



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition

DOI-BLM-WY-P060-2022-0057-EA

Environmental Assessment

June 2023



**Casper Field Office
2987 Prospector Drive
Casper, Wyoming 82604-2968**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background or Project summary

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to acquire a parcel of land from a private landowner in Natrona and Carbon County, Wyoming with the help of The Conservation Fund (TCF). BLM management of the lands would facilitate an opportunity to enhance public recreation opportunities within the North Platte River corridor and beyond.

The parcel contains approximately 8 miles of North Platte River frontage that will provide opportunities for recreational development, wildlife, and fisheries. The parcel also contains approximately 35,669.52 acres (33,470.93 acres in Natrona County in the Casper Field Office and 2,198.59 acres in Carbon County in the Rawlins Field Office) upland from the river that will increase public access. No infrastructure development is planned for the acquisition area with this project, this environmental assessment (EA) only covers the acquisition of the property. Any further planning or developments on the acquisition area will use the most recent Department of the Interior (DOI) and BLM regulations, policy and guidance including compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

On May 18, 2022, a decision record and finding of no significant impact were signed by the BLM authorized officers (for the Casper and Rawlins Field Offices) for the Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA, (ePlanning project number DOI-BLM-WY-P060-2022-0057-EA). On June 17, 2022, the State of Wyoming appealed the decision to the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Hearings and Appeals, Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). On October 21, 2022, the IBLA issued an order to set aside and remand the BLM's decision,¹ so that the BLM can "reevaluate its May 18, 2022, decision, provide additional opportunities for public notice and comment, and supplement its environmental analysis to better address issues raised by the Appellant in the Statement of Reasons."

¹ See Order at page 1. This appeal was docketed as number IBLA-2022-0218.

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

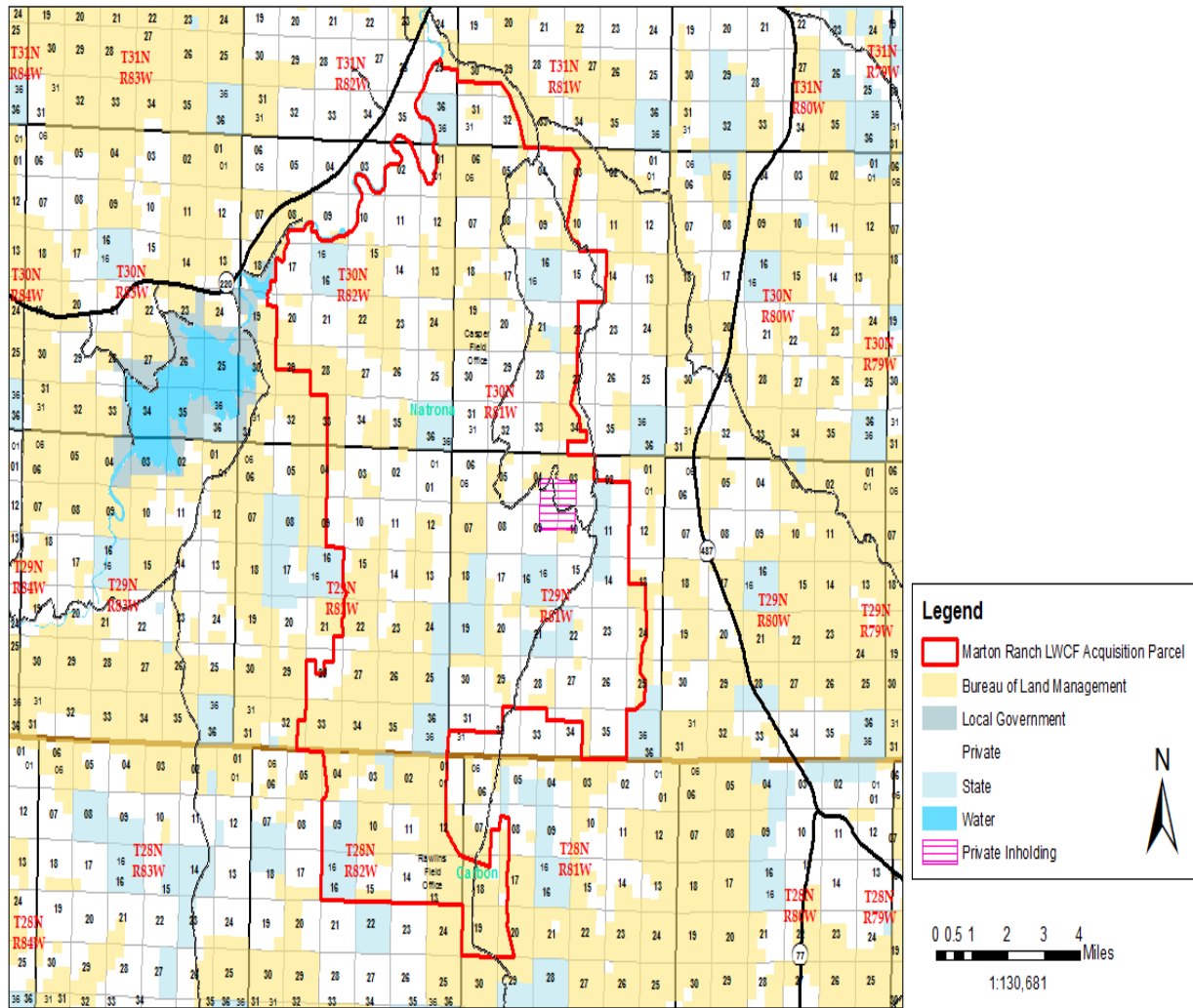


Figure 1, Project Boundary

1.2 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The need for the action is to acquire the described parcel placing it into public ownership and respond to the Order from the IBLA, including to supplement the BLM's NEPA analysis and enhance opportunities for public participation.

The purpose for the action is to enhance and facilitate public recreation opportunities as set forth in the Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Casper Field Office (Casper RMP FEIS), the Record of Decision and Approved Casper Resource Management Plan (Casper RMP) and the PROPOSED Resource Management Plan and FINAL Environmental Impact Statement for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, (Rawlins RMP FEIS) the Record of Decision and Approved Rawlins Resource Management Plan (Rawlins RMP) signed in December 2008 as amended

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

decisions detailed in section 2.3 below and supplement the BLM's analysis and disclosure of potential effects related to the BLM's acquisition of the Marton Ranch parcel, and to provide for additional public participation.

Decision to be Made: Based upon the results of the additional analysis and disclosure in this EA, and the feedback from the public in its review, the BLM will decide whether or not to acquire the parcel of land and, if so, under what terms and conditions.

1.3 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analysis

The preparation of this EA follows guidelines and regulations adopted by the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) found in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500-1508, DOI regulations in 43 CFR Part 46, the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 and BLM policies regarding the implementation of NEPA and compliance with the above regulations.

The BLM's policy is derived from various laws, including Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended [43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.].

1.4 Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues

Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the BLM Casper and Rawlins Field Offices interdisciplinary team. The original project was posted on the ePlanning website on February 16, 2022. A field visit to the project area was conducted in September 2021.

Based upon the concerns raised by the State of Wyoming in its Statement of Reasons (WY SOR),² the BLM has determined that additional analysis and disclosure for several resources is necessary.

Resources identified for analysis in the original document included Aquatic Invasive Species, Fisheries, Recreation and Recreational Setting, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species, Socioeconomic Considerations – Local Property Taxes, Wildlife and Special Status Animal or Plant Species other than Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) candidate or listed species.

Resources identified for further analysis in this document include recreational setting, fisheries, and aquatic invasive species.

Public review of the project began on April 21, 2023 and ended on May 12, 2023. Public review resulted in 351 comment submissions of which 330 were found to be genuine comment

² See the State of Wyoming's Statement of Reasons (SOR) dated July 15, 2022. In their SOR, the State of Wyoming raised several issues related to NEPA compliance and public participation, including: (1) impacts of the Marton Ranch acquisition on the recreational setting of the North Platte River Special Recreation Management Area, (2) indirect impacts of the acquisition on fisheries and aquatic invasive species, (3) cumulative effects, and (4) involvement of State, local governments, and the public in the BLM's NEPA compliance process. The BLM will seek to redress those issues in this EA.

submissions while 11 were submitted after the close of the comment period. Of those comment submissions, 352 individual comments were found including 44 substantive comments. The BLM attempted to respond to all comments and those responses are included in the Marton EA Comments and Responses document on the ePlanning website. Of interest was that 88 percent of comments were for the purchase while 6 percent were against. The rest showed no real opinion either way.

CHAPTER 2

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternative A, No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not acquire the parcel.

2.2 Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF) would acquire the approximate 36,000 acre Marton Ranch parcel in Natrona and Carbon Counties, Wyoming which includes approximately 8 miles of North Platte River frontage, in Natrona County. The BLM would otherwise manage the property in the same way as the surrounding BLM administered public lands as detailed in the Casper RMP and the Rawlins RMP.

