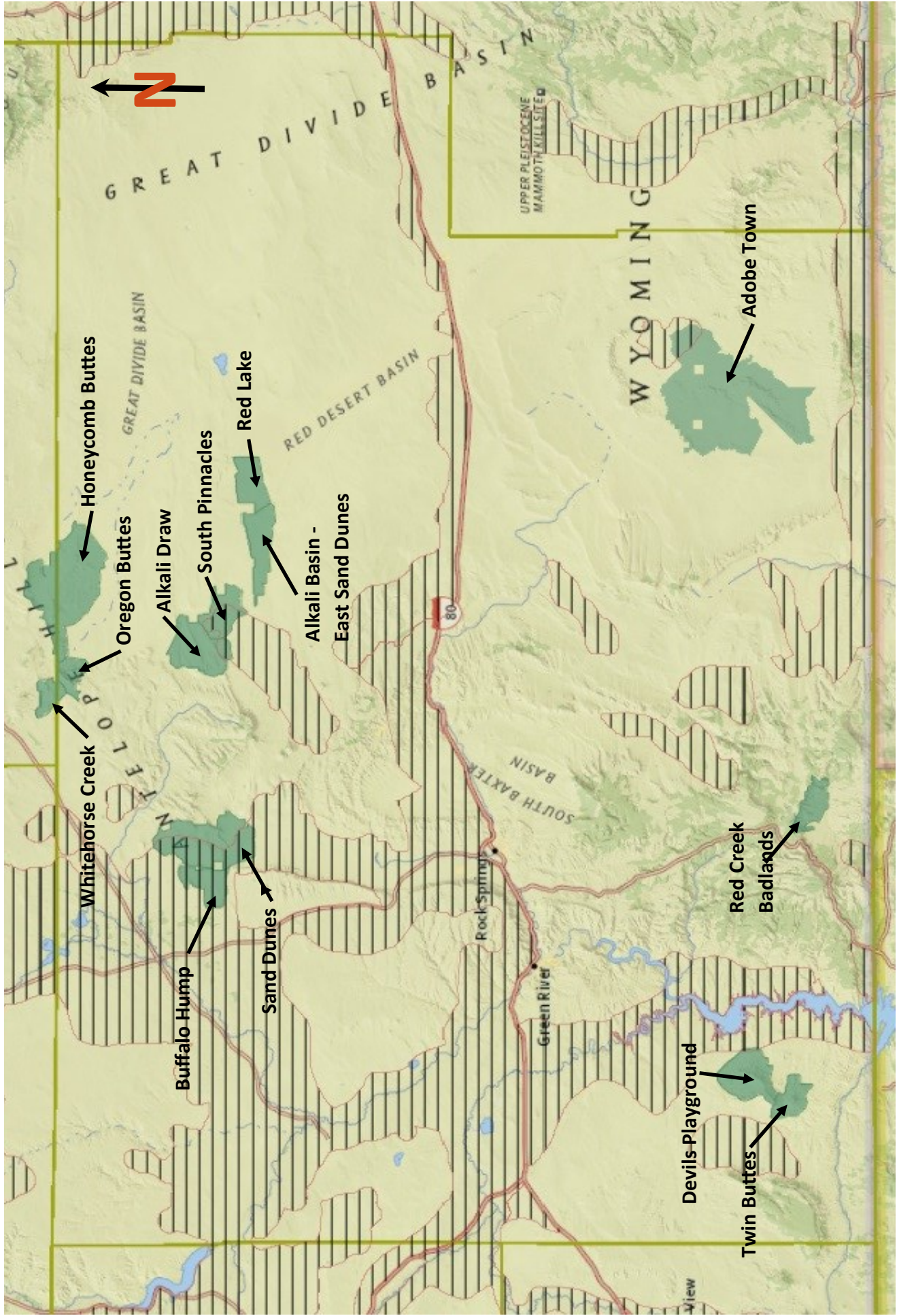
Elk Parturition Area



WSA

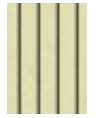


Sweetwater County WSA and Antelope Crucial Winter Range



Data and map shapes from the State of Wyoming Natural Resource and Energy Explorer. SWCO May 23, 2017

