



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer To:

NV-20.06  
1610.RMP

Dear Reader/Interested Party:

Attached is the Relevance and Importance evaluation analysis report of 29 areas nominated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Winnemucca Field Office, Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The evaluations document whether nominations meet the relevance and importance criteria as provided in *BLM Manual 1613 "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern."* Three (3) of the 29 nominations meet the criteria and will move forward for further consideration. One existing ACEC will also be brought forward. The remaining 25 nominations have been dropped from further analysis as potential ACECs.

If you submitted a nomination for an ACEC, this letter and report provides notice as required in *BLM Manual 1613* whether your nomination met the relevance and importance criteria to move forward as a potential ACEC. During the 90-day public comment period for the Draft RMP/EIS, the public may comment on the ACEC relevance and importance analysis.

The BLM is currently in the process of defining management alternatives for the RMP. Management goals, objectives, actions and allowable uses will be defined for each of the 3 proposed ACEC nominations and 1 existing ACEC to protect relevant and importance values identified in the nominations.

Thank you for your continued interest in the planning process.

Sincerely,

Gail G. Givens  
Field Manager

Enclosure:  
ACEC Analysis Report



United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

Winnemucca Field Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.  
Winnemucca, NV 89445

September 2006



## **AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

### **Relevance and Importance Evaluations For 29 Areas Nominated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report documents the evaluation of 29 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) nominations reviewed as part of the Winnemucca Resource Management Plan (RMP). Four (4) of the 29 nomination areas will be considered further in alternatives developed for the plan and the associated environmental analysis. The 3 areas are referred to as Potential ACECs with 1 area being an existing ACEC.

This evaluation does not designate any of the areas as ACECs. Designation of potential ACEC areas will be determined after public input and analysis of the RMP/EIS is completed. Final designation will be reflected in the signed Record of Decision (ROD) for the RMP.

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESI	Ecological Site Inventory
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
GIS	Geographic Information System
MFP	Management Framework Plan
NCA	National Conservation Area
NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
MLRA	Major Land Resource Area
OHV	Off Highway Vehicle
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
TCP	Traditional Cultural Property
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WA	Wilderness Area
WFO	Winnemucca Field Office

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# INTRODUCTION

In March 2005 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Winnemucca Field Office (WFO) initiated the official public scoping period to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) via publication of the Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register*. The RMP will incorporate appropriate management decisions from the existing Paradise-Denio and Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plans (1982) along with updated evaluations and decisions into one RMP. The WFO planning area boundary encompasses about 10,060,000 acres consisting of public lands, private lands, state lands, Indian reservations and the federal lands not administered by the BLM. The RMP will address the public lands administered by the WFO. Approximately 1.2 million acres within the planning area was included in the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area, associated wilderness areas and other contiguous lands. A separate land use plan for this area was developed and approved in July 2004. The WFO RMP will cover about 7.2 million acres of public land within the WFO administrative boundary and certain grazing allotments outside of the boundary administered by WFO via Memorandums of Understanding with other BLM Field Offices.

The BLM is required under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 As Amended (FLPMA) to do land use planning under Title II. Sec. 202 (c)(3) requires BLM to give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC) as part of the land use planning process. Among various land use plan decisions, the WFO RMP will address administrative designations such as ACECs. To be designated as an ACEC, an area must meet both the relevance and importance criteria listed in the ACEC BLM manual #1613, (9/88) and require special management. Requests for ACEC nominations for the RMP were initiated in May 2005. Nominations may come from BLM staff, other agencies, or members of the public. In addition to new nominations, the BLM WFO will be evaluating past nominations received. To date, the WFO has received 29 nominations.

## DEFINITION OF AN AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

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.”

ACECs differ from other special management designations such as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in that the designation, by itself, does not automatically prohibit or restrict other uses in the area. A Plan of Operation is required for any proposed mining activity within an ACEC.

## **CRITERIA REQUIREMENTS FOR ACEC DESIGNATION**

To be designated as an ACEC, an area must meet the relevance and importance criteria listed in BLM 1613 Manual (BLM 1988) **and** require special management. As part of the WFO RMP, BLM planning team members will review all ACEC nominations to see if they meet ACEC criteria. The three elements of ACEC criteria are listed below.

### **Relevance Criteria:**

Does the area contain one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value?
2. A fish and wildlife resource?
3. A Natural process or system?
4. A natural hazard?

### **Importance Criteria:**

Does the value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above have substantial significance or value? Does it meet one or more of the following:

1. Is it more than locally significant, especially compared to similar resources, systems, processes, or hazards within the region or nation?
2. Does it have qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change?
3. Has it been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA?
4. Does it have qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare?
5. Does it pose a significant threat to human life and safety or property?

### **Need for Special Management:**

Does the value, resource, system, process, or hazard require special management to protect (or appropriately manage) the importance/relevant values(s)? Special management is defined as or is needed when:

1. Current management activities are not sufficient to protect a given relevant/important resource value and a change in management is needed that is not consistent with the existing land use plan(s).
2. The needed management action is considered unusual or outside of the normal range of management practices typically used.
3. The change in management is difficult to implement without ACEC designation.

## **ADDITIONAL RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE CRITERIA APPLIED**

### **CULTURAL RESOURCES AND VALUES**

*Relevance* - For the purpose of this evaluation, an area would meet the relevance criteria for cultural values if it is more than locally significant. This is defined as: a site or group of sites which are unique within the region, state, or nation. Sites which are considered to be representative of many known sites (relatively common) within the local area are not considered to be unique.