2.3 Conformance with BLM Land-Use Plan and Incorporation by Reference

Casper Field Office

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1501.11 and 1501.12, this EA tiers to and incorporates by reference the information and analysis contained in the Casper RMP FEIS and Casper RMP signed in December 2007 as amended. Furthermore, the proposed action is in conformance with the Casper RMP goals and objectives and decisions, specifically the following:

Decision 6006. “Acquisition of lands and interest in lands will be pursued in areas of high recreational or paleontological value, with sensitive cultural resources, area with important fish and wildlife habitat, and along historic trail segments.” Objective LR:1, “Manage the acquisition, disposal, withdrawal, and use of public lands to meet the needs of internal and external customers and to preserve important resource values.”

Decision 6008. “Lands that are reconveyed or acquired will be managed in the same manner as the adjoining public lands.” Objective LR:1.1, “Develop and maintain a land-ownership pattern that will provide better access for managing and protecting public lands.”

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

Decision 6034, “North Platte Special Recreation Management Area Prescriptions: Development, livestock grazing, and ROW will be limited. Emphasis will be placed on enhancing recreational benefits and wildlife/fisheries habitats within the selected boundary. Acquisitions and easements will be pursued as opportunities arise to improve public access and recreation opportunities...” Objective LR:8.1, “Manage and maintain recreation sites and facilities to acceptable operations standards.”

Decision 7023 “The BLM will pursue acquisition of lands and interest in lands in the Bolton Creek Drainage and Bates Creek areas.” GOAL SD:4, “Manage the Bates Hole MA to protect highly erosive soils, fragile watersheds, and important and crucial wildlife habitat; conserve and (or) improve special status species habitat and maintain unfragmented vegetative communities.”

Decision 7035 “The BLM will pursue acquisition of lands and interest in lands in the North Platte River area...” Objective SD: 7.1, “Manage the public lands and mineral estate in a manner than enhances the natural character and preserves wildlife and fisheries habitats.”

Rawlins Field Office

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1501.11 and 1501.12, this EA tiers to and incorporates by reference the information and analysis contained in the Rawlins FEIS RMP and Rawlins RMP signed in December 2008 as amended. Furthermore, the proposed action is in conformance with the Rawlins RMP decisions, goals and objectives even though it is not specifically provided for because it is consistent with those decisions, goals and objectives within the Rawlins RMP.

Management Goal:

1. Manage the acquisition, disposal, withdrawal, and use of public lands to meet the needs of internal and external customers (i.e., to respond to community needs for expansion and economic development and to preserve important resource values) (Appendices 6, 7, and 34).

Management Objectives:

1. Identify BLM-administered lands within the RMPPA (resource management plan planning area) available for acquisition, disposal, or withdrawal.
4. Utilize appropriate actions (e.g., land tenure adjustments or easement acquisitions) to help solve problems related to intermixed landownership patterns.

Management Actions:

4. When practicable, develop and maintain a landownership pattern that will provide better access for management and protection of the public lands (Appendix 6).

CHAPTER 3

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the affected and/or existing environment (i.e. the physical, biological, social, and economic values and resources) of the area. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts and consequences described in Chapter 4.

3.2 Resources Not Considered in this Analysis

The following resources are not present or impacted by the project and will not be analyzed as detailed in Appendix A:

| | |
|--|--|
| Air Quality and Visibility | Public Health and Safety |
| Energy | Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines |
| Environmental Justice | Rangeland Management |
| Farmlands (Prime or Unique) | Saleable Minerals |
| Floodplains | Soils |
| Forestry | Special Management Areas including ACECs, WSAs, ERMAs, SRMAs |
| Fuels/Fire Management | Surface Water |
| Geology | Transportation |
| Greenhouse Gasses and Climate Change | Travel Management |
| Ground Water | Vegetation |
| Heritage Resources | Visual Resources |
| Historic Trails | Wastes (hazardous or solid) |
| Invasive, Non-native Species other than Aquatic | Water |
| Lands and Realty | Water Quality (Prime or Sole Source Drinking Water) |
| Leasable Minerals | Wetlands and Riparian Zones |
| Livestock Grazing | Wild and Scenic Rivers |
| Locatable Minerals | Wilderness Characteristics |
| Native American Religious Concerns and Traditional Cultural Properties | |
| Paleontology | |

3.3 Recreation and Recreational Setting

The lands within the described parcel include the North Platte River, which is the only floatable waterway in central Wyoming and has become valued as a Class 1 cold-water recreational fishery within a multi-state area and rated Blue Ribbon by the Wyoming Game and Fish

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

Department. The river is a high-interest area for anglers and wildlife enthusiasts, representing the top 3-5 percent of rivers and streams within the state for trout production and attracts approximately 100,000 seasonal anglers a year. The most popular game fish species include rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout. Below Gray Reef dam (which is located immediately upstream of the Marton Ranch's river frontage), the river has been recently touted as the number one destination for trout fishing in North America by multiple angling publications. As a result, this world-class fishery is a primary focus of the BLM's recreation management program.

The BLM has issued and manages 18 special recreation permits (SRPs) for commercial fly-fishing companies that can guide along the Marton property. Permitted guides utilize public lands along the North Platte River for launching and retrieving drift boats and rafts, and anchoring and wade fishing on BLM administered public lands. With the permission of other landowners, guides and the public could also use private lands in similar ways.

Adjacent recreation areas such as Gray Reef, including the Blue Gulch and The Redd's day use sites; Pete's Draw Campground and Trappers Route—which is divided into the Bolton Creek Access, Miles Landing and Whitetail day use sites; and the Golden Current, Chalk Bluffs, and Buffalo Berry Campgrounds are heavily used throughout the year with 212,000 visits recorded in 2021.

Other common recreation activities include floating, wildlife observation, hunting, shed antler collecting, OHV use, camping and picnicking on BLM public lands. Due to the Trapper's Route Recreation Area's close proximity to local communities and public access, mountain biking and equestrian use have been increasing over time.

This acquisition will be managed for the recreational setting as referenced in the Casper RMP, Appendix O specific to the setting character.

The recreational setting consists of low-lying view from the water surface creates the perception of a relatively undisturbed landscape. Different combinations of line, form, color, and texture enhance the visual quality which is combined with the constantly changing shorelines and vegetative communities. The landscape changes from open areas, densely vegetated banks, panoramic views, and landform features, such as cliff walls formed by erosion, and provide nesting habitat for a variety of bird species.

The land is currently under private ownership and permission for recreational access to these lands would first need to be obtained from the private landowner.

3.4 Socioeconomic Considerations

The BLM does not pay property taxes to local governments. FLPMA and subsequent laws accounted for this discrepancy by creating the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. Natrona and Carbon Counties both receive annual PILT from the Department of the Interior for public lands within the boundaries of their counties, calculated annually (citation). Natrona County received a PILT of \$3,952,693 in 2022, which is the most that they can receive in a given fiscal year (FY) due to a population ceiling limit. Carbon County received a PILT payment of

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

\$1,566,471 in 2022, which is also capped under the population ceiling limit. Because of population constraints factored into annual PILT calculations, additional land acquisitions do not merit increased PILTs beyond a certain per capita amount for areas like Carbon and Natrona Counties that have reached their respective population ceiling limit (DOI 2022). The Marton Ranch's annual property tax payment was estimated to be \$14,500 between both counties in 2022. The acquired acres are estimated to have contributed approximately \$10,000 in 2022 property taxes, while the remaining acreage kept by the landowner in the acquisition is estimated to have contributed approximately \$4,500 in 2022 property taxes (Natrona County Assessor 2023).

The Marton Ranch provides additional limited public access to the North Platte River via State Highway 487 and Natrona County Roads 403, 404, and 405. This area is comprised of open areas, densely vegetated banks, panoramic views, and landform features. The North Platte River is a high-interest area for anglers and wildlife enthusiasts, representing the top 3-5 percent of rivers and streams within the state for trout production and attracts approximately 100,000 seasonal anglers a year. The BLM has issued and manages 18 special recreation permits (SRPs) for commercial fly-fishing companies in this area. Permitted guides utilize public lands along the North Platte River for launching and retrieving drift boats and rafts, and anchoring and wade fishing on BLM administered public lands. Other common recreation activities include floating, wildlife observation, hunting, shed antler collecting, OHV use, camping and picnicking on BLM public lands. A 2022 Community Needs Assessment for Natrona County indicated recreational activities as number three of the top ten service needs identified by surveyed community members (Natrona County 2022), despite being a regularly recreated area for the activities described above.

3.5 Special Status Animal or Plant Species other than FWS candidate or listed Species

The Special Status Species concerns considered in relation to the proposed action were greater sage grouse; raptor; mountain plover; swift fox; sagebrush obligate species; grassland obligate species; and riparian/wetland obligate species as indicated on the Special Status Species Issues Map. There are a variety of wildlife present throughout the project area, including big-game, non-game, small-game, furbearing, and predatory animals. The area is known to support populations of small game and non-game species, but no comprehensive inventories exist for the area.

As depicted on the Special Status Species Issues Map, the Marton Ranch is located southwest of Casper and just east of Alcova Reservoir. Pronghorn antelope and mule deer utilize the area year-round. The parcel includes crucial big game winter range habitat for both pronghorn antelope and mule deer.

