



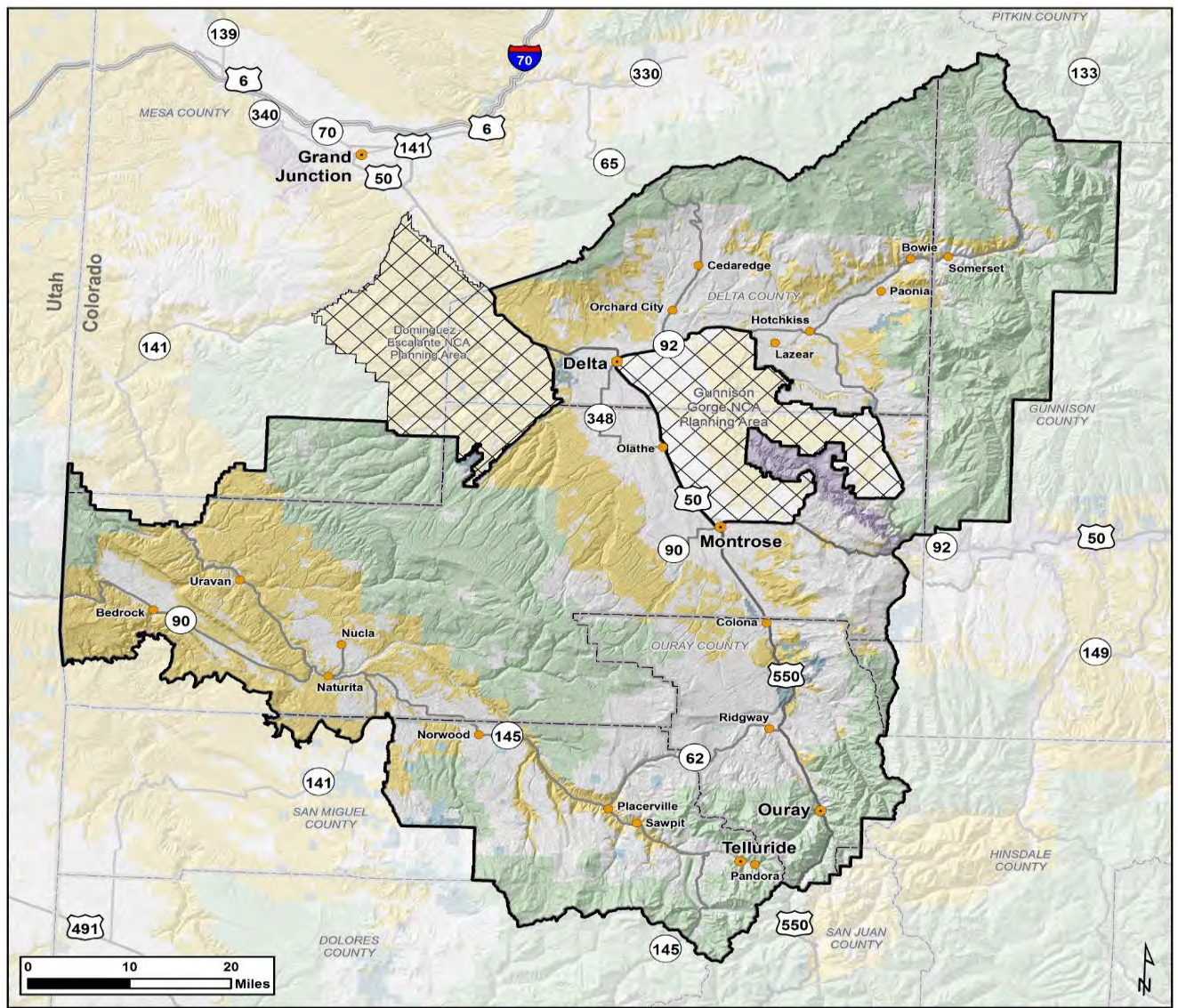
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan Amendment

Project Update and 2024 ACEC Report – BLM Colorado Southwest District Resource Advisory Council



August 7 and 8, 2024



Planning Area Boundaries

- Uncompahgre RMP Planning Boundary
- Area Excluded from Uncompahgre RMP

Local Administrative Units

- City / County Seat
- Other City or Town
- County Boundary

Surface Management Agency

- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Other Federal
- Private
- State
- State, County, City Areas
- US Forest Service

Map Produced by BLM Uncompahgre Field Office Staff
 File: UFO_RMPA_PlanningArea
 Date: 1/25/2023
 Map Scale: 1:920,000
 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 13N
 CO Reference System: U.S. PLSS NMM / 6th M

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Background

- UFO Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision developed 2010 – 2019
- Approved RMP signed in April 2020
- BLM received 3 lawsuits on the Approved RMP/ROD
- State of Colorado litigation settled
 - ✓ Big game and Gunnison Sage Grouse RMP Amendment
- Remaining lawsuits settled
 - ✓ UFO RMP Amendment



Purpose and Need

- **Need to fulfill responsibilities under the settlement agreements that resolved litigation to the 2020 UFO Approved RMP/ROD**
- **Purpose is to consider different management for:**
 - ✓ **Oil and gas – areas closed to new leasing, open subject to stipulations**
 - ✓ **ACECs (at minimum 15 previously analyzed ACECs)**
 - ✓ **Lands with wilderness characteristics (at minimum 7 areas previously analyzed)**

Notice Of Intent published January 5, 2024, initiating a 45-day scoping period



Scoping Comment Summary

Total Submissions	Unique	Form	Substantive
312	28%	72%	487

Substantive input includes:

- Decisions outside the scope of the plan
- Oil and gas leasing recommendations
- Lands with wilderness characteristics citizen's inventory
- WSA designation recommendations
- Requests to follow the Public Lands Rule
- New ACEC nominations – focus of our presentation going forward

Final scoping report is available on the project ePlanning website



What is an ACEC?

- BLM's principal designation for lands where special management is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to "relevant and important" values (43 CFR 1610.7-2).
- Designated by the BLM State Director when issuing a decision to approve a RMP revision or amendment.
- Potential areas are nominated through public and internal scoping.
- Nominations are evaluated by a BLM interdisciplinary team
 - ✓ Disclosed in an ACEC evaluation report
- Areas that meet relevance and importance criteria are brought forward for analysis to determine if special management is required
 - ✓ A resource must be both relevant and importance for the area to be considered for designation. It's easy to lump the two together, but they are two distinct sets of criteria.



What is Relevance?

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value
2. A fish and wildlife resource – usually endangered, threatened, or special status
3. A natural process or system – vegetation, special status plants, geologic features
4. A natural hazard

Resource must be within the ACEC boundary

- ✗ proximity/adjacency is usually insufficient
- ✗ common or widespread
- ✗ isolated occurrences
- ✓ landscape level considerations/habitat connectivity



What is Importance?

A resource must be both relevant and important for the area to be considered for ACEC designation

1. National or more than local importance
2. Qualities that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, exemplary, or unique
3. Contributes to ecosystem resilience, landscape intactness, or habitat connectivity
4. Poses a threat to human life and safety

