

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Silver State Trail Update



Jasmine Kleiber, Wildlife Staff Specialist, Habitat Division



History of the Silver State Trail

- 2004 Lincoln Co. Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2004 (267mi.)
- 2006 White Pine Co. Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2004 began process of route designation study in White Pine Co.
- 2010 White Pine Co. Silver State Trail EA
- 2011 Decision signed with FONSI
- 2011 Special public meeting held, project put on hold
- 2012 Silver State Trail EA DR Rescinded
- 2012 County Commission requested BLM to revisit



Silver State Trail EA Timeline

- 2018 – November – BLM provides partners with two Alternatives
- 2018 – November – NDOW begins participation in planning
- 2019 – February – Scoping Ends
- 2019 – March – Deadline for Administrative Draft Comments
- 2019 – April – Release of Preliminary EA (<https://go.usa.gov/xPvNT>)
- 2019 – June 4th – Public Comment Period Ends

Comments due to:

BLM Ely District Office

Attn: John Miller, Project Manager

702 North Industrial Way

Ely, NV 89301

blm_nv_bfo_silverstatetrail_2018ea@blm.gov



Nevada Department of Wildlife

Alternatives

- 1) Alternative A
- 2) Alternative B
- 3) Alternative C – “Wildlife Alternative”
- 4) Alternative D – No Action Alternative



Silver State Trail – Alternative A

- 197 miles
- Connection to Ely
- Extend south toward Lincoln Co., but not connect to SST in Lincoln Co.
- Crosses BLM-administered lands
- No U.S. highway crossings
- Access through:
 - Cave Valley (starting just north of Lincoln Co. line)
 - Butte Valley
 - Steptoe Valley (ending at Highway 93 just north of Comins Lake at county boundary)