The area provides suitable habitat for a variety of migratory birds, including raptors. The area contains a diversity of habitat types supporting most avian species associated with sage steppe, , riparian/wetland, or grassland habitats. Migratory bird nest site occupancy is unknown, as no nest surveys have occurred in the area.

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

Raptor species likely to occur within the area include the following: Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Rough-legged hawk (*Buteo lagopus*), Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), Sharp shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), Great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Historic raptor nest sites and one artificial nesting structure (ANS) have been documented in the vicinity of the parcel. It is likely that raptor nests occur that have not been identified. No intensive raptor surveys have been completed in this area and the parcel provides suitable habitat for a variety of raptors.

The Bald eagle is listed as a Wyoming BLM Sensitive Species. Areas associated with the North Platte River have been designated as bald eagle foraging habitat and eagles may be seen regularly along the river corridor. The Sticking Creek Roost is approximately 2 miles east of the parcel. The Jackson Canyon ACEC is located approximately 8 miles northeast of the parcel and contains two winter communal eagle roosts: Jackson Canyon and Little Red Creek Roost.

White-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys leucurus*) colonies are present within the parcel. Prairie dogs are listed as a Wyoming BLM Sensitive Species. The colonies are believed to be active, but the size and extent is unknown. These colonies can provide suitable habitat for other Wyoming BLM Sensitive Species such as Swift Fox (*Vulpes velox*) and Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*).

The parcel contains habitat that supports the Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). The parcel occurs within Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and portions of the parcel contain Sage-grouse Winter Habitat (See Special Status Species Issues Map in Chapter 8 below). The following leks fall within the parcel: Marton, Ledge Creek, Bolton Creek 1, Bear Mountain, and Canyon Creek N Fork. The Bear Springs East, Rattlesnake Spring, Meers Camp, Canyon Creek South, and Bolton Creek 2 leks fall within 1.0 mile of the parcel and are considered occupied. The parcel contains suitable habitat for Greater Sage-grouse breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing, as well as winter habitats.

3.6 Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species

The Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species concerns considered in relation to the proposed action were: Black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) and species associated with the Platte River Species Area of Influence (AOI) as indicated on the T&E Species Issues Map in Chapter 8 below. No comprehensive inventories of these species exist for the area.

Black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) habitat is present within the parcel. The Black-footed ferret is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The parcel occurs within the boundaries of the Bates Hole/Shirley Basin (10J) Black-footed Ferret experimental/ non-essential population area. White-tailed prairie dog colonies exist throughout the parcel which provide food and habitat for Black-footed ferrets. The prairie dog colonies are believed to be active but are spread out causing less successful dispersal between ferrets. There have been

multiple reintroductions, however, the active reintroduction area is located north of the town of Medicine Bow.

The Platte River Species Area of Influence (AOI) falls within the northwest portion of the parcel, along the North Platte River. This AOI was designed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify areas where potential effects need to be considered for Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate species and designated and proposed Critical Habitat, in reference to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. This area contains critical habitat for the endangered Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) and the threatened Piping Plover (*Grus americana*) listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Other species associated with the Platte River Species AOI are endangered Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*), endangered Pallid Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) and the threatened Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

3.7 Wildlife

The Wildlife species considered in relation to the proposed action are: Elk (*Cervus canadensis*), Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and Pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*). (in Wyoming this species is defined by statute 23-1-101 as “antelope”). White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are also present within the area in relatively low densities compared to other areas throughout the state. Big Game Winter Range for Mule deer and Pronghorn antelope is found within the parcel. There are a variety of wildlife species present throughout the project area, including big-game, non-game, small-game, furbearing, and predatory animals. The area is known to support populations of small game and non-game species, but no comprehensive inventories exist for the area.

Elk within the area are managed as part of the Shirley Mountain Herd Unit. Elk use in the area is isolated, as a small population is found in the area year-round. This population is geographically separated from the other more typical elk habitats that occur within the central portion of the herd unit. However, elk use in the area is expanding as there is likely some migration from the expanding populations to the south and east (Laramie Peak/Muddy Mountain herd).

Mule Deer within the area are managed as part of The Bates Hole-Hat Six Mule Deer Herd Unit. Due to a persistent downward trend in the population, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department made the Bates Hole-Hat Six Mule Deer herd a focus of the Area 66 Mule Deer Initiative. The southeast section of the parcel contains crucial winter habitat for mule deer, but the parcel is used year-round.

Pronghorn antelope within the area are managed as part of the Medicine Bow Herd Unit. Major seasonal pronghorn movement takes place within this area as pronghorn move from their summer range to crucial winter-yearlong range. The northern half of the parcel is designated as crucial winter range, but the parcel is utilized year-round.

3.8 Wildlife – Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are an ever-present concern throughout the State the Wyoming. They pose an especially grave threat to the economically and ecologically important North Platte River fishery.

New Zealand Mudsail were detected in 2018 at the Gray Reef boat ramp facility and are now present in the North Platte River on the Marton Ranch. The snail is spread by fish, birds, natural downstream dispersal, and by humans on fishing gear. They can outcompete native species and alter water chemistry (Wyoming Game and Fish Department-Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention, Dec. 2014).

Brook Stickleback were discovered in the North Platte River in 2012 at Bessemer Bend Bridge which is approximately 25-miles downstream of the property. They have also been found upstream of the property in both Pathfinder and Seminole reservoirs. Brook Stickleback can compete with and negatively affect other fish species. They are known to forage for other fish species' eggs and are primarily spread through live bait introductions and water currents. Juvenile fish and fish eggs may be difficult to see and can be accidentally moved with standing water (Wyoming Game and Fish Department-Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention, Dec. 2014).

The most significant known threat to Wyoming is from zebra and quagga mussels based on their proximity and demonstrated impacts in neighboring states. They have been found in Colorado, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Utah and are transported in water on boats as microscopic larvae or attached to the hull, motor, or other hard surface of a boat as juveniles or adults. Zebra and quagga mussels remove nutrients from water and out-compete native mussels (Wyoming Game and Fish Department-Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention, Dec. 2014).

This reach of the North Platte River sees high numbers of out-of-state recreational fishermen. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department conducted a creel survey on this stretch of the river in 2020 and found that 78.6% of those interviewed were non-residents. Most non-resident anglers were from Colorado, 59.1% (WGFD, Annual Fisheries Progress Report on the 2020 Work Schedule, pp. 17-32).

Public boating access to the North Platte River in the area consists of two boat ramps which are on lands other than Marton Ranch. The Gray Reef boat ramp is the upper boating access point. The Lusby Public Access Area boat ramp is the lower boating access point. There are no other developed boat ramps in the reach of river located within the property.

3.9 Wildlife – Fisheries

The approximately 8 miles of North Platte River frontage within the property has been recognized as a trophy Blue Ribbon tail water by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department(WGFD). This reach of the river is comparable to the Miracle Mile reach of the North Platte River, the Bighorn River near Thermopolis, and several sections of the Shoshone River near Cody. The purchase area is highlighted in the WGFD's 2022 Statewide Habitat Plan.

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

Aquatic priority areas from this document which are applicable to this reach of the North Platte River include “Aquatic Crucial” protecting riparian habitat and the Blue Ribbon Fishery, and “Aquatic Restoration” targeting degraded areas for stream restoration and improving Blue Ribbon Fishery status. Popular sport fish in this reach include rainbow trout, brown trout, Bear River cutthroat, and Snake River cutthroat. As one of the nation’s premier trout fisheries, this reach of river sees high numbers of recreational anglers each year. There were an estimated 8,439 boat anglers that fished the Gray Reef section (which includes the Marton Ranch) of the North Platte River in 2020 alone (WGFD, Annual Fisheries Progress Report on the 2020 Work Schedule, pp. 17-32). The total number of anglers fishing the Gray Reef section of the North Platte River would be greater due to an unknown number of wade anglers utilizing publicly accessible areas.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department samples this reach of the North Platte biennially. Their sampling results show a decline in fish abundance from 2014 to 2018 and then a stagnation in abundance from 2018 to 2020. The report states that the 2020 estimates for this section of the North Platte River remain significantly below the management objective for both abundance and biomass per mile. Their results also provide evidence of an aging fish population due in part to poor recruitment (WGFD, Annual Fisheries Progress Report on the 2020 Work Schedule, pp. 17-32).

Their report suggests that poor recruitment rates may be due in part to a high prevalence of hooking injury imposed on sexually mature fish. As angling pressure is expected to remain the same in the foreseeable future, they suggest a two-pronged approach to help remedy the problem. Educating the public on best catch-and-release methods and mitigate sources of angling-related injury on fish by implementing special fishing regulations. (WGFD, Annual Fisheries Progress Report on the 2020 Work Schedule, pp. 17-32).

Ledge Creek, Wash-out Creek, Bear Creek, and approximately 6-miles of Bolton Creek are on the property. The Ledge Creek and Bolton Creek tributaries have contributed significant amounts of sediment into the North Platte River in the past and have therefore been a cause for concern pertaining to water quality and fish health. Projects have been implemented in the past (specifically on Bolton Creek) to reduce sediment deposition and erosion in the area.