Antelope Crucial Winter Range



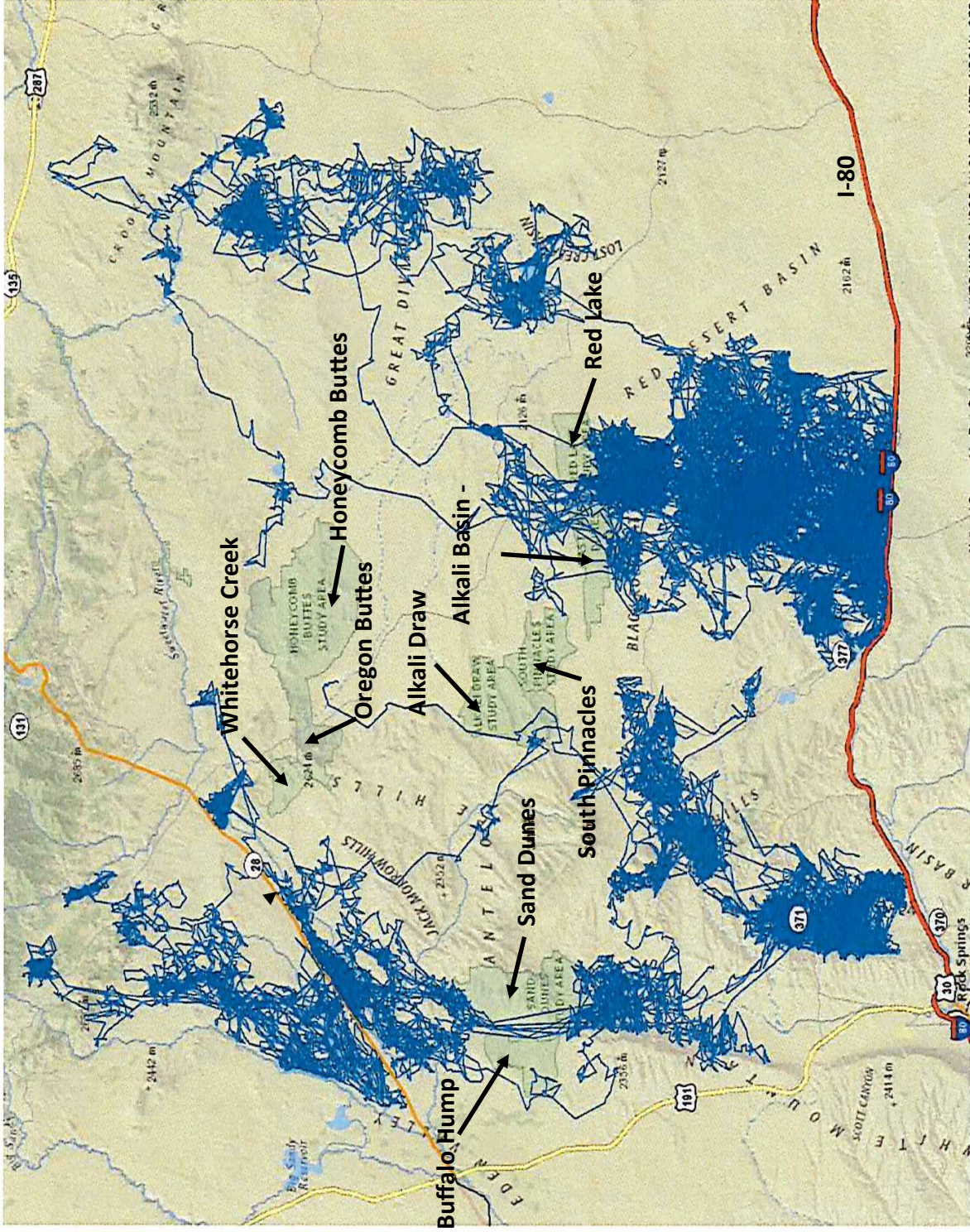
Mule Deer Parturition Areas



WSA



Pronghorn movement relative to northern WSAs - Hall Sawyer Report



Data and map shapes from Hall Sawyer
"Seasonal distribution and movement
Patterns of pronghorn northeast of Rock
Springs, Wyoming. August 20, 2015

Pronghorn Winter Core Use and WGFD Crucial Winter Range relative to northern WSAs -

