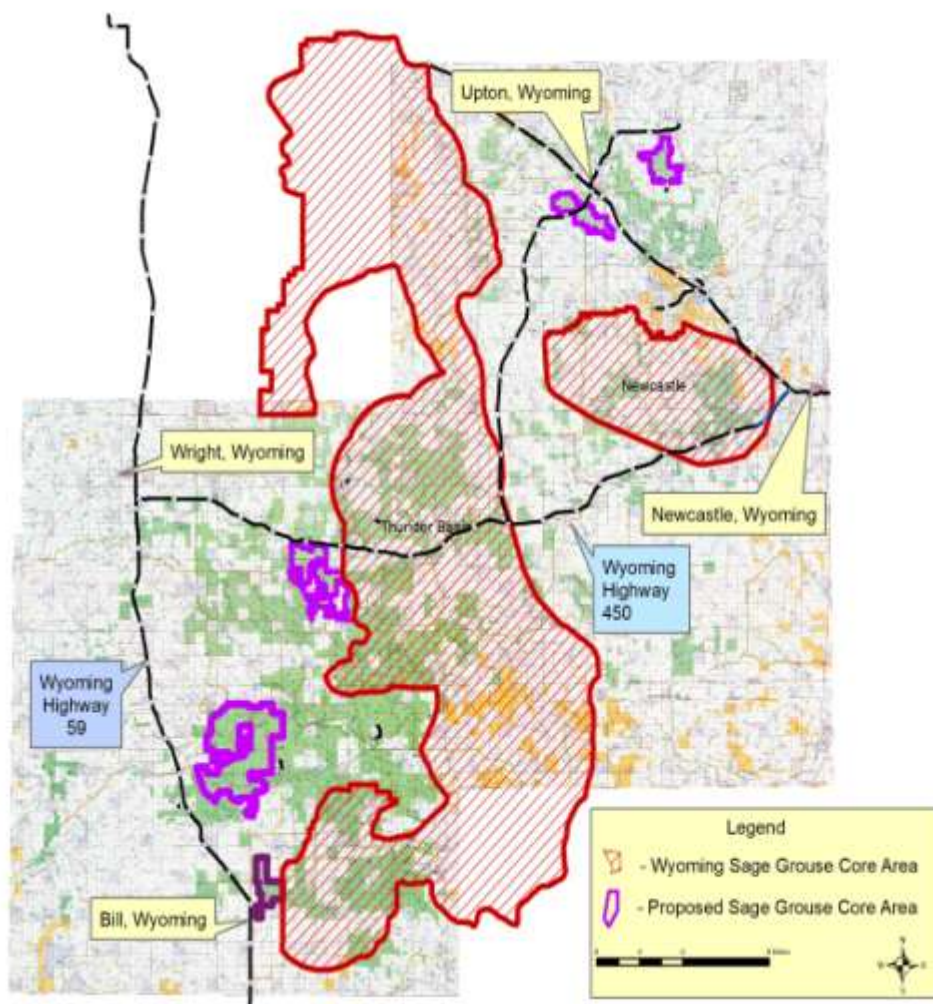


Thunder Basin NG Core Area Adjustment Recommendations

The U.S. Forest Service, Douglas Ranger District would like to propose the following adjustments the Wyoming Governor's Sage Grouse Core Area Management associated with the Thunder Basin National Grassland. We would like to recommend the additions of five additional areas completely on National Grassland surface and the removal of a portion of the Thunder Basin Core Area that we feel is not in the most suitable habitat for sage grouse. The five new areas represent approximately 51,067 acres of Thunder Basin National Grassland, and the area being recommended for removal is approximately 6,904 acres. If fully accepted, this represents a net gain of 44,163 acres of Core on Thunder Basin National Grassland surface, and includes no private or State of Wyoming lands. Each area will be discussed individually below.

AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION



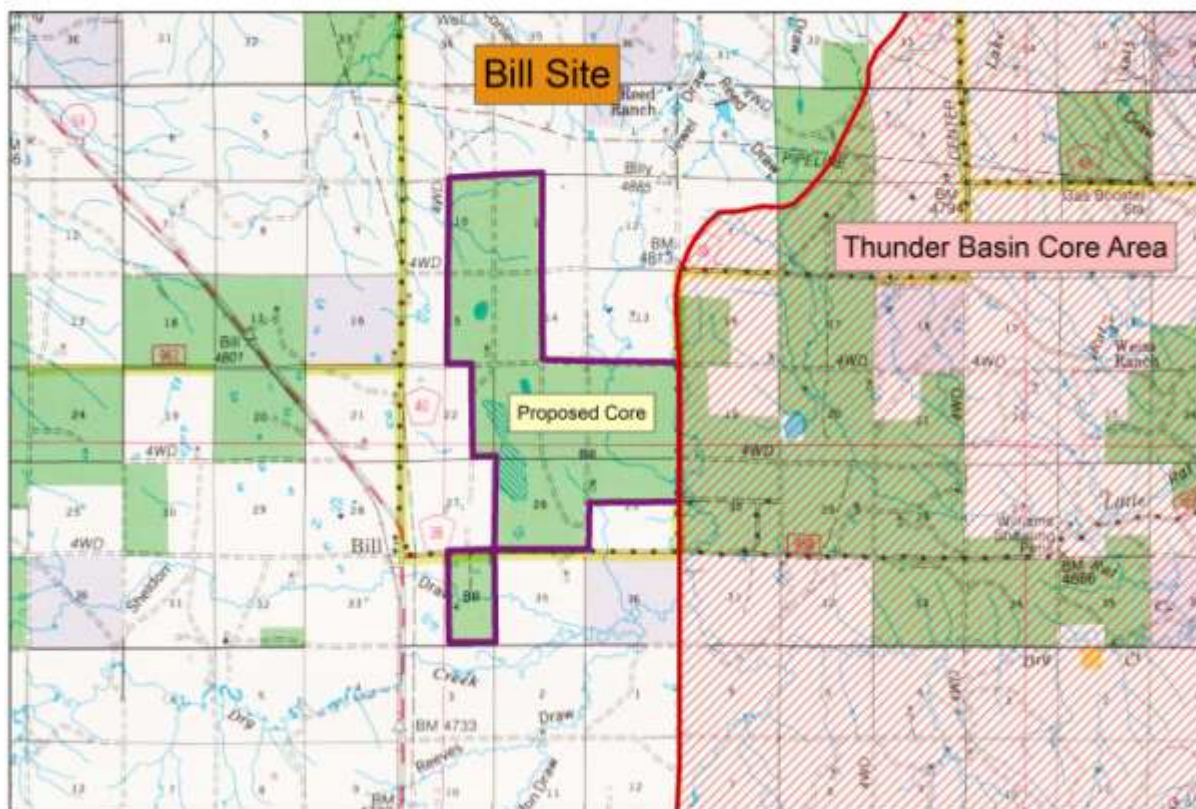
1: The Bill Site

Located near Bill Wyoming, east of Wyoming Highway 59.

This area adjoins the Thunder Basin Core area on the southwest edge and would extend out



about an additional 2.5 miles from the current edge. It represents approximately 4,053 acres of National Grassland surface. This area provides nesting and brood-rearing habitat in a relatively undisturbed sagebrush habitat type as depicted in this picture. There are no current mineral leases on this parcel, and the current grazing activity appears to be compatible with sage grouse management.