Fishing access to this reach of the North Platte River is almost all on the north side of the river. Both private and public access is extremely limited on the south side of the river as there are very few established roads

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

4.1 Introduction

An environmental impact is a change in the quality or quantity of a given resource because of a modification in the existing environment consequential of a project-related activity. Impacts can vary in degree from a slightly discernible change to a total change in the environment. Potential impacts are quantified when possible; however, when impacts are not quantifiable, suitable explanations are used to best describe the level of impact.

Impacts are considered as being direct or indirect, cumulative, and residual. The impacts are also examined for short term/long term and/or beneficial/adverse. Where appropriate the analysis identifies these types of impacts and compares the alternatives accordingly.

Direct impacts are those impacts which are caused by the action and occur at the time and place. Indirect impacts are those impacts which are caused by the action and are later in time or further removed in distance but are still reasonably probable.

Short-term impacts can be defined by resource and are usually up to a few years in span. Long-term impacts would be lasting beyond the short term to the end of the project and beyond.

Cumulative impacts are defined as the environmental impact resulting from the incremental direct/indirect and short/long term impacts of the alternative when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of who undertakes such other actions.

Mitigations that the BLM would implement as part of the approval are then described and analyzed with any impacts left over being summarized as residual impacts.

4.1.1 Cumulative Impact Analysis Area

The cumulative impacts analysis (CIA) area is the project boundary for all resources except Recreation and Socioeconomics analyzed in this EA. For Recreation the CIA is the project boundary plus the North Platte River Special Recreation Management Area (North Platte SRMA). For Socioeconomics the CIA would be the counties.

4.1.2 Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

The area has been historically used for grazing of both cattle and sheep, ranching, hunting, oil and gas development and recreation. Though the project area has no planned infrastructure developments the property is across the river from an area that has seen substantial developments for recreation and tourism including housing due to the popularity of the North Platte River. No infrastructure development is planned for the acquisition area with this project.

4.2 Recreation and Recreational Setting

Please note, some impacts specific to fishing is further addressed in the Fisheries section below.

Alternative A, No Action

Under this alternative, the lands would not be acquired, and operations and management would continue as they are currently. No impacts to the recreational setting would occur.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, the lands would be acquired and recreation would be managed in accordance with the Casper and Rawlins RMPs including the North Platte SRMA. The acquisition of approximately 36,000 acres would also allow for expanded recreation and use across the landscape including once landlocked parcels of BLM and Wyoming State lands.

The addition of 8 miles of one side of North Platte River could allow more public pedestrian access and use along those 8 miles whereas previously the private lands were controlled by the landowner but the area acquired within the SRMA is remote; has no developments; and access to the river is limited by the topography and lengthy, difficult to use trails. While the direct impacts would normally be an increase in public use of the area for recreation along the river the remoteness of the area will ameliorate these impacts.

Prior to the acquisition of this property, the 8 mile section was open to floating and fishing by the public. The acquisition of this property would allow for anchoring and use of the river bank. It is not anticipated that these changes will substantially increase overall river use.

These recreational impacts due to the acquisition will not impact the recreational setting as the area will be managed consistent with Appendix O of the Casper RMP (the Recreation Management Matrices). Consistent with the approved RMP, in the Casper planning area the BLM will maintain the prescribed setting character of the North Platte River SRMA, including managing social contacts to “middle country” encounters and “front country” encounters. The managed use of this property will further provide for targeted outcomes including but not limited to bank fishing, boat fishing activities; experiences such as relaxing, enjoying scenery and natural setting, improving outdoor-related skills and enjoying leisure activities; and the benefits of nature and aesthetic appreciation, improved perceived quality of life, family bonding/better family life and improved image of land management agencies.

Cumulative Impacts

The addition of roughly 36,000 acres for recreational uses could add to the impacts already seen from present uses such as oil and gas, hunting and fishing in the uplands areas.

North Platte SRMA could see a slight decrease in concentrated impacts with the additional linear miles of river and associated uplands accessible to the public as those impacts could be spread across this larger acquired area. The remoteness of the river may make accessing the river

difficult and time consuming for the user though. The dispersal of recreational uses across the additional area could relieve all forms of recreation pressures especially in the uplands area but also in and around the SRMA as well as the adjoining public lands.

Mitigation

No proposed mitigations concerning recreational setting at this time. However, any future planning and development of the recreational setting would involve the requisite stakeholders such as the Office of State Lands and Investments and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Residual Impacts

Under the proposed action, the residual impacts would include continued interest in recreation opportunities from these expanded areas along the river and associated uplands. However, the recreational setting will see reduced residual impacts as the area will remain remote and difficult to access, and potential future mitigation would limit the potential adverse impacts.

4.3 Socioeconomics

Alternative A, No Action

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not acquire the private land parcels. Local governments would not realize a decrease in annual property taxes received from Marton Ranch parcels. Selection of the no action alternative would prevent the parcel from being managed as public land and access opportunities for the public would remain unchanged.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, Natrona and Carbon Counties would lose approximately \$10,000 (\$7,000 in Natrona County and \$3,000 in Carbon County) of the estimated \$14,500 total in property tax contributions. The remaining acreage kept by the landowner in the acquisition is expected to continue to accrue property tax revenue, having contributed approximately \$4,500 in 2022 property taxes (Natrona County Assessor 2023).

The acquisition of this property will further provide for recreation impacts as described above consisting of targeted outcomes including but not limited to bank fishing, boat fishing activities; experiences such as relaxing, enjoying scenery and natural setting, improving outdoor-related skills and enjoying leisure activities; and the benefits of nature and aesthetic appreciation, improved perceived quality of life, family bonding/better family life and improved image of land management agencies.

In addition to their ecological importance, fish are a valuable resource for humans. Management actions that impact access to this resource for recreational use by the public would be a direct impact on fisheries management (Proposed Casper RMP and Final EIS, Chapter 4—Environmental Consequences, 4-94). The acquired land would now be legally accessible to bank fishing and anchoring. This could result in increased and/or prolonged fishing pressure in reaches

of the North Platte River that had previously been legally inaccessible to anchoring and wade fishing by the public. However, the BLM will be able to monitor the uplands areas consisting of the tributaries in this area. The information gained through monitoring will be used to inform management decisions and identify habitat projects in a way that best improves overall habitat quality (see section 4.8 for a complete discussion on potential fishery impacts).

Cumulative Impacts

The area has been historically used for grazing of both cattle and sheep, ranching, hunting, oil and gas development and recreation. Though the project area has no planned infrastructure developments the property is across the river from an area that has seen substantial developments for recreation and tourism including housing due to the popularity of the North Platte River. No infrastructure development is planned for the acquisition area with this project. The addition of roughly 36,000 acres for recreational uses could add to the impacts, both positive and negative, already seen from present uses such as oil and gas, hunting and fishing in the uplands areas.

With respect to the North Platte SRMA, the acquisition of 8 miles of the North Platte River with roughly 36,000 acres of upland will further add to the BLM's ability to manage and improve fisheries habitats by improving and stabilizing the tributaries to the river. This increase is expected to offset the current recreational uses and developments in the area and allow for improved habitat management.

The nominal reduction of approximately \$10,000 in property taxes for the area—0.001 percent of total property taxes levied in Natrona County in 2022 (WY DOR 2022)—is not a significant impact to local revenues. To the degree that property taxes are incrementally reduced on an annual basis without a corresponding increase in associated PILTs, counties and municipalities in the study area also receive annual local government distributions from the State of Wyoming. These distributions are determined biennially, as a function of per capita sales and use taxes and per capita assessed values; a significant change in assessed value, and ensuing property taxes, would therefore be realized and reflected within the updated biannual local government distribution for a given county (2022 WY Session Laws).

Mitigation

No proposed mitigation but the area will be managed consistent with Appendix O of the Casper RMP (the Recreation Management Matrices). Consistent with the approved RMP, in the Casper planning area the BLM will maintain the prescribed setting character of the North Platte River SRMA, including managing social contacts to “middle country” encounters and “front country” encounters, which should also result in net gains in riparian condition and bank stability (Proposed Casper RMP and Final EIS, Chapter 3—Affected Environment, 3-52).

Residual Impacts

There would be nominal residual impacts (approximately \$10,000 per year) to the surrounding tax base. The residual impacts due to the land acquisition could include more targeted management of the lands and the fisheries habitat therein.

4.4 Special Status Animal or Plant Species other than FWS candidate or listed species

Impacts to Special Status Species from the acquisition process are expected to be negligible. As stated in Chapter 2, future management of the area would conform to the Casper and Rawlins RMP decisions including applicable laws, regulations and policy. This process is primarily administrative and would result in no direct impacts, aside from extending the Casper and Rawlins RMPs decisions for Special Status Species on the approximate 36,000 acre parcel and associated wildlife habitats as depicted on Special Status Species Issues Map in Chapter 8 below.

Alternative A, No Action

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not acquire the private land parcels. Selection of the no action alternative would prevent the parcel from being managed as public lands. The current parcel is private land which controls access to the land, impacting Special Status Species minimally.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, Special Status Species values on the parcels would be managed in accordance with the approved RMPs. RMP. The parcel would be managed as public lands. Acquiring the parcel will benefit Special Status Species. Acquisition of these lands could provide for the continued maintenance of BLM special Status Species habitat that may inhabit the area.

