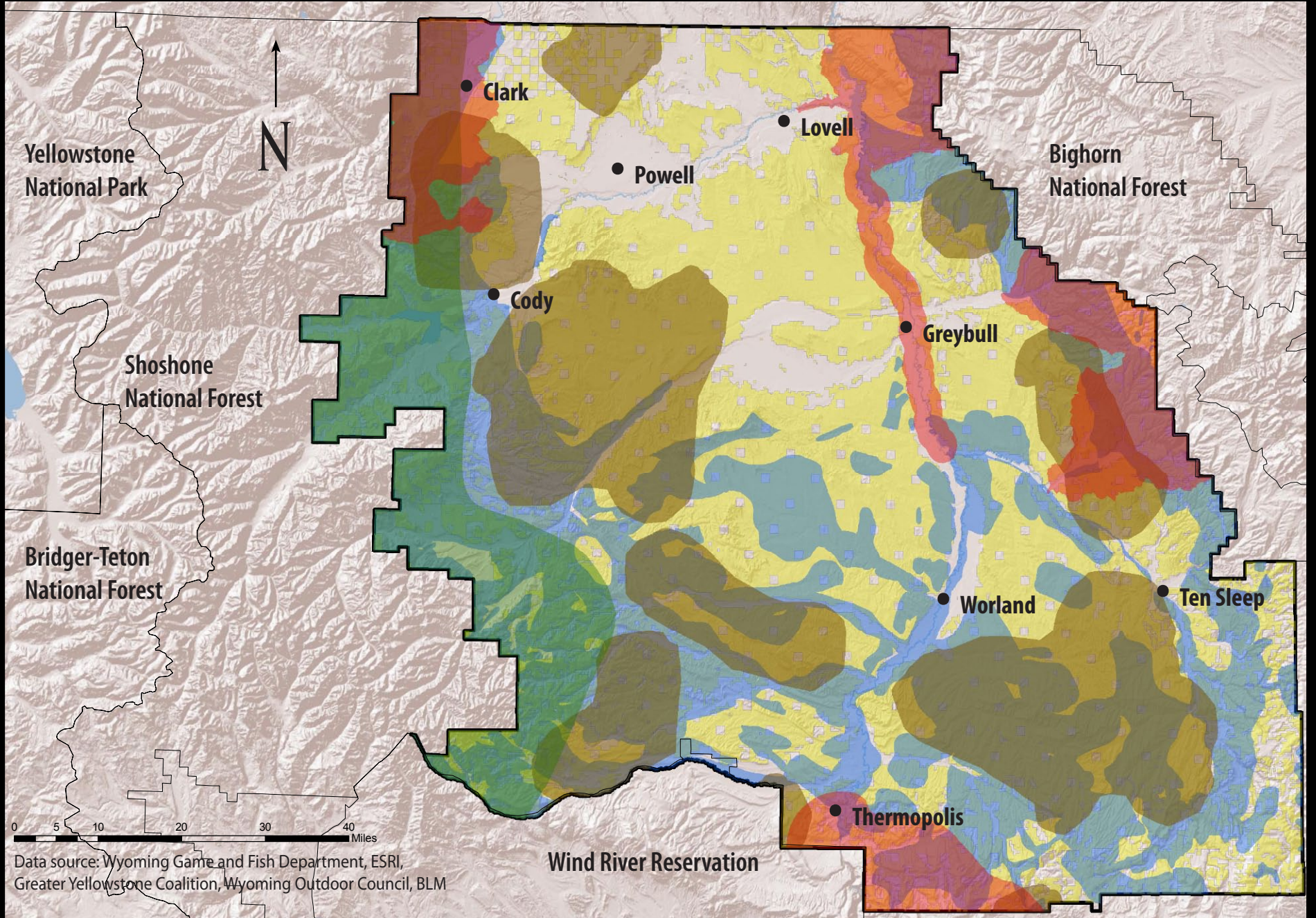



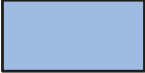



IMPORTANT WILDLIFE HABITAT IN THE BIGHORN BASIN



KEY

-  Key Nongame Area
-  Occupied Grizzly Bear Habitat
-  Sage Grouse Core Area
-  Big Game Crucial Winter and Parturition Habitat
-  Federal Minerals





WYOMING is known for its world-class wildlife and open spaces. Within Wyoming, the Bighorn Basin has some of the state's most intact, diverse, and important wildlife habitats. Visitors to the Bighorn Basin have a chance to see the full complement of native species in a fully-functioning ecosystem. Just a few of these species include: grizzly bear, gray wolf, black bear, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, moose, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, , prairie dog, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, golden eagle, great gray owl, ferruginous hawk, greater sage-grouse, long-billed curlew, mountain plover, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and boreal toad. It was in the Bighorn Basin that the last-known wild population of black-footed ferrets, one of the world's rarest mammals, was found. Notably, the Bighorn Basin contains the largest contiguous tract of BLM land occupied by grizzly bears in the lower 48 states. With the decline of important food sources such as whitebark pine and Yellowstone cutthroat trout throughout the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, as well as additional stressors related to climate change, all occupied and suitable grizzly habitat on BLM lands will be needed to ensure healthy populations of this species.

Few areas in North America support such robust populations of bighorn sheep, moose, elk, mule deer, and pronghorn as does the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Many of these animals spend the summer on National Forest and Park Service lands, but descend onto BLM lands in the Bighorn Basin during the winter. These crucial winter habitats are an important limiting factor for these animals and must be protected to assure the viability of these herds across all of the lands in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Several wolf packs range across BLM lands along the western edge of the Bighorn Basin. These wolves fill a vital role in maintaining healthy wildlife herds and restoring native vegetation communities.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has designated several Key Nongame Areas in the Bighorn Basin because these places support a variety of bird and mammal species of special concern. One of these areas supports the highest concentration of nesting mountain plover in Wyoming. This species has been proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Several core greater sage-grouse breeding areas have also been identified in the Bighorn Basin. If adequately protected, these areas may help preclude the need to list this species under the ESA.

MANAGEMENT CHANGE IS NEEDED TO PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE HERITAGE

Under current management, BLM has recognized that "the forecast for wildlife resources in the [Bighorn Basin] Planning Area is predicted to decline overall." Summary of the Analysis of the Management Situation for the Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan Revision, 2-101. Climate change will likely exacerbate this decline because vegetation communities may shift or change if Wyoming becomes warmer and drier. A new management paradigm that protects our wildlife heritage from unnecessary or poorly planned oil and gas development and climate change is needed to protect one of the nation's great wildlife areas.



QUICK FACTS

- The largest contiguous tract of BLM land occupied by grizzly bears in the lower 48 states is found in the Bighorn Basin.
- The last-known wild population of black-footed ferrets was found in the Bighorn Basin.
- BLM lands in the Bighorn Basin provide crucial winter range for bighorn sheep, moose, elk, deer, and pronghorn.
- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has designated several Key Nongame Areas in the Bighorn Basin because of their importance to birds and mammals that are of special concern.
- Populations of many wildlife species in the Bighorn Basin are likely to decline in the face of industrial development in their critical habitats. Therefore we must prevent development in these areas, while planning for development in the areas where wildlife would not be significantly harmed by development.