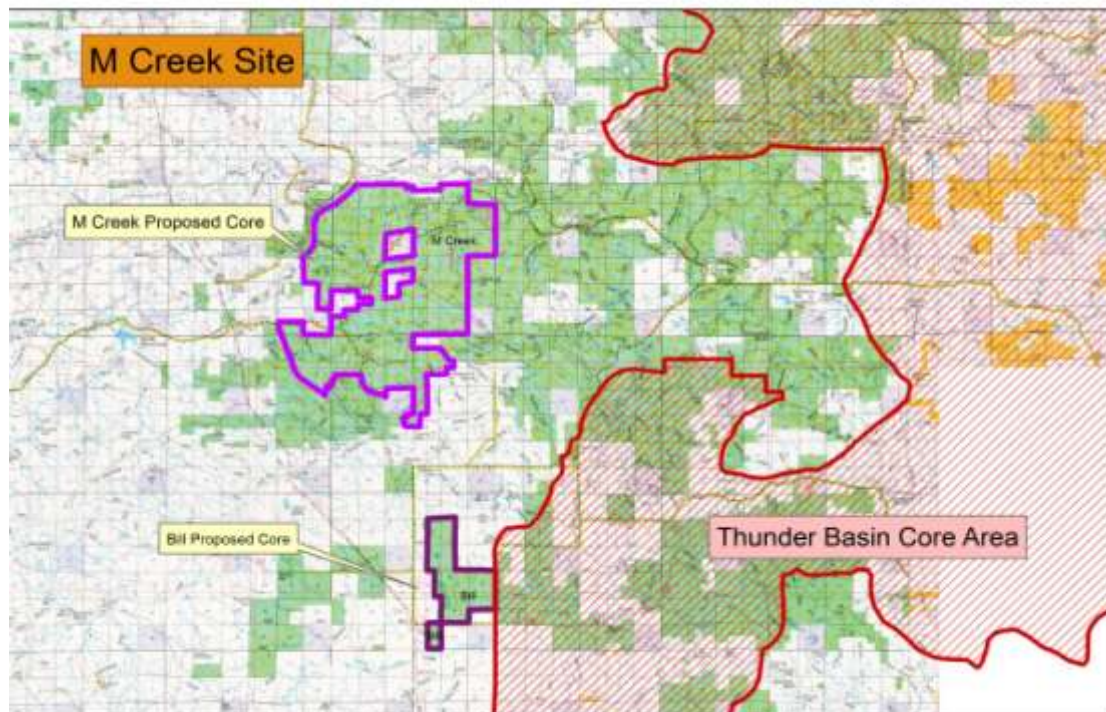
2: M Creek Site

Located north of Bill, Wyoming and east of Wyoming Highway 59 Benefits

This area is just east of the Thunder Basin Core area between the Dry Fork of the Cheyenne River and Antelope Creek. It represents approximately 26,606 acres of National Grassland surface. There are three known sage grouse leks in the area, two of which had a combined 37



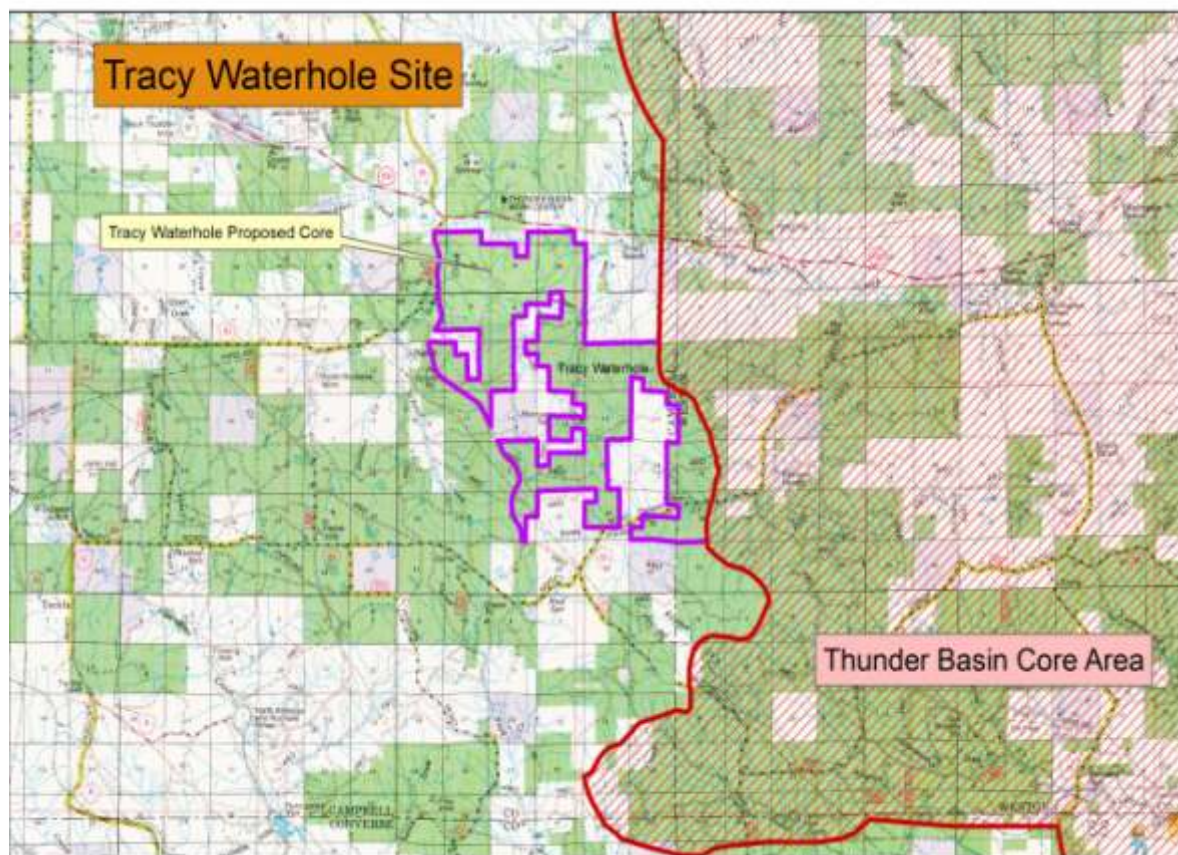
males reported in 2006. This area provides yearlong habitat including known nesting and brood-rearing habitat in a relatively undisturbed sagebrush habitat type as depicted in this picture. There is minimal (approximately 16%) oil and gas leasing on this parcel, and coal mining activities are moving away from this area. In addition, the current grazing activity appears to be compatible with sage grouse management.