*Importance* – A site/area would meet the importance criteria if:

- a. The site or group of sites are so fragile, sensitive, or rare, that, if lost would be irreplaceable or the site(s) have no other comparable site(s) from which data can be extrapolated.
- b. The site(s) meet priority concerns via an existing National special designation such as, National Historic Trail, national Landmark, National Register site or District, or Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). Sites can meet these criteria by being nominated as a TCP or by being eligible for listing on the National Register for more than local significance.
- c. An historic structure or cultural feature that is in such a state of disrepair or in an unstable condition as to pose a significant human health or safety hazard.
- d. The area contains significant and unique rock art locations.

*Special Management Requirements* - Evaluation would be determined based on need for management change after reviewing existing management plans, Federal Laws, Regulations, BLM policy and guidance.

**SCENIC VALUES** – For the purpose of this evaluation, only areas containing all or portions of Visual Resource Management Class I or II are deemed to meet relevance and importance criteria.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES** – For the purpose of this evaluation, the following criteria will be used to evaluate relevance and importance.

- e. Bureau listed, sensitive, species of concern, or state listed special status species that are considered to be more than locally significant and have regional importance.
- f. Federally listed threatened or endangered species have regional and national importance.
- g. Species or habitat where there is a real immediate threat.

### **NATURAL PROCESSES OR SYSTEMS**

This system addresses the relevance and importance criteria as they relate to in a broader context, rare, unique, or unusual plant communities. For the purposes of this evaluation,



a sensitive plant species or unusual plant community is considered to meet the relevance criteria wherever it is found and is considered to be more than locally significant if the plant or community is rare within the Northern Great Basin or Western United States.

A plant species or community also meets the importance criteria if:

- h. The plant community rates high when compared to other similar plant communities with the Major Land Resource Area (MLRA). This rating is based on comparing survey data collected by the Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) method.
- i. The site/plant community has been recognized to be of national importance via National level special designations, such as a National Conservation Area or Traditional Cultural Property based at least in part, on the presence of plant/community values.

### **NATURAL HAZARDS**

The following relevance and importance criteria will be applied to natural hazards.

- j. Is a natural hazard present?
- k. Does the area have qualities that warrant highlighting public notification to satisfy public management concerns about safety and public welfare?
- l. Does the area pose a significant threat to human life and safety?

## **THE ACEC EVALUATION PROCESS**

There are several steps in the identification and evaluation of ACECs (See figure 1 – page 8). These steps include nomination of areas that may meet the relevance and importance criteria, evaluation of the nominated areas, and consideration of proposed ACECs in various alternative scenarios. The effects of proposed alternatives including proposed ACECs are analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS which is subject to a 90 day public review and comment period. After the close of the 90 day public comment period, public comments are reviewed and adjustments to the proposed RMP and proposed ACECs are made and included in the Final RMP/EIS. Designation of ACECs occurs in the Record of Decision approving the RMP.

### **Identification / Nomination**

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern can be nominated at anytime, but can only be designated through Land Use Plans. Nominations were solicited from the public during the public scoping process. The BLM requested nominations for ACECs at 4 public scoping meetings held in May 2005. In addition, request for nominations were sent to internal BLM staff in April 2005 and letters were sent out to interested publics in May of 2005. A total of 29 nominations were received from BLM staff and public sources.

### **Evaluation of Nominations for Relevance and Importance**

Nominations were evaluated to determine whether they meet the relevance and importance criteria. The relevance and importance criteria are detailed in the “Evaluation Process” section of this report.

### **Consideration of Potential ACECs**

Potential ACECs are considered as RMP alternatives are developed. Each potential ACEC is proposed for designation in at least one management alternative. The need for special management and the resulting effects from applying such management are assessed in the environmental impact statement. The Agency 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. Comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS will be considered in the preparation of the Final RMP/EIS. After a 30-day protest period, a Record of Decision is prepared and the plan is approved along with applicable ACECs (see below designation section).

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

## ACEC EVALUATION

The BLM is responsible for evaluating a nominated area to determine if it meets the relevance/importance criteria and requires special management. The WFO evaluation team was comprised of an interdisciplinary team composed of specialists with different resource backgrounds. The team evaluated nominations provided by the public and BLM staff. The evaluation considered current nominations and others compiled over the years. The WFO ACEC evaluation team was comprised of the following specialists:

Craig Drake	Hydrologist
Rod Herrick	Hazardous Material Specialist
Matthew Varner*	Wildlife Biologist
Mike Zielinski	Soil Scientist
Jeff Johnson	Planning & Environmental Coordinator

