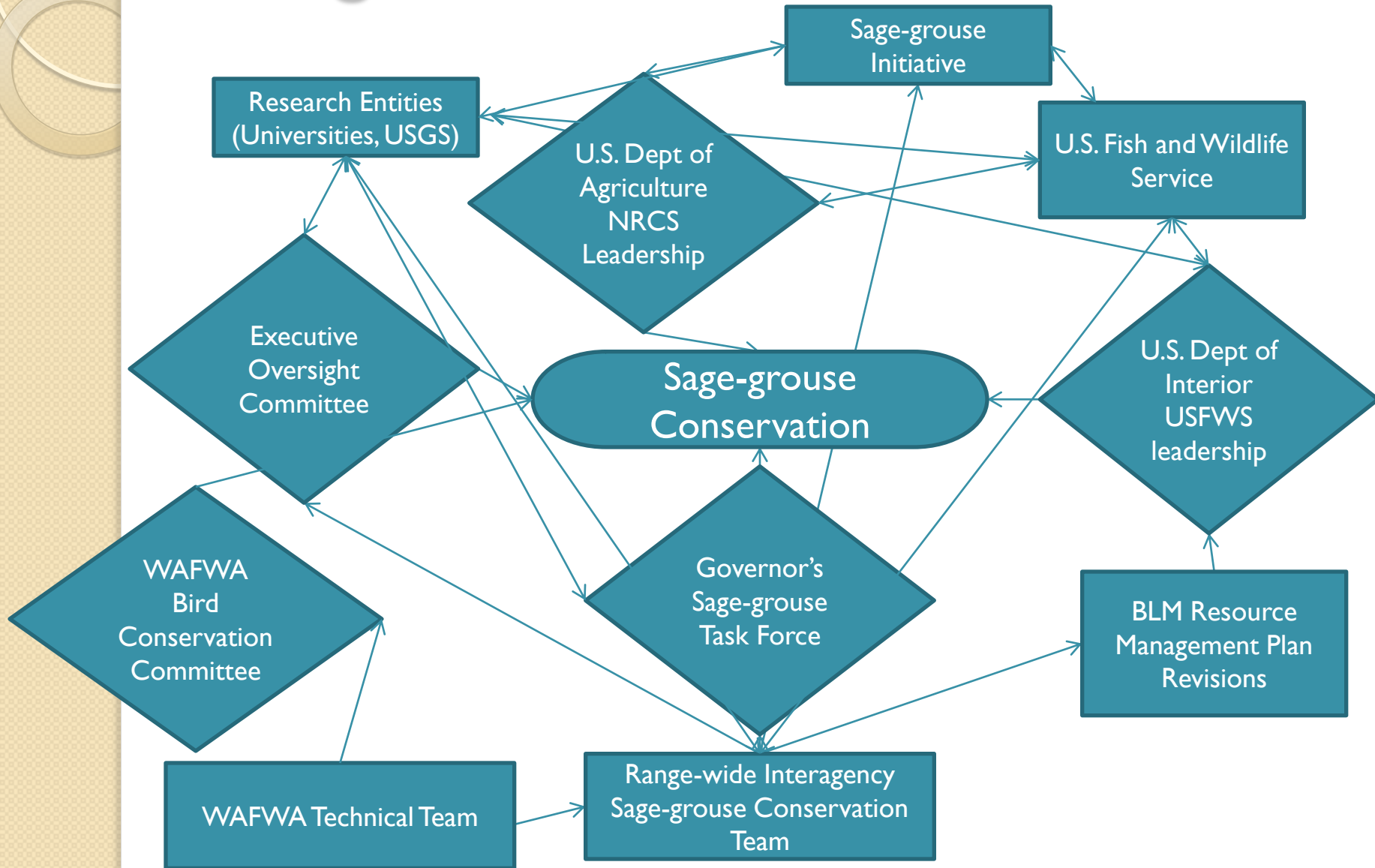


Sage-grouse Conservation Strategies

Governor's Sage-grouse Advisory Council

May 22, 2013





Range-wide Collaborations

- Conservation Objectives Report
- National Technical Team Report
- WAFWA Conservation Strategy
 - Near-term conservation actions
- Range-wide genetic connectivity study
- Research prioritization document
- State-led strategies