3: Tracy Waterhole Site

Located east of Wright, Wyoming and south of Wyoming Highway 450.

This area is located east of the newly re-constructed Mackey Road and connects to the western edge of the Thunder Basin Core Area. It represents approximately 10,693 acres of National Grassland surface. There is one known sage grouse leks in the area, the Tracy Waterhole lek, which was discovered in 2000. It had 30 males reported in it in 2006. This area provides yearlong habitat including known nesting and brood-rearing habitat in a relatively undisturbed sagebrush habitat type as depicted in this picture. There is limited (approximately 23%) oil and gas leasing on this parcel, and coal mining activities are moving away from this area. In addition, the current grazing activity appears to be compatible with sage grouse management.



4: Upton Site

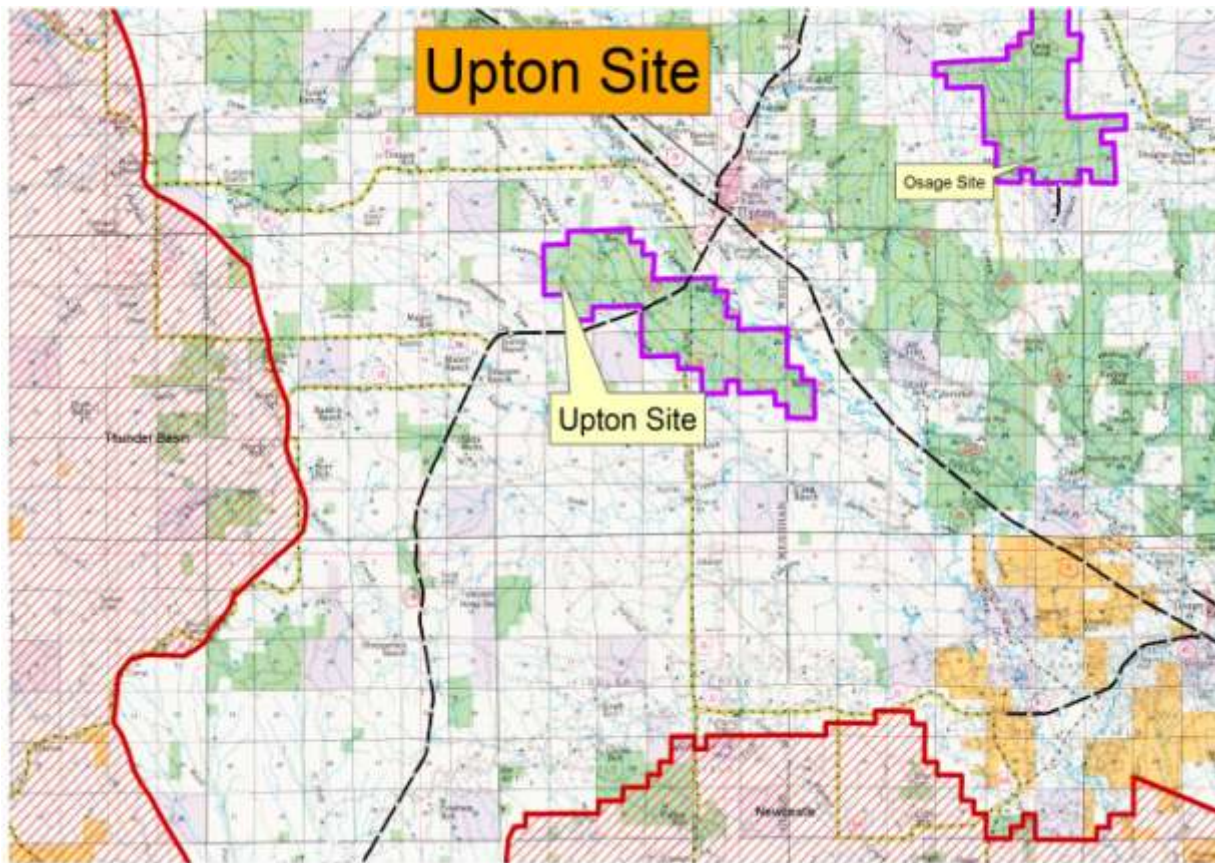
Located south of Upton, Wyoming and on both sides of Wyoming Highway 116.

