North Labarge Area Grazing Plan

Management Objectives

1. Maintain or achieve those Wyoming Standards for Rangeland Health that can be positively affected by changes in livestock grazing management.
2. Maintain economically viable livestock operations while applying multiple use/sustained yield management principles.
3. Improve the orderly administration of the North Labarge Common Allotment.

Project Area Description

This grazing plan replaces the North Labarge Common Allotment Management Plan.

Figure 1 is a project area map and Figure 2 is a map of land ownership patterns.

Land Ownership: The project area encompasses a total of 162,205 acres. Table 1 summarizes the project acres by ownership. This grazing plan only applies to Bureau of Land Management Pinedale Field Office (PFO) and United States Forest Service Bridger Teton National Forest (BTNF) managed lands (141,035 acres; all acreage values derived from PFO corporate GIS layers).

Table 1

Surface Ownership	Acres
Bureau of Land Management	130,510
Forest Service	12,573
Private	14,656
State	6,515
Total	**164,253**

There are eleven federal grazing allotments included in this grazing plan. Table 2 summarizes total acreage by allotment but does not separate out private or state managed lands.

Table 2

Allotment	Allotment #	Acres
Beaver Crk Meadow	2142	1,974
Beaver Crk Individual	2141	1,450
Bird Individual	12206	598
Bridger Teton NF	122223	12,573
Dry Piney Ind	2100	1,899
Jory Ind	2099	934
Labarge Ind	2091	2,750
N. Labarge Com	2077	142,244
O Neil Ind	2163	776
Piney Place Meadows	2079	641
S Piney Ranch	2074	977

Climate: The climate is typical of western Wyoming with long, cold winters and short, cool summers. The frost-free period is about 45 days. Annual precipitation is generally 7-9 inches, with the bulk arriving as snow.

Riparian Resources: There are 42.55 miles of lotic streams under BLM jurisdiction within the project area. Table 3 summarizes the PFC ratings for all reaches. Roughly 85% of all riparian areas are in proper functioning condition. Of those functioning at risk (FAR) about 11% are in an upward trend and 2% did not show an apparent trend. There is a ¾ mile stretch of Sawmill creek that is classified as FAR with a downward trend and ¼ mile of Fogerty creek that is non-functioning. There are several contributing factors involved with the FAR rating for Sawmill creek (discussed below) and the major contributing factor associated with the non-functional rating of Fogerty creek is industrial development associated with long-term oil and gas development.

Table 3

PFC	Miles	% of Total
FAR-DOWN	0.75	1.76%
FAR-NA	0.85	2.00%
FAR-UP	4.67	10.98%
NF	0.23	0.54%
PFC	36.05	84.72%
Grand Total	**42.55**	

Sawmill Creek (T28N R114W Sec. 22 & 23; Figure 3): When considering functioning condition of this section of Sawmill creek one must first consider its' minimal potential to form one distinct channel. This reach is characterized by a widening of the flood plain and several dramatic vegetation changes that include wet meadow, a well established aspen stand, and a remnant beb willow community transitioning to a booth willow community. An expectation that this section will develop one distinct channel in any meaningful amount of time is unrealistic. However, this area does have the ability to more effectively buffer the hydrologic forces of moving water, thus enhancing soil stability, soil moisture holding capacity, and the landscape's ability to recover from natural or induced disturbances.

There are three contributing factors to this section of Sawmill creek rating FAR with a downward trend:

1. Exxon-Mobile owns a parcel of land adjacent to (upstream) of this reach that contains a natural spring. The company constructed a fishing pond sometime before 2006. This installation has modified the natural hydrologic cycle downstream by limiting downstream flow patterns.
2. A powerline was installed sometime within the last 10-15 years that crosses this reach just downstream of another natural spring. When the powerline was installed the right of way was simply bulldozed, removing all topsoil. Reclamation was inadequate to restore the natural hydrologic cycle which has further limited water recharge back into the stream channel and floodplain.
3. This reach is located near the eastern portion of Pine Grove pasture. When livestock are rotated from Big Mesa into Pine Grove they tend to congregate in this stream bottom, exacerbating the damage already done by limited water recharge into the system.