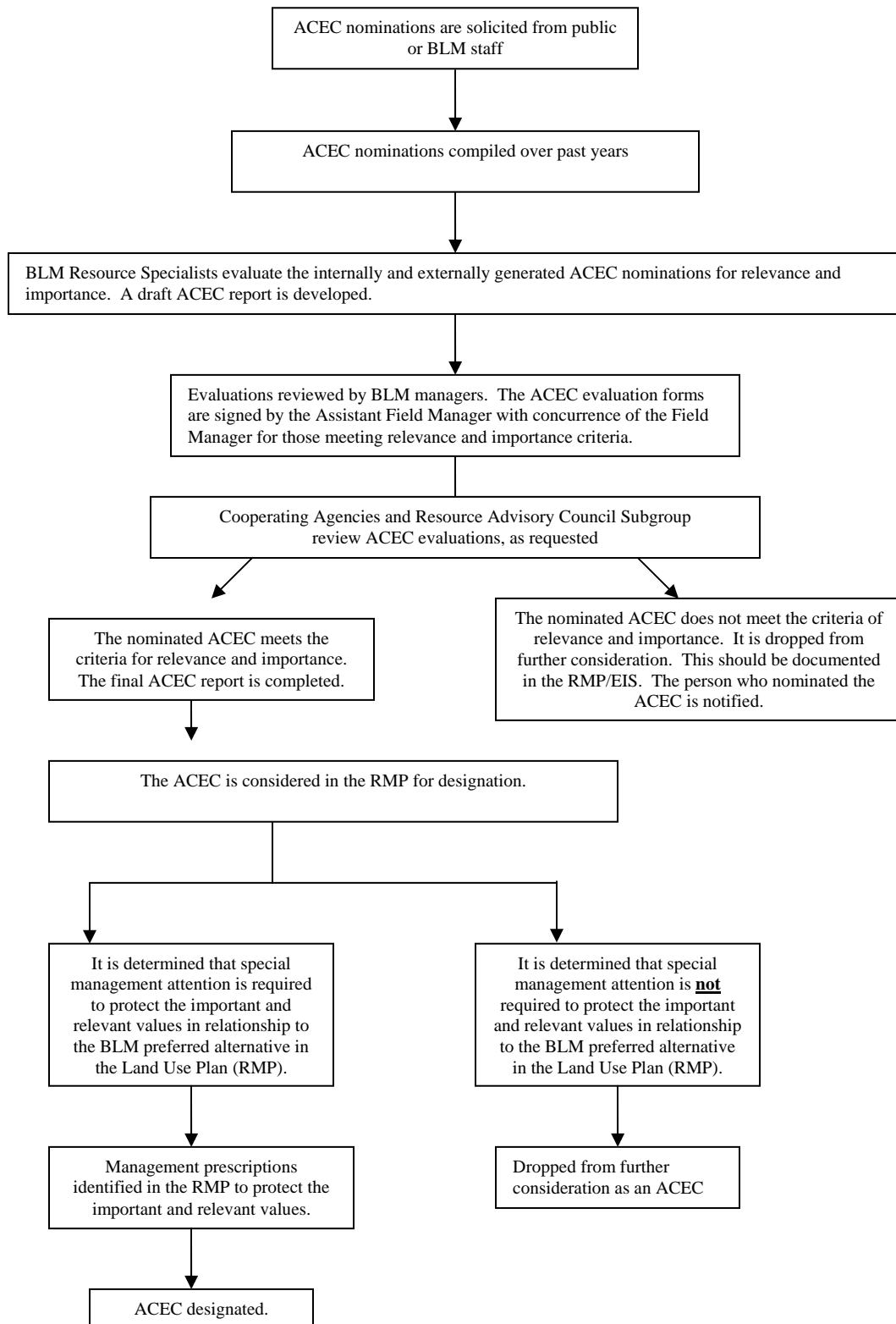
(Matt Varner did not attend the second meeting, due to relocation)

The evaluation team analyzed 28 nominations for ACECs and one existing ACEC. Two nomination evaluation meetings were held. The first meeting was held on August 31, 2005. This meeting evaluated 27 nominations. Results of this meeting included 8 nominations meeting the initial evaluation for ACEC criteria. On September 26, 2005, the Nevada Department of Wildlife removed two of their nominations; titled the Lone Willow and Owyhee ACECs. The second meeting was held on December 7, 2005. This meeting considered one new nomination for the Smoke Creek Playa, based on a scoping comment to the Granite-Fox Power project and included the existing Osgood Mountain Milkvetch ACEC. In addition, the team re-evaluated the remaining 6 nominations. Consequently, the evaluation team evaluated a total of 8 nominations at the second meeting. These included:

1. Raised Bog
2. Gridley Lake
3. Continental Lake
4. Porter Springs
5. Pine Forest
6. Stillwater
7. Smoke Creek Playa
8. Osgood Mountain Milkvetch.

After reviewing the criteria for ACEC designation, including relevance criteria, importance criteria and need for special management, the evaluation team identified the Raised Bog Proposed ACEC, Pine Forest Proposed ACEC, Stillwater Proposed ACEC and the existing Osgood Mountain Milkvetch ACEC nominations to be brought forward in the RMP alternatives.

Figure 1 – WFO RMP ACEC Process



## IMPORTANCE & RELEVANCE EVALUATION OF ACEC NOMINATIONS

Existing or Proposed ACEC	Relevance Criteria #	Importance Criteria #	Recommend Yes or No	Comments
1. Pine Forest ACEC (Proposed by NDOW, 2005)	Yes – 2, 3, & 4	Yes – 1 & 2	Yes	-Need further discussion on ACEC boundary
2. Stillwater ACEC (Proposed by Fallon Tribe & Staff, 2005)	Yes - 1	Yes 1 & 2	Yes	Discuss options for ACEC boundary
3. Lovelock Cave/Leonard Petroglyphs (Proposed by Staff, 2005)	Yes – 1	Yes 1b, 2d	No	Leonard Rock Shelter and Petroglyphs are on private lands. Special management options would be through OHV travel , Spec. Recreation Mgt. Areas and Back Country By Ways.
4. Winnemucca Mtn. (Proposed by Staff, 2005)	Yes	No	No	Checkerboard land status – Could manage through OHV travel restrictions and VRM Mgt.
5. Porter Springs (Proposed by Staff and Sierra Club, 2005)	Yes - 2	Yes - 2	No	Not a Natural Area, man made ditches and introduced tree species. Manage as a special rec. area.
6. Black Rock Desert Archaeological District (Proposed by Cashion Callaway, Intermountain Research, 1988)	In NCA			
7. Smoke Cr. Desert Biological & Cultural Research Area- Bryan Hockett, UNR, 1988)	Yes	No	No	Nominator did not suggest any relevance values or nomination and the BLM is not aware of any significant values that would meet the relevance