This area is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the town of Upton and lies between the



Thunder Basin Core Area and The Newcastle Core Area. It represents approximately 5,282 acres of National Grassland surface. There are two known sage grouse leks in the area, one of which was discovered in 2000. The highest reported attendance was 7 males reported in 2009. This area provides yearlong habitat in a relatively undisturbed sagebrush habitat type as depicted in this picture. There no oil and gas leasing on this parcel, and bentonite mining activities have moved away from this area. The

current grazing activity also appears to be compatible with sage grouse management.



5: Osage Site

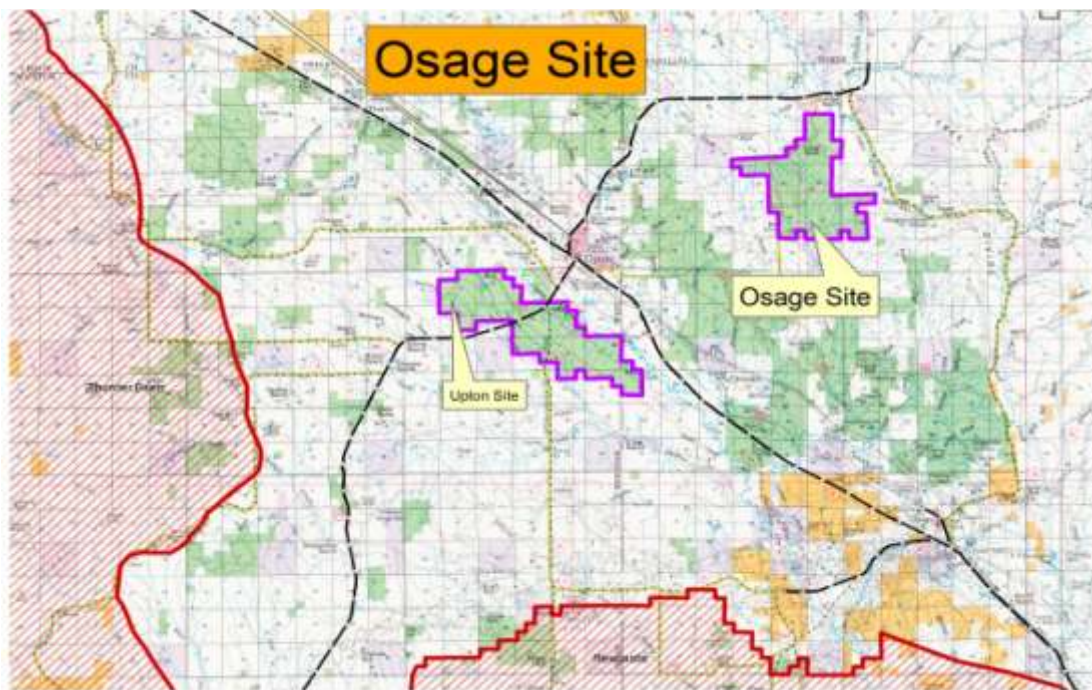
Located north of Upton, Wyoming and east and south of Wyoming Highway 116.

