

# Chapter 2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

This chapter describes the two alternatives identified for this project related to the donation of the Chandler Ranch:

- Alternative A, no action alternative
- Alternative B, the proposed action, giving the Service the authority to accept the donation of the Chandler Ranch and expand the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge

The alternatives consider the effects of expanding the refuge boundary to include the project area identified in this EA.

## *Alternative A (no action)*

Currently, the Service manages approximately 23,271 acres of land at the Arapaho NWR. Under the no action alternative, the Service would not expand the boundary of the refuge and would not accept the donation of the Chandler Ranch in fee title.

If the Service fails to act and accept this donation, the executor of the Chandler estate may be forced to change course, and move against the final wishes of Ms. Chandler. There is a distinct possibility that this property, because of its desirable location and existing access by all-weather roads, would be developed and subdivided. This would significantly fragment the area, making it less attractive to wildlife, especially sage-obligate species such as the greater sage grouse. Threats to sagebrush communities include fragmentation from increased housing development, energy development, mining activities, and new roads. Invasive species such as cheatgrass can dramatically alter fire regimes, resulting in negative impacts sagebrush communities, thereby impacting the animals that use this important habitat type.

Conservation organizations or state and local agencies could try to pursue efforts to conserve the acreage within the project area to secure this important habitat. Other groups and agencies could pursue efforts of habitat protection, enhancement or restoration projects within the project area to improve wildlife habitat for migratory birds and the greater sage grouse.

## *Alternative B (proposed action)*

The Service would expand the Arapaho NWR to accept the Chandler Ranch by donation from the last will and testament of Gloria Chandler. The Service would accept, in fee title, approximately 2,250 acres (figure 2).

The Service would also seek to withdraw approximately 605 acres adjacent to the boundary of the Chandler Ranch. These “roundouts” would provide additional quality sagebrush habitat, ease management, operations and maintenance costs for the Service,

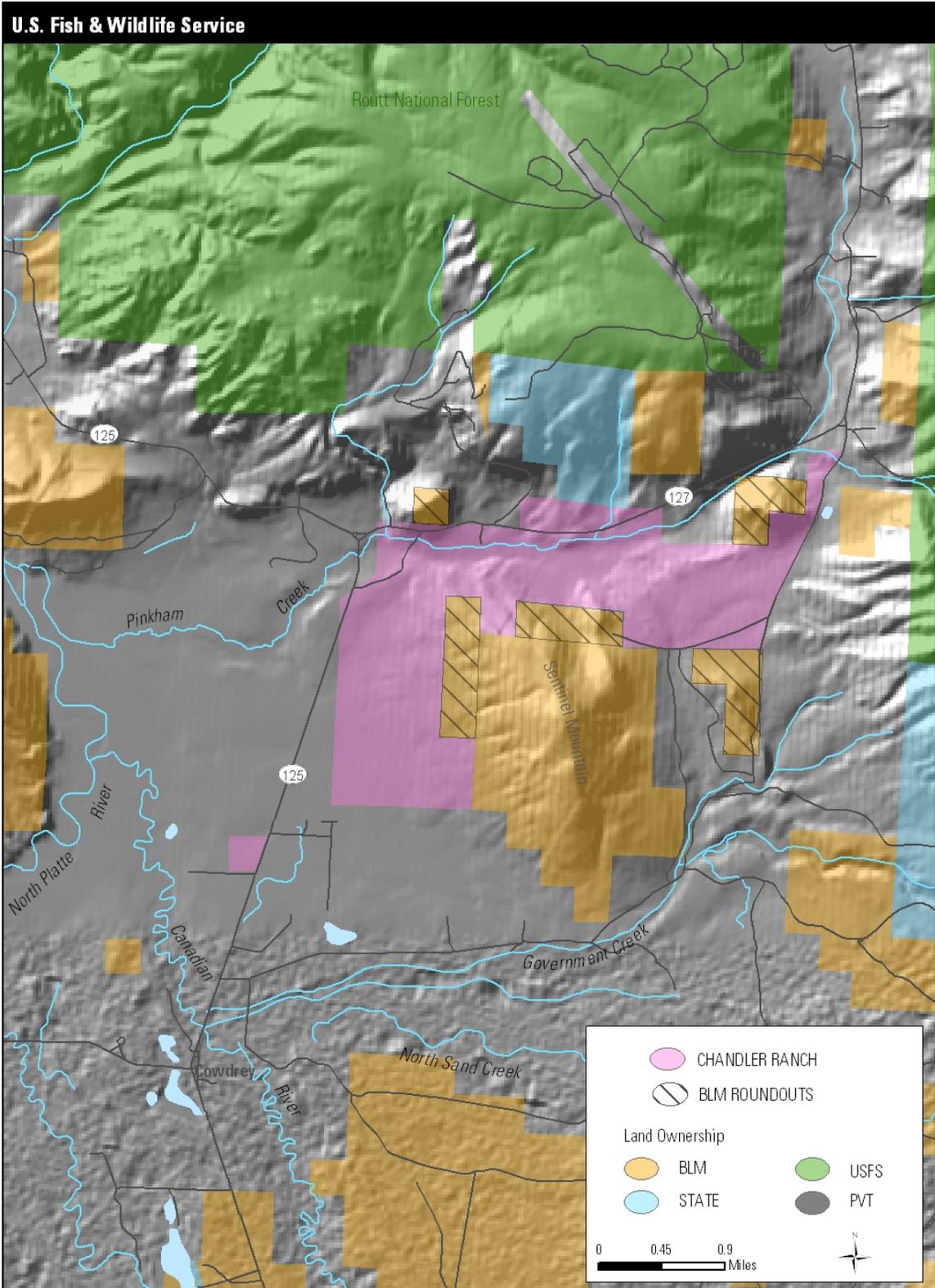


Figure 2. General landownership near the Chandler Ranch.

and to reduce confusion to the general public by more clearly delineating boundaries. The total proposed expansion of Arapaho NWR is 2,850 acres.

Existing agricultural use of grazing livestock would continue to be permitted as is. Assistance and coordination with other agencies and non-profit groups would be sought to best manage wintering habitat for the greater sage grouse.

All management would be conducted by the staff at Arapaho NWR complex. Monitoring would consist of reviewing land status conditions to ensure that the vegetation goals and standards set forth by the Service are met through management actions.



Example of sagebrush habitat on the Chandler Ranch (Sentinel Mountain in distance).

