



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Pacific Southwest Region – Refuges
Federal Building
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825
Email: fw8plancomments@fws.gov



April 25, 2024

Subject: Request for Scoping Comments for the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, and Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge for Management of Aquatic Invasive Plants

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is preparing a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects associated with the management of aquatic invasive plants within and surrounding the Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Colusa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Delevan NWR, Sacramento NWR, Sacramento River NWR, Steve Thompson North Central Valley WMA, Sutter NWR, San Joaquin River NWR, San Luis NWR, Merced NWR, Grasslands WMA, and Stone Lakes NWR (hereto referred to as the “Covered Refuges”).

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), South American spongeplant (*Limnobium laevigatum*), alligatorweed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*), floating yellow primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*), and Uruguay water primrose (*Ludwigia hexapetala*) (referred to together as “primrose”) are floating aquatic invasive plants that are not native to California. These non-native species grow in wetlands, marshes, shallow water bodies, slow moving waterways, lakes, reservoirs, and rivers. Water hyacinth, South American spongeplant, alligatorweed, and primrose can be a problem for boating, agriculture, as well as public safety, and can negatively impact the environment, industry, and local economies. These non-native, highly invasive plants can de-stabilize dissolved oxygen cycles, crowd out native plants, shade out crucial shallow-water fish habitat, obstruct waterways and navigational channels, and block agricultural and municipal water intakes.

Aquatic invasive plants are adversely affecting the priority resources of concern within the Covered Refuges; therefore, suppressing or containing these invasive species is necessary to reduce or eliminate the threat they cause to these sensitive environmental resources. The Service is proposing the use of integrated pest management (IPM) methods to manage aquatic invasive plants, as necessary, within and adjacent to the Covered Refuges within California’s Central Valley. Proposed methods could include physical, mechanical, cultural, and chemical treatments, which will be analyzed in the Draft EA. Potential waterways adjacent to the Covered Refuges where IPM methods could also be utilized include, but are not limited to, Bear Creek, Bravel Slough, Deadman Creek, Deep Slough, Eastside bypass of the San Joaquin River, Los Banos Creek, Merced River, Mud Slough, Salt Slough, San Joaquin River, Stanislaus River, Tuolumne River, as well as miscellaneous irrigation supply and delivery canals and unnamed tributaries.

The Service respectfully requests that you consider the proposed action and provide any comments and/or available information that you may have regarding resources within and adjacent to the Covered Refuges. At this time, we are seeking input to help identify the scope of issues and potential alternatives to be analyzed in the Draft EA, as well as regulatory concerns and any other relevant information. Please provide any comments in writing via email by **5:00 P.M. on May 25, 2024** to fw8plancomments@fws.gov. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, please be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time.

While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Sincerely,

Mark Pelz
Chief, Natural Resources Division
Pacific Southwest Region

Enclosures:

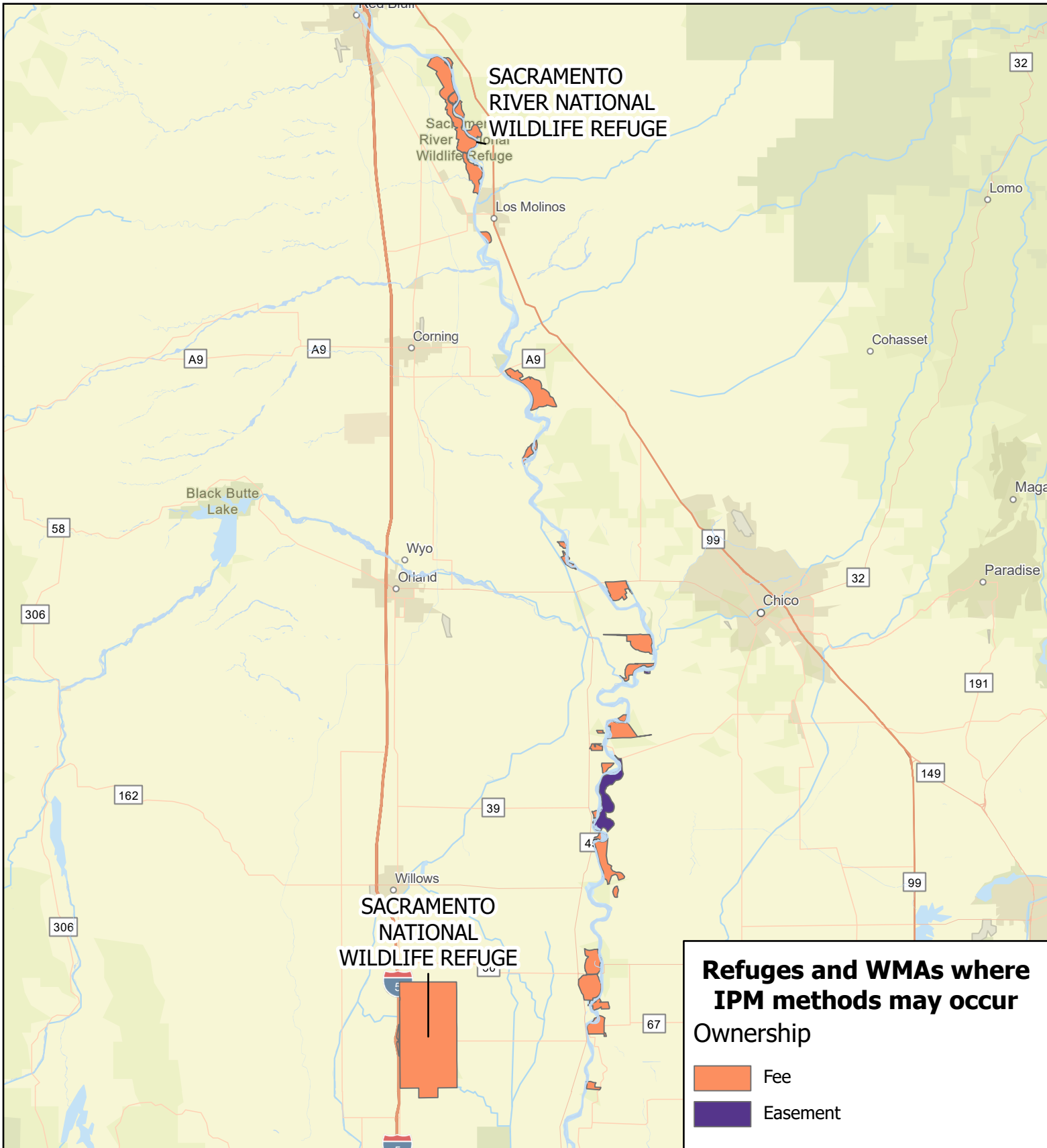
Map 1. Sacramento and Sacramento River NWRs

Map 2. Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter NWRs and Butte Sink and Steve Thompson North Central Valley WMAs