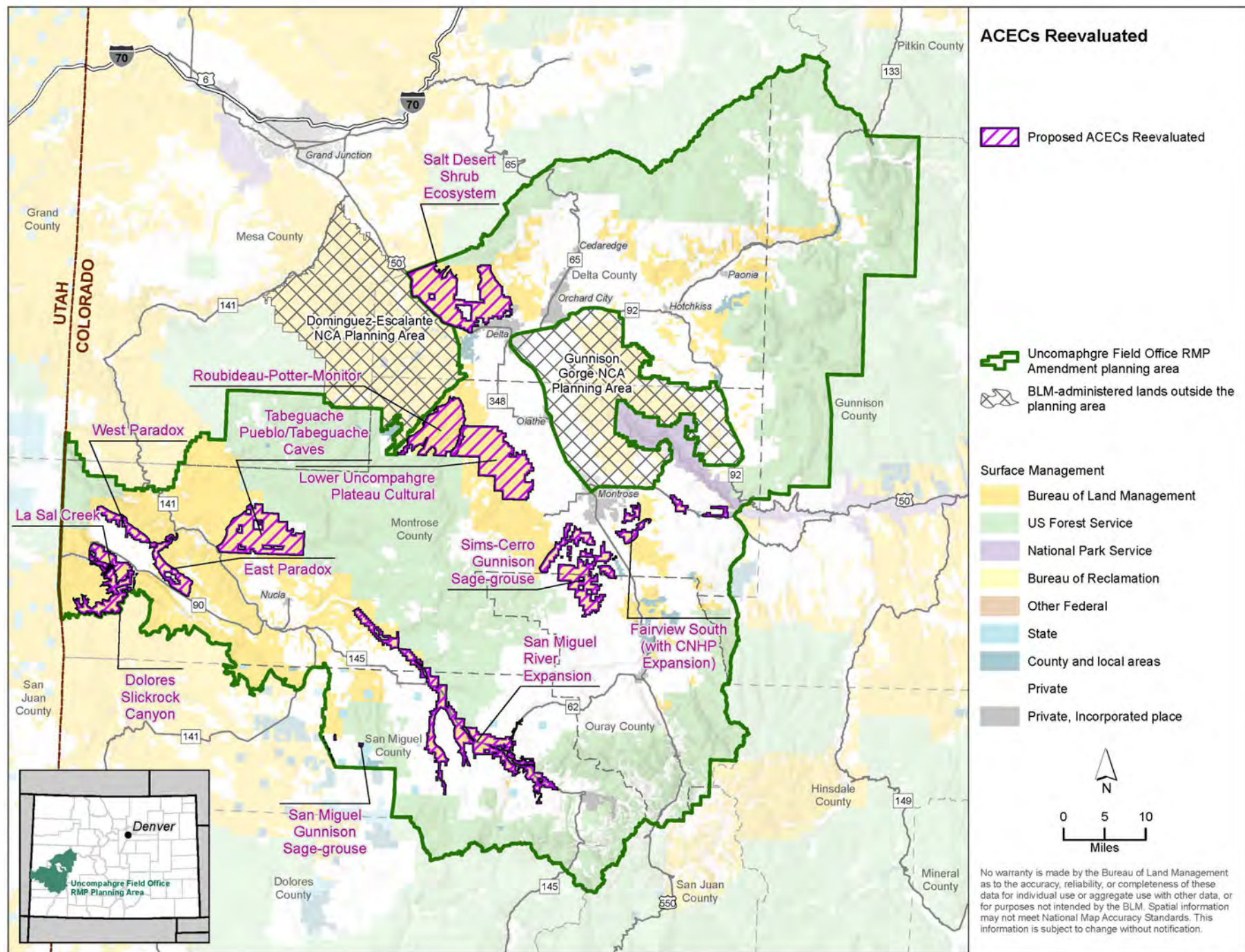


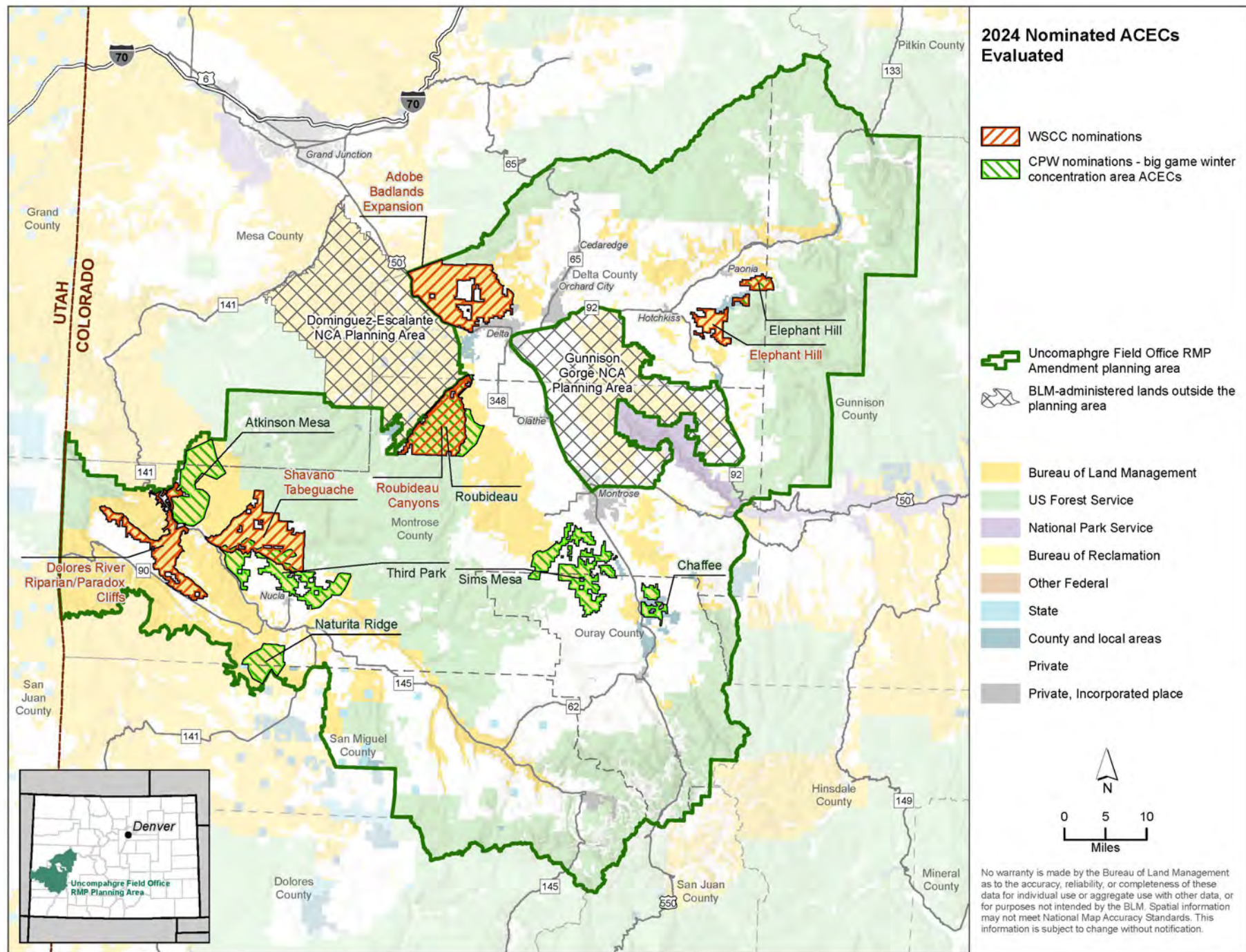
Determining Relevance and Importance

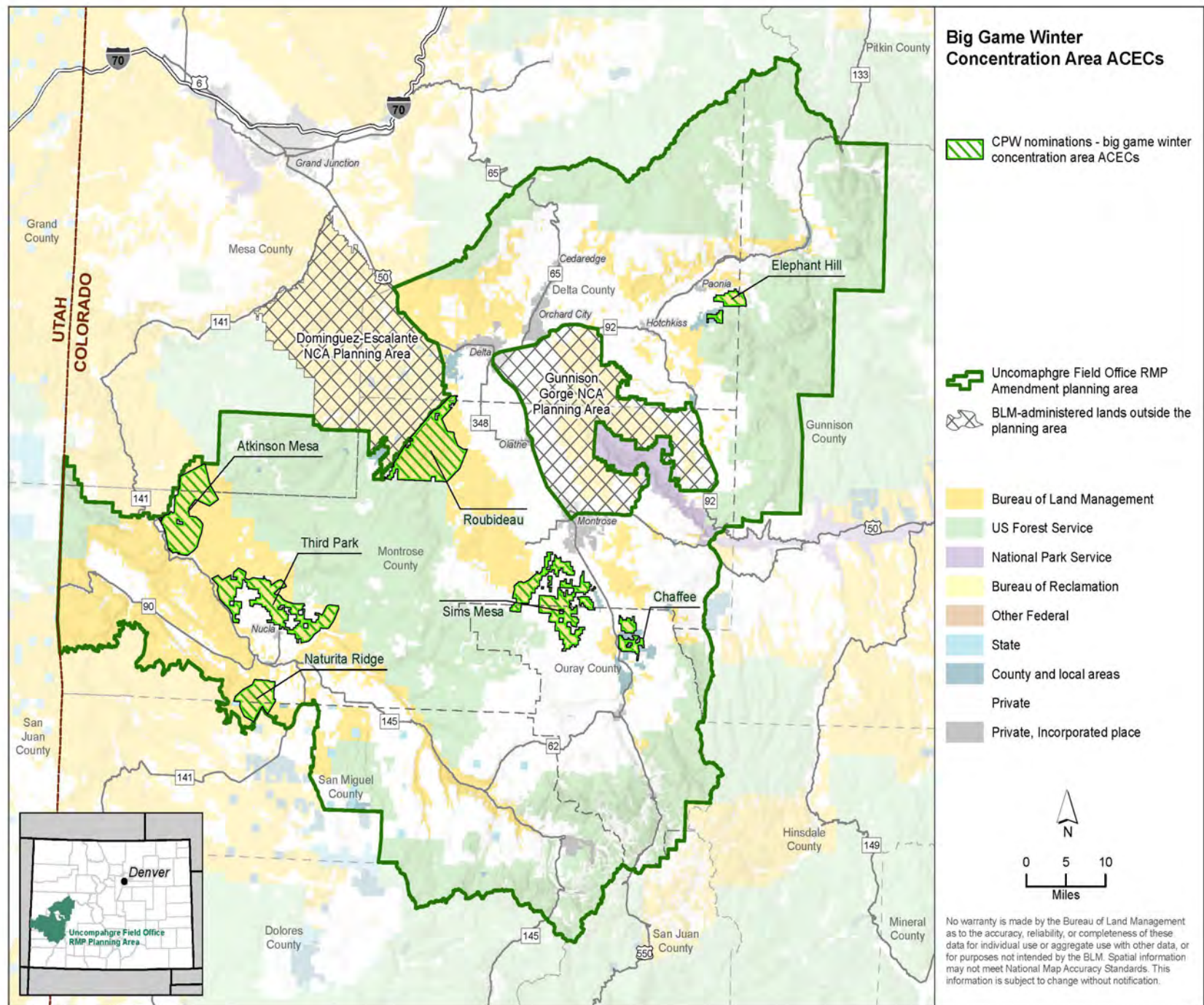
- 2013 ACEC Evaluation Report
- CNHP rarity G1/S1 – G4/S4
- CNHP PCA B1 – B3
- 2024 Nomination Report
- CNHP Data Explorer
- NatureServ
- CPW Data Analysis Units
- USFWS recovery plans