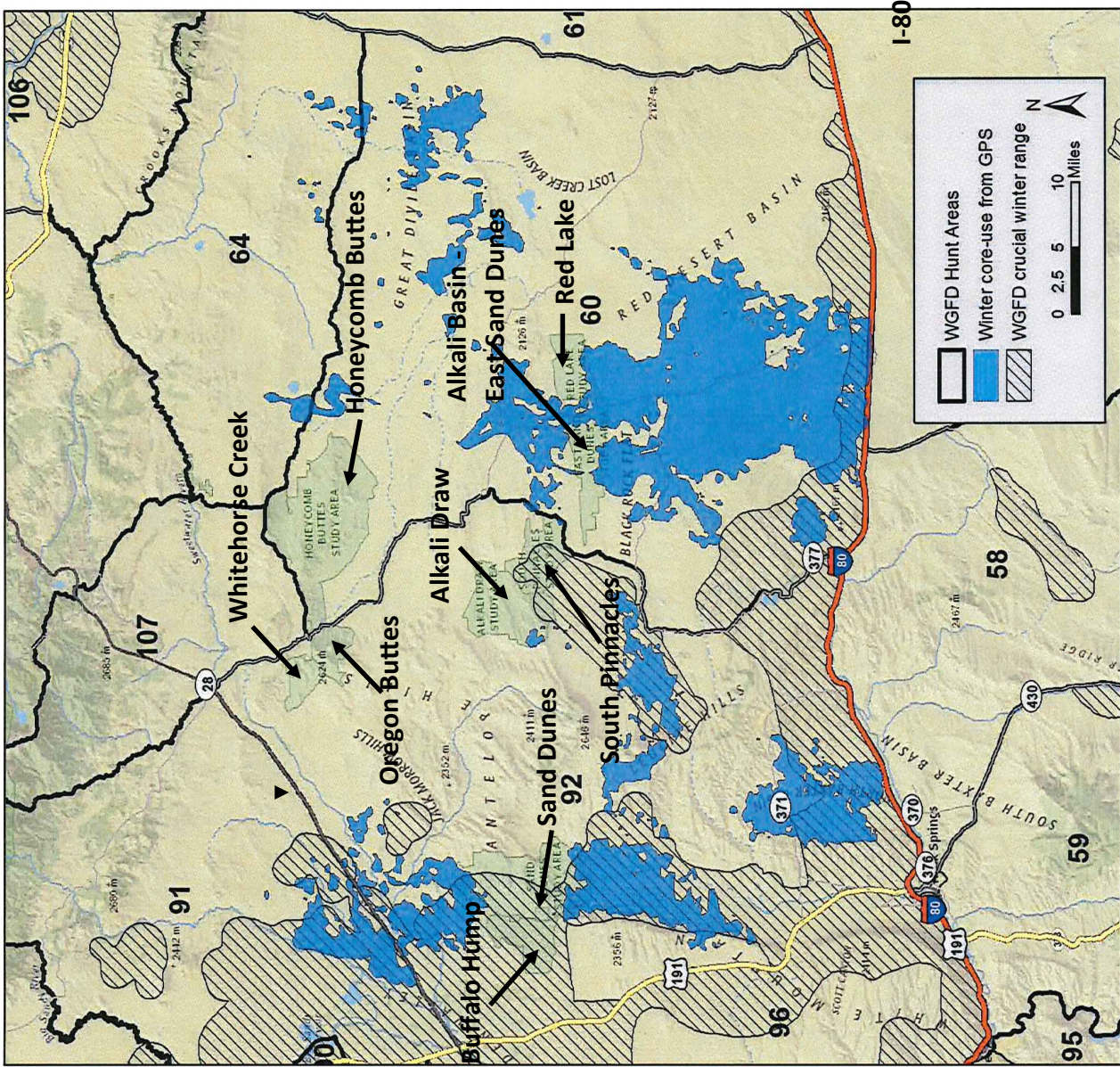