Map 3. San Joaquin River NWR

Map 4. San Luis and Merced NWRs and Grasslands WMAs

Map 5. Stone Lakes NWR



Refuges and WMAs where IPM methods may occur

Ownership

- Fee
- Easement

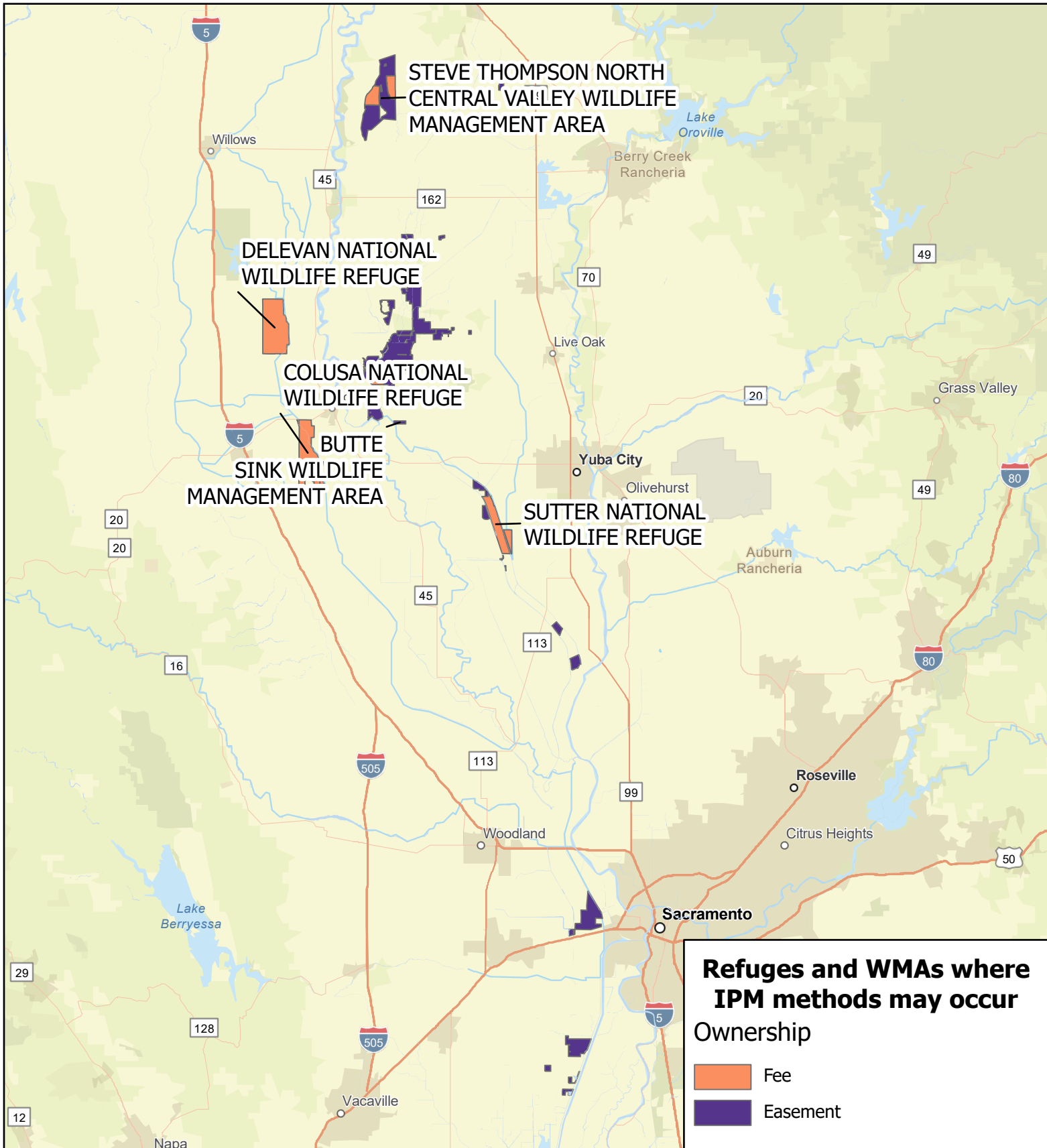


Map 1. Sacramento and Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuges



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
Region 8

Source: Spatial data courtesy of the Service, waterways data courtesy of USGS NHD
Projection: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Scale: 1:551,780