- 2023 BLM sensitive species list
- Visual Resource Inventory
- Class I Paleontological Survey
- Class I Cultural Survey
- Land health assessments
- AIM
- Species monitoring and mapping
- Tribal consultation









Big Game Winter Concentration ACECs

Value	Meets Criteria	Rational
Big game winter concentration habitat	Yes - Atkinson Mesa, Roubideau, Sims Mesa, Third Park	Within Uncompahgre Plateau SO 3362 priority herd
	No – Chaffee Creek, Elephant Hill, Naturita Ridge	Not within Uncompahgre Plateau SO 3362 priority herd

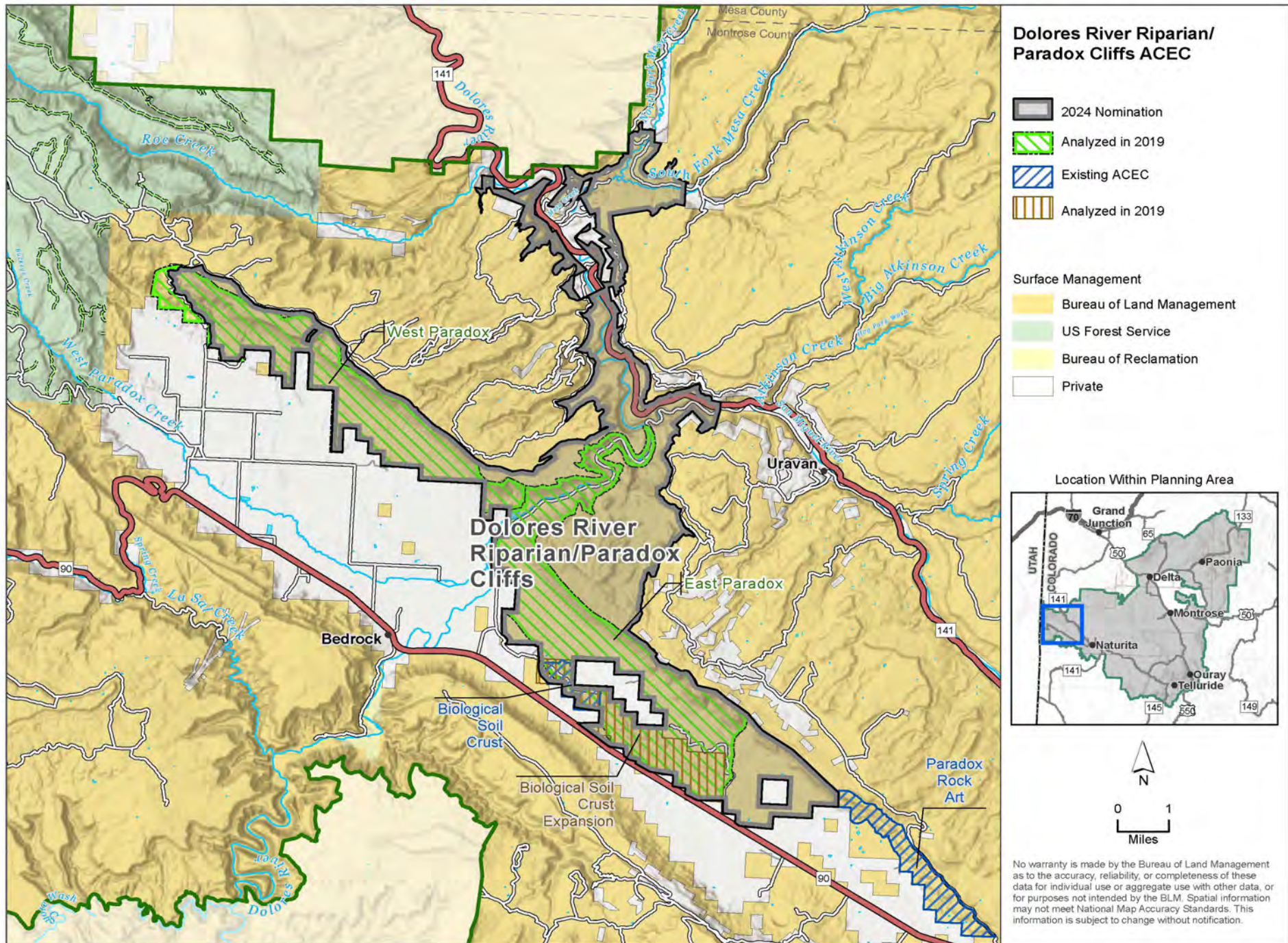
Atkinson Mesa, Roubideau, Sims Mesa, and Third Park are brought forward for analysis



Adobe Badlands ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
T&E Species – Colorado hookless cactus	Yes	Core populations of Colorado Hookless Cactus
Vegetation	No	Does not meet land health standards due to invasive species dominance; area requires significant restoration; landscape is fragmented
Cultural	No	Common in the region
Special status wildlife	No	Common in the region/secure populations/not present in the area
Big game habitat	No	Not a priority herd under SO 3362
Natural hazards	No	Concern for selenium loading in the Gunnison River comes from irrigated lands