This area is located approximately 5 miles northeast of the town of Upton and also lies between

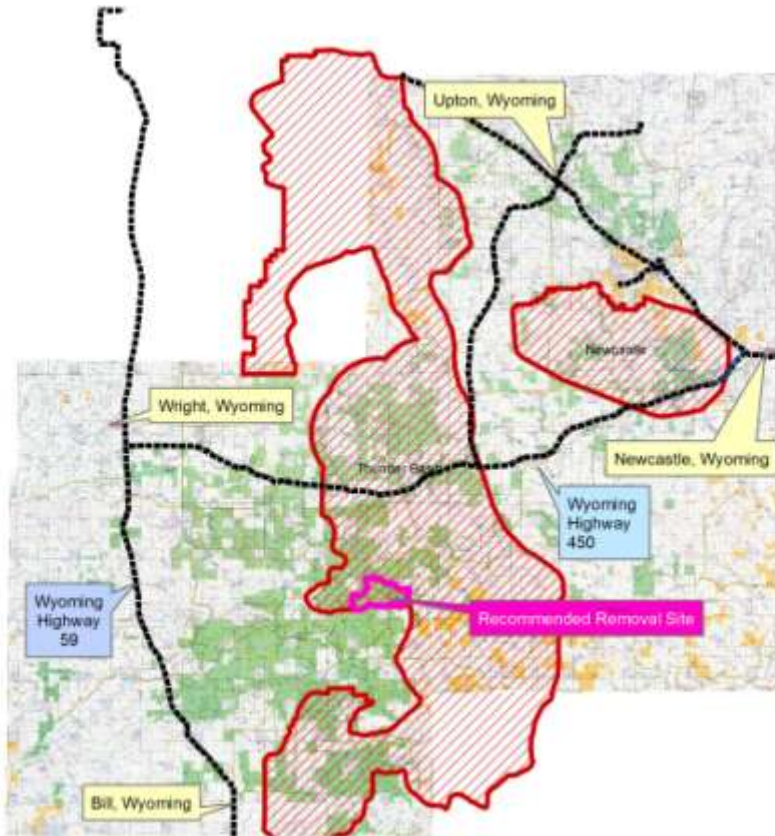


the Thunder Basin Core Area and The Newcastle Core Area. It represents approximately 4,433 acres of National Grassland surface. While there are no leks on this parcel, there are three known sage grouse leks within 0.6 mile of the area. The highest reported combined attendance was 20 males reported in 2010. This area provides yearlong habitat in a relatively undisturbed sagebrush habitat type as depicted in this picture.

There is no oil and gas leasing on this parcel, and no mining in the area. The current grazing activity also appears to be compatible with sage grouse management.