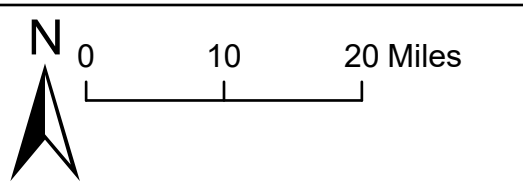


Refuges and WMAs where IPM methods may occur

Ownership

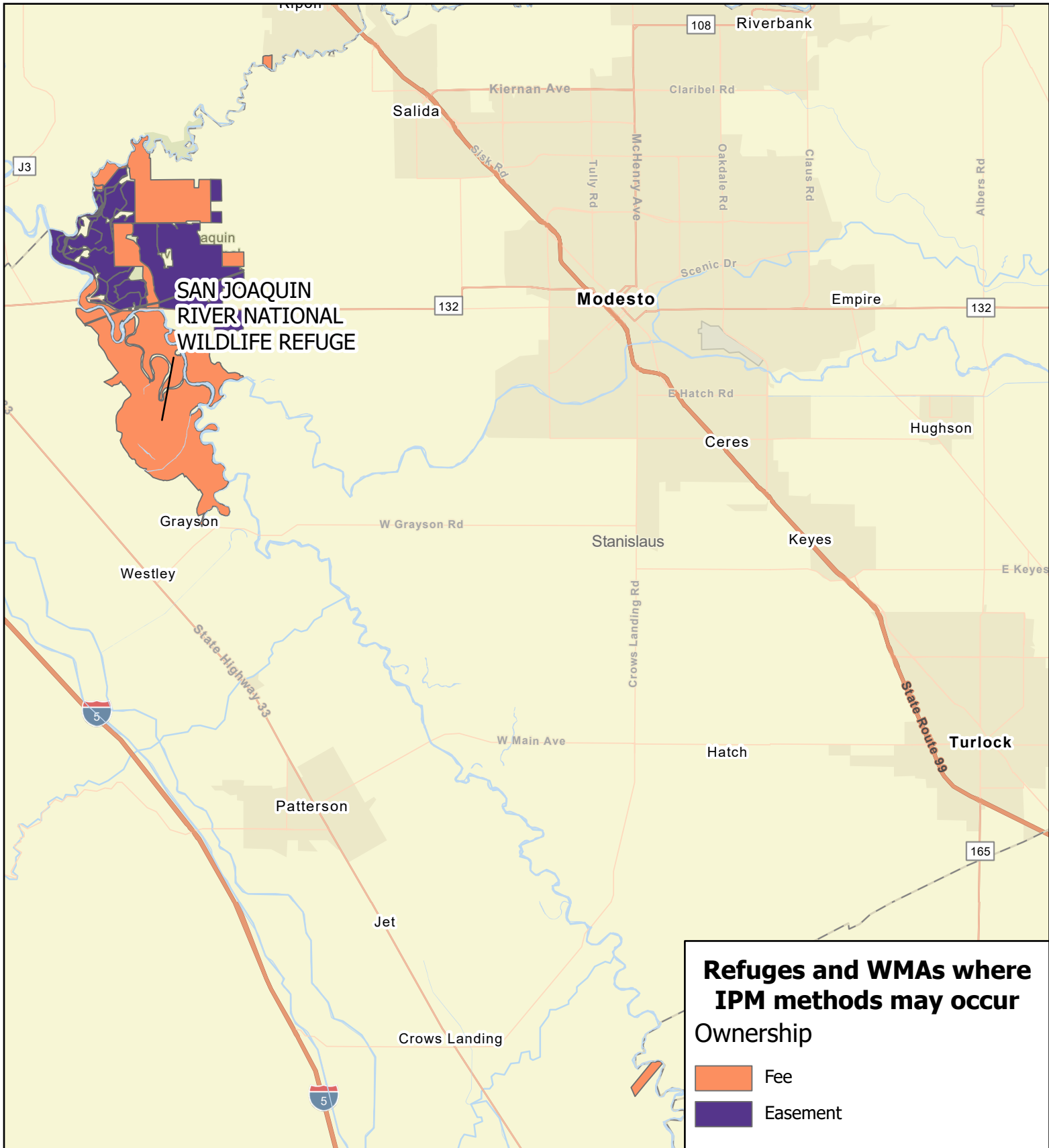
- Fee
- Easement

Map 2. Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter NWRs and Butte Sink and Steve Thompson North Central Valley WMAs