Adobe Badlands ACEC is brought forward for analysis

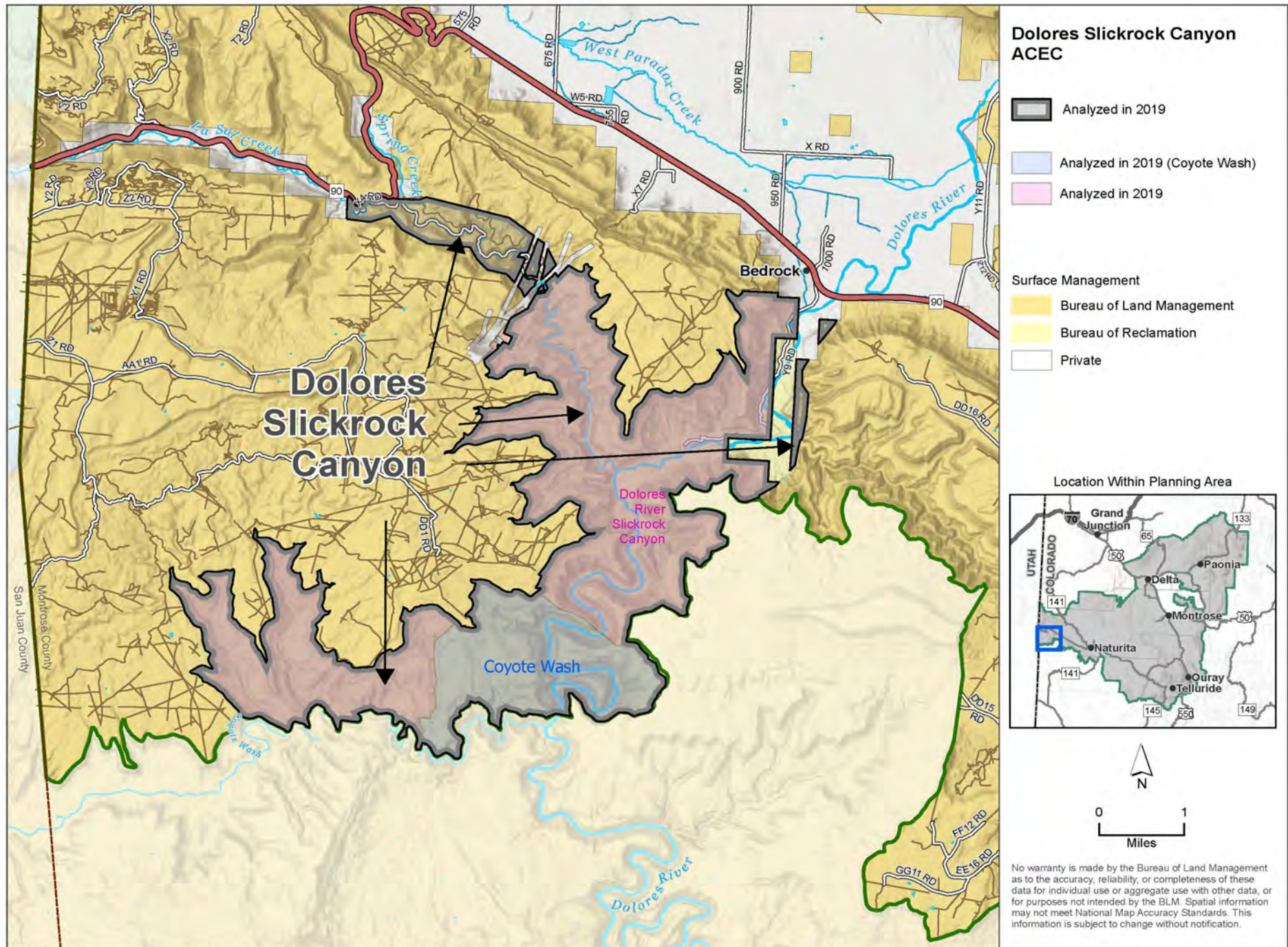




Dolores River Riparian and Paradox Cliffs ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Cultural	Yes	Important Ute ancestral homelands
Historic	Yes	Historic hanging flume is nationally significant
Sensitive plants	Yes	Paradox lupine and Paradox breadroot
Sensitive wildlife species	Yes	Exemplary raptor nesting habitat, important fish movement corridors for three sensitive fish species
Biological soil crust	Yes	Present in East Paradox area
Big game habitat	No	Not a priority area under SO 3362
Natural hazards	No	Soil disturbance is not a significant human health and safety issue

Dolores River Riparian and Paradox Cliffs ACEC and other units within it are brought forward for analysis

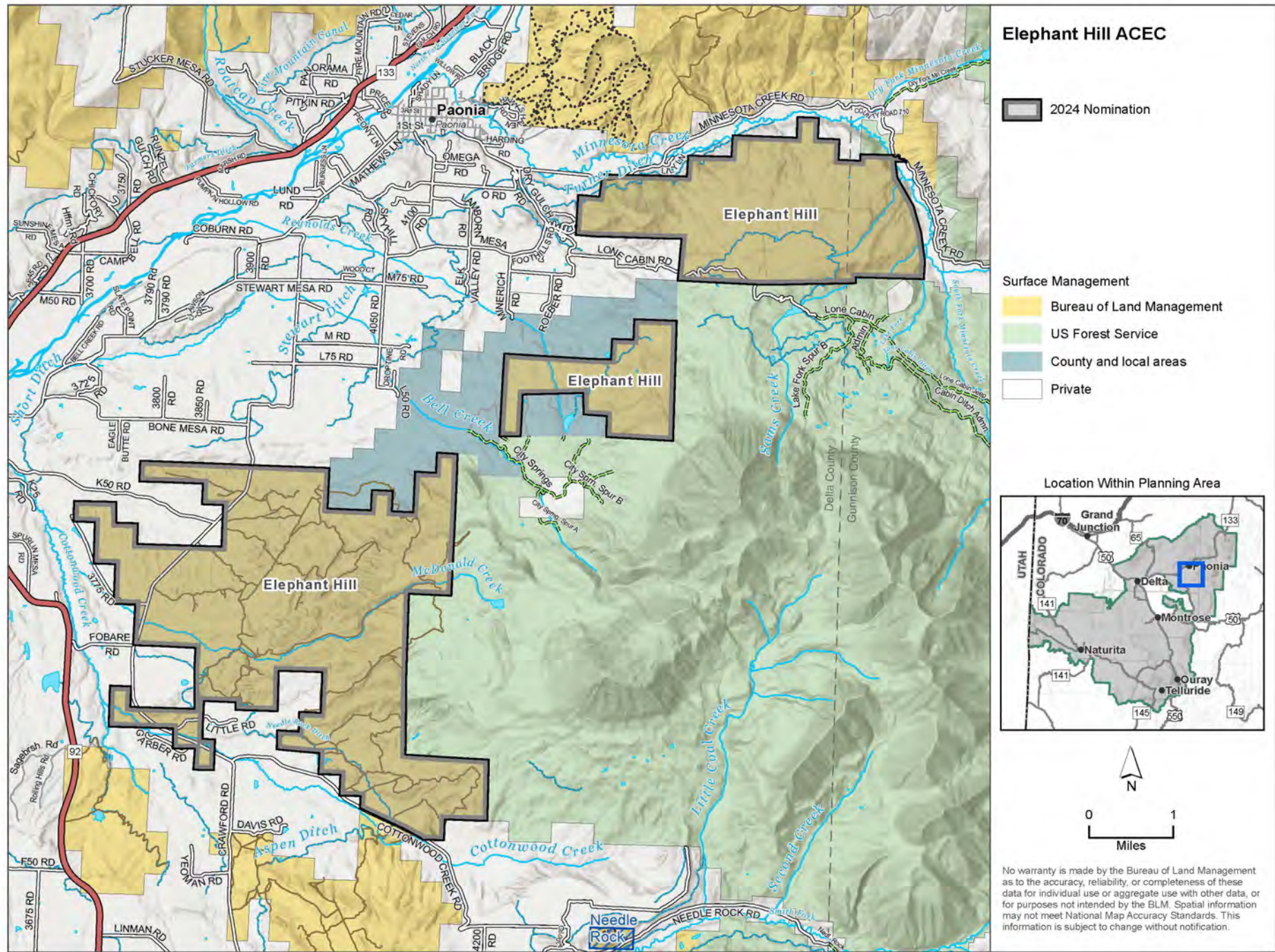




Dolores Slickrock Canyon ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Scenic Values	No	High scenic value is common in the context of the greater landscapes
Paleontological	Yes	Sites of national and scientific significance
Cultural	Yes	Nationally significant archaeological sites that are irreplaceable if damaged
Sensitive plants	Yes	Intact rare and globally vulnerable plant communities, special status plants
Sensitive wildlife species	Yes	Exemplary populations of three sensitive fish species, desert bighorn sheep present

Dolores Slickrock Canyon ACEC and other units within it are brought forward for analysis