Portion of the Thunder Basin Core Area Recommended For Removal



1. The Frog Creek Site

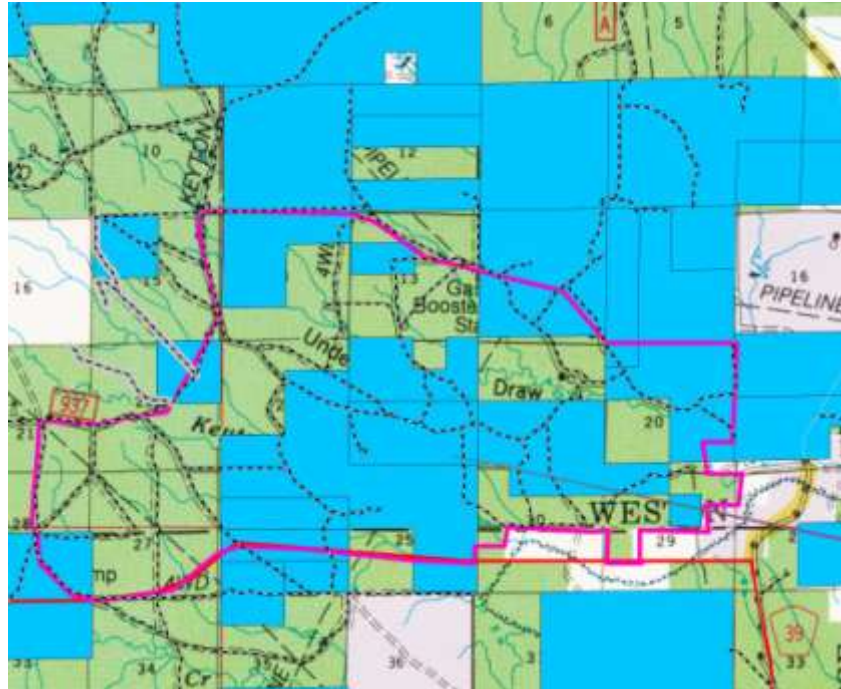
Located on the central, western edge of the Thunder Basin Core Area.

The U.S. Forest Service would like to recommend The Frog Creek site for removal from the



Thunder Basin Core Area. This area is north of the Cheyenne River and between the Keyton and Lynch Roads. This is an area of approximately 6,904 acres of National Grassland surface. The habitat is fragmented by numerous roads associated with the development of the Frog Creek oil field. Within this area 52% is currently leased for oil and gas development.

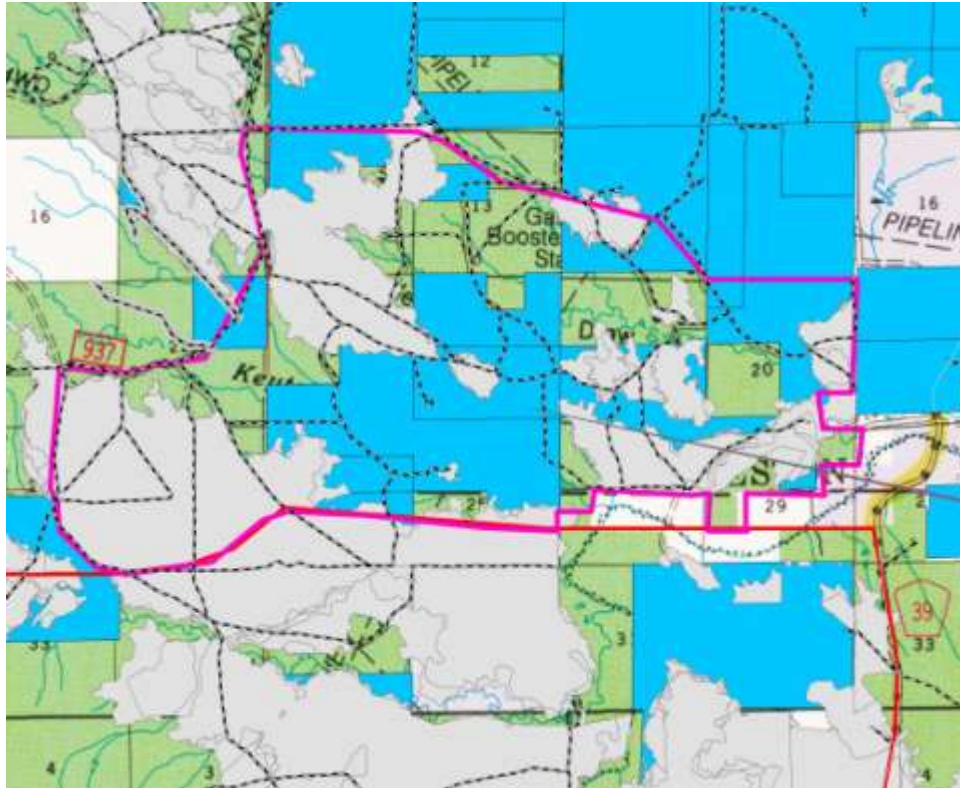
The areas shown below in blue are current oil and gas leases.