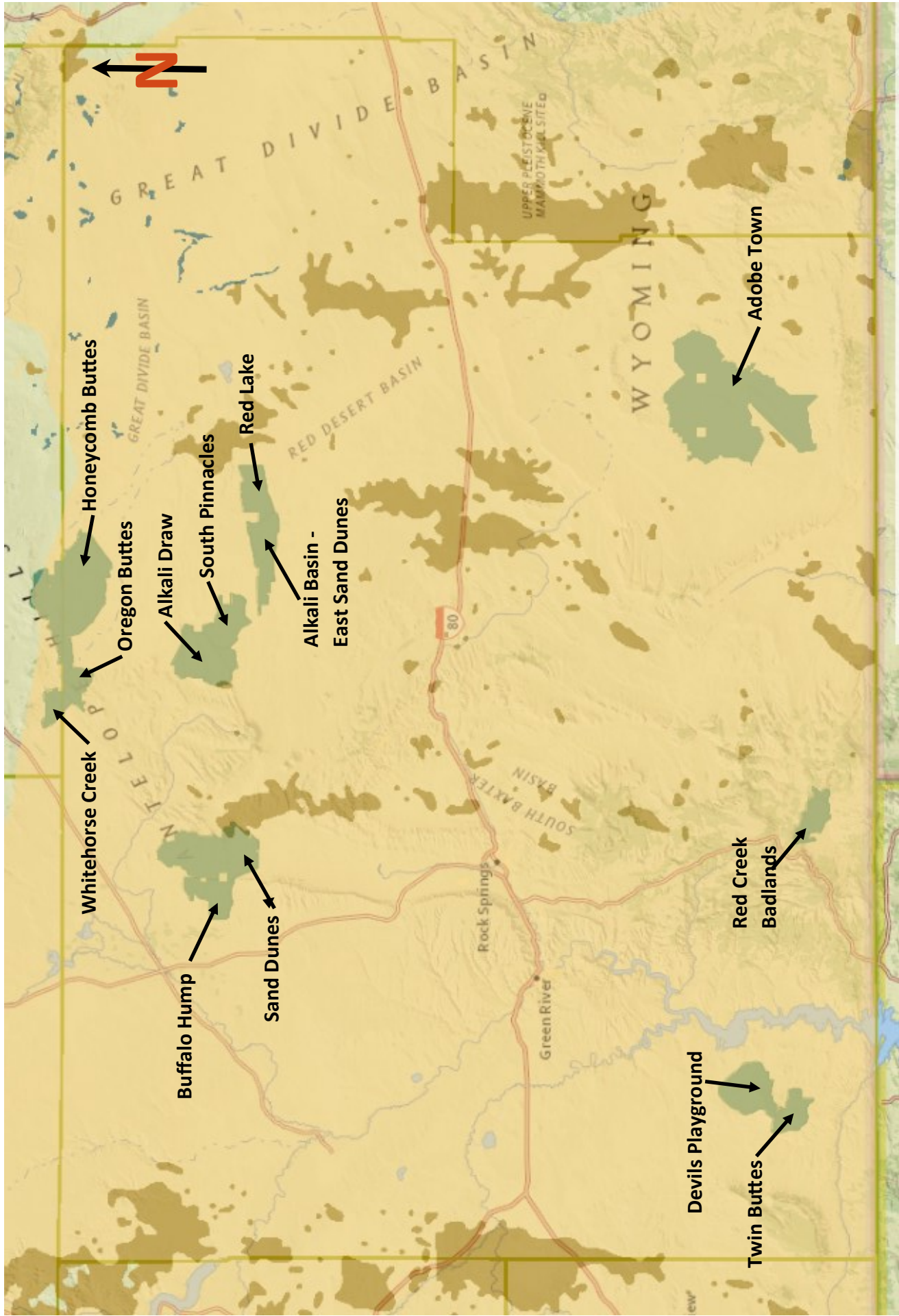