The effects of factors 1 and 2 cannot be influenced with a change in grazing management. However, it is likely that the riparian area's ability to annually recover from the impacts of factor 3 has been

detrimentally affected by factors 1 and 2. While there is no guarantee that a change in grazing management would result in improving riparian condition, an attempt at reducing annual effects from livestock is worth the effort.

Fogerty Creek (T28N R113W Sec. 17, 20, TR41; Figure 4): As illustrated in Figure 1 this section of Fogerty creek is severely impacted by industrial development associated with long-term oil and gas development. It is highly unlikely that any change in grazing management, including total removal of livestock, would result in any improvement in riparian function.

Upland Vegetation Resources: The dominant upland range site is shallow-loamy. The eastern half of the project is in the 7-9 inch precipitation zone. In this precipitation zone the plant community is dominated by plants that can grow with restricted root depth and droughty conditions. The dominant grass species found on this site are indian ricegrass, needleandthread, Sandberg bluegrass, and thickspike wheatgrass. Other grass species that occur are bluebunch wheatgrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, and letterman needlegrass. The dominant shrub species are Wyoming big sagebrush, black sagebrush, low sagebrush, and low rabbitbrush. The most common forb species are various asters, phlox, and penstemon species. According to the range site description herbage cover normally ranges from 10-30%. This means the combination of bare ground and litter cover would range from 70-90%. These values are consistent with informal field observations where herbage tends to run about 30%, litter about 10%, and bare ground about 60%.

The central quarter of the project area is also characterized by shallow-loamy but tends toward the 10-14 inch precipitation zone. The plant community is very similar to the 7-9 inch precipitation zone but herbage cover and grass production are both higher. For example, grass heights tend to be about 10-14 inches (compared to about 6-8 inches in the 7-9 inch precipitation zone).

The western quarter of the project area is in higher elevation, forested habitats. This portion of the project area is characterized by deeper soils and higher annual precipitation values. As a result herbage production and cover are much higher than in the lower elevation sites. Mixed conifer and aspen stands are prolific and bare ground cover is only about 10-20%.

Wildlife Resources:

Sage grouse: Certain areas within the allotments contain suitable yearlong habitat for sage-grouse, including breeding sites (8 known leks within 2 miles of the project area), nesting and brood rearing areas, and winter habitat. Lek count data indicate a relatively stable trend in population on leks associated with these allotments. However, long term trends for sage-grouse in the Upper Green River Basin (and throughout their range) show a decline in population.

BLM Sensitive Species (excluding sage grouse): Other sensitive species that potentially occur within these allotments include pygmy rabbits, white tailed prairie dogs, ferruginous hawk, long-billed curlew, burrowing owl, sage thrasher, loggerhead shrike, Brewer's sparrow, and sage sparrow.

Big game species: The allotments lie within crucial winter range, migration routes, and some year round range for mule deer, pronghorn, elk, and moose. In addition, there are some elk parturition areas within the project area. The following herd units are associated with these allotments: Wyoming Range Mule Deer, Sublette Pronghorn, Piney Elk, and Sublette Moose. Current data from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department indicates the Wyoming Range Mule Deer herd is below objective, although the herd is relatively stable. Pronghorn in the Sublette herd are above objective but recent efforts have been made to bring the population down to more sustainable levels. Elk in the Piney Herd Unit are currently

above objective. Many of the elk winter on feedgrounds, but efforts are being made to encourage more elk to winter on native range. Moose have generally been declining in the Sublette herd but the recent trend indicates the population may be stabilizing.

Other wildlife species: Suitable habitat exists for a variety of small mammals, migratory songbirds, raptors, and other nongame species. There is currently very little trend data associated with many of these species.

Historical and Current Mineral Development: Oil and gas development have been a part of this landscape for around 100 years. According to PFO GIS data there are currently 2,907 oil or gas wells in the project area. The road density for the project area is 5.75 miles per square mile. The majority of the project area is considered an intensively developed area as defined in the Pinedale RMP.