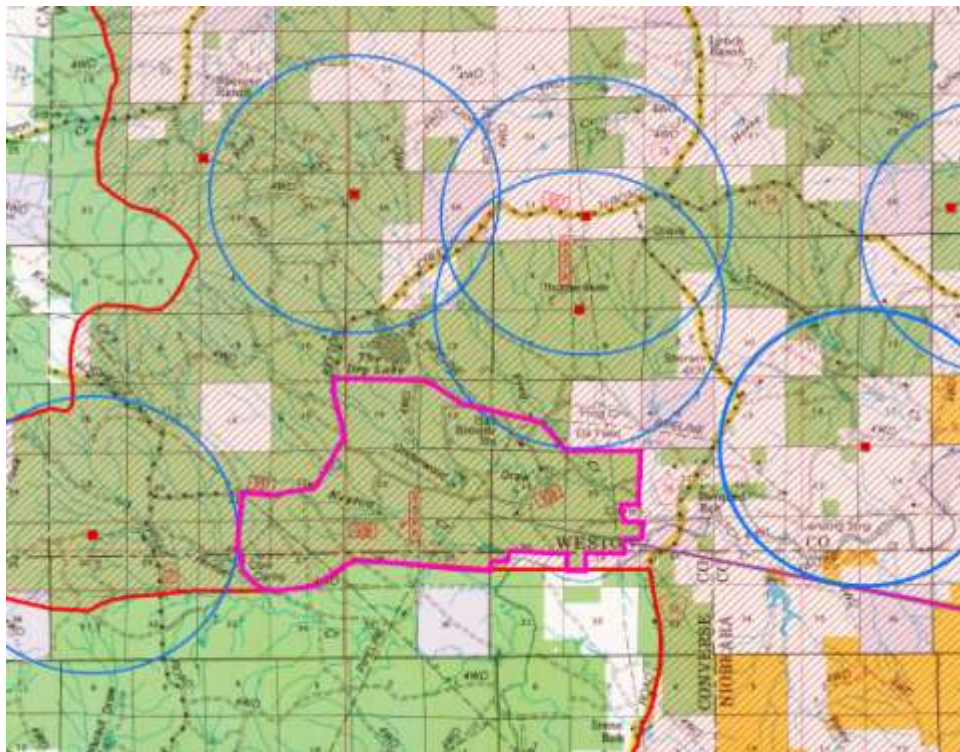
Much of the habitat in this area is also made up of both active and historical prairie dog colonies (shown below in gray), but that have little or no sagebrush component.



With these three habitat impacts, there is little suitable habitat remaining.



The following map also illustrates 2 mile buffers around the nearest active leks in the area.



Based on the above information, the Forest Service does not feel that the Frog Creek site can reasonably be expected to meet quality sage grouse habitat needs, and respectfully recommends that this area be removed from the Thunder Basin Core Area. This modification boundary was also drawn to follow existing roads to better facilitate locating the Core Area boundary on the ground.

The Forest Service believes that these recommendations meet the “sideboards” established by the SGIT:

1. “No Net Loss of birds or habitat” – Our recommendations would result in a net gain of both birds and habitat.
2. “Do Not allow core areas to be Swiss Cheeses or fragmented” – All forest Service recommendations are dealing with Core area boundaries or areas currently outside of a current core area.
3. “Make recommendations for areas within core that may be considered disturbance” – The Frog Creek area is a highly disturbed area with much of the area in a “non-sagebrush habitat type.”
4. “Consider boundary adjustments based on new knowledge” – Several of the areas proposed by the Forest Service are based on new information on grouse use and populations within the proposed areas.
5. “Consider areas recommended by the USFS in their viability analysis” – The five new areas proposed for addition are these exact areas that were originally presented to the SGIT as a part of our analysis.

In summary, the Forest Service would like to recommend the additions of five additional areas completely on National Grassland surface and the removal of a portion of the Thunder Basin Core Area that we feel is not the most suitable habitat for sage grouse. The five new areas represent approximately 51,067 acres of Thunder Basin National Grassland, and the area being recommended for removal is approximately 6,904 acres. If fully accepted, this represents a net gain of 44,163 acres of Thunder Basin National Grassland surface, and includes no private or State of Wyoming lands.

If you have any questions feel free to contact Tim Byer, at the Douglas Ranger District, 307-358-7131.