<b>Existing or Proposed ACEC</b>	<b>Relevance Criteria #</b>	<b>Importance Criteria #</b>	<b>Recommend Yes or No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
				criteria.
8. Lower High Rock Canyon (Proposed APEX, 1988)	In NCA			
9. George Lund (Proposed APEX, 1988)	Yes	No	No	Current Mgt. protection OHV travel restrictions
10. Applegate "Cut Off" Trail (Proposed APEX, 1988)	In NCA			
11. Lahontan Trout Natural Area (Proposed APEX, 1988)	ISA Protection			Covered in NCA
12. China Gardens Dunes Scenic Area (Proposed APEX, 1988)	Yes – 2	No	No	Checkerboard land status, Special Mgt. Options – Special Rec. Mgt. Area
13. Water/Thomas Canyons (Proposed APEX, 1988)	Yes	No	No	Checkerboard land status, Special Mgt. Options - Spec. Rec. Mgt. Area – Consider land tenure adjustments to identify lands for acquisition
14. Soldier Meadows (Proposed APEX 1988)	NCA			
15. Double Hot Springs (Proposed APEX 1988)	NCA			
16. Quinn River (Proposed APEX, 1988)	NCA			
17. Hardin City (Proposed APEX, 1988)	NCA			
18. Sulphur Springs Wetlands (Proposed by Staff, 2005)	Yes – 2	No	No	Address through other management. Might have to be reclaimed per

<b>Existing or Proposed ACEC</b>	<b>Relevance Criteria #</b>	<b>Importance Criteria #</b>	<b>Recommend Yes or No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
				Mining Regulations.
19. Raised Bog (Proposed by Staff, 1981)	Yes – 3	1 & 2	Yes	Address boundary, management options OHV designation, and livestock mgt.
21. Hot Springs Mtn. (Proposed by Nature Conservancy, 1990)	Yes – 2 & 3	No	No	Management options - OHV travel restrictions. Issues: Fire and invasive species
22. Humboldt Range (Proposed by Nature Conservancy, 1990)	Yes – 3	Yes - 2	?	Mgt. Options; OHV designations, checkerboard land pattern, and invasive species,
23. McGill Canyon (Proposed by Nature Conservancy, 1990)	NCA - Wilderness			
24. Osgood Mtn. Milkvetch ACEC (Existing)	Yes- 3	Yes – 2	Yes	Define new mgt.
25. Gridley Lake	Yes – 2 & 3	Yes - 2	No	Playa not locally unique. Existing management could be implemented to include OHV closures, Burro removal, and seasonal restrictions during nesting season
26. Continental Lake	Yes – 2 & 3	Yes - 2	No	Same As Above
27. Owyhee	Nomination dropped by NDOW 9/26/05			
28. Lone Willow PMU ACEC	Nomination dropped by NDOW 9/26/05			
29. Smoke Creek Desert Playa	Yes – 2 & 3	No	No	Nominator did not suggest relevance values for nomination and BLM is not aware

<b>Existing or Proposed ACEC</b>	<b>Relevance Criteria #</b>	<b>Importance Criteria #</b>	<b>Recommend Yes or No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
				of any significant values that would meet relevance criteria.



## STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

Based on nomination evaluation there are three areas and one existing ACEC that meet the criteria to be further considered as potential ACECs through the land use planning process. These are:

- Pine Forest ACEC nomination
- Stillwater ACEC nomination
- Raised Bog nomination
- Osgood Mountain Milkvetch – existing ACEC

### **Pine Forest Area**

**Description/ Values of Concern:** This area is comprised of approximately 42,398 acres of diverse landscape encompassing elevations over 5,550. Notable lakes and reservoirs include; Blue Lakes, Onion Reservoir, Little Onion Reservoir, and Knott Creek Reservoir. Main habitats include sub-alpine limber and white bark pine trees, sagebrush step, large aspen stands, rocky talus slopes and several riparian areas. A portion of lands nominated in this area are within two Wilderness Study Areas. The high elevations in the Pine Forest Areas contains habitat that supports a diverse array of wildlife including; American Pika, Humboldt yellow-Pine Chipmunk, northern goshawk, sage grouse, mule deer, California Bighorn Sheep, pygmy rabbit, western jumping mouse, sage thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, and an array of sagebrush obligate species. Lakes and reservoirs offer outstanding recreational opportunities including fishing, hunting, hiking and other outdoor activities.