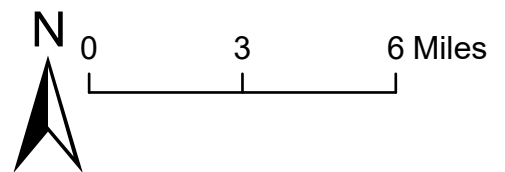


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Source: Spatial data courtesy of the Service, waterways data courtesy of USGS NHD
Projection: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
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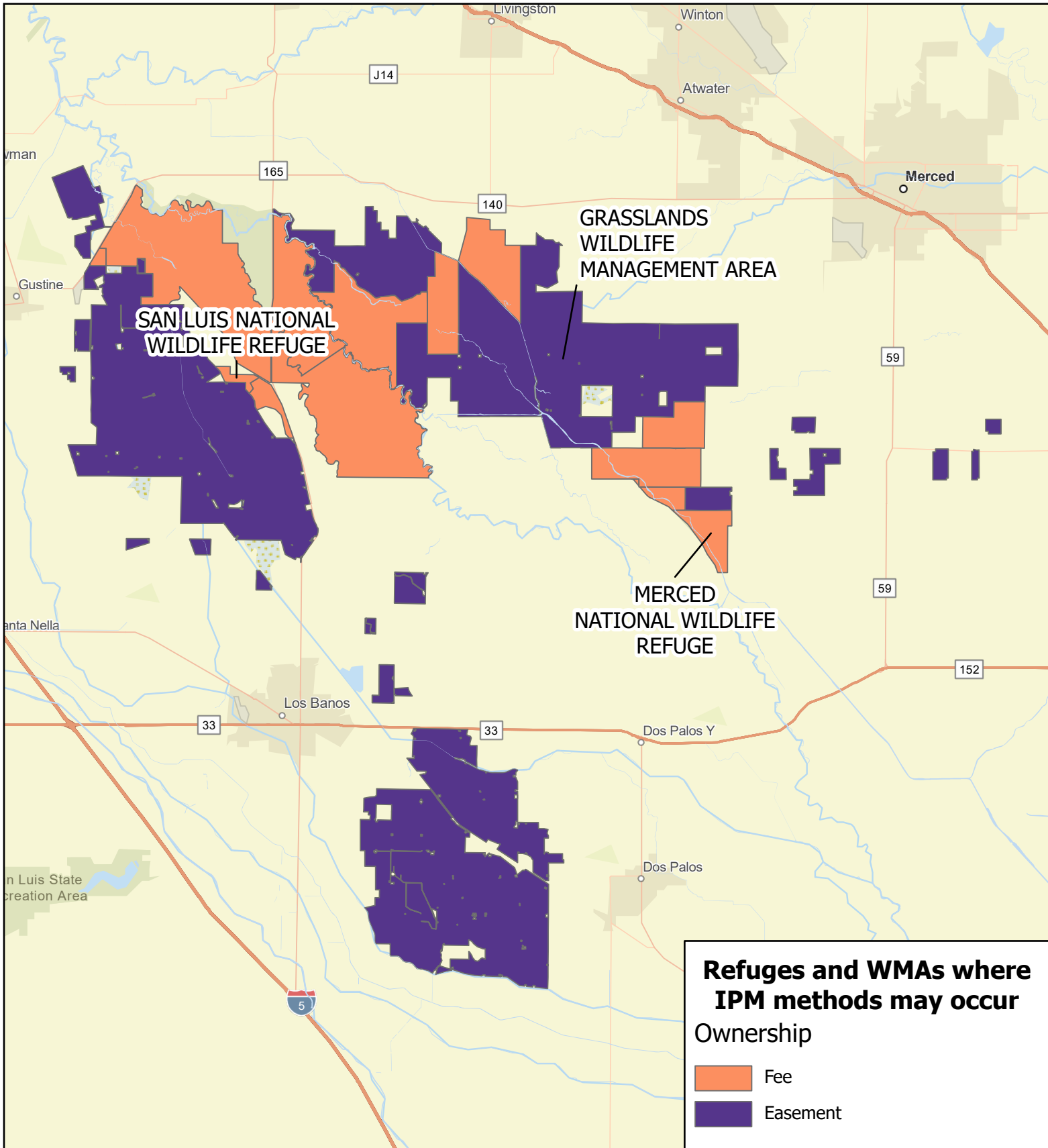