Cumulative Impacts

The addition of 8 miles of river with approximately 36,000 acres of up lands would add to the habitats under public ownership in the area, expanding the Special Status Species habitats that could be placed under the pertinent RMP. Blocking up of public lands could lead to more efficient management of these habitats adding cumulatively to the areas habitat availability for these species.

Mitigation

No proposed mitigation.

Residual Impacts

The residual impacts anticipated due to the change in ownership would include continued management of Special Status Species habitats under the BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mandate.

4.5 Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species

Impacts to Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species from the acquisition process are expected to be negligible. As stated in Chapter 2, future management of the area would conform to the Casper and Rawlins RMP decisions including applicable laws, regulations and policy. This process is primarily administrative and would result in no direct impacts, aside from extending the Casper and Rawlins RMPs decisions for Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species onto the approximate 36,000 acre parcel and associated wildlife habitats as depicted on T&E Species Issues Map in Chapter 8 below.

Alternative A, No Action

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not acquire the private land parcels.. Selection of the no action alternative would prevent the parcel from being managed as public lands. The current parcel is private land which controls access to the land, impacting Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species minimally.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species values on the parcels would be managed in accordance with the approved RMPs. RMP. The parcel would be managed as public lands and acquiring the parcel will benefit Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species. Acquisition of these lands could provide for the continued maintenance of Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species habitat that may inhabit the area.

Cumulative Impacts

The addition of 8 miles of river with approximately 36,000 acres of up lands would add to the habitats under public ownership in the area, expanding the Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species habitats that could be placed under the pertinent RMP. Blocking up of public lands could lead to more efficient management of these habitats adding cumulatively to the habitats available for these species.

Mitigation

No proposed mitigation.

Residual Impacts

The residual impacts anticipated due to the change in ownership would include continued management of Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species habitats under the BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mandate.

4.6 Wildlife

Impacts to wildlife from the acquisition process are expected to be negligible. As stated in Chapter 2, future management of the area would conform to the Casper and Rawlins RMP decisions including applicable laws, regulations and policy. This process is primarily administrative and would result in no direct impacts, aside from extending the Casper and Rawlins RMPs decisions for wildlife onto the approximate 36,000 acre parcel and associated wildlife habitats.

Alternative A, No Action

Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not acquire the private land parcels. Selection of the no action alternative would prevent the parcel from being managed as public lands. The current parcel is private land which controls access to the land, impacting wildlife minimally.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, wildlife values on the parcels would be managed in accordance with the approved RMPs. The parcel would be managed as public lands and acquiring the parcel will benefit wildlife. Acquisition of these lands could provide for the continued maintenance of BLM wildlife habitat that may inhabit the area.

Cumulative Impacts

The addition of 8 miles of river with approximately 36,000 acres of up lands would add to the habitats under public ownership in the area, expanding the special status species habitats that could be placed under the pertinent RMP. Connecting public lands into larger blocks could lead to more efficient management of these habitats adding cumulatively to the habitats available for these species.

Mitigation

No proposed mitigation.

Residual Impacts

The residual impacts anticipated due to the change in ownership would include continued management of wildlife habitats under the BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mandate.

4.7 Wildlife – Aquatic Invasive Species

Alternative A, No Action

Under this alternative, the lands would not be acquired, and operations and management would continue as is. Current and future management and monitoring pertaining to AIS on private land under private ownership is unclear.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, the lands would be acquired, and the fisheries and streams would be managed in accordance with Casper and Rawlins approved RMPs.

The North Platte River draws users from out of state which could increase the chance of AIS introduction. The primary means of AIS introduction is via watercraft. This proposed action does not include installation of additional boat ramps or boating access points. All existing access points and ramps are properly signed and monitored by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Individuals who recreate in Wyoming waterways are subject to the AIS requirements set forth by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Therefore, increased risk of AIS introduction via watercraft due to this land acquisition is minimal to non-existent.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts from the land acquisition to AIS is minimal as the acquisition does not increase access points for watercraft that do not already exist.

Mitigation

None

Residual Impacts

There will be no residual impacts as the acquisition does not increase risks of AIS spread through the primary means of watercraft introductions.

4.8 Wildlife – Fisheries

Alternative A, No Action

Under this alternative, the lands would not be acquired, and operations and management would continue as is. Future management of the fisheries habitat under private ownership is unclear.

Currently, there are privately owned reaches of the North Platte River in this area where boats are not legally allowed to anchor, and the public is not legally allowed access to bank fish. These

areas could serve as a type of fish “safe haven” where fish see less angling pressure. This is a direct beneficial impact to sport fish on the property.

Habitat monitoring and improvement are managed by the private landowner. Any monitoring or reclamation efforts that occur will be conducted by the private landowner. It is unknown if anything pertaining to this will occur under current or future private landownership.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

Under this alternative, the lands would be acquired and the fisheries and streams would be managed in accordance with Casper and Rawlins RMPs.

In addition to their ecological importance, fish are a valuable resource for humans. Management actions that impact access to this resource for recreational use by the public would be a direct impact on fisheries management (Proposed Casper RMP and Final EIS, Chapter 4—Environmental Consequences, 4-94).

There are possible direct adverse impacts to fish due to increased and/or prolonged fishing pressure throughout the North Platte River reach on the property. The newly acquired land would now be legally accessible to bank fishing. Anchoring in these reaches would also now be legal. This could result in increased and/or prolonged fishing pressure in reaches of the North Platte River that had previously been legally inaccessible to anchoring and wade fishing by the public.

Direct beneficial impacts to fisheries habitat could be seen due to BLM Casper and Rawlins RMP requirements for riparian and rangeland health standards. These standards require all perennial and intermittent lotic riparian systems on BLM administered land to meet Proper Functioning Condition (PFC). If PFC is not met, management actions must be taken to improve the habitat so that it is trending upward or meeting the PFC standards. This would further create direct beneficial impacts to fisheries habitat due to the BLMs ability to implement stream and riparian habitat improvement projects on BLM administered land including the newly acquired lands.

Furthermore, the direct beneficial impacts to fisheries could be seen due to BLM habitat monitoring. The BLM will be able to monitor the tributaries in this area using PFC and/or Aquatic Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) protocols. The information gained through monitoring will be used to inform management decisions and identify habitat projects in a way that best improves overall habitat quality.

There is the possibility of indirect adverse impacts to water quality due to increases in soil disturbance because of increases in off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on the property. Increased rates at which sediment is transported to and through streams increases deposition in the streams and could adversely impact fish abundance by decreasing the potential for them to naturally reproduce. Increased sediment can also lead to channel degradation and increased stream temperature.

Cumulative Impacts

The acquisition of 8 miles of the North Platte River and 36,000 acres of upland will further add to the BLM's ability to manage and improve fisheries habitats by improving and stabilizing the tributaries to the river. This increase will offset the current recreational uses and developments in the area and allow for better management of this important habitat.

Mitigation

The BLM will be required to manage the rangeland in accordance with the Casper and Rawlins approved RMPs, which should result in net gains in riparian condition and bank stability (Proposed Casper RMP and Final EIS, Chapter 3—Affected Environment, 3-52).

Signage and education on spawning grounds and catch and release to be provided within the SRMA.

Residual Impacts

The residual impacts due to the land acquisition could include better management of the lands and the fisheries habitat.

CHAPTER 5

AGENCIES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR TRIBES

CONSULTED

State of Wyoming Agencies including:

Department of Agriculture,

Department of Environmental Quality,

Office of the Governor of the State of Wyoming

Office of State Lands and Investments,

State Historic Preservation Office,

State Parks & Cultural Resources,

Wyoming Game & Fish Department,

Wyoming State Geological Survey,

Carbon County Board of Commissioners

Natrona County Board of Commissioners

CHAPTER 6

LIST OF PREPARERS

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------------------|
| Jennifer Weber | Senior Realty Specialist | Project Lead - past |
| Mike Robinson | Planning and Environmental Coordinator | Project Lead - present |
| Cullen Hardy | Recreation Planner | Preparer |
| Sara Bassett | Wildlife Biologist | Preparer |
| Matthew Chappell | Recreation Planner | Preparer |
| Mike Mischke | Fisheries Biologist | Preparer |

CHAPTER 7

LITERATURE CITED

CITATIONS

“Conserving Wildlife - Serving People.” *Wyoming Game and Fish Department - Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention*, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Dec. 2014, <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Fishing-and-Boating/Aquatic-Invasive-Species-Prevention>.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Fish Division, Cheyenne, WY, 2020, pp. 17–32, *Annual Fisheries Progress Report on the 2020 Work Schedule Regional and Statewide Aquatic Wildlife and Habitat Management*.

United States, Congress, Casper Field Office. *Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Casper Field Office Planning Area*, 1 of 2, U.S. DOI BLM Casper Field Office, Dec. 2007, pp. 3–51-4–93.