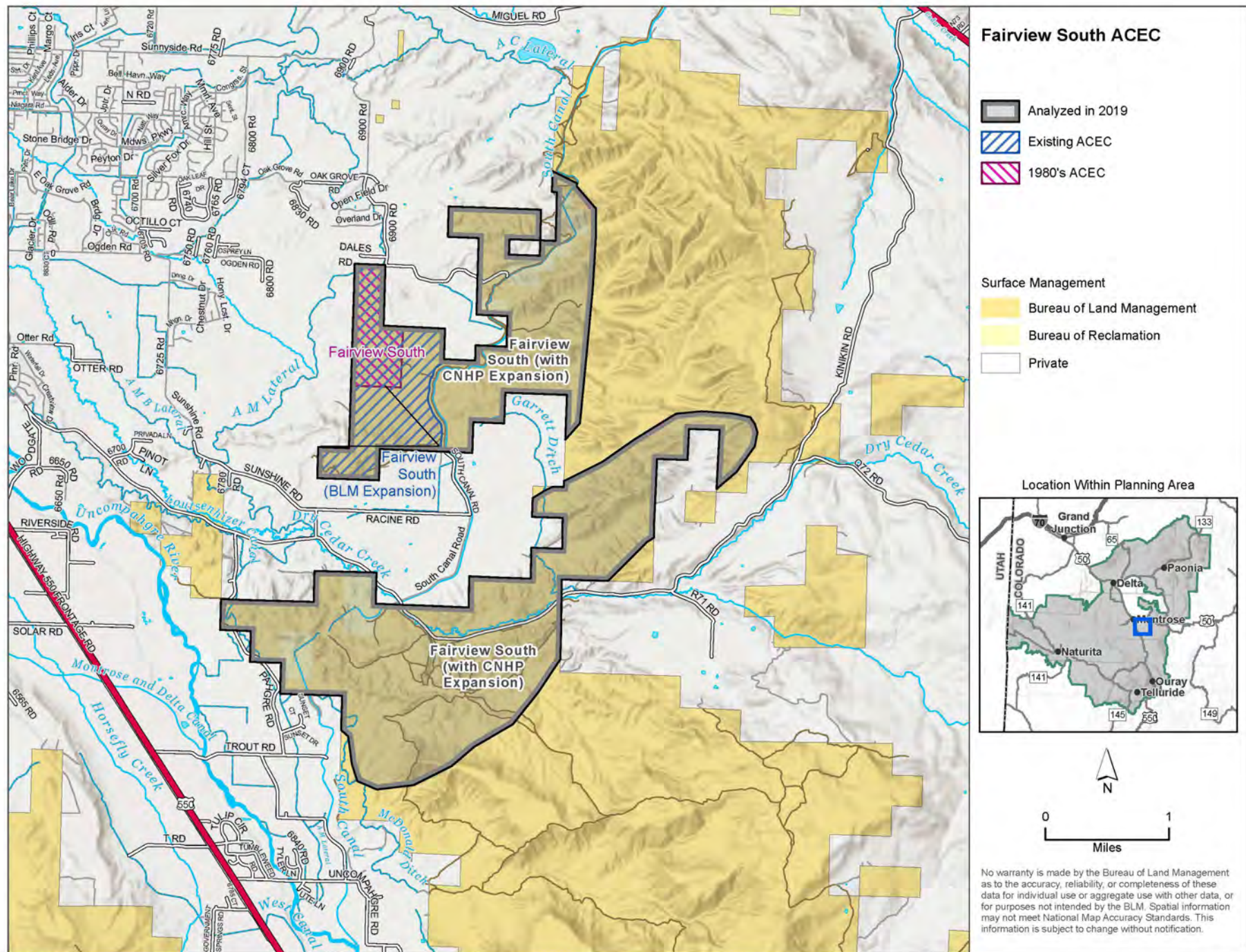




Elephant Hill ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Cultural	No	Lithic scatters are common in the region
Sensitive wildlife species	No	Common in the region/secure populations/not present in the area
Big game habitat	No	Not a priority herd under SO 3362
Sensitive plant species	No	Isolated occurrence of one sensitive plant species.
Vegetation	No	Does not meet land health standards due to invasive species dominance; landscape is fragmented
Wetlands	No	Ordinary distribution, many developed for source water/not in a natural state

Elephant Hill ACEC is not brought forward for analysis

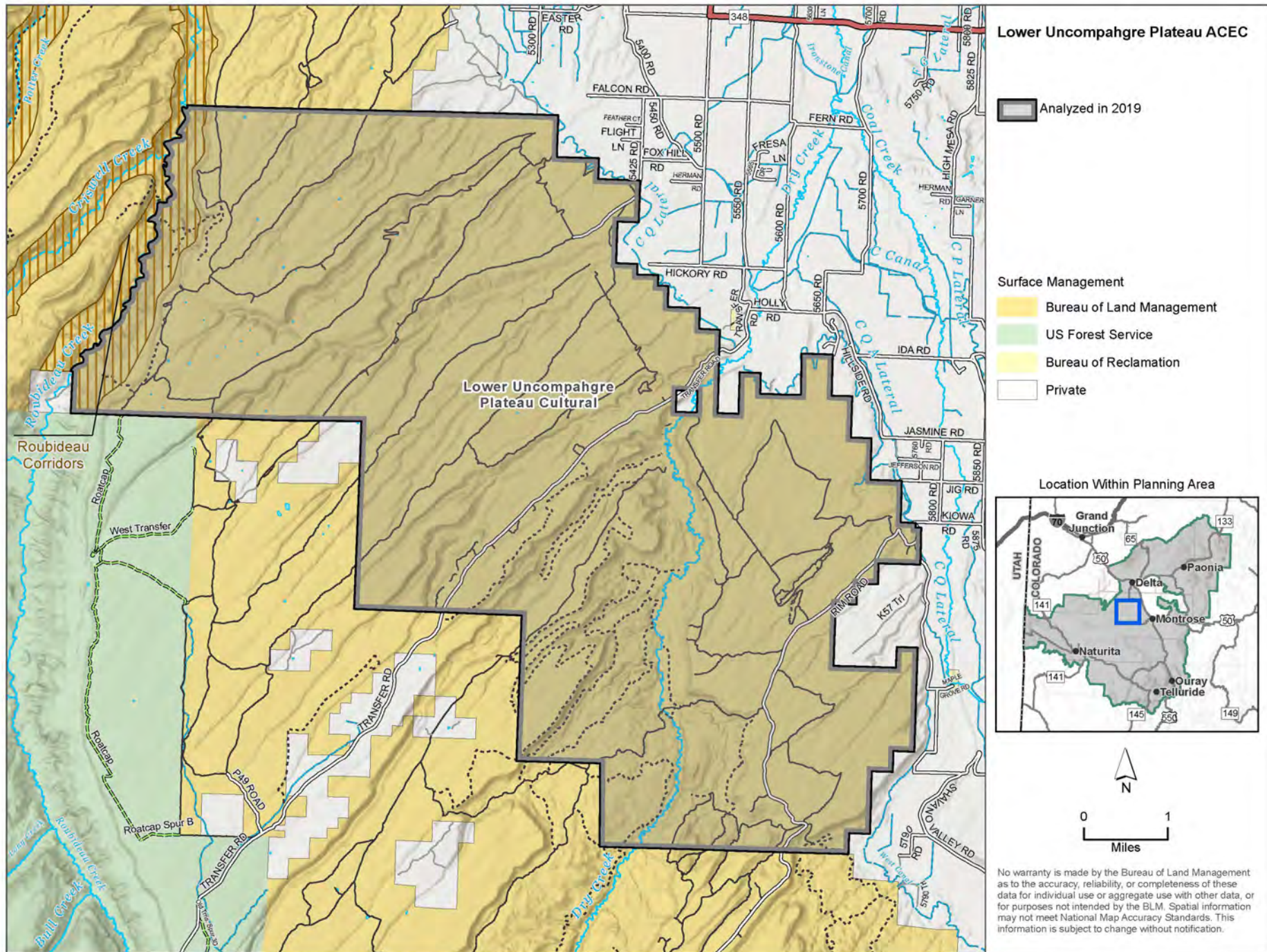




Fairview South ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Sensitive wildlife species	No	White tailed- prairie dog is state and globally secure
Sensitive plant species	Yes	Federally endangered clay-loving wild buckwheat (core population), three BLM sensitive plants