Alternative A

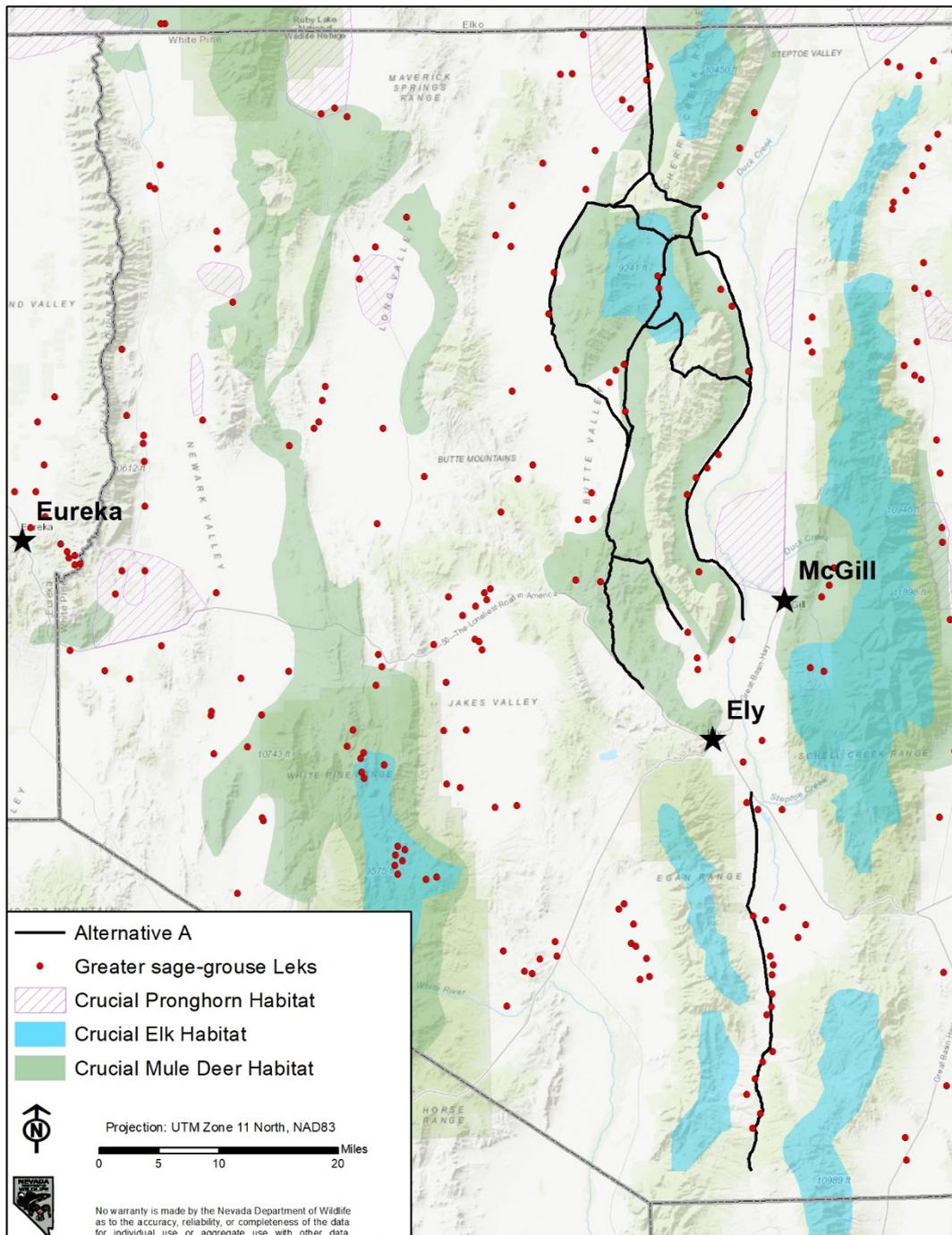
North-South

197 miles

Existing County Roads

Crucial Habitat:

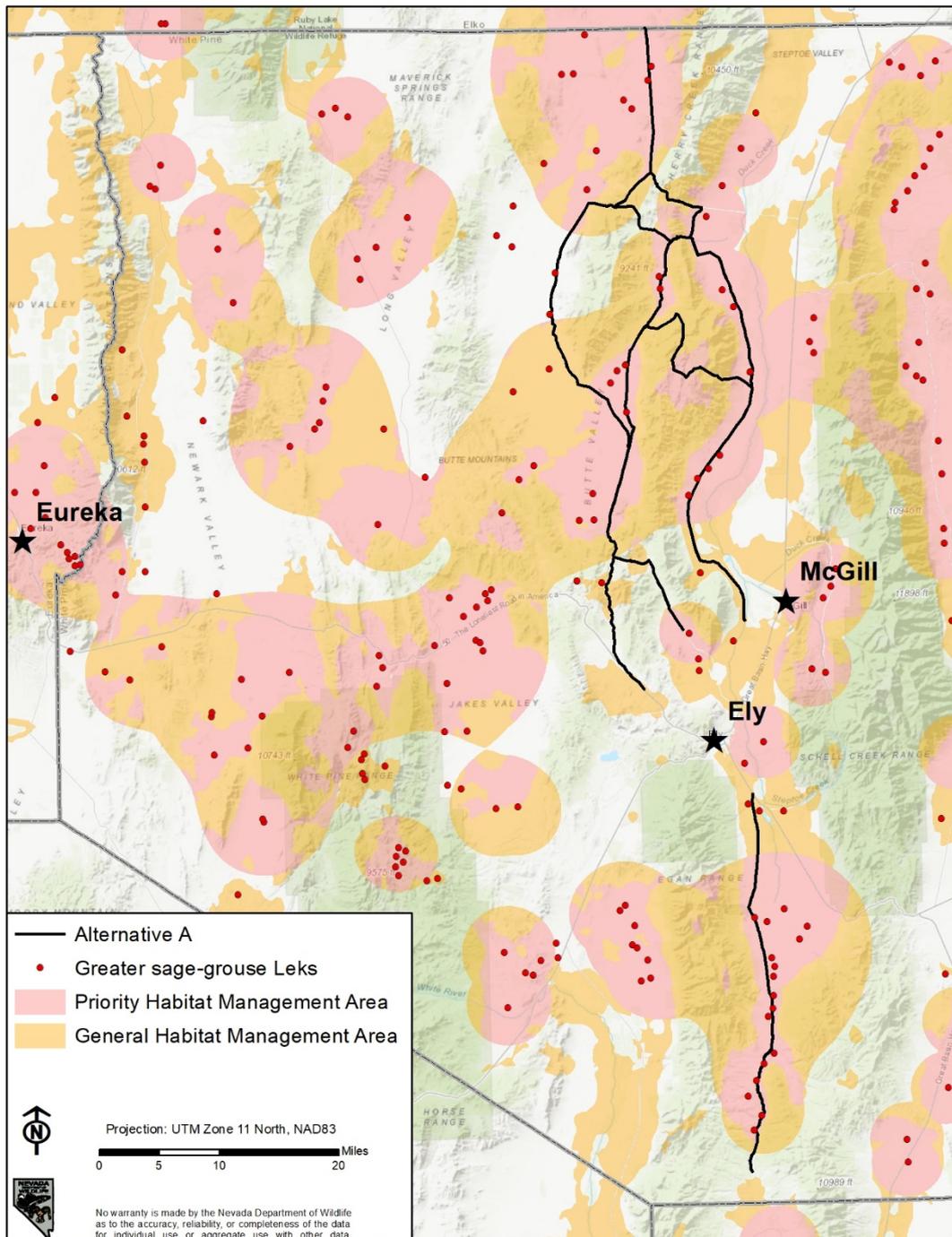
- Mule Deer
- Elk
- Pronghorn



Alternative A

Crucial Habitat:

- Sage-grouse
 - Lek sites
 - Brood-rearing
 - PHMA
 - GHMA



Silver State Trail – Alternative B

- 335 miles
- Based on 2004 Alternative submitted by the public
- Alternative C (with modifications) chosen in 2011 White Pine Act DR
- Connection to Ely, Lund, Eureka
- Extend south into Lincoln Co., but not connected to SST in Lincoln Co.
- Unimproved/unmaintained routes
- Utilizes Egan Crest Recreation Area Trailhead
- Crosses BLM and USFS
- Multiple U.S. Highway crossings
- Follows Mt. Grafton Wilderness boundary as well as the southern, eastern and northern boundary of Becky Peak Wilderness
- White Pine Wilderness and South Egan Range Wilderness



Alternative B

335 miles

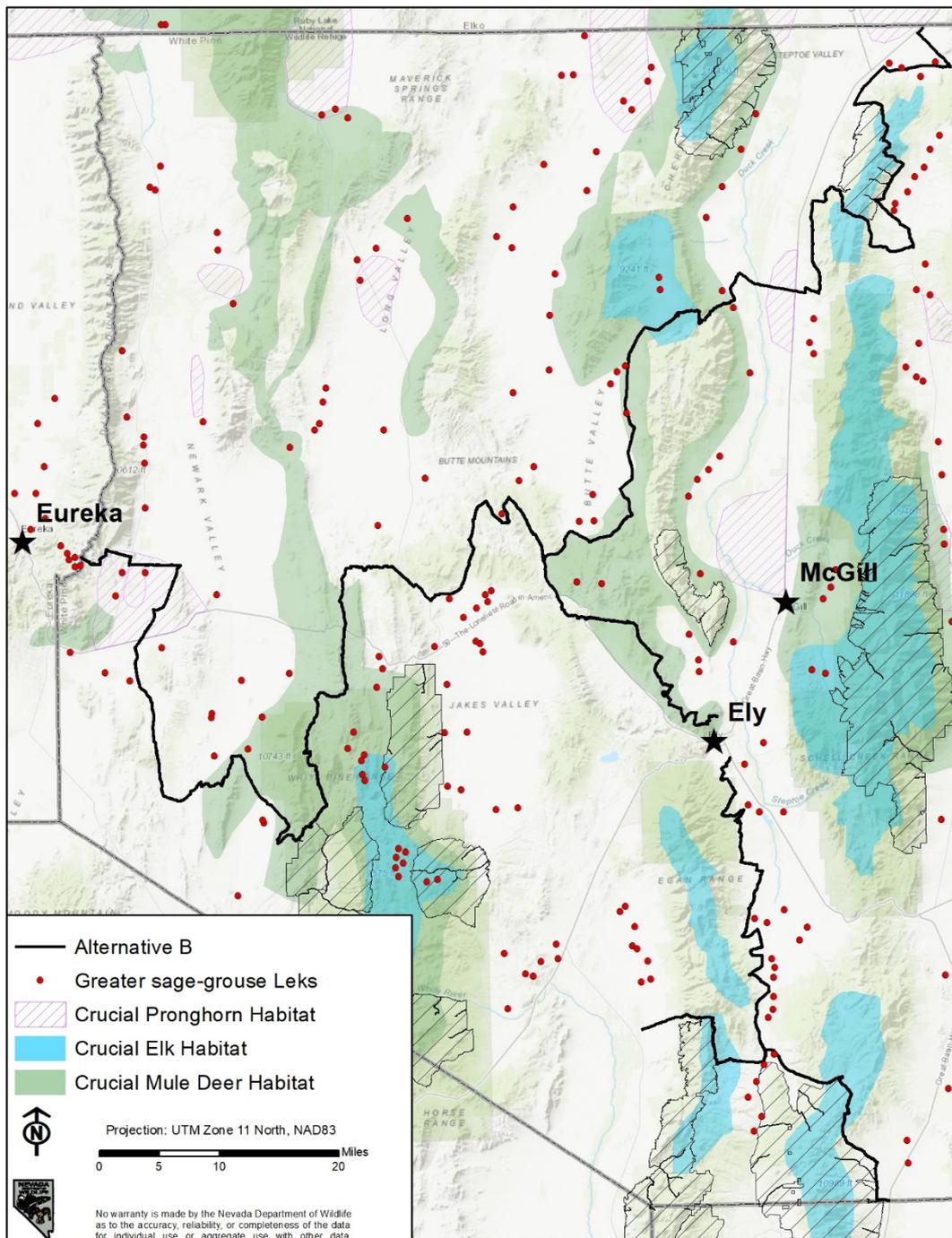
Existing County Roads

Unimproved single/double tracks

Bounds four wilderness areas

Crucial Habitat:

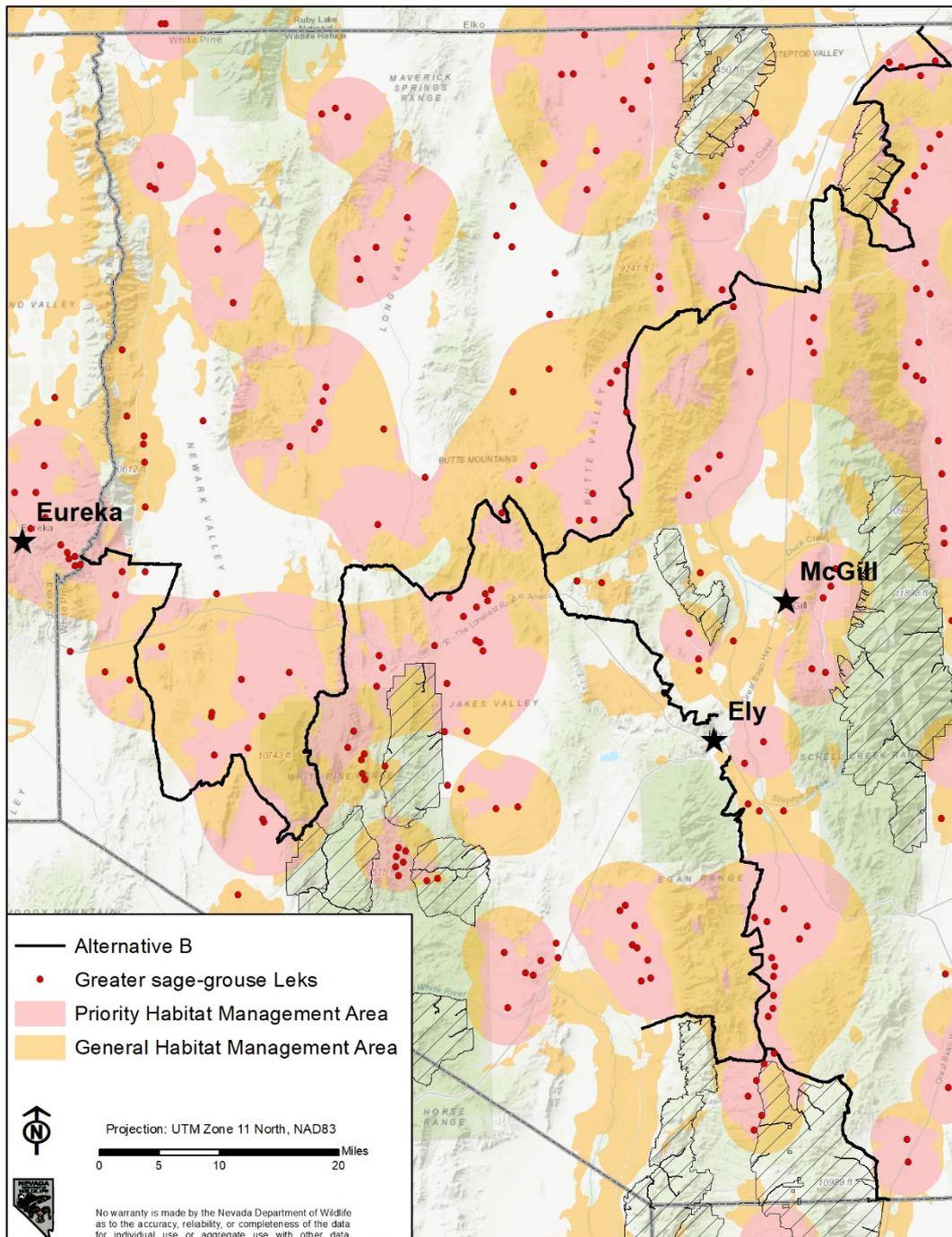
- Mule Deer
- Elk
- Pronghorn



Alternative B

Crucial Habitat:

- Sage-grouse
 - Breeding/Lek sites
 - Brood-rearing
 - PHMA
 - GHMA



Silver State Trail – Alternative C

- 153 miles
- “Wildlife Alternative”
- Incorporated feedback received during Scoping
- Modification of Alternatives A and B
- Crosses only BLM-administered lands
- Bounds north and eastern boundary of Mt. Grafton Wilderness
- Incorporates avoidance of:
 - Sensitive habitat for greater sage-grouse and active leks
 - Sensitive habitat for elk, mule deer, pronghorn
- Still includes significant wildlife concerns