### **Raised Bog Area:**

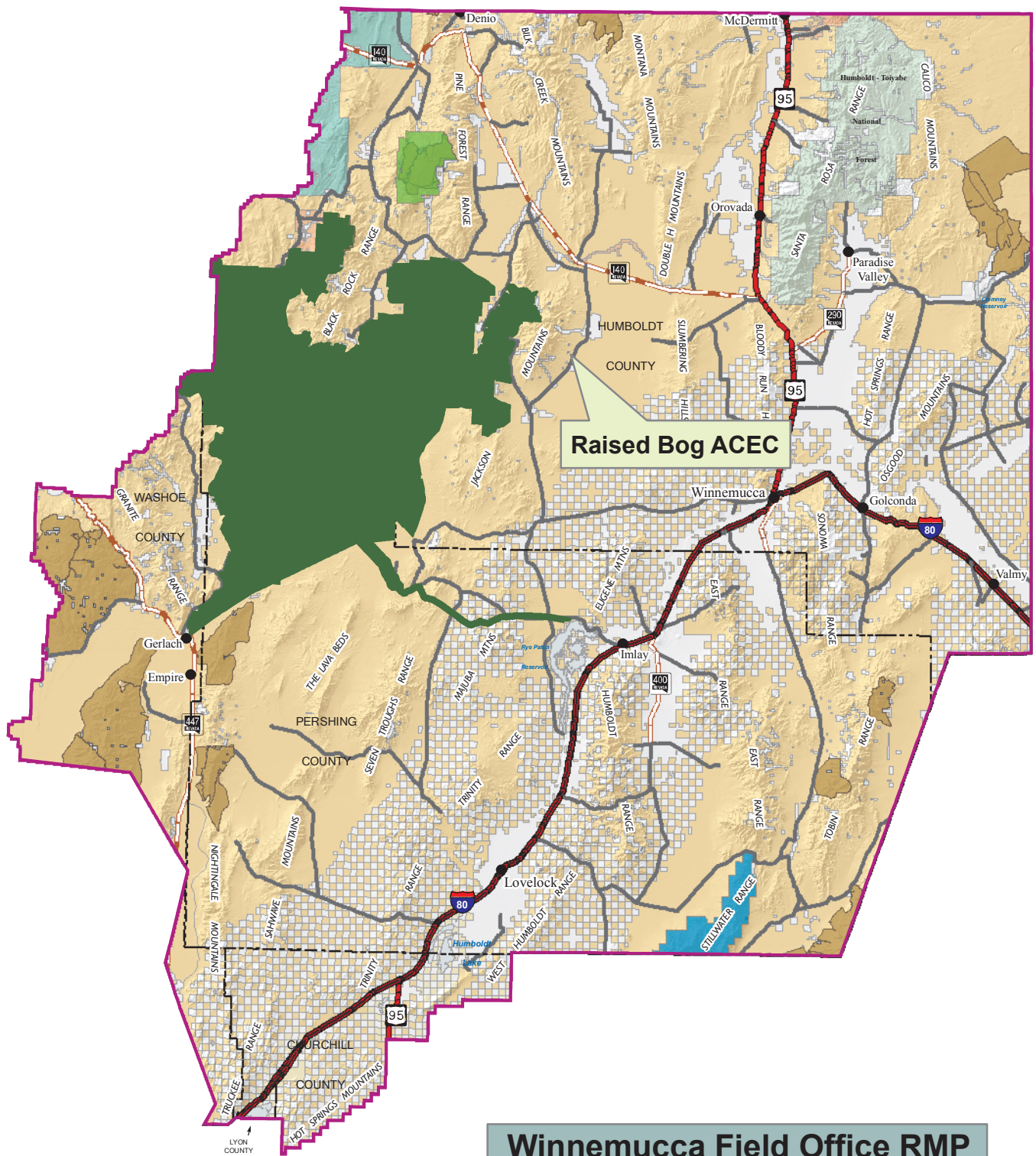
**Description/Values of Concern:** This 40 acre area contains a calcium rich spring whose source is a geologic fault. For several thousand years calcium deposits have accumulated forming a crater at the top of a mound. Slow decaying vegetation including sedges and rushes has gradually accumulated forming a bog. The bog is known as a quaking bog because of its buoyant properties. The bog is of immense scientific value as plant and animal remains have been preserved in the peat layers providing a record of past vegetation and flora of the region. It also provides an indication of climatic fluctuation during the life of the bog. Very few of these bogs are known to occur throughout the Great Basin.

### **Stillwater Range Area:**

**Description/Values of Concern:** The Stillwater Range nomination is approximately 55,322 acres and contains significant historic, cultural, religious, and scenic values important to Native Americans. The Range is the heart of the aboriginal territory of the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe and the Lovelock Tribe. Pinyon-Juniper trees dominate the landscape and have been the source of traditional pinyon nut and wood harvesting in the area.

**Osgood Mountain Milkvetch Area:**

**Description/Values of Concern:** This 60 acre area is located at the top of the Osgood Mountains and contains a unique and rare plant species called the Osgood Mountain Milkvetch.



## Winnemucca Field Office RMP Proposed ACECs

**Legend**

- Towns
- Counties
- BLM Winnemucca Field Office Administrative Boundary
- Black Rock/High Rock NCA RMP Area

**Roads**

- U.S. Interstate
- State Highway
- U.S. Highway
- County

**Land Status**

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Department of Defense
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Forest Service
- Nevada State
- Private
- Water
- BLM Wilderness Study Area