Figure 4. Winter core-use areas estimated from 28,892 locations collected from 25 GPS-collared pronghorn across winters (2012-13, and 2013-14), relative to crucial winter range designated by Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Data and map shapes from Hall Sawyer "Seasonal distribution and movement Patterns of pronghorn northeast of Rock Springs, Wyoming. August 20, 2015

Sweetwater County WSA - Oil, Gas and Uranium Development Potential



Data and map shapes from the State of Wyoming Natural Resource and Energy Explorer. SWCO May 25, 2017

Potential for Uranium Development

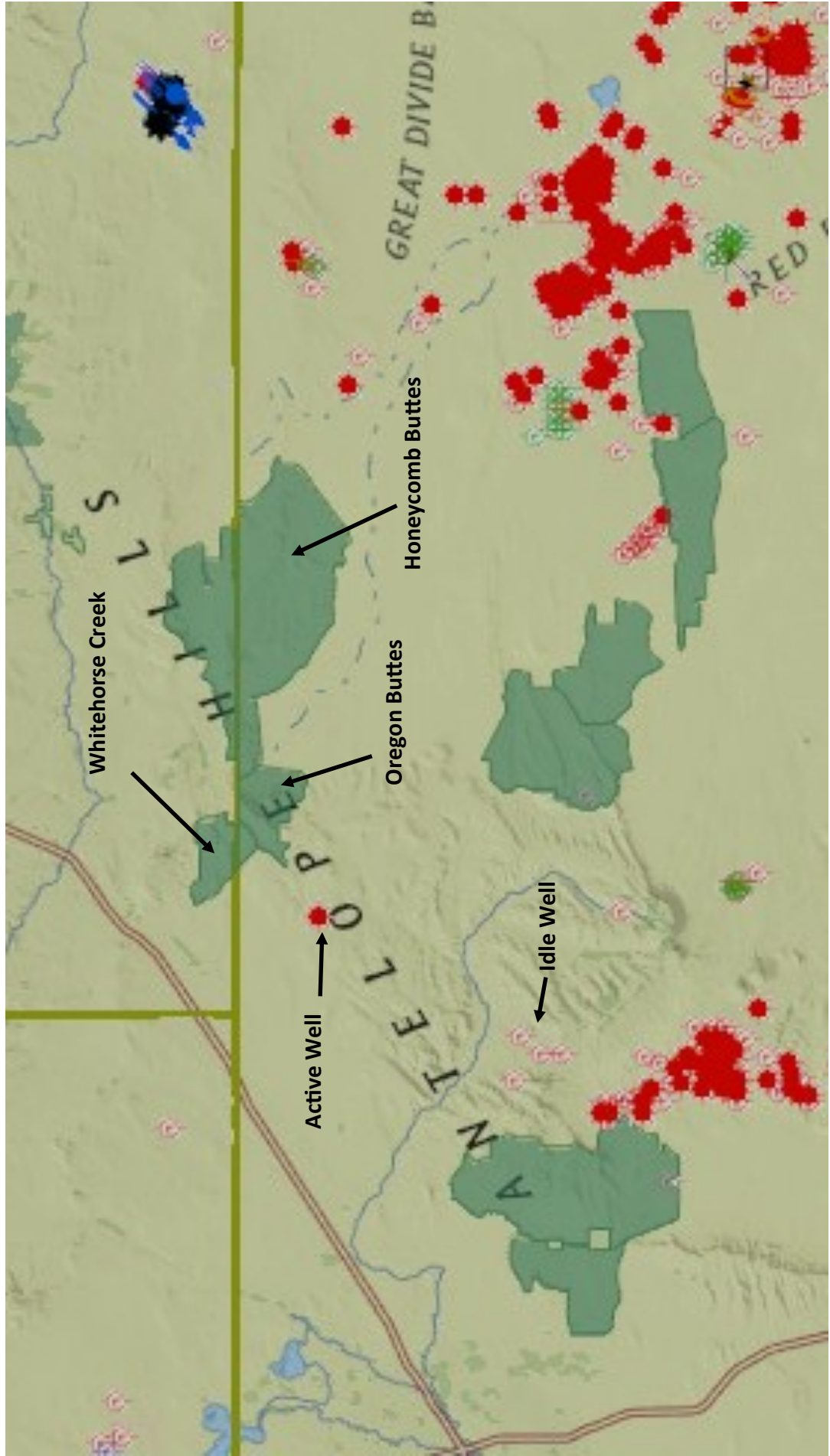
Oil and Gas - Moderate Development Potential

Oil and Gas - High

WSA

Honeycomb Buttes, Oregon Buttes Whitehorse Creek WSAs

NREX - Active Oil and Gas Wells - July 2017



ADVENTURES ABOUND IN WIND RIVER COUNTRY

After a day hiking, or a weekend camping, in the Northern Red Desert, be sure to check out:

- South Pass City State Historic Site
- Red Canyon Overlook
- Sinks Canyon and the Loop Road