CHAPTER 8

APPENDICES

Appendix A INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS RECORD CHECKLIST

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Project Title: | Marton Ranch LWCF Acquisition |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ePlanning Number: | |
| File/Serial Number: | WYW191415 |
| Project Lead: | Jennifer Weber |
| Project Description | Proposed LWCF Land Acquisition |

Determination of STAFF: (Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column based on your assessment of the project on your resource from the EA Preliminary Issues Worksheet.)

NP = [Not Present] not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions.

NI = [Not Impacted] present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required.

PI = [Present and Impacted] present with potential for impact that needs to be analyzed in detail in the EA.

Specialist will sign when either determination is NP/NI or after EA is reviewed/written for PI.

| RESOURCES / CONCERNS and CRITICAL ELEMENTS | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|-------------------|-------------|
| Resource | Determination | Rationale for Determination | Signature | Date |
| Air Quality and Visibility | NI | The proposed action does not entail any construction, disturbance or development. It is just the acquisition of property. Therefore no impacts to either of these resources. | /s/ Mike Robinson | 12/16/2021 |
| Energy | NP | No renewable resources are existing or proposed within the area of analysis. | /s/ Brian Halbert | 1/25/2022 |
| Environmental Justice | NP | According to the PROPOSED Resource Management Plan and FINAL Environmental Impact Statement for the Casper Field Office Planning Area, sections 3.8.4 and 4.8.4 "While minority and low-income populations exist in the planning area, no particular BLM actions proposed in any of the alternatives are identified as causing disproportionate adverse impacts on these populations." Further, while the land acquisition contributes to the enhancement of public access to public land, waters, and resources, the area within the SRMA is remote; has no recreation infrastructure developments; and access to the river is limited by the topography and lengthy, difficult to use trails. | /s/ Karsyn Lamb | 3/13/2023 |
| Farmlands (Prime or Unique) | NP | No farmlands exist within the project area | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |
| Floodplains | NI | The process is just land acquisition and no surface disturbance is anticipated with the project. | /s/ Shane Evans | 12/10/2021 |

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

| | | | | |
|---|----|--|-----------------------|------------|
| Forestry | NP | Forestry resources are very limited on the land that is proposed to be acquired. The small pockets of timber that do exist are largely inaccessible and on ground that would be inoperable for logging equipment. Furthermore, simply acquiring the land would cause no impact to the forestry resource. There is a slight change that future decisions could have an impact, but it would likely be small in scale. | /s/ Casey Cheesbrough | 1/28/2022 |
| Fuels / Fire Management | NI | Although potential exists down the road for environmental impacts related to fire management and fuels due to possible increased fire occurrence, potential vegetation treatments etc... Most are not directly tied to the actual acquisition of the lands. Effects would be analyzed for specific decisions regarding increased public presence (potential for more fire occurrence), vegetation treatments etc. A positive impact would be an increased availability of strategic options due to more contiguous acres and increased distance between fire starts and private lands. However, the actual strategic and tactical decisions regarding management of a future wildfire will be evaluated and documented in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) and will involve the appropriate specialists at the time of the fire. Again, acquisition of the land doesn't necessarily cause the environmental effect, a future decision regarding management of a wildfire does. For these reasons the proposed activity does not cause significant impacts to fire/fuels management. | /s/ Casey Cheesbrough | 1/28/2022 |
| Geology | NI | The conversion of the surface estate to federally owned land will not have an impact on the geology of the area. | /s/ Matthew Clark | 2/4/2022 |
| Greenhouse Gasses and Climate Change | NI | The proposed action does not entail any construction, disturbance or development. It is just the acquisition of property. Therefore no impacts to either of these resources. | /s/ Mike Robinson | 12/16/2021 |
| Ground Water | NI | The process is just land acquisition and no surface disturbance is anticipated with the project. | /s/ Shane Evans | 12/10/2021 |
| Heritage Resources | NI | Cultural resources are present in the project area, but will not be impacted by the land acquisition. There will be no ground disturbance on this project. | /s/ Kelly Jo Jackson | 12/13/2021 |

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

| | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|---------------------------|------------|
| Historic Trails | NP | There are no known historic trails located in or within 3miles of the project area. | /s/ Kelly Jo Jackson | 12/13/2021 |
| Invasive, Non-native Species | NI - Plants PI - Aquatics | According to the proposed action, once the property is acquired, the BLM would manage the property in the same way as the surrounding BLM administered public lands as detailed in the Casper RMP. | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |
| Lands and Realty | NI | The following are existing authorizations found in the CFO jurisdiction within the analyzed area of the proposed action: Pipelines WYC0039592 and WYW0266530; Powerlines WYW034562, WYW047611, WYW101869 Road WYW191502 The proposed action will not impact the resource. | /s/ Brian Halbert | 1/25/2022 |
| Leasable Minerals | NI | The conversion of the surface estate to federally owned land will not have an impact on the leasable mineral estate. | /s/ Matthew Clark | 2/4/2022 |
| Livestock Grazing | NI | According to the proposed action, once the property is acquired, the BLM would manage the property in the same way as the surrounding BLM administered public lands as detailed in the current RMPs. Grazing leases will still be issued as previously as well as decided in the Casper RMP. | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |
| Locatable Minerals | NI | The conversion of the surface estate to federally owned land will not have an impact on the locatable mineral estate. | /s/ Matthew Clark | 2/4/2022 |
| Native American Religious Concerns and Traditional Cultural Properties | NI | No known TCP's are located in the project area at this time. | /s/ Kelly Jo Jackson | 12/13/2021 |
| Paleontology | NI | No ground disturbance means the PFYC 3-5 formations will not be affected by this action, however the possibility for collection of scientifically significant fossils on BLM PFYC 3-5 formations by the public would require a paleontology inventory. | /s/ Deandra De Los Santos | 1/24/2022 |
| Public Health and Safety | NI | The proposed action will not impact this resource. | /s/ Art Terry | 12/15/2021 |
| Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines | NI | Proposed action will not affect rangeland health conditions | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

| | | | | |
|--|----|--|-------------------|------------|
| Rangeland Management | NI | According to the proposed action, once the property is acquired, the BLM would manage the property in the same way as the surrounding BLM administered public lands as detailed in the current RMPs. | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |
| Recreation | PI | The proposed action will impact recreation. Analysis in the EA. | /s/ Cullen Hardy | 12/9/2021 |
| Saleable Minerals | NI | The conversion of the surface estate to federally owned land will not have an impact on the salable mineral estate. | /s/ Matthew Clark | 2/4/2022 |
| Socio-Economic | PI | The proposed action does not entail any construction, disturbance or development. However, the related tax base of the county has been altered in the transfer of land ownership, constituting a new socioeconomic affected environment that should be analyzed to reflect any potential trends associated with differing management alternatives as proposed in the EA. Also, because there is increased access and ensuing impacts on recreation and wildlife/fish, which contribute to the socioeconomics of the area, sufficient SE narrative framed around PILT and property taxes would still incorporate findings from other resource impacts to accurately paint the picture of how the land's value would evolve with the acquisition. | /s/ Karsyn Lamb | 3/2/2023 |
| Soils | NI | According to the proposed action, once the property is acquired, the BLM would manage the property in the same way as the surrounding BLM administered public lands as detailed in the current RMPs. | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |
| Special Management Areas including ACECs, WSAs, ERMAs, SRMAs. | NI | Impacts to the North Platte SRMA will be minimal with this proposed action. If parcel is acquired all applicable lands will be managed accordingly to the current SRMA. | /s/ Cullen Hardy | 12/13/2021 |
| Special Status Animal or Plant Species other than FWS candidate or listed species | PI | The Marton Land Acquisitions is within Bald Eagle Feeding Concentration, Priority Habitat Management Area, 4 occupied Sage-grouse leks, Sage-grouse winter habitat, White-tailed prairie dog colonies, numerous raptor species, Mountain Plover, and Swift Fox which have been documented in the area. Various sagebrush, grassland, and riparian/wetland obligate species could also be impacted. Impacts to these wildlife | /s/ Sara Bassett | 12/15/2021 |