Fairview South ACEC is brought forward for analysis

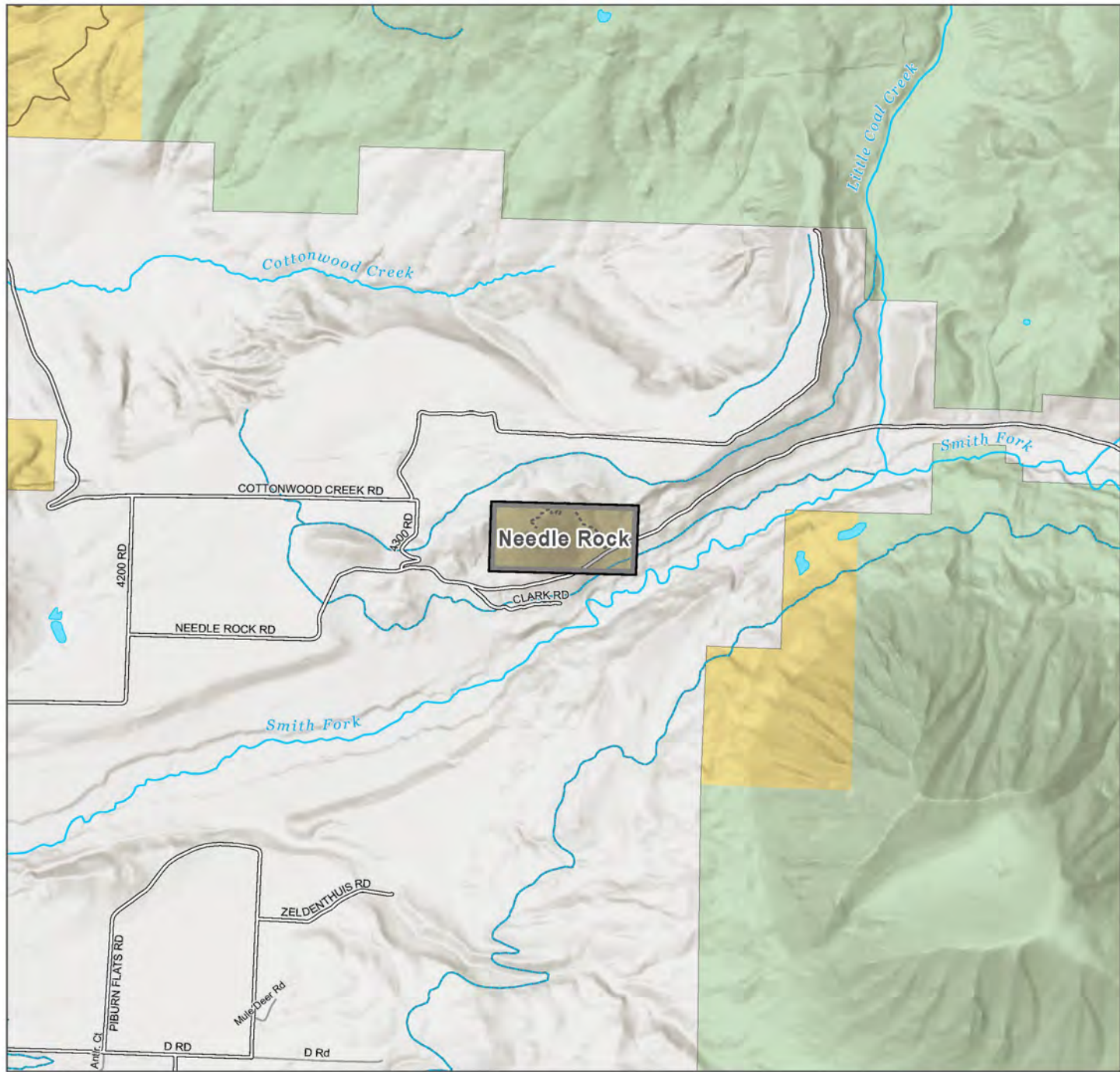





Lower Uncompahgre Plateau ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Cultural	Yes	Nationally significant archaeological sites that are irreplaceable if damaged
Big game habitat	Yes	Within Uncompahgre Plateau SO 3362 priority herd




Lower Uncompahgre Plateau ACEC is brought forward for analysis



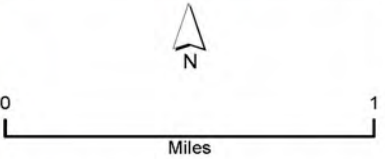
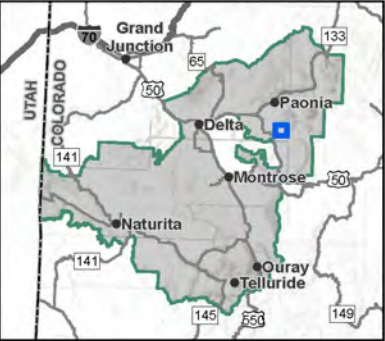
Needle Rock ACEC

 Evaluated ACEC Boundary

Surface Management

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  US Forest Service
-  Private

Location Within Planning Area



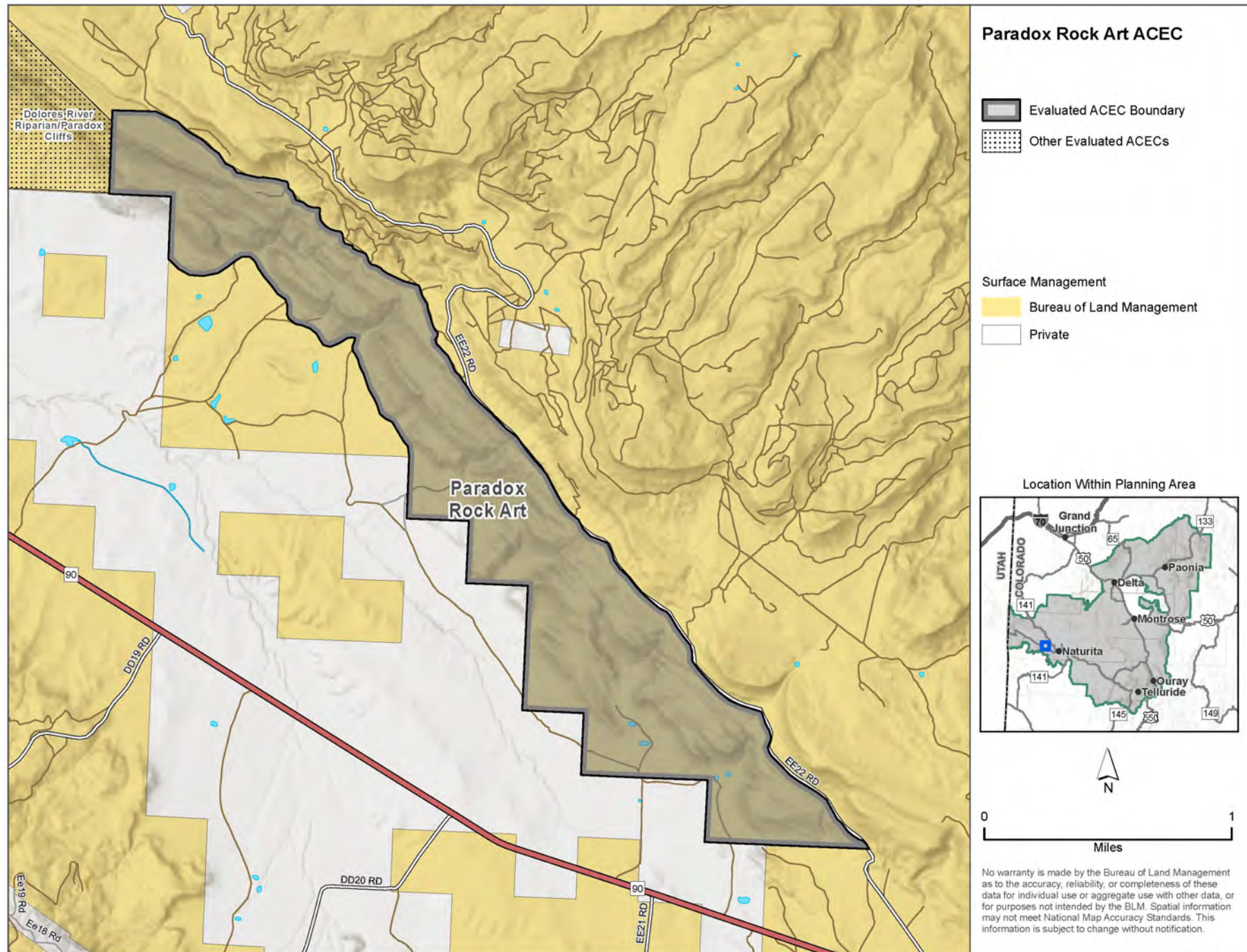
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Needle Rock ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Scenic	Yes	Regionally significant landmark

Needle Rock ACEC is brought forward for analysis





Paradox Rock Art ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Cultural	Yes	Nationally significant archaeological sites that are irreplaceable if damaged