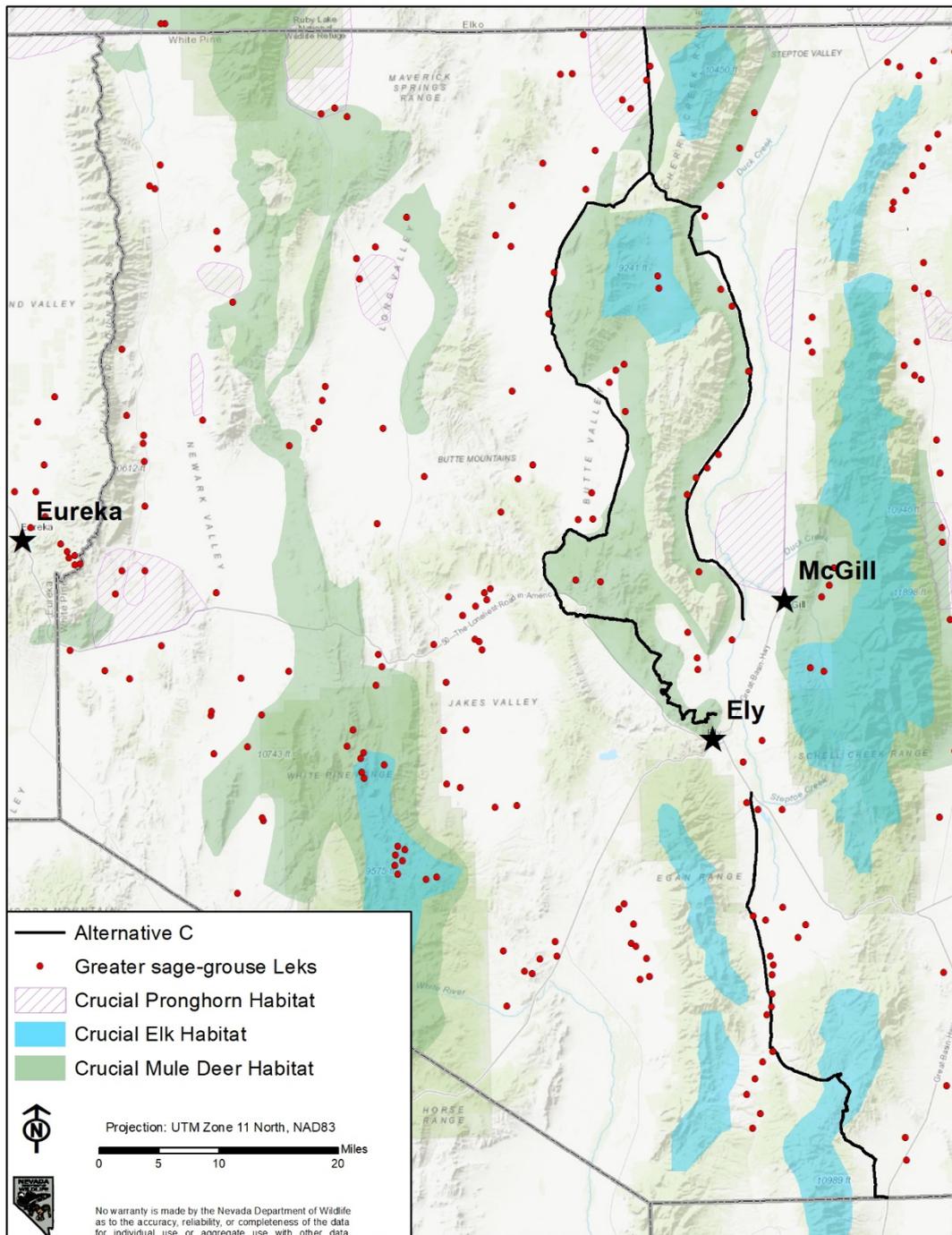


Alternative C

Existing County Roads

Crucial Habitat:

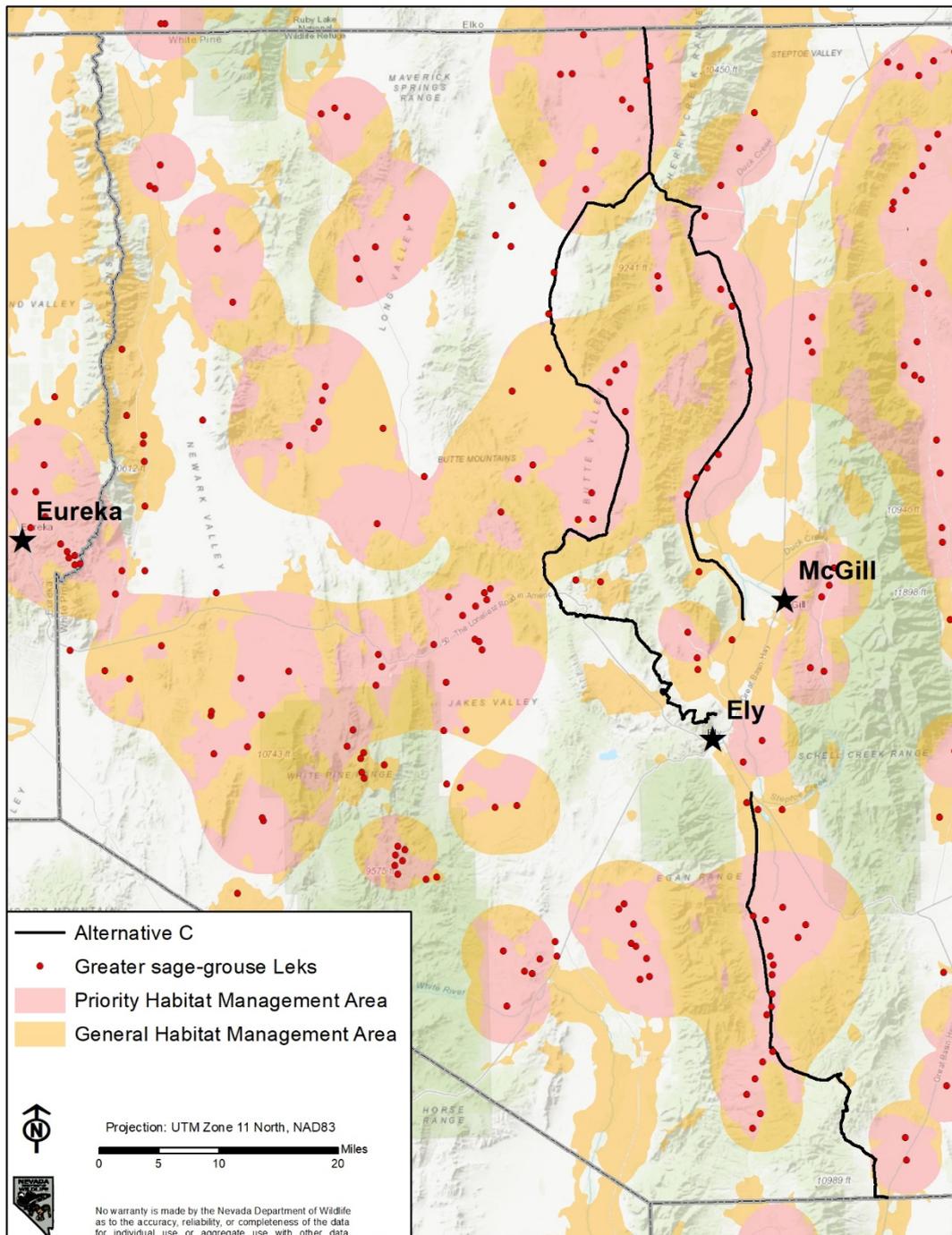
- Mule Deer
- Elk
- Pronghorn
- Sage-grouse



Alternative C

Crucial Habitat:

- Sage-grouse
 - Breeding/Lek sites
 - Brood-rearing
 - PHMA
 - GHMA



Silver State Trail – Alternative D

- No Action Alternative
- No designation of trails
- Would not change motorized recreation on designated and existing roads and trails as allowed under the Ely RMP/FEIS and the USFS Travel Management Plan.
- OHV management, use, and associated impacts in White Pine Co. would continue with no anticipated increase in use.