Historical and Current Livestock Grazing: Cattle grazing has been a part of this landscape for at least 120 years. However, it was the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934 that implemented some form of managed grazing under an allotment-permittee system. The original forage allocation for the entire project area was about 26,500 animal unit months (AUM's). In the middle sixties this number was reduced by just under 40% to its' current allocation of 16,340 AUM's.

During the last 10-15 years water developments have been constructed that were intended to improve perceived livestock distribution issues. One objective of those developments was to be able to functionally rotate livestock with water instead of fences. However, water developments were not designed to accommodate the required demand and so all potential water must be made available when cattle are in pastures. If, based on monitoring, distribution is an issue, current water developments must be retrofitted to truly meet cattle water requirements and additional water wells will need to be considered and developed prior to being able to implement any kind of water-regulated rotation system.

Action Items

Range Improvements

- Chimney Butte Water Pipeline: The Chimney Butte Pipeline will consist of a 1.7 mile water pipeline connecting an existing livestock trough and pipeline system (the Dry Basin line) to an existing livestock water pit (the Chimney Butte Pit #2) in order to improve stock water availability in said stock pit. (Figure 5)
- Big Mesa Drift Fence: The Big Mesa drift fence will consist of a 0.8 mile, wildlife-friendly drift fence in order to delay livestock use of vegetation in the western portion of the Big Mesa pasture (along the central portion of the Calpet road) by holding livestock owned or controlled by authorization numbers 4904437 and 4904419 in the north eastern portion of the Big Mesa pasture. (Figure 6; T28N R113W Sec. 27, TR48)

Grazing Practices

Table 4 summarizes the grazing schedules and associated animal unit months (AUM's) to be adhered to as part of this grazing plan.

Table 4			
Allotment Name	**AUM's**	**Earliest On Date**	**Latest Off Date**
Beaver Creek Meadow Individual	20	1-Sep	15-Nov
Bird Individual	14	1-Mar	30-Nov
Bridger Teton National Forest	1202	15-Jul	5-Oct
Dry Piney Ind	30	1-Jan	31-Dec
Jory Individual	49	1-May	1-Oct
Labarge Individual	336	1-Jul	30-Sep
North Labarge Common (Big Mesa Rotation)	5206	15-May	15-Oct
North Labarge Common (Black Canyon Pasture)	809	11-Jul	1-Oct
North Labarge Common (Calpet Pasture)	659	15-May	15-Oct
North Labarge Common (Chimney Rotation)	7831	15-May	15-Oct
O'Neil Individual	82	1-Oct	15-Nov
S. Piney Place Meadows	42	16-Oct	14-May
S. Piney Ranch	90	16-Oct	14-May

During summer 2008 proper functioning condition (PFC) surveys were conducted on all reaches that had been previously (1994-1999) classified as either non-functioning or functioning at risk (FAR) with either no apparent trend or a downward trend. The result of this work indicates that about 0.75 mile of North Sawmill Creek is still classified as FAR with a downward trend. While mitigating circumstances (discussed in detail in the Affected Environment section of this document) beyond the control of livestock grazing exist, the BLM and grazing permittees believe that concentrated herding of cattle out of this area may contribute to riparian recovery. Therefore, cattle will be allowed to naturally gather in this area after rotation into the Pine Grove pasture for 7-10 days to facilitate livestock management but permittees will then actively push cattle towards the fish corrals and onto Pine Grove Ridge, Narrow (Mormon) Ridge and Lake Ridge.

Other Actions

Administratively split North Labarge Common into two separate and smaller common allotments and two separate and smaller individual allotments. The allotment division is according to established (since the 1970's) livestock use patterns. Table 5 summarizes this division. This split may eventually require splitting this grazing plan into several plans that incorporate only those permittees involved in each of the proposed new allotments. The recommendation is to use this grazing plan through the first plan evaluation and then modify this plan into several new plans with appropriate changes if necessary.