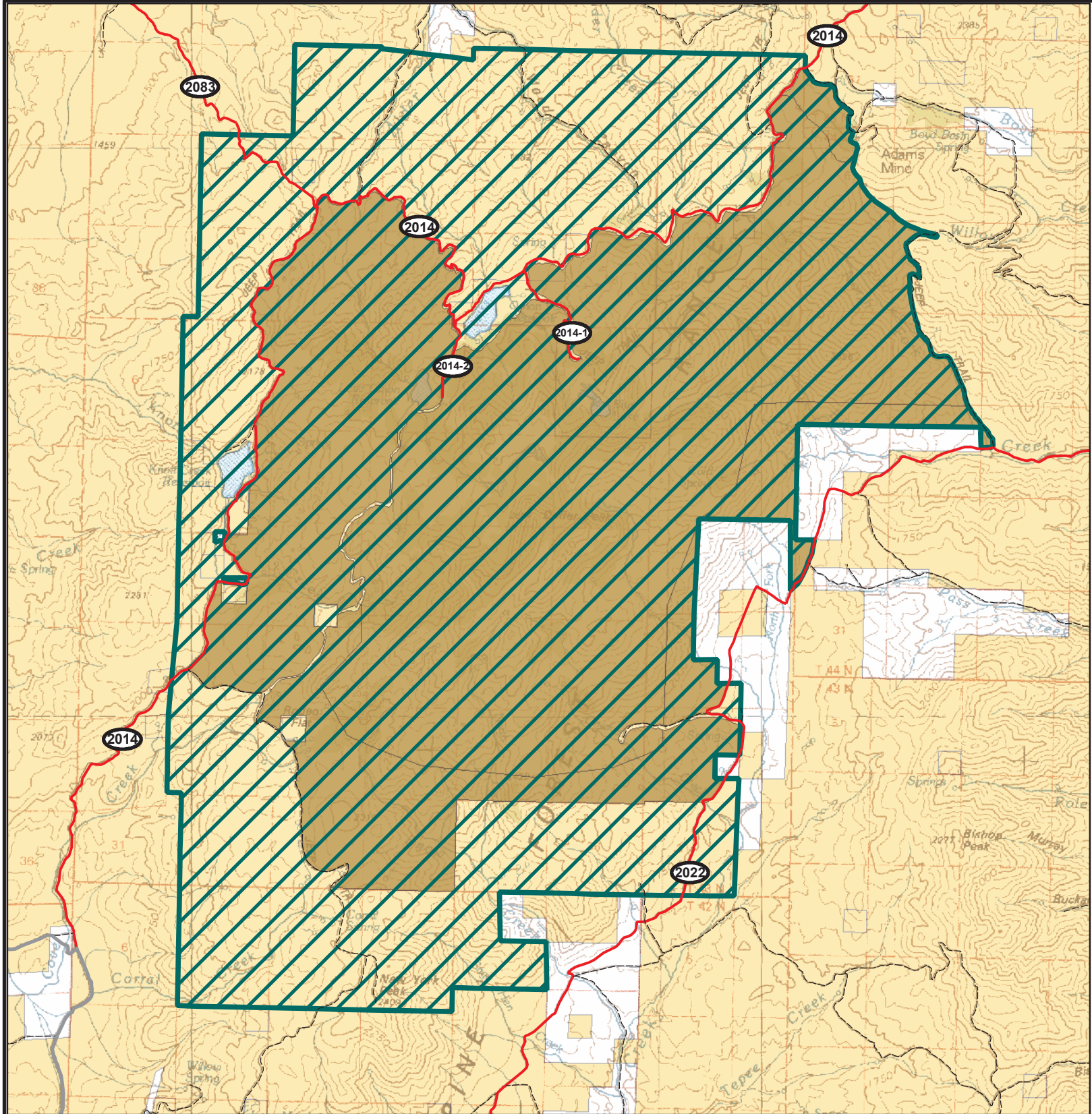
**Proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

- Stillwater ACEC
- Pine Forest ACEC
- Raised Bog ACEC




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. 9/1/06











## Legend

 Proposed Pine Forest ACEC

## ROADS

-  Other Dirt Road
-  County Road
-  BLM Road

## LAND STATUS

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Private
-  BLM Wilderness Study Area



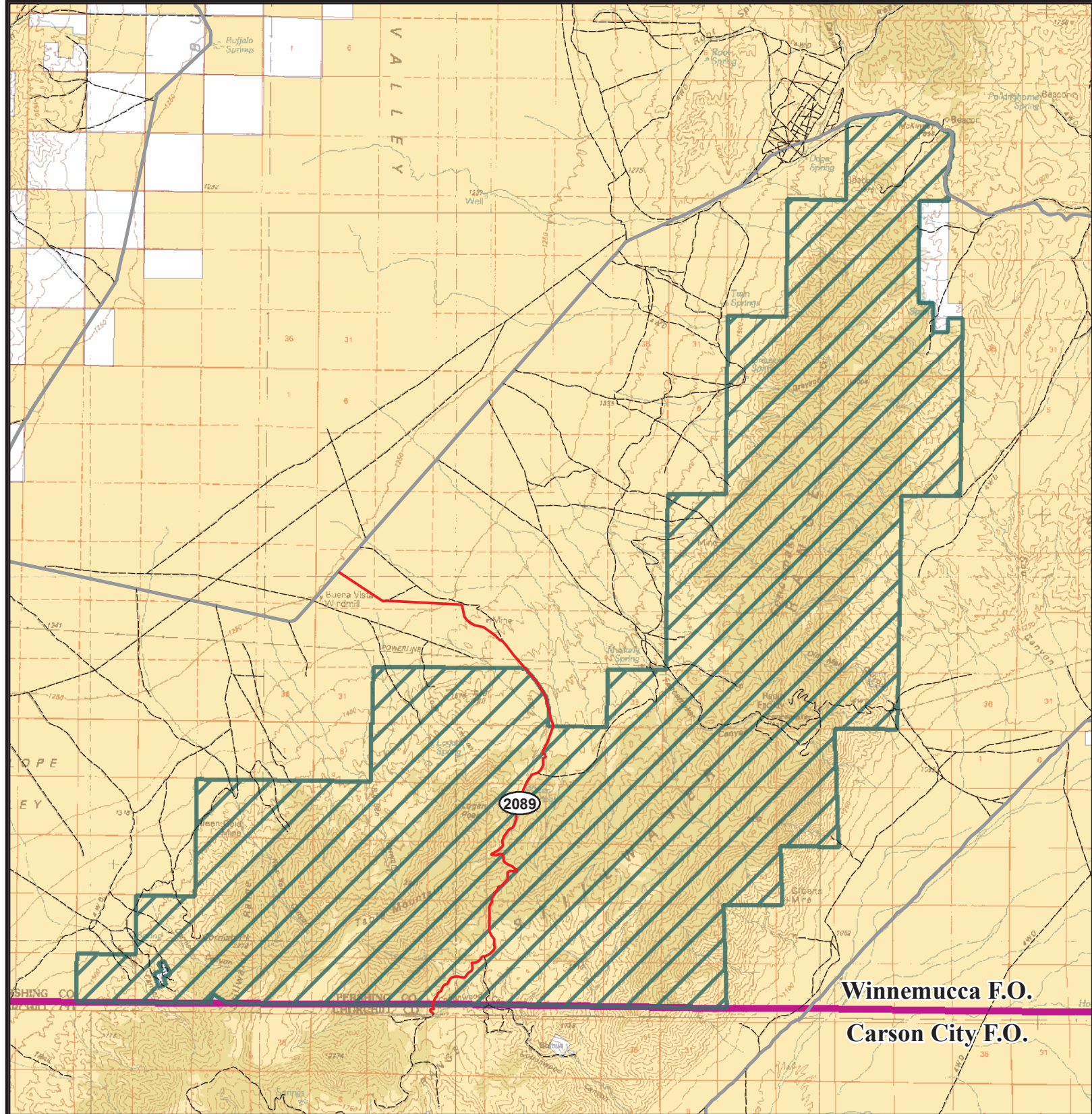
# Winnemucca Field Office RMP Proposed Pine Forest ACEC

