From: Wightman, Catherine
To: Carlson, John; Jeff Berglund
Cc: jlchaffi@blm.gov; jthompso@blm.gov; ramiller@blm.gov; thanley@blm.gov; Brooks, Sandra S; Kimberly Prill; Kelly Bockting
Subject: RE: Management zone boundaries at the local scale
Date: Wednesday, March 13, 2013 1:44:03 PM
Attachments: shields valley for BLM_not for distribution.jpg

John,

The MZ boundaries were drawn based on floristic provinces as defined by Connelly et al. 2004. The Shield River area was considered to be more ecologically similar to SW Montana than to the Great Plains – right or wrong. The general habitat that you show in #3 includes a curve of habitat that links lekking areas in Meager Co (and a bit of Park) to lekking areas in Sweetgrass County but the connecting link does not currently have any known leks. Similarily #2 on your map is not known to currently support any leks. I am not aware of the non-lekking areas being used as winter habitat. I have attached a crude map of the area that depicts what I am trying to describe. This map is for BLM internal use only. I believe the sage-grouse distribution shown in the map is a hold-over from Schroeder et al. 2004.

The Big Belt population, primarily in Meager Co., is small and isolated from other populations by at least 50 miles. There are ~a dozen active leks in the area and I believe male attendance is low, I can average those data if it would be helpful. Much of the area has been converted to cropland, some is currently in CRP. The outlook for this population is not rosy.

The area in question is small overall so I'm not sure it matters how it is grouped for analysis; I doubt it will change the outcome much. That said, I am a little uncomfortable with re-defining MZ boundaries for the RMP process. I understand why it will facilitate your effects analysis, but it is unclear to me how that will translate to other range-wide interpretations and whether it will become problematic in the future.

My 2-cents.

Catherine

From: Carlson, John [mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2013 12:47 PM
To: Jeff Berglund; Wightman, Catherine
Cc: jlchaffi@blm.gov; jthompso@blm.gov; ramiller@blm.gov; thanley@blm.gov; Brooks, Sandra S; Kimberly Prill; Kelly Bockting
Subject: Management zone boundaries at the local scale

Hey Jeff and Catherine,

I would like to solicit some advice/guidance/feedback from you and your agencies as we struggle through this management zone level effects documentation effort.

Here is my first request.

Attached is a map that depicts our MT sage-grouse distribution (general habitat) with the boundary between MZ 1 and MZ4. The particular portion in question is the big northern loop of MZ4 that takes in the distribution in the Shields River and areas north of that (in general the area bounded by the red circle #3). This particular portion of the distribution appears to be problematic in the delineation of the management zones since I have found other versions that

have included this portion in MZ 2 as well. From a biological/ecological view this population still appears to not be assigned to the most logical MZ given the contiguous distribution of birds from MZ 1 into this area from the south and east and the gap in distribution with the rest of MZ 4 to which it is currently assigned. This is now coming up as an issue for us as well at how to document effects at the MZ level and which planning effort will be using this distribution in their analysis which is an artifact of your planning area boundaries in relation to this depiction of population affinities as defined by these MZ boundaries.

Catherine, I suspect the FWP had the most influence in these delineations since it is a WAFWA product, so if you would find out what the thought process was to include this area in MZ 4 that would help us chart a course to deal with this. I would like to propose that we merge that loop, including the areas circled and labeled as 2 and 3 on this map into MZ 1 for our MZ effects documentation if you both concur and we will provide a narrative justification for that decision. Thoughts?

Thanks - John

PS. as a side note - Catherine, do you happen to have any idea on the status of sage-grouse in the area under questions. I am under the impression the area no longer has a population of sage-grouse due to the conversion of much of the habitat along the Shields to irrigated cropland. Are there any active leks know in the area any more?

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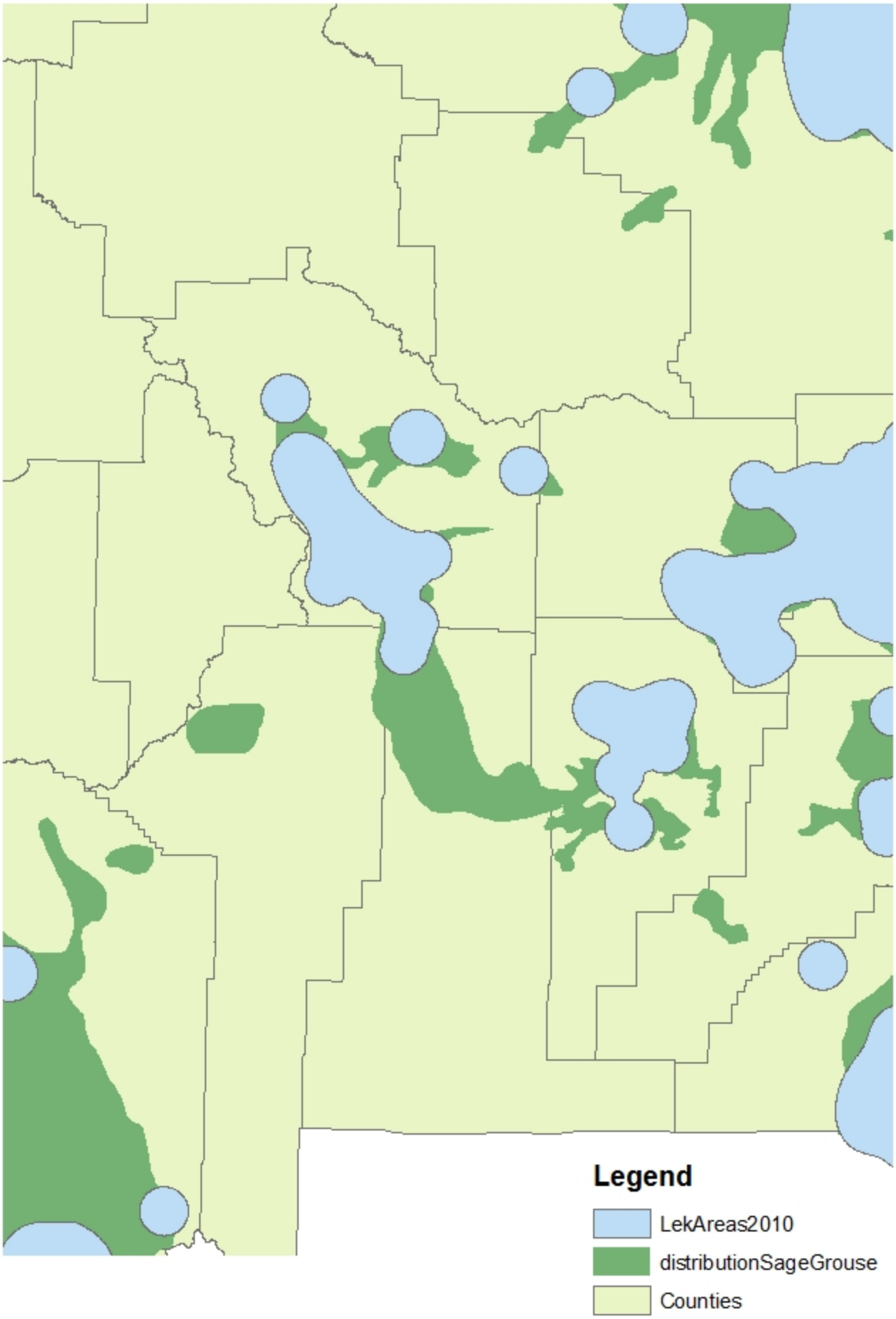
Legend
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