Table 5		
Current Allotment Name	**Proposed Allotment Name**	**AUM's**
North Labarge Common (Big Mesa Rotation)	Big Mesa Common	5206
North Labarge Common (Black Canyon Pasture)	Black Canyon Individual	809
North Labarge Common (Calpet Pasture)	Calpet Individual	659
North Labarge Common (Chimney Rotation)	Chimney Butte Common	7831

Flexibility

- Animal numbers can fluctuate annually as long as total permitted AUM's are not exceeded
- Turn-out and take-off dates can fluctuate annually but turn-out for any allotment cannot occur earlier than specified in Table 4 and take-off cannot occur later than specified in Table 3, except in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.4.

Monitoring Indicators and Schedules

In order to appropriately measure success in meeting management objectives an adequate monitoring plan must include a realistic monitoring schedule, the measuring of meaningful indicators, and timely data analysis. Below are the specific indicators to be measured in order to determine success or needed changes in management. Unless otherwise stated, all vegetation monitoring techniques are adopted from the Wyoming Rangeland Monitoring Guide, 2001 along with guidance from the Pinedale RMP. All indicators will be monitored during summer 2009 to establish a baseline; key areas will be established in cooperation with the grazing permittees, the BLM rangeland management specialist, and the BLM wildlife biologist prior to any monitoring.

General Monitoring

Indicator 1: Rangeland health standards continue to be met in all areas of all three allotments.
Monitoring Technique: Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health, Technical Reference 1734-6, Volume 4 - 2005
Frequency Measured: A new rangeland health standards assessment will be performed in summer 2009 or 2010 and further monitoring needs will be developed by the interdisciplinary team and permittee at that time.

Upland range condition

Indicator 1: maintain a neutral or positive GRI score in established key areas.
Monitoring Technique: GRI.
Frequency Measured: annually or no less than every two years.

Indicator 2: undesirable changes in vegetative cover (e.g. decrease in bunchgrass cover, increase in bare ground, etc).
Monitoring Technique: Cover by Life Form Transect in key areas, differentiating between bunchgrass and rhizomatous wheatgrass.
Frequency Measured: every 3-5 years.

Riparian Condition

Indicator 1: improve greenline score in north Sawmill drainage
Monitoring Technique: a modified greenline stability score such that the greenline technique is applied to several representative cross-section transects across the floodplain. Transect start and endpoints should be marked with permanent rebar or T-posts. Observer should take 3-4 paces away from start point (enough distance to leave the area of influence of the marking post on livestock behavior) and then follow instructions located in the Wyoming Rangeland Monitoring Guide (2001) for Greenline Stability. Observer should also complete transect at least 3-4 paces before the end point (again, enough distance to leave the area of influence of the marking post on livestock behavior).
Frequency Measured: Annually.

Indicator 2: Maintain or improve greenline stability on PFC-monitored reaches within the project area.

Monitoring Technique: Greenline Stability on key reaches (those reaches determined to be most susceptible to livestock use).
Frequency: every 3-5 years per reach.

Evaluation

This grazing plan will be evaluated at least every three years. At a minimum the grazing permittee and BLM rangeland management and wildlife specialists will conduct the evaluation. The factors to be considered during evaluation include but are not limited to:

- Are objectives being met?
- Is the grazing system appropriate to meet objectives?
- Are additional range improvements or vegetation treatments required to meet plan objectives?
- Are plan objectives realistic or do they need modification?

Consultation and Coordination Requirements

Any changes to this grazing plan require coordination and consensus with all affected permittees and the Pinedale BLM Field Manager.

Authorities

- The Pinedale Field Office Resource Management Plan**,** 2008
- 43 CFR 4120, 4130, and 4180

North Labarge Area Grazing Plan
Signature Page

The undersigned livestock operators support this grazing plan in its entirety. They agree to participate in monitoring whenever possible (or designate a permittee representative during monitoring) and to operate according to the terms in this plan. The BLM agrees to provide ample notice (at least two weeks) regarding scheduling of monitoring activities and to to give permittees the opportunity to participate.