All Alternatives

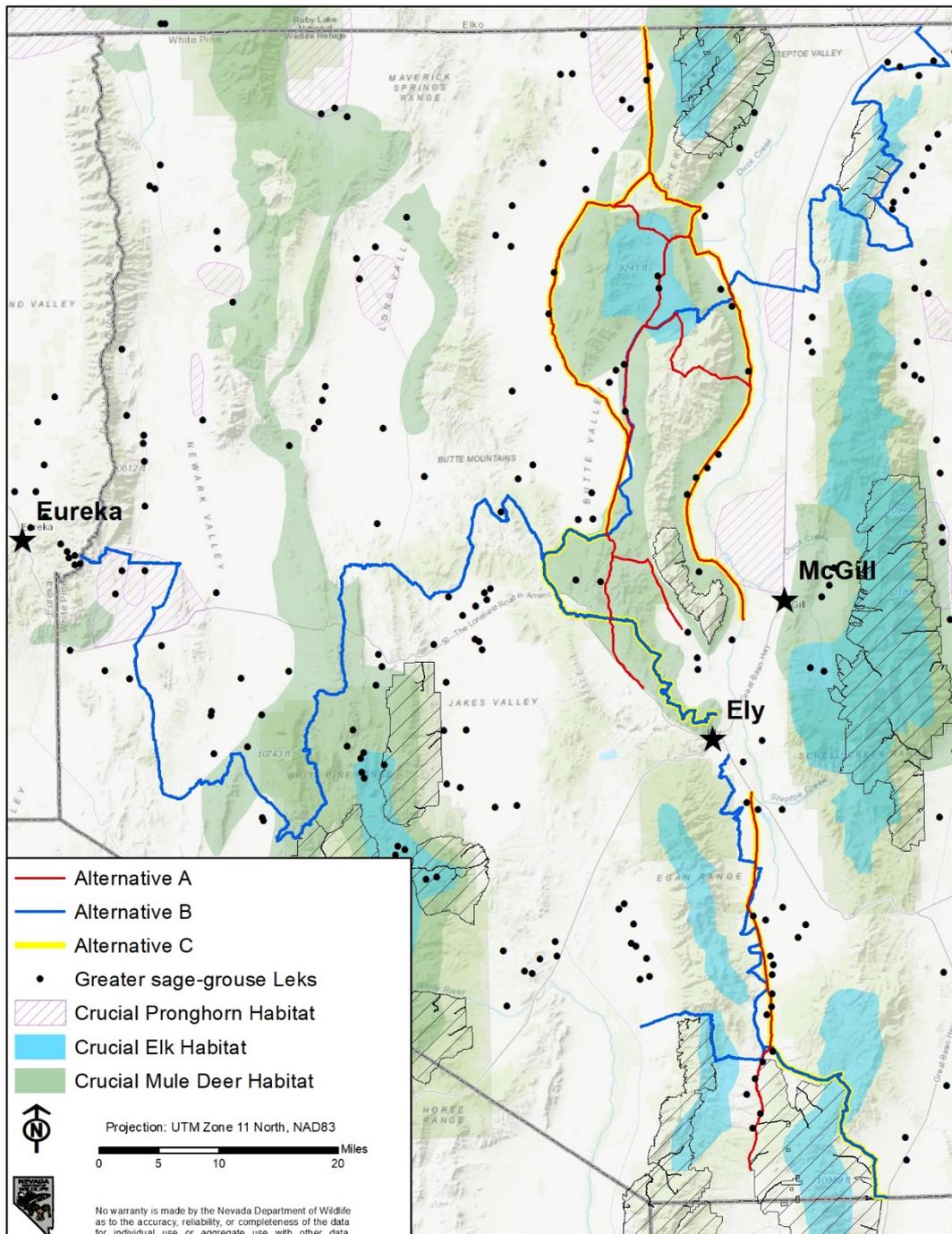
A – 197 miles

B – 335 miles

C – 153 miles

Crucial habitat:

- Mule deer
- Elk
- Pronghorn
- Sage-grouse
- Migratory birds
- Raptors



All Alternatives

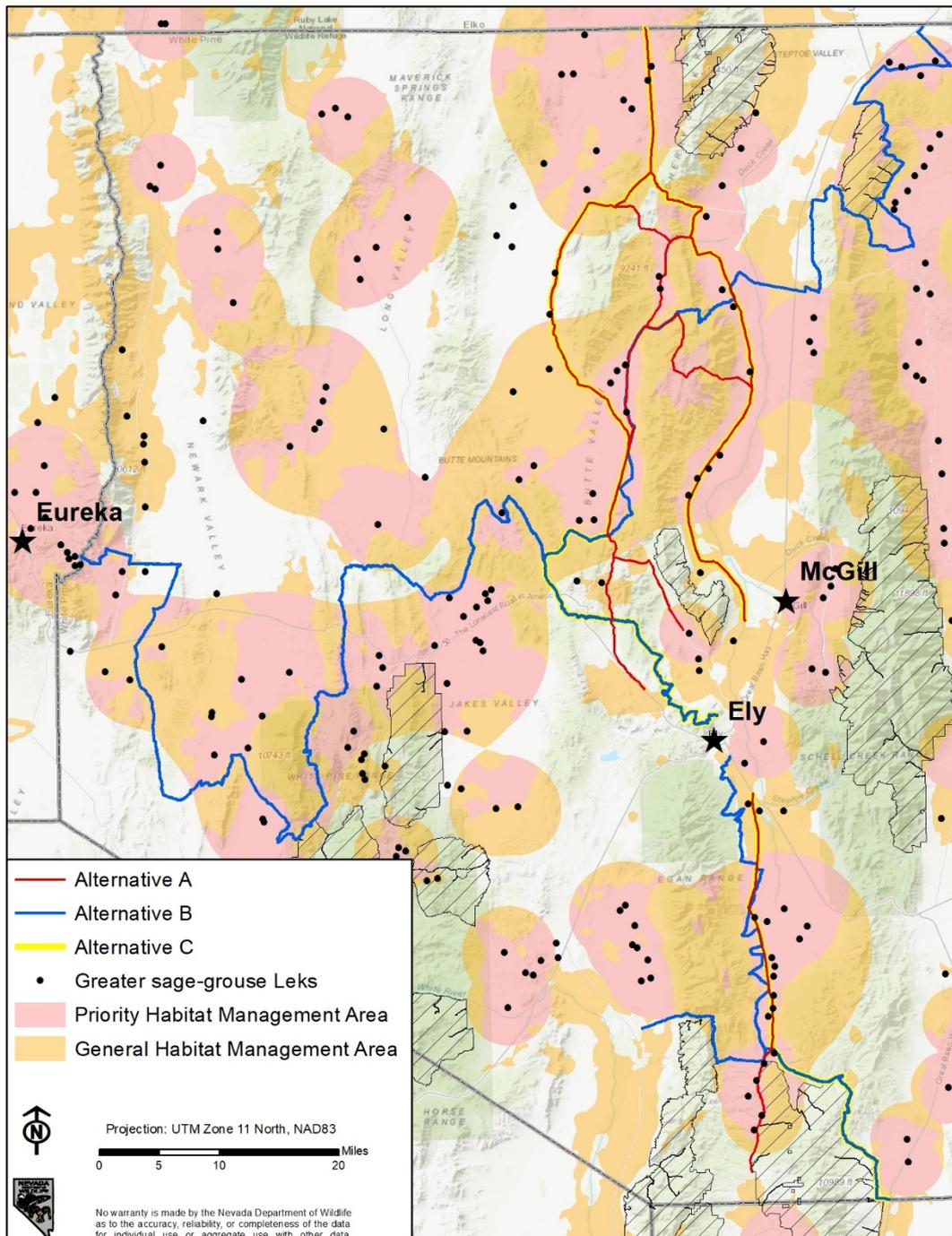
A – 197 miles

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Crucial habitat:

- Mule deer
- Elk
- Pronghorn
- Sage-grouse
- Migratory birds
- Raptors



Silver State Trail - Concerns

- Complete Management Plan (MP) won't be completed for up to two years
 - MP will describe actions to periodically evaluate and manage appropriate levels of use
 - Educational signage and materials
 - Wildlife monitoring
 - Recreational and visitor use monitoring
 - Riparian and wetland monitoring
 - Rangeland monitoring
- No traffic studies completed to-date
- Discrepancies in wildlife data used for EA analysis



Silver State Trail - Concerns

- Insufficient analysis of impacts to wildlife due to increased use of trails as a result of designation
- Lack of consistent adherence to the BLM sage-grouse ARMPA stipulations
- Cumulative effects analysis has not been adequately addressed
- All routes have segments occurring in close proximity to active sage-grouse leks
- All routes intersect crucial summer and winter habitat for big game.
- Increased use may lead to avoidance of crucial habitats due to human presence and increased noise
- Increased potential for habitat loss and degradation by the spread of noxious weeds by OHVs



Silver State Trail - Concerns

- Increased potential for wildfire due to increased human presence
- Route proliferation by users creating new routes into areas with no designation
 - Alternative B bounds existing wilderness areas, where additional unsanctioned routes would decrease habitat quality and reduce wilderness characteristics
- Concern whether BLM has the resources to conduct monitoring and maintenance that would be required to minimize analyze and manage impacts
- Assumption of “incremental increase in motorized use and human presence” despite no studies being conducted



Silver State Trail - Recommendations

- Alternative D, no action alternative, is the least impactful to wildlife
- Alternative C, incorporated some wildlife concerns
- Address lack of analysis on impacts due to increased traffic
- Address lack of analysis on associated roads with potential for increased use due to designation
- Address discrepancies in wildlife data used for analysis



Silver State Trail - Recommendations

- Incorporate ability to implement seasonal timing restrictions/limitations
- Provide educational information on seasonal closures to those users that are looking to utilize the SST for the sole purposes of recreation
- Protection of natural and artificial water sources
- Protection of critical lambing/fawning habitat during seasonal use
- Develop monitoring plan
- Include more comprehensive cumulative effects analysis



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