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

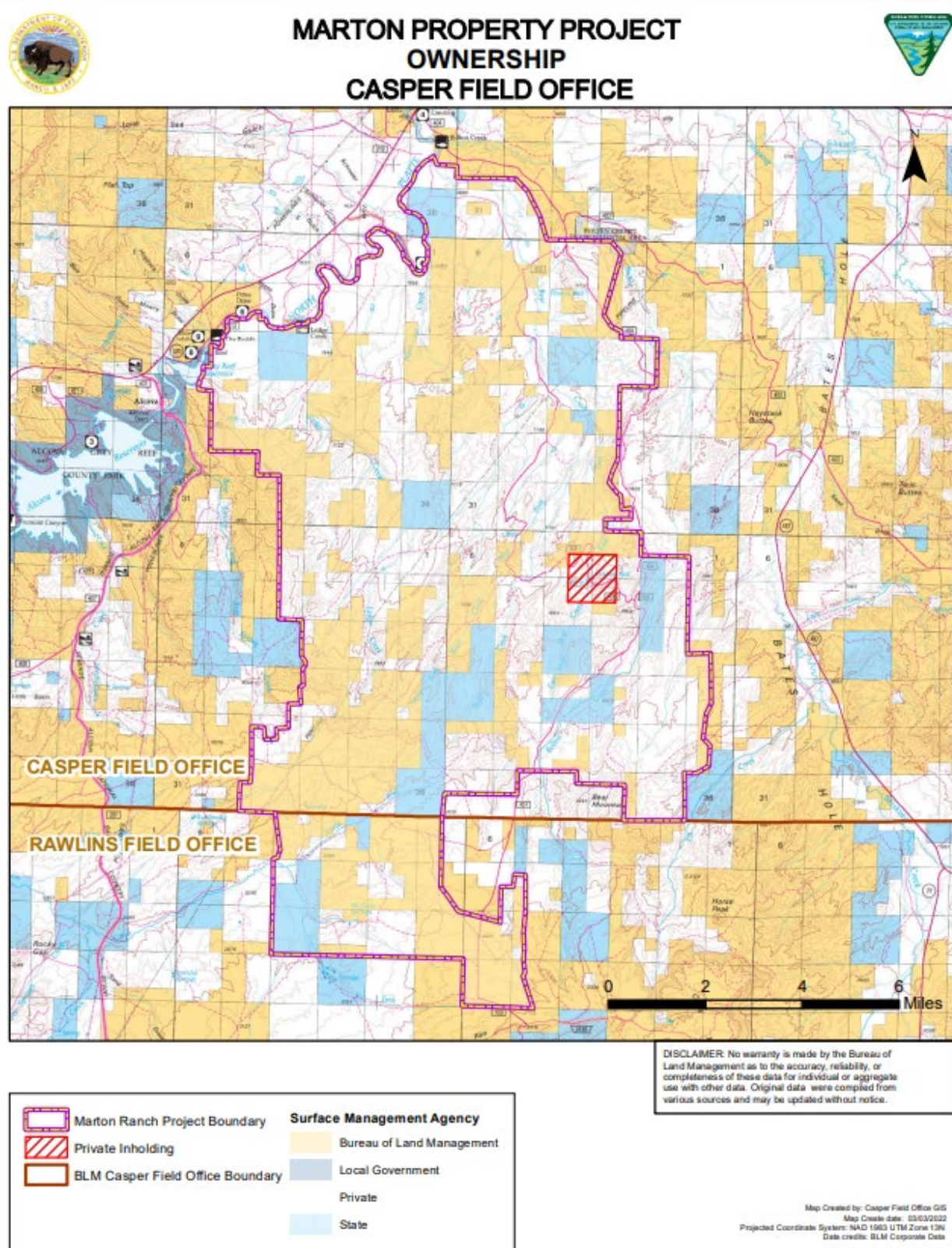
| | | | | |
|--|----|---|-------------------|------------|
| | | species would be caused by overall increase in activities due to public access. These impacts include species avoidance to high traffic areas for recreational use, flushing of wildlife from mating and nesting areas, increase in invasive and non-native weeds. | | |
| Surface Water | NI | The process is just land acquisition and no surface disturbance is anticipated with the project. | /s/ Shane Evans | 12/10/2021 |
| Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal or Plant Species | PI | The Marton Land Acquisitions falls within the Black-footed ferret (Endangered) reintroduction area. This area is considered to be an experimental/ non-essential population. The Platte River Species Area of Influence (AOI) contains critical habitat for T&E species. Impacts to these species could be increase in activities which would cause avoidance, increase in stress to a T&E species which could decrease reproduction, and flushing of T&E species from critical habitats. | /s/ Sara Bassett | 12/15/2021 |
| Transportation | NI | County Road 404 and County Road 405 traverse the lands within the analyzed area of the proposed action. The proposed action will not significantly impact the resource. | /s/ Brian Halbert | 1/25/2022 |
| Travel Management | NI | Existing routes acquired with this proposed action will fall under current RMPs management objectives until travel management planning is completed. | /s/ Cullen Hardy | 12/13/2021 |
| Vegetation | NI | According to the proposed action, once the property is acquired, the BLM would manage the property in the same way as the surrounding BLM administered public lands as detailed in the current RMPs. | /s/ Matt Roberts | 12/10/2021 |
| Visual Resources | NI | There will be no impact to visual resources from the proposed action. | /s/ Cullen Hardy | 12/13/2021 |
| Wastes (hazardous or solid) | NI | The proposed action will not impact this resource. | /s/ Art Terry | 12/15.2021 |
| Water | NI | The process is just land acquisition and no surface disturbance is anticipated with the project. | /s/ Shane Evans | 12/10/2021 |
| Water Quality (Prime or Sole Source Drinking Water) | NP | No prime or sole source drinking water within the project area. | /s/ Shane Evans | 12/10/2021 |
| Wetlands and Riparian Zones | NI | The process is just land acquisition and no surface disturbance is anticipated with the project. | /s/ Shane Evans | 12/10/2021 |

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|--|------------------|------------|
| Wild and Scenic Rivers | NP | According to Decision #7079 in the Casper FO RMP, none of the six eligible waterways located in the field office are recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. | /s/ Cullen Hardy | 12/9/2021 |
| Wilderness Characteristics | NI | The Casper FO RMP states: <i>Survey for, identify, and protect lands of wilderness quality</i> as an alternative that was considered but eliminated from detailed analysis. Per CFO management, staff will still continue completing inventories for lands that are identified as having potential for LWC. | /s/ Cullen Hardy | 12/14/2021 |
| Wildlife | PI | Mule deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope are known to use the parcel throughout the year. Crucial Big Game Wintering Habitat for pronghorn antelope and mule deer exist in portion of the parcel. Big-game, non-game, small-game, furbearing, and predatory animals are known to exist in the area. Overall increase in public access can impact wildlife presence. Increase in vehicles and recreational activity could cause increase spreading of non-native and noxious weeds. | /s/ Sara Bassett | 12/15/2021 |

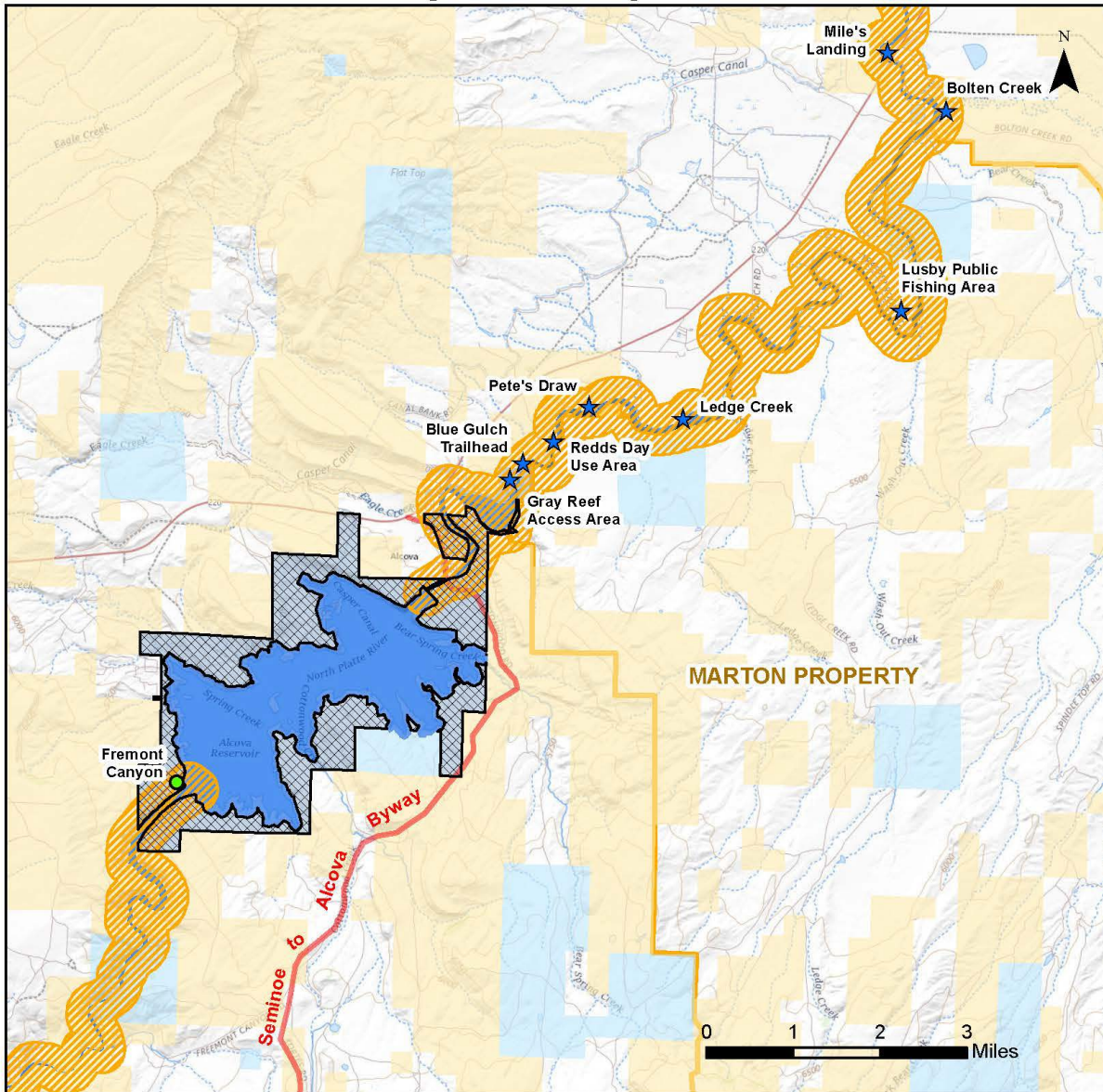
Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