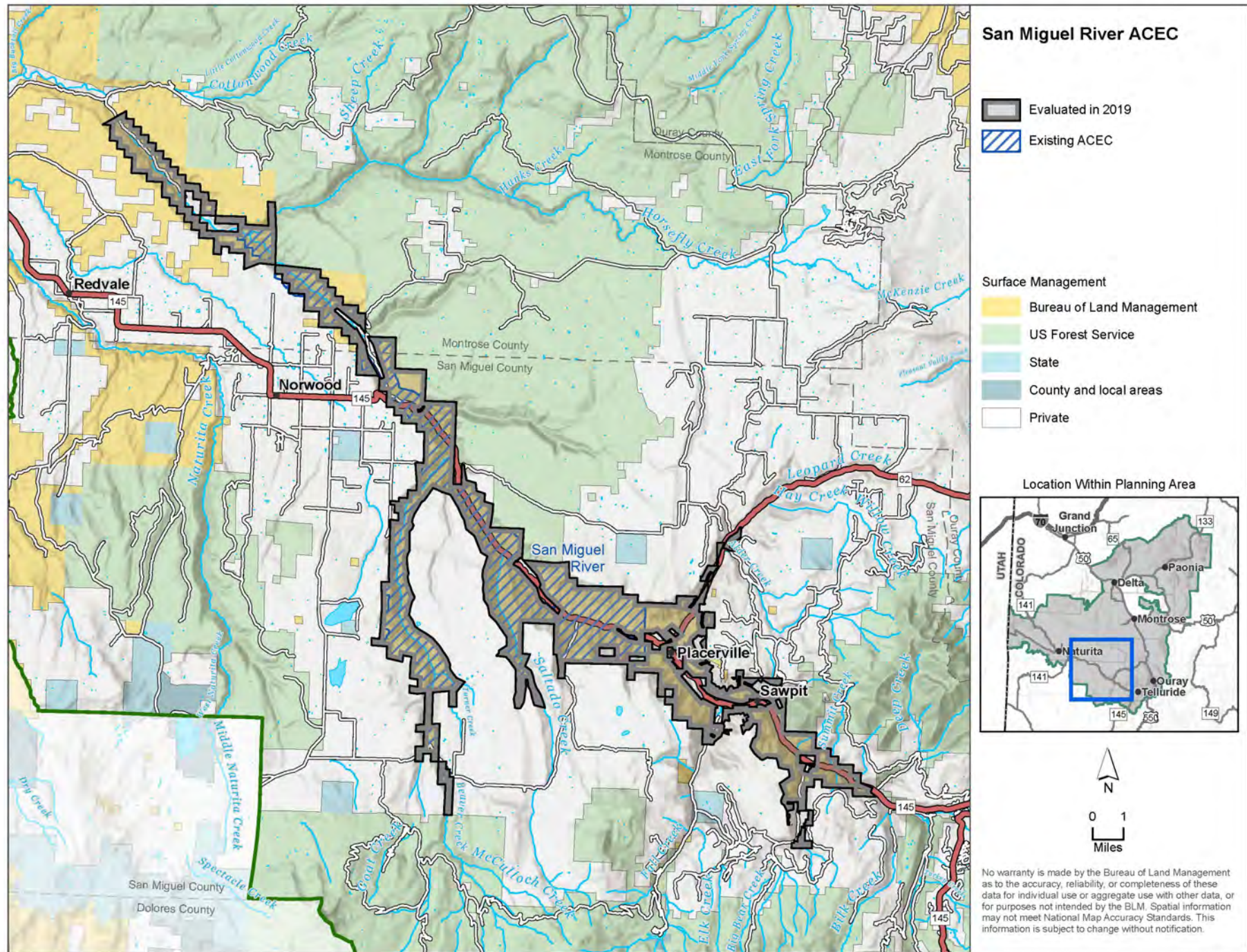
Paradox Rock Art ACEC is brought forward for analysis



Roubideau ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Cultural	Yes	High density of unique/rare sites
Historic	Yes	Historic evidence of western settlement
Sensitive wildlife species	Yes	Exemplary amphibian habitat, important movement corridors for three sensitive fish species, desert bighorn present
Big game	Yes	Within Uncompahgre Plateau SO 3362 priority herd
Sensitive plants	Yes	Colorado hookless cactus, Grand Junction milkvetch
Vegetation	Yes	Highly intact landscape, globally significant riparian vegetation communities

Roubideau ACEC is brought forward for analysis

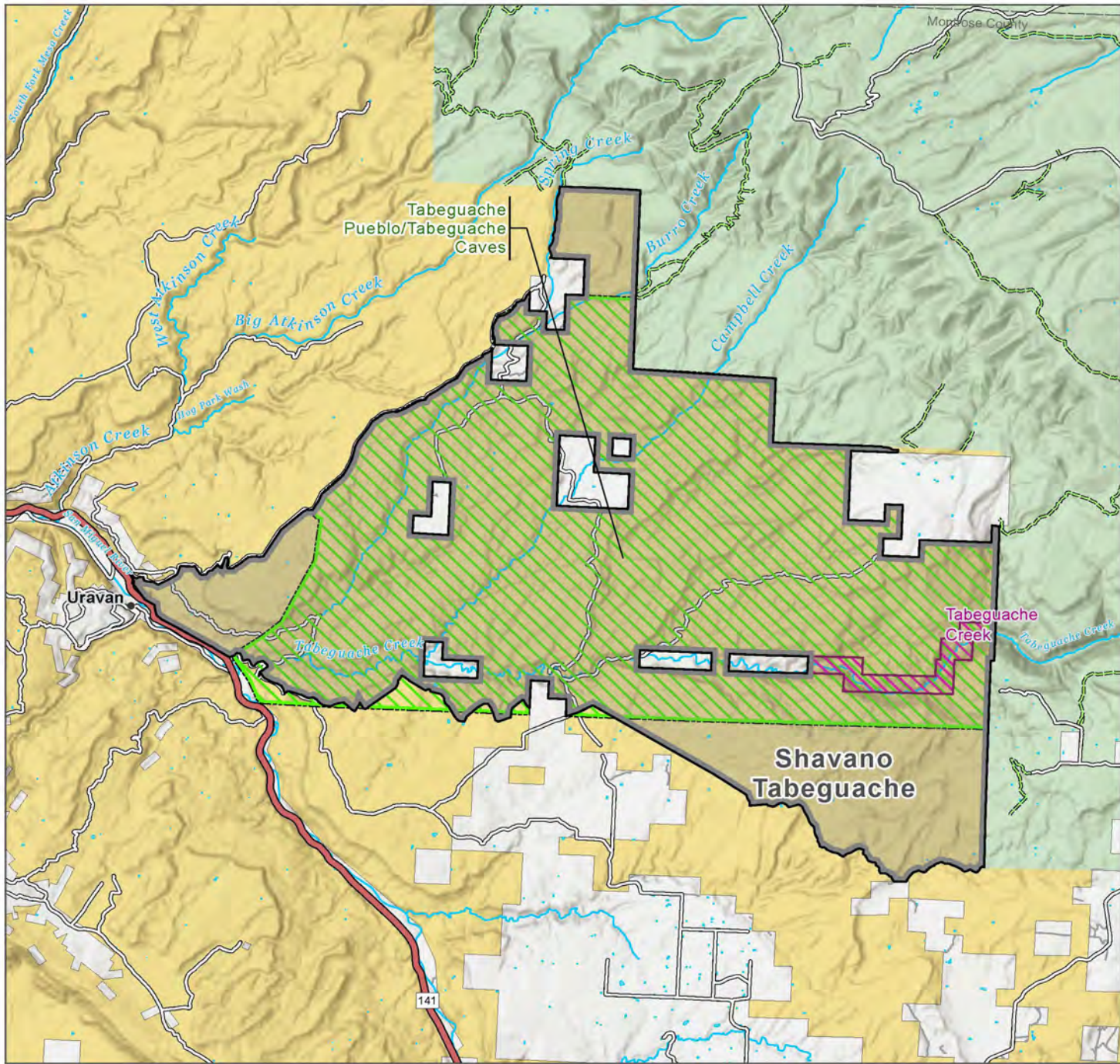




San Miguel River ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Scenic	Yes	National and State designated byways
Wildlife	Yes	Designated Important Bird Area
Vegetation	Yes	Exemplary intact riparian communities due to the undammed nature of the river