_____

C & D Enterprises Date

_____

JF Ranch, Inc. Date

_____

Midway Ranches Limited Partnership Date

_____

Milleg Partnership Date

_____

Rocking Chair Cattle Co. Date

_____

Sims Revocable Trust Date

_____

Mike Schaffer Date

Approved:

_____

Pinedale Field Manager Date

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

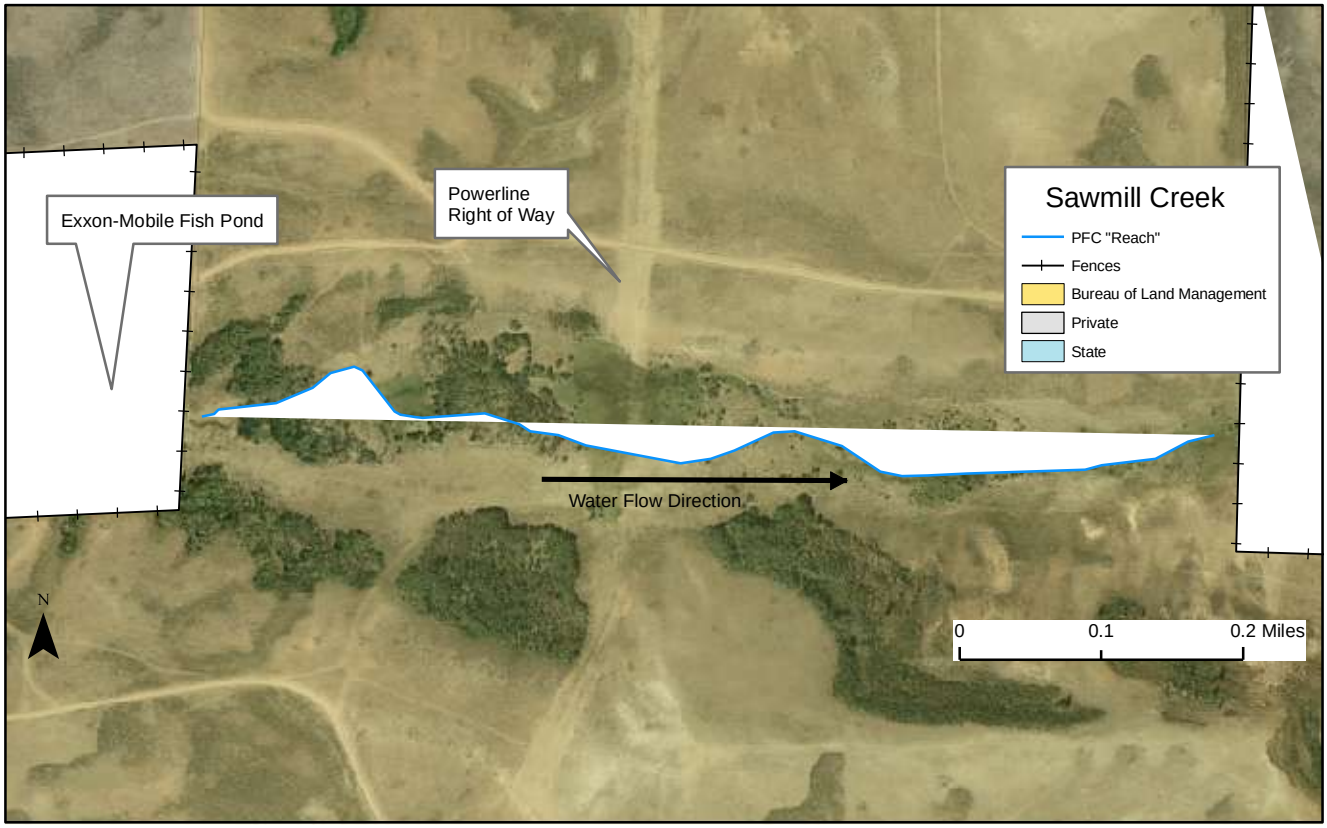


Figure 4

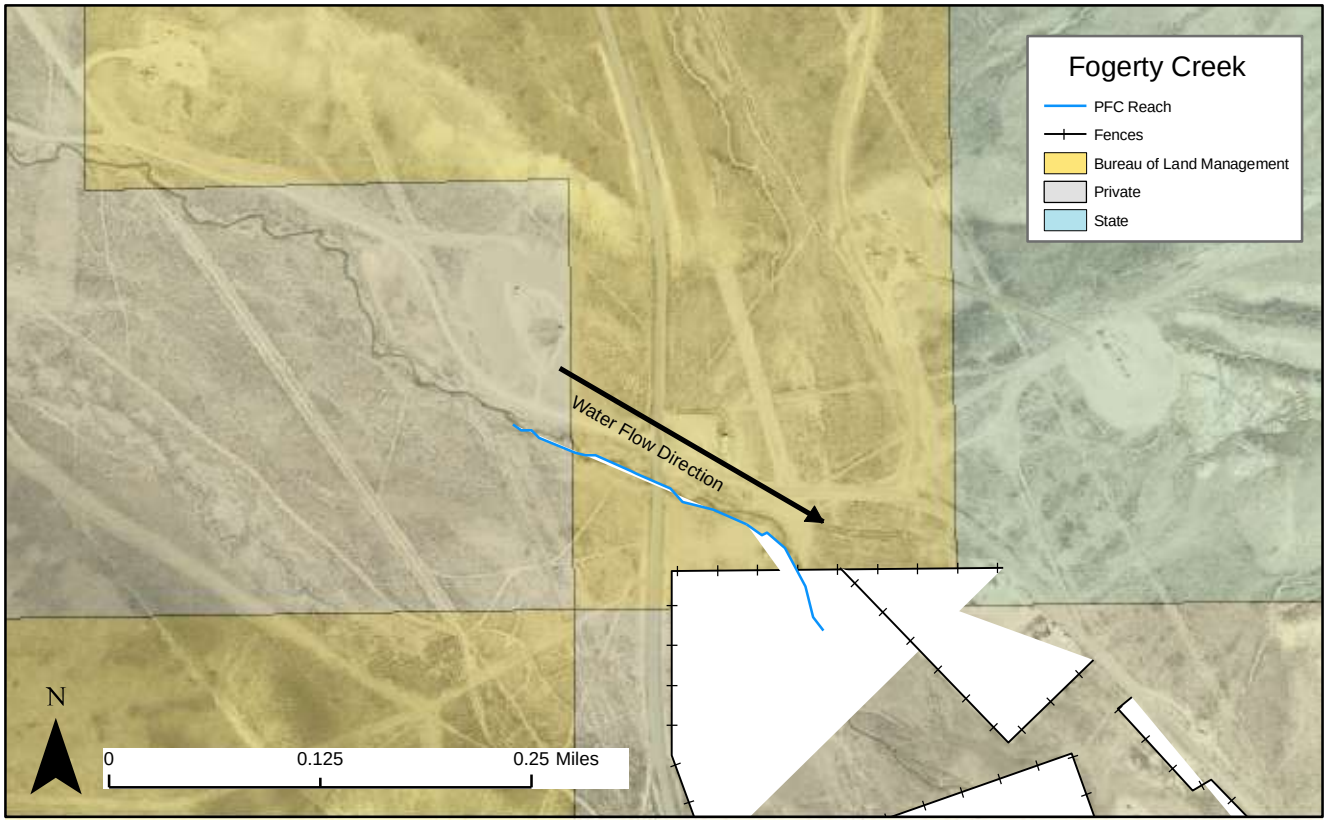


Figure 5

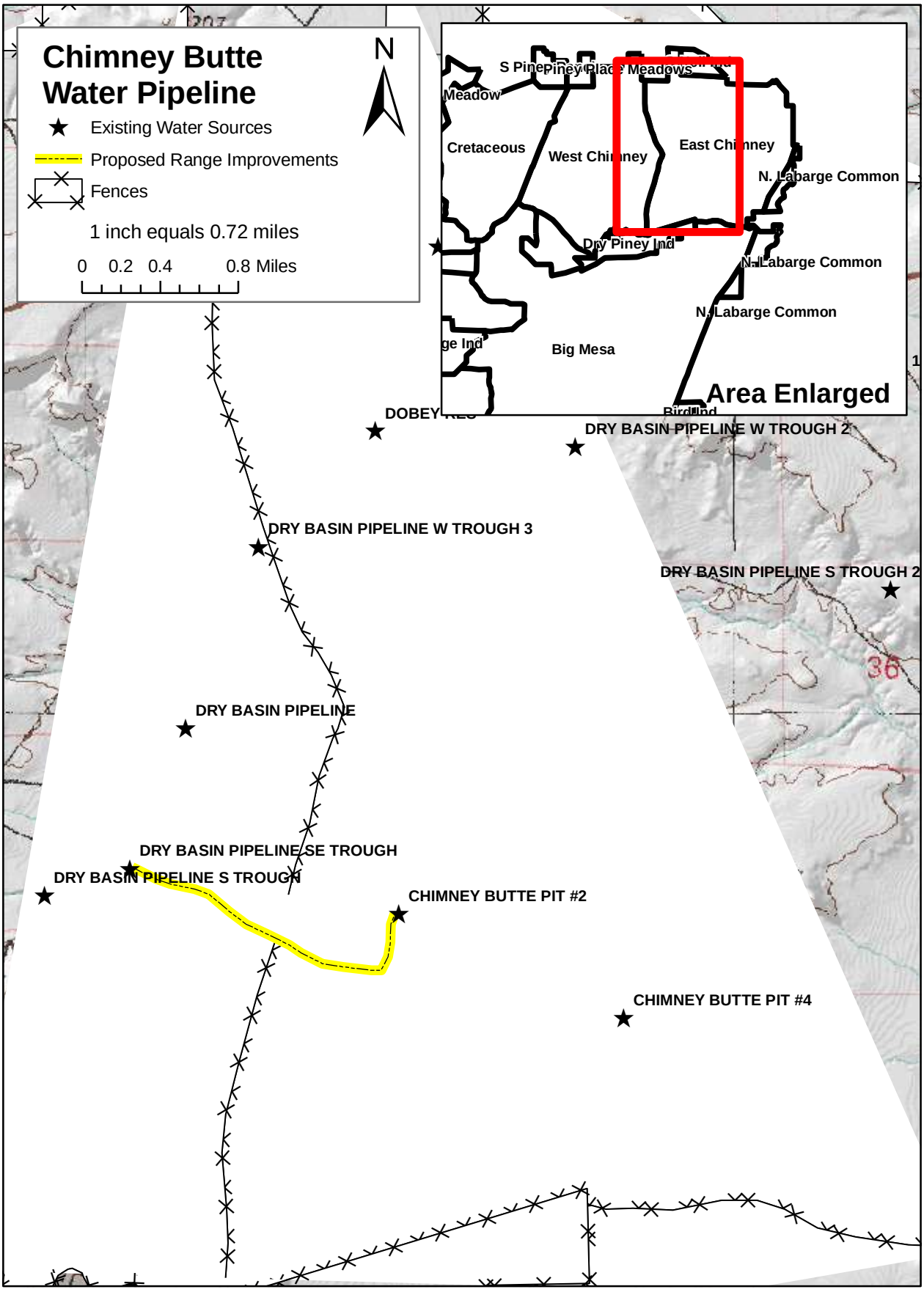
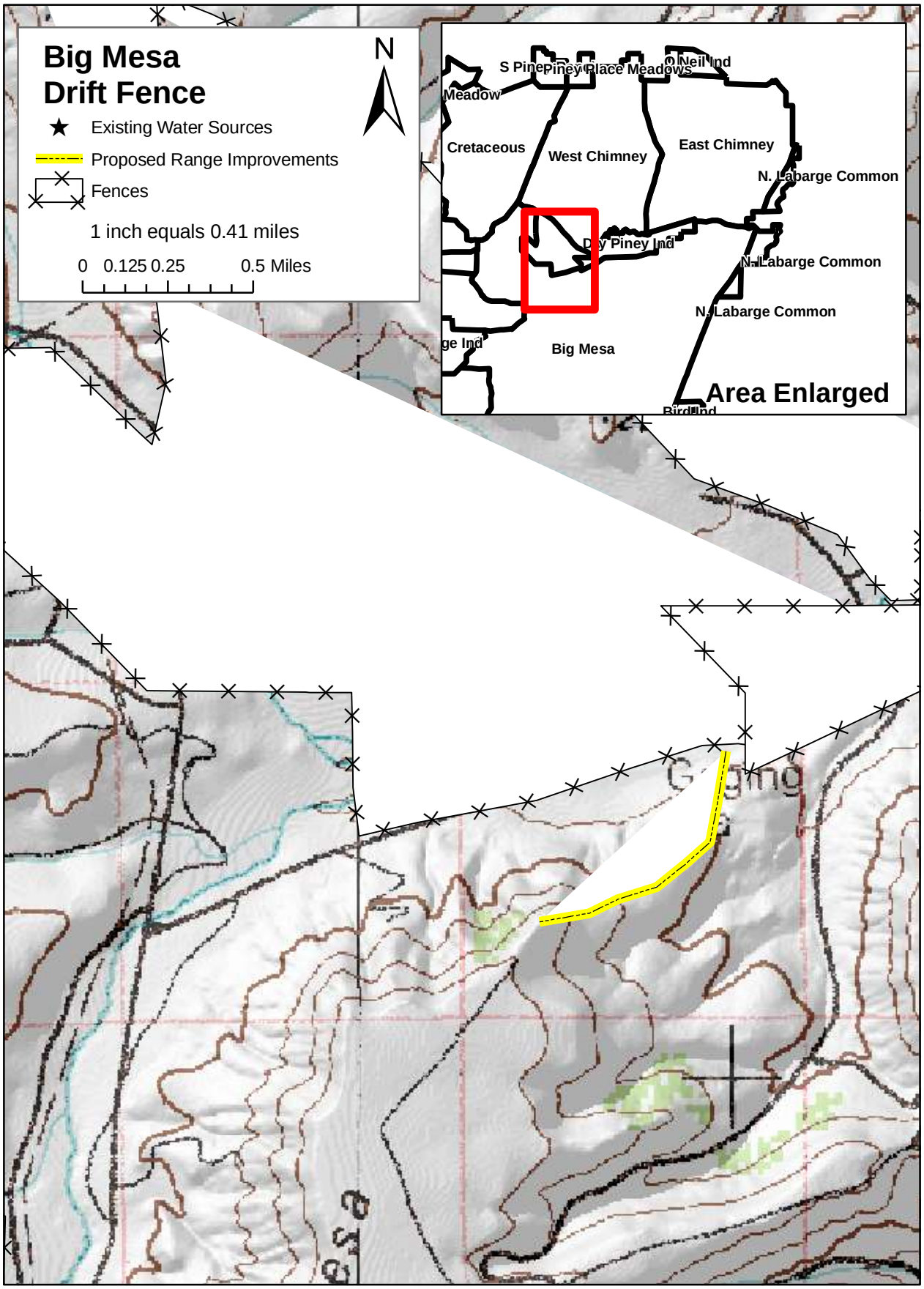

Chimney Butte
Water Pipeline
Existing Water Sources
Proposed Range Improvements
Fences
1 inch equals 0.72 miles
0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Miles
N
S Pine
Piney Place Meadows
Meadow
Cretaceous
West Chimney
East Chimney
N. Labarge Common
Dry Piney Ind
N. Labarge Common
N. Labarge Common
Big Mesa
Area Enlarged
DOBEY
DRY BASIN PIPELINE W TROUGH 2
DRY BASIN PIPELINE W TROUGH 3
DRY BASIN PIPELINE S TROUGH 2
36
DRY BASIN PIPELINE
DRY BASIN PIPELINE SE TROUGH
DRY BASIN PIPELINE S TROUGH
CHIMNEY BUTTE PIT #2
CHIMNEY BUTTE PIT #4

Figure 6


Big Mesa
Drift Fence
Existing Water Sources
Proposed Range Improvements
Fences
1 inch equals 0.41 miles
0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles
N
S Pine
Piney Place Meadows
O Neil Ind
Meadow
Cretaceous
West Chimney
East Chimney
N. Labarge Common
Dry Piney Ind
N. Labarge Common
N. Labarge Common
Big Mesa
Area Enlarged