Map 3. San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge



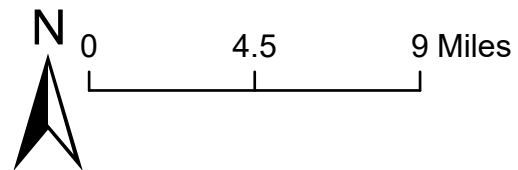
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Source: Spatial data courtesy of the Service,
waterways data courtesy of USGS NHD
Projection: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary
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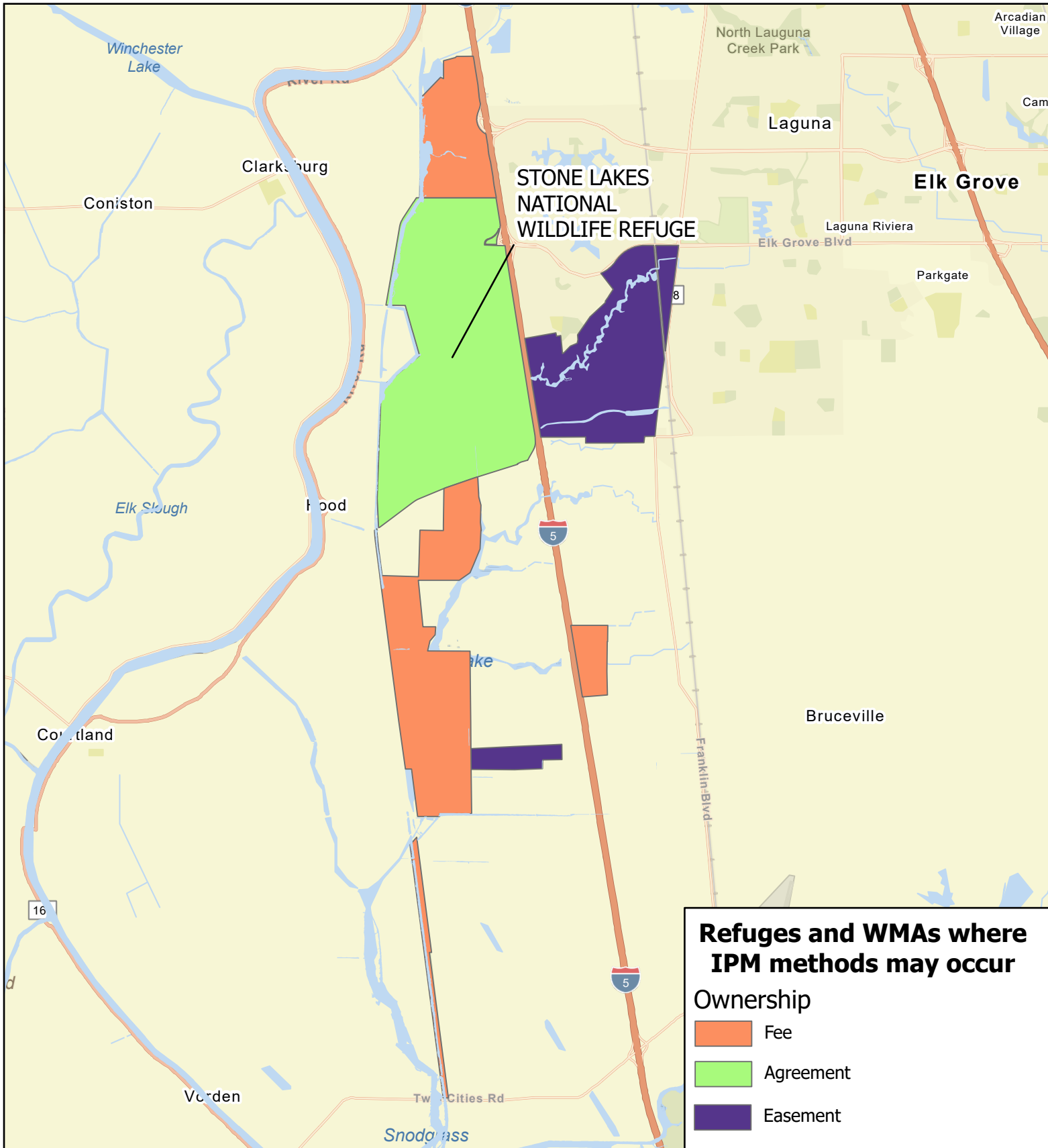


Map 4. San Luis and Merced National Wildlife Refuges and Grasslands Wildlife Management Area

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 8



Source: Spatial data courtesy of the Service, waterways data courtesy of USGS NHD
 Projection: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
 Scale: 1:330,683



Map 5. Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

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Refuges and WMAs where IPM methods may occur

Ownership

- Fee
- Agreement
- Easement

N 0 1.5 3 Miles

Source: Spatial data courtesy of the Service, waterways data courtesy of USGS NHD
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