More information on these driving tours is available at windriver.org



Jennie Hutchinson

South Pass City State Historic Site



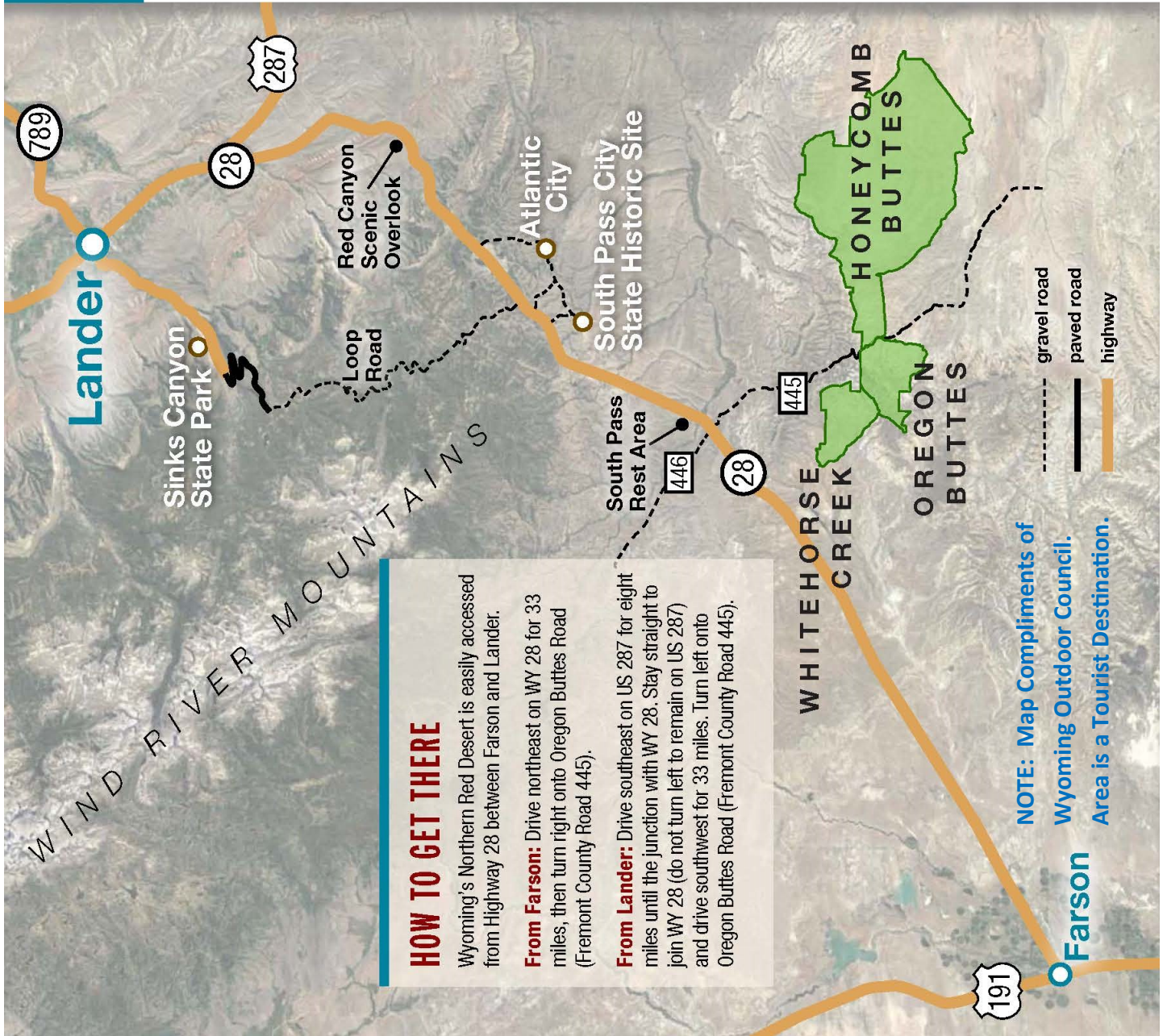
Scott Copeland

Red Canyon Scenic Overlook



Scott Copeland

Sinks Canyon's Disappearing River



HOW TO GET THERE

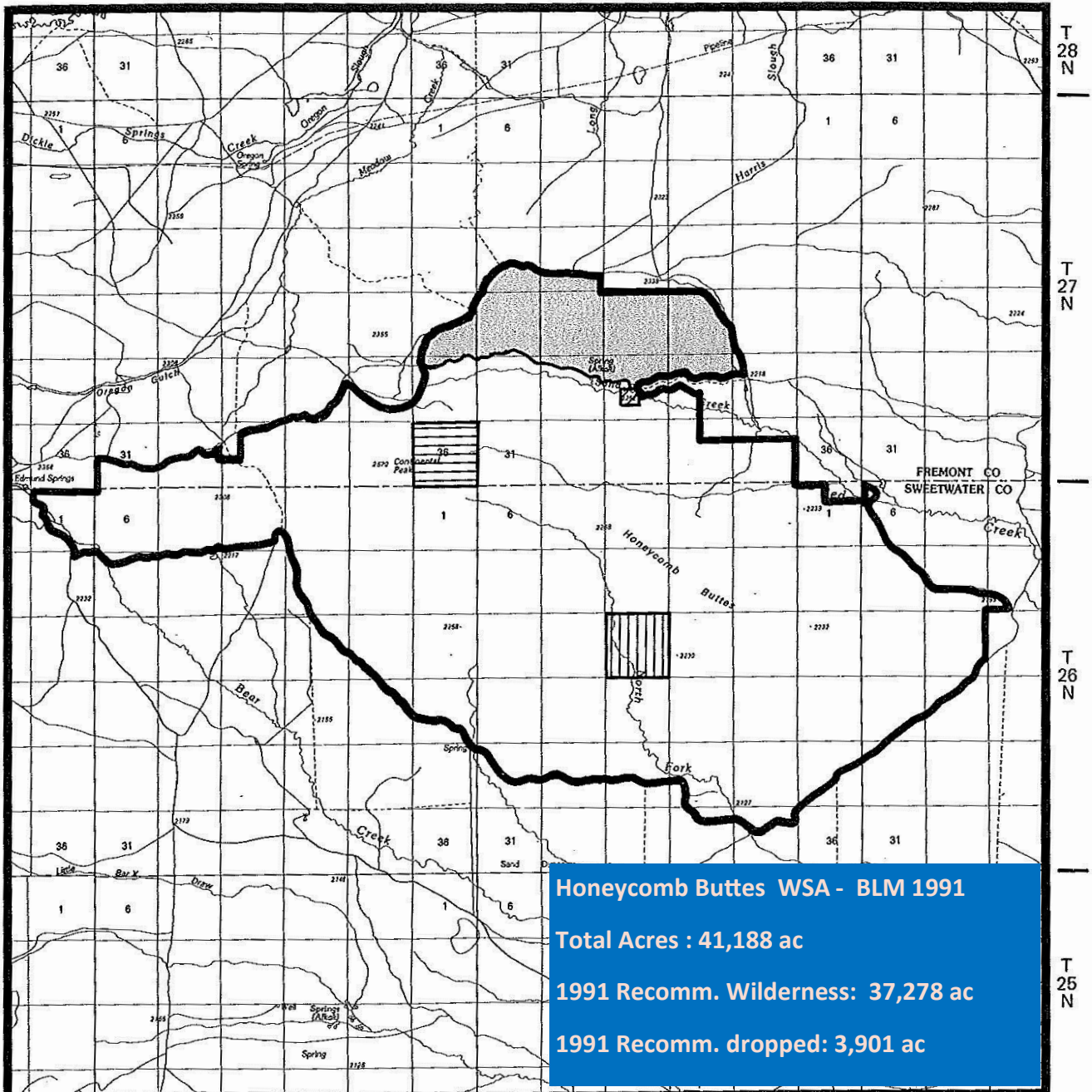
Wyoming's Northern Red Desert is easily accessed from Highway 28 between Farson and Lander.

From Farson: Drive northeast on WY 28 for 33 miles, then turn right onto Oregon Buttes Road (Fremont County Road 445).

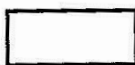





From Lander: Drive southeast on US 287 for eight miles until the junction with WY 28. Stay straight to join WY 28 (do not turn left to remain on US 287) and drive southwest for 33 miles. Turn left onto Oregon Buttes Road (Fremont County Road 445).

NOTE: Map Compliments of Wyoming Outdoor Council. Area is a Tourist Destination.

BLM 1991 Recommendation to Congress



R101W | R100W | R99W | R98W

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | Recommended for Wilderness |  | Split Estate |
|  | Recommended for Nonwilderness |  | State |
|  | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |  | Private |



Honeycomb Buttes Proposal



WY-040-323
June, 1990

Honeycomb Buttes WSA Notes: Provided by Sweetwater County staff. Sources include: state and federal documents, comments from WSA knowledgeable managers/individuals, on line information, staff experience and other sources.

Key Features:

The Honeycomb Buttes WSA encompasses 41,188 acres of BLM land, with 640 acres of state land and 640 acres of split estate land. The WSA is entirely within the BLM Rock Springs Field Office. The area is bounded on the north and south by unnamed unpaved roads, on the east side by the Rock Springs District Boundary and on the west by Sweetwater County Road 4-74, the Oregon Buttes Road. An approximately one and half mile long access road and a 40 acre private parcel are cherry-stemmed into the WSA along the Sand Creek Drainage. This access road and private parcel are excluded from the WSA.

The Honeycomb Buttes WSA is essentially natural in character and is one of the best examples of badlands topography in Wyoming with many colorful bluffs, draws and side canyons. Twisted and contoured erosional features dominate the landscape. The buttes are scattered with petrified wood and tortoise shells.