Appendix B, Maps





MARTON PROPERTY PROJECT SURROUNDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES CASPER FIELD OFFICE



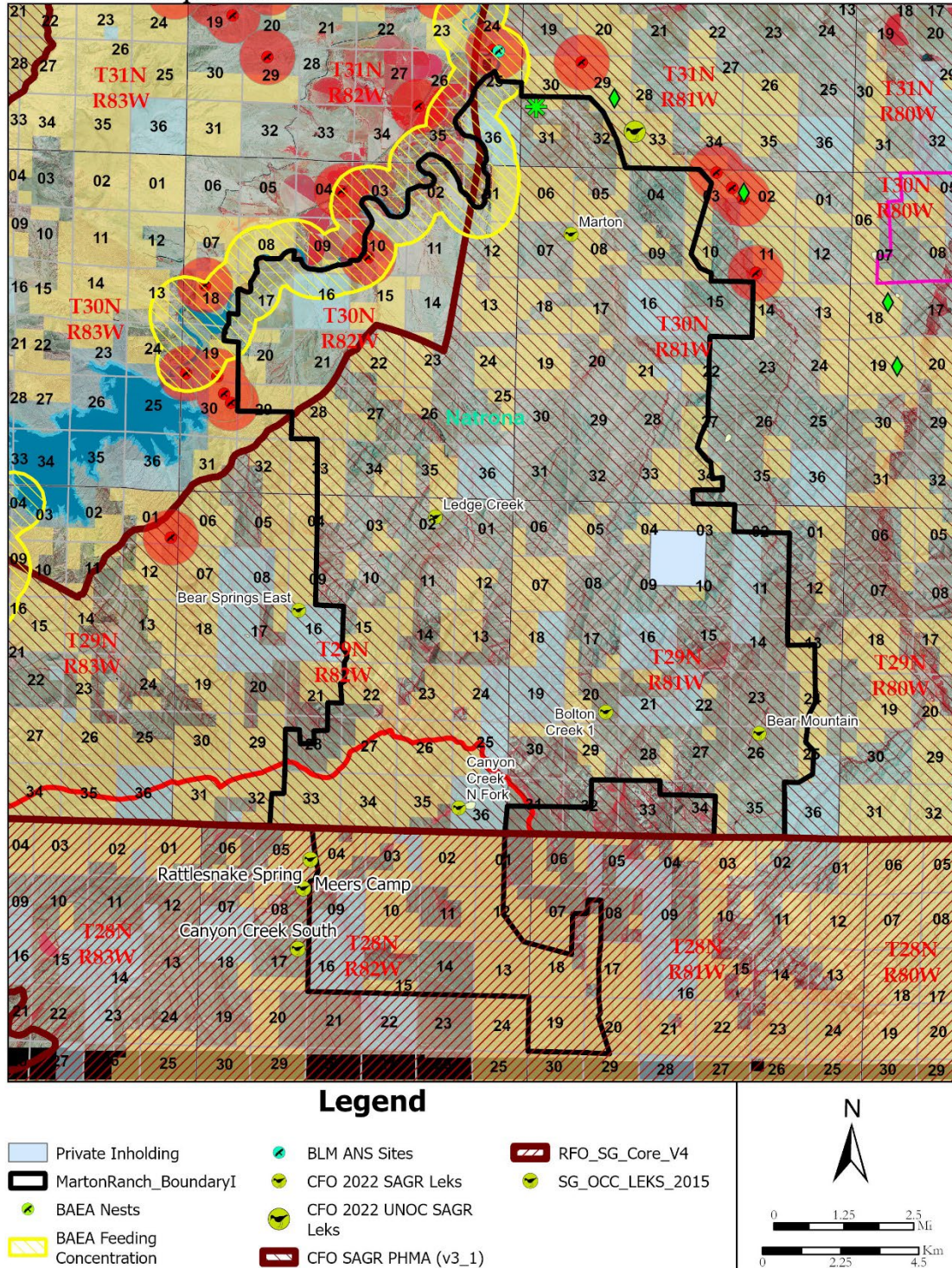
DISCLAIMER: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notice.



Map Created by: Casper Field Office GIS
Map Create date: 03/29/2022
Projected Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 13N
Data credits: BLM Corporate Data

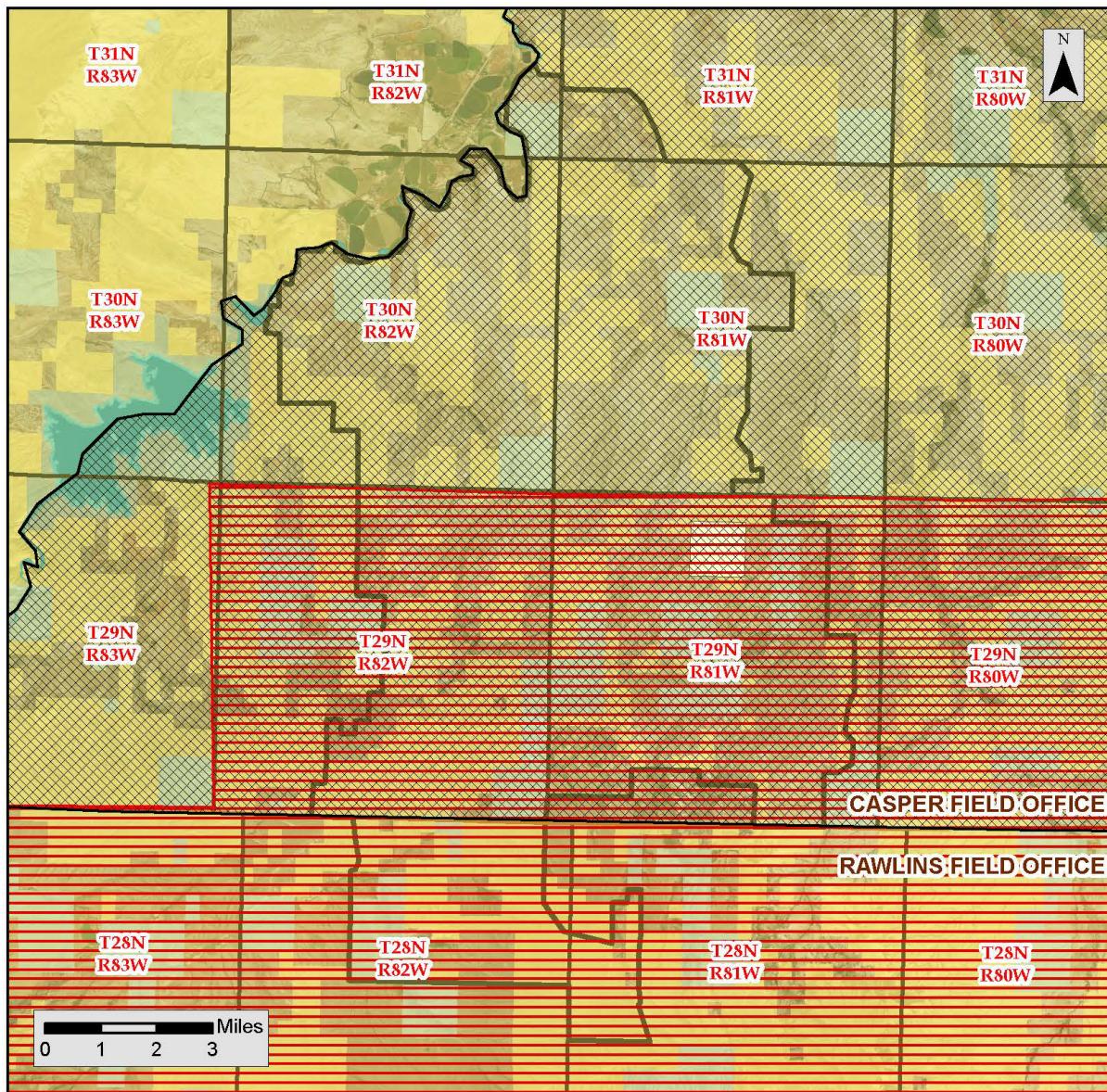
Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA

Marton Property Project Special Status Species Issue map Casper and Rawlins Field Offices





MARTON PROPERTY PROJECT T&E SPECIES ISSUES MAP CASPER AND RAWLINS FIELD OFFICES



- Marton Ranch Project Boundary
- Private Inholding
- Casper Field Office Boundary
- Blackfooted Ferret Mgnt. Area Natrona County
- Shirley Basin MBRNF Blackfooted Ferret Management Area
- Platte River Species AOI

DISCLAIMER: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notice.

Map Created by: Casper Field Office GIS
Map Create date: 05/02/2022
Projected Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 13N
Data credits: BLM Corporate Data