0 0.5 1 2 Miles





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








## Legend

-  Proposed Stillwater ACEC
-  BLM Winnemucca Field Office Administrative Boundary

## ROADS

-  Other Dirt Road
-  County Road
-  BLM Road

## LAND STATUS

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Private

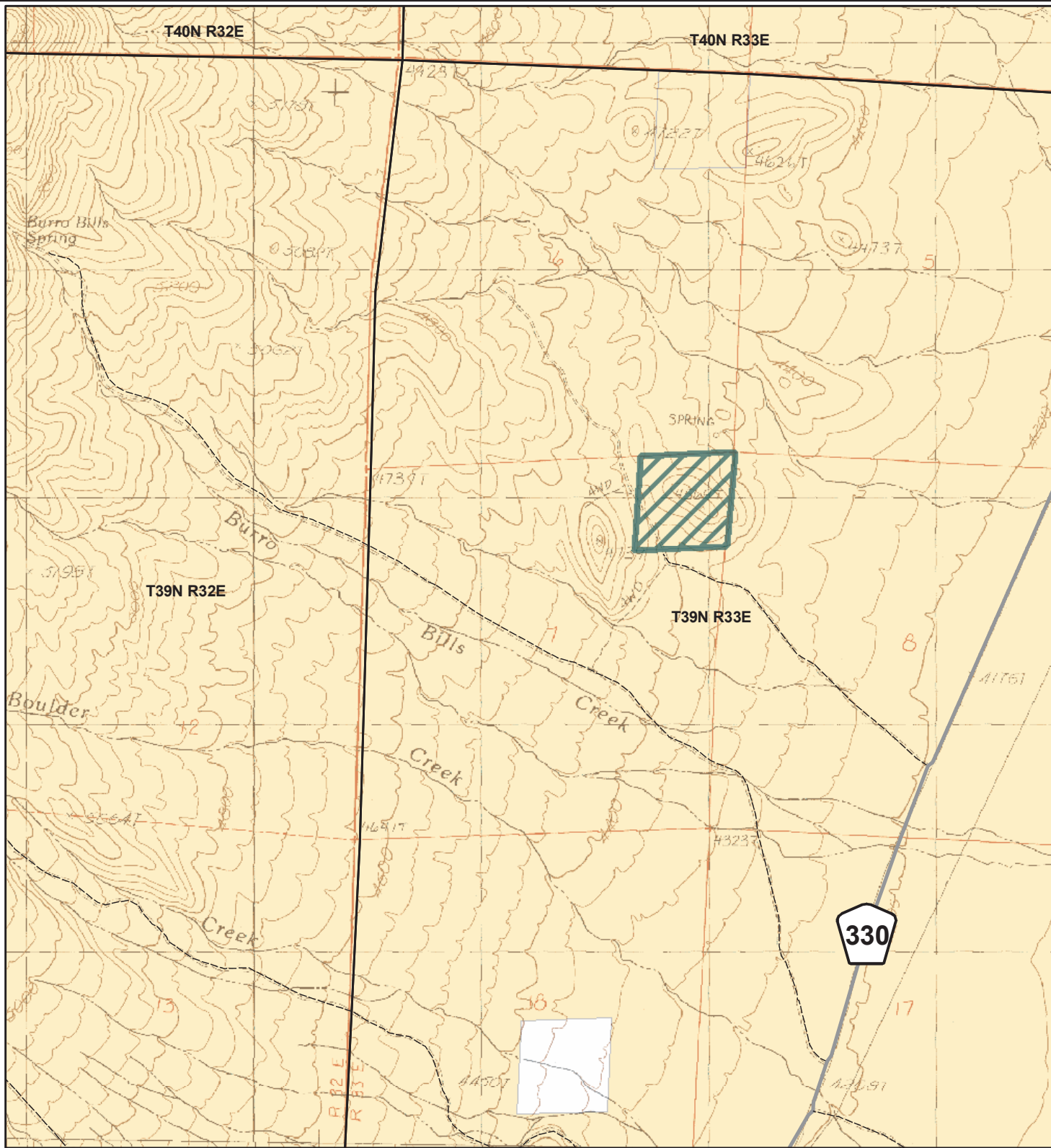


## Winnemucca Field Office RMP Proposed Stillwater ACEC

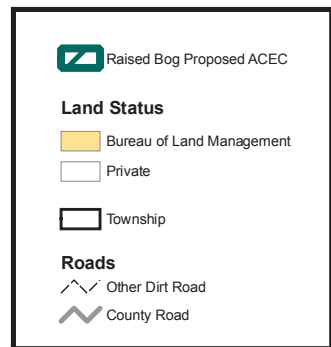
0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