Although a few two-track trails intrude into the WSA, it remains in a highly natural appearing state. Much of the area is highly erodible, and surface impacts fade relatively quickly. The many cliffs, ridges, draws, and secluded grottos provide numerous areas where solitude can be experienced. The WSA provides opportunities for various kinds of primitive and unconfined recreation including rock hounding, non-technical climbing on clay and rock buttes, spelunking in erosion caves found in the buttes, horseback riding, hunting, backpacking and photography.

In regard to wildlife, the Final BLM Rock Springs Wilderness EIS states: "The primary big game species in the WSA is antelope. Several hundred occupy the WSA during the spring, summer, and fall. Mule deer use northern parts of the WSA yearlong, moving to northwestern parts of the WSA during severe winter weather. Approximately 20 mule deer occupy the area near the two springs. Elk use northwestern parts of the WSA during the summer months and migrate to the south-central parts in winter." See State of Wyoming Natural Resource and Energy Explorer (ENREX) maps for additional wildlife information.

From the mineral perspective, Honeycomb Buttes, along with the adjacent Oregon Buttes and Whitehorse Creek WSAs, are located within an area that has moderate oil and gas potential, which is the same potential as the majority of Sweetwater County. ENREX and the Wyoming Reservoir Information Tool show no leases, permits or wells within the Honeycomb Buttes, Whitehorse Creek or Oregon Buttes WSAs. BLM information shows that there are no existing federal leases within these units.

According to state databases regarding coal and uranium, there is moderate coal potential with little or no uranium potential within Honeycomb Buttes, Oregon Buttes or Whitehorse Creek WSAs. The Rock Springs Wilderness EIS mentions that there was some uranium exploration conducted in Honeycomb Buttes during the 1970's. As stated in the EIS: "...no production from claims is anticipated. There is low potential for salable mineral values in the Honeycomb Buttes and no activity is anticipated."

Honeycomb Buttes, Oregon Buttes and Whitehorse Creek are actively used by recreationists especially from the Lander area. See attached tourism brochure published by the Wyoming Outdoor Council.

These three WSAs along with Buffalo Hump, the Sand Dunes, Alkali Draw and the South Pinnacles are all a part of the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan.

Access:

Honeycomb Buttes WSA is most easily accessed from Wyoming Highway 28 via Fremont County Road 445. The WSA may also be accessed from the south via various Sweetwater County roads connecting into Sweetwater County Road 4-74, the Oregon Buttes Road. Access from the south requires 50 plus miles of driving gravel or dirt county roads.

1991 Recommendation:

In 1991, the BLM recommended retaining, for wilderness designation, 37,287 acres of the Honeycomb Buttes WSA, and releasing 3,901 acres from the original WSA acreage of 41,188 acres.

The recommendation for releasing 3,901 acres was based on the following as stated in the 1991 Wyoming Statewide Wilderness Report and Wilderness Study Area Specific Recommendations:

“The 3,901-acre area not recommended for wilderness designation is separated from the rest of the WSA by a road and 40 acres of private land from the east is “cherry-stemmed”, so it does not truly lie within the WSA. However, the road continues west from the private land, eventually exiting the WSA. This road is moderately used to facilitate livestock grazing management and oil and gas exploration. Releasing this portion of the WSA for non-wilderness uses eliminates a cherry-stem and thus greatly improves manageability of the recommended area by eliminating potential conflicts with the use of the private land.”

Comments and Notes:

As with the other 1991 WSA recommendations, the Honeycomb Buttes WSA recommendation needs to be reevaluated within the framework of 2017 land use data, information and context.

The 1991 report states that the parcel and the cherry-stem road would create problems for manageability. This may still be possibly true. However, with a relatively small footprint, the impact of the cherry-stem road and parcel on WSA manageability may be small especially since the cherry-stem feature is on the northeast edge of the WSA. Again, this issue should be re-evaluated.

In regard to the road extending to the west from the private parcel, since this road has not had vehicle traffic on it for 26 years, it may not be passable or in existence at this time. Like the private parcel and the cherry-stem road, whether or not the issue of WSA manageability is still applicable to this road should be re-evaluated.

The Honeycomb Buttes, Oregon Buttes and Whitehorse Creek WSA complex is well known and attracts recreational users from Lander and Riverton. See attached advertisement flyer. This WSA region may receive the highest recreational use of any Sweetwater County WSA. From an economic perspective, the future of this entire WSA complex may be best served by designating it as all Wilderness or as a Wilderness / National Conservation Area Complex.

This area has strong potential for supporting the growing recreational industry in our county.