San Miguel River ACEC is brought forward for analysis

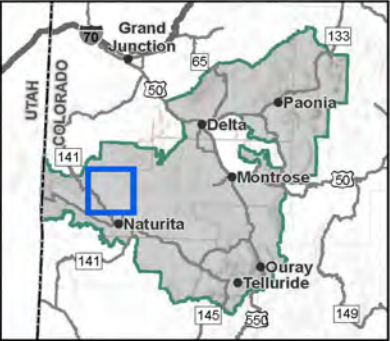


Shavano Tabeguache ACEC

- 2024 Nomination
- Analyzed in 2019
- Previously Existing ACEC

- Surface Management
- Bureau of Land Management
 - US Forest Service
 - Private

Location Within Planning Area



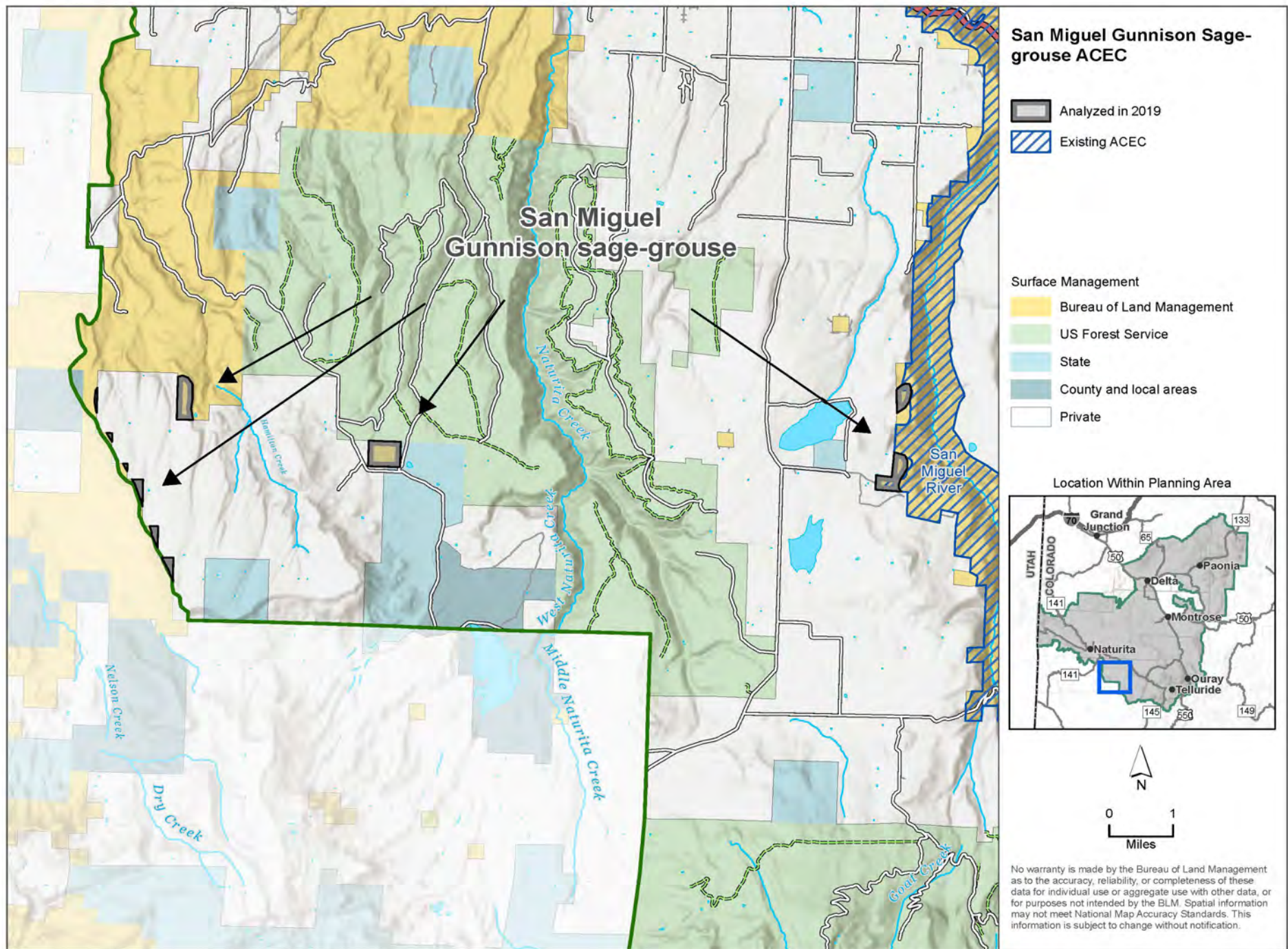
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Shavano-Tabeguache ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Cultural	Yes	Nationally important sites
Sensitive wildlife species	Yes	Important movement corridors for three sensitive fish species
Big game	Yes	Within Uncompahgre Plateau SO 3362 priority herd
Sensitive plants	No	Isolated occurrence of two species
Natural hazards	No	Soil disturbance is not a significant human health and safety issue

Shavano-Tabeguache ACEC is brought forward for analysis

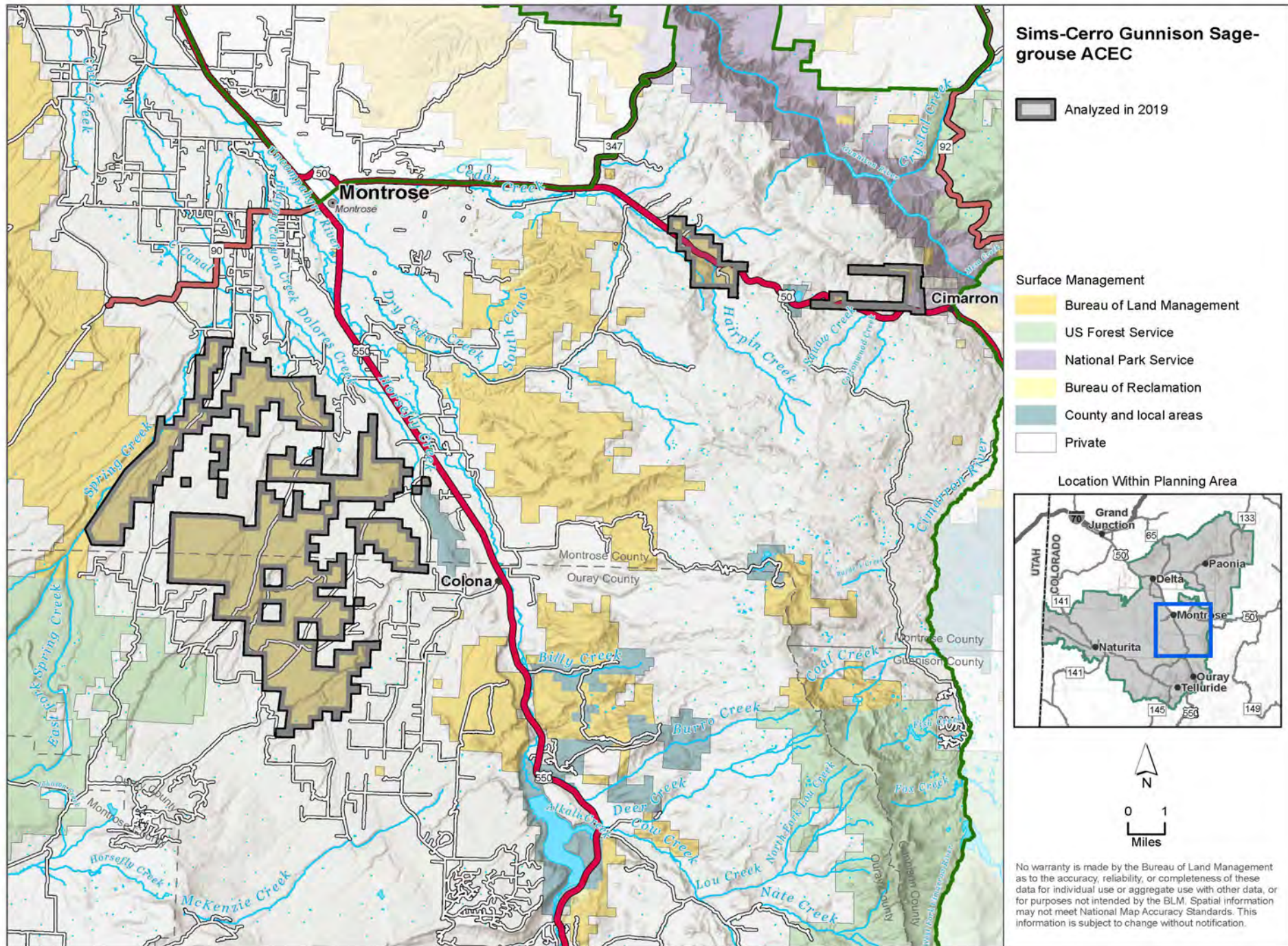




San Miguel Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Wildlife	Yes	Threatened Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat

San Miguel Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC is brought forward for analysis





Sims-Cerro Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC

Value	Meets	Rational
Wildlife	Yes	Threatened Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat
Scenic	No	High scenic value (Cerro Summit area) is common in the context of the greater landscape
Big game habitat	Yes	Within Uncompahgre Plateau SO 3362 priority herd (Sims Mesa area only)

Sims-Cerro Gunnison Sage Grouse ACEC is brought forward for analysis



Special Management Attention

An area with relevant and important value must require special management attention to be designated as an ACEC

- Required to protect the values from irreparable damage – management under existing law and policy is not sufficient
- “Irreparable damage” means harm that diminishes the value of resource to the extent that it can’t be easily restored
- Management would not be prescribed if the values were not present

Determination of whether an area needs special management attention is done through environmental analysis



Summary

18 ACECs brought forward for analysis

- 15 required by settlement agreement
- 3 new ACECs
 - ✓ 2 for big game – Atkinson Mesa, Third Park

1 ACEC not brought forward for analysis

- Did not meet R&I – Elephant Hill



Next Steps & Project Schedule

Target Timeline	Key Milestone
January 2024	Notice of Intent and 45-day scoping
March – November 2024	Develop Draft RMPA/Draft EIS
December 2024 – March 2025	Notice of Availability for the Draft RMPA/Draft EIS and 90-day public comment period
April – August 2025	Develop Proposed RMPA/Final EIS
September 2025	Notice of Availability for the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS
September – December 2025	Public protest period (30 days) and Governor's Consistency Review (60 days)
January 2026	Approved RMPA and Record of Decision