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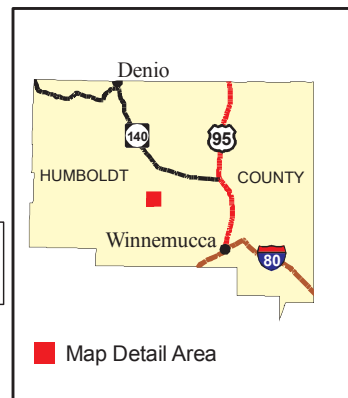




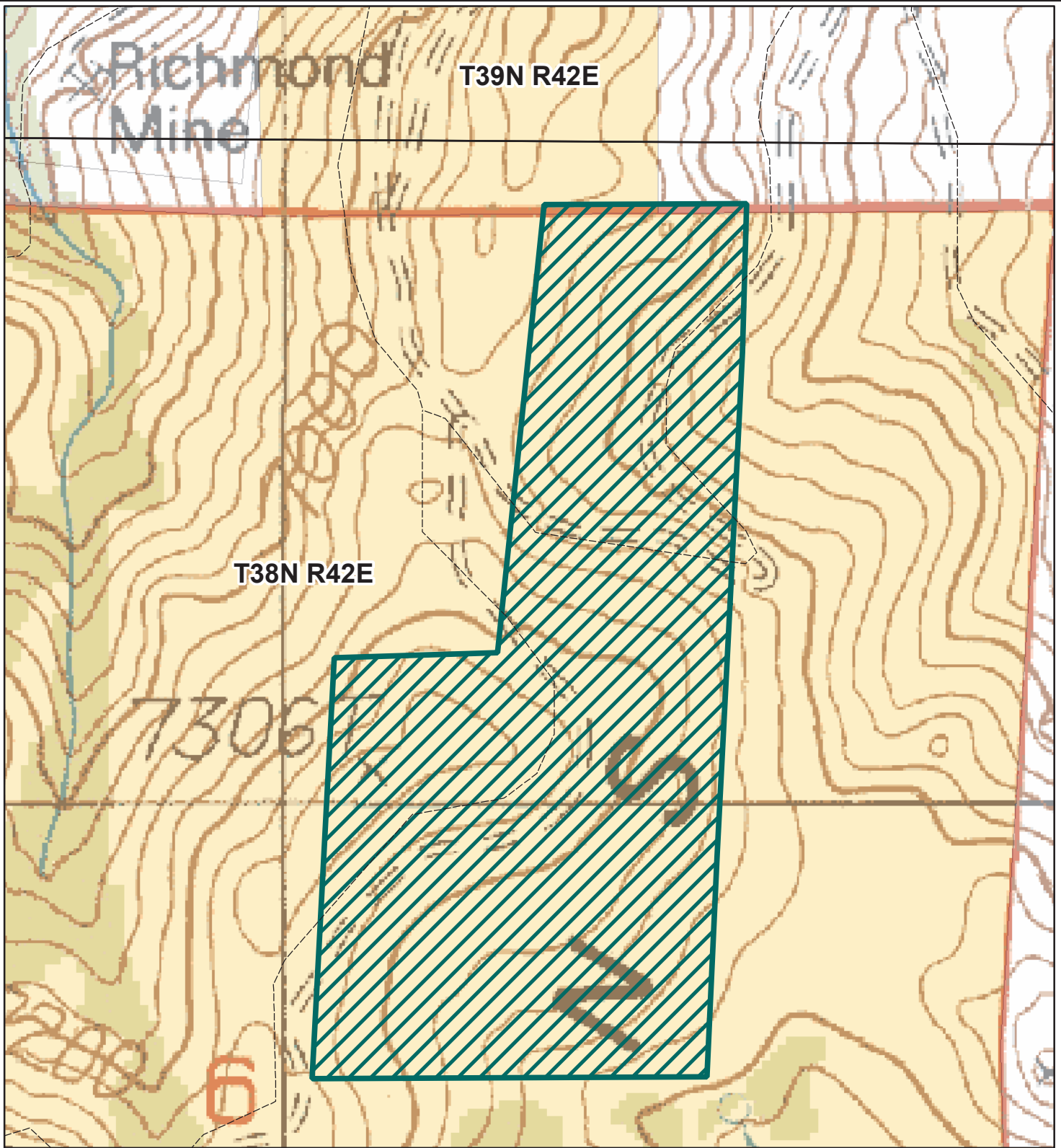
### Raised Bog Proposed Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)




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9/1/06










**Osgood Mountains Milkvetch  
Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)**

 Osgood Mountains Milkvetch ACEC


**Land Status**


 Bureau of Land Management

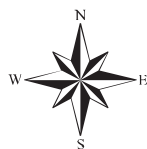
 Private

 Township

**Roads**

 Other Dirt Road

 Riparian Area/Woodland



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9/1/06