Range-wide Collaborations

- Conservation strategies in western part of range
 - Wildfire preparedness



Range-wide Collaborations

- Conservation strategies in western part of Range
 - Invasive species management and habitat restoration



Range-wide Collaborations

- Conservation strategies in western part of Range
 - Conifer removal

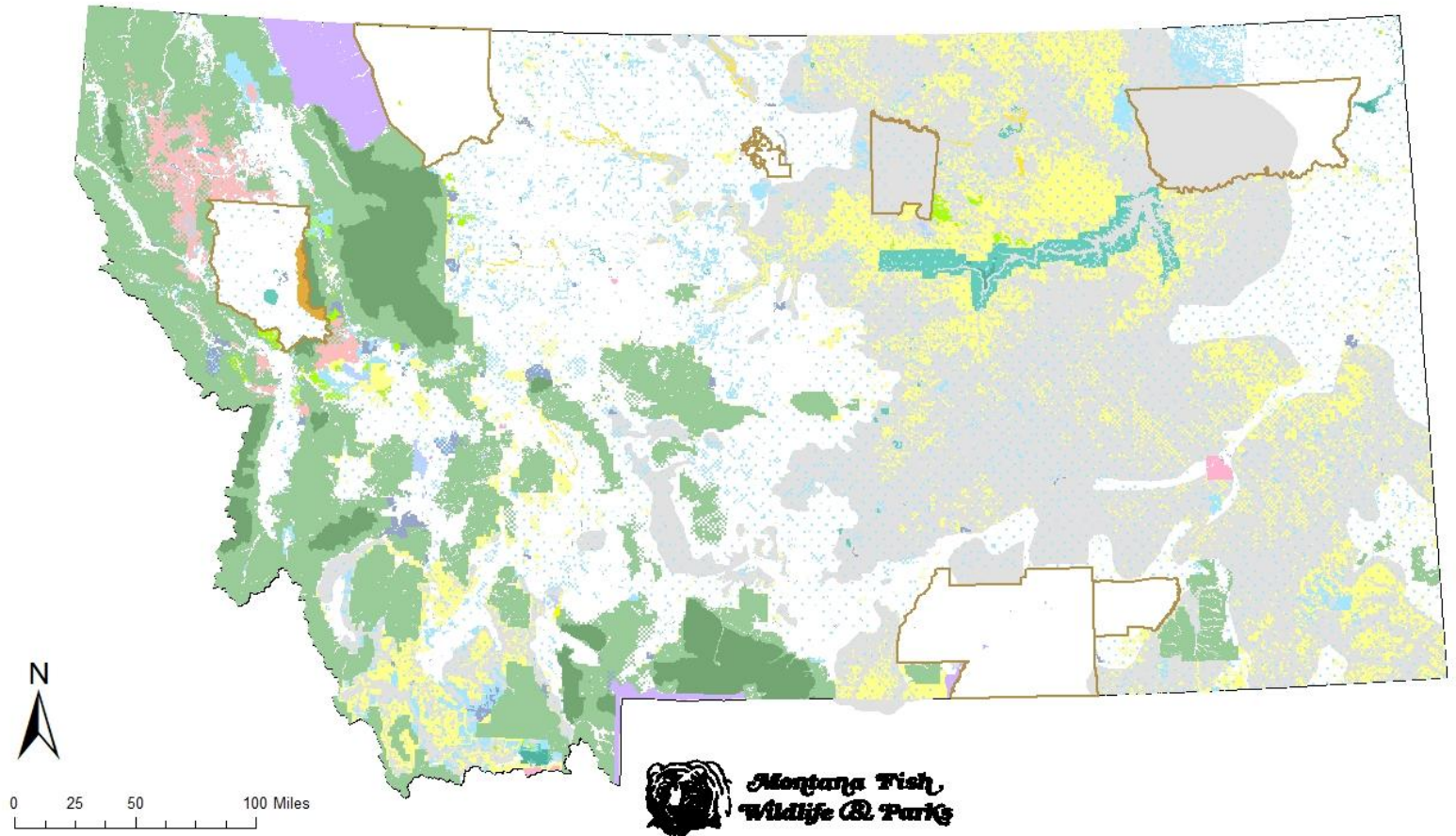


Montana's Approach

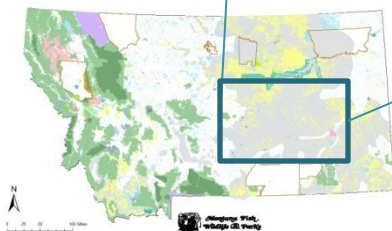
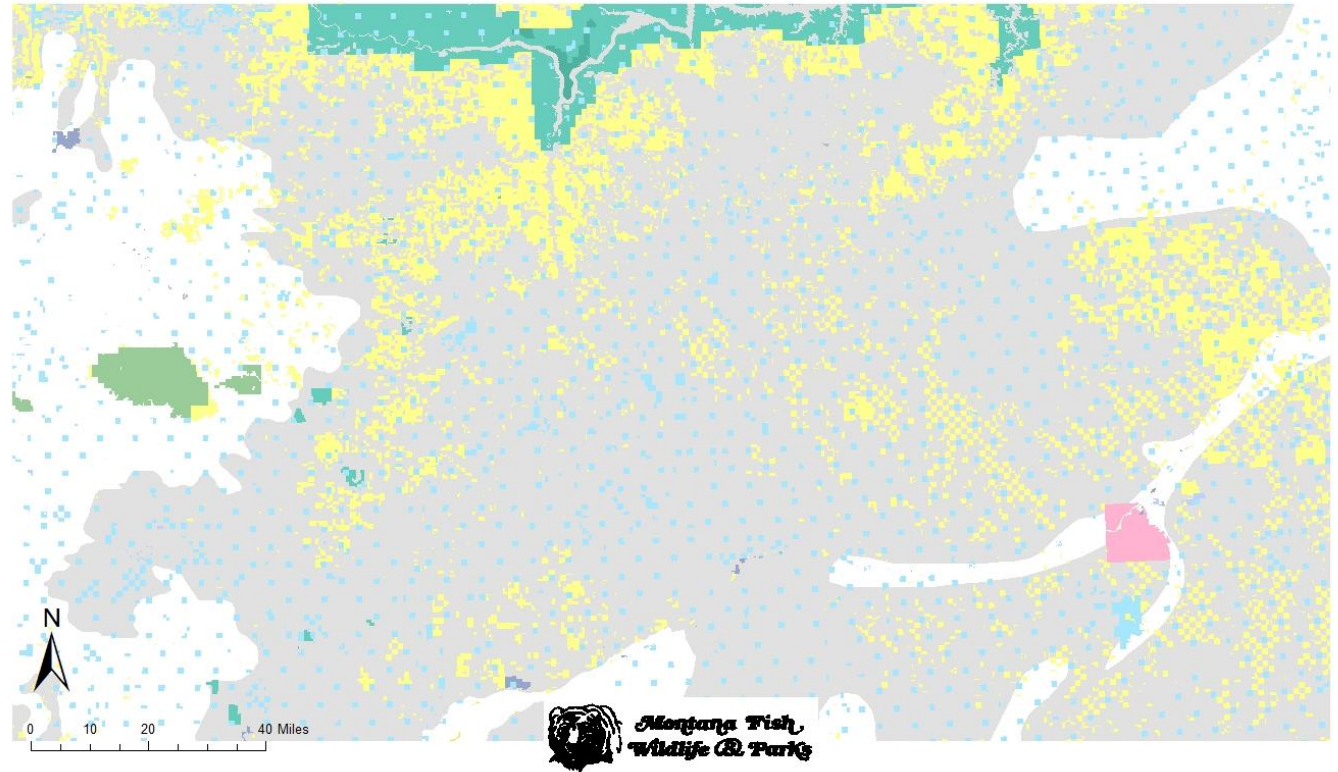
- Background
- Core areas
- Working lands
- FWP general recommendations
- Population monitoring
- Regulatory mechanisms



Background



Background



Background

- Landownership patterns
 - BLM RMP revisions
 - NRCS SGI implementation
- Large, intact systems
- Coordinated, focused, landscape approach

Background

- Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana - Final
 - Good reference on sage-grouse biology in Montana
 - Core areas were not yet defined
 - Results from recent energy research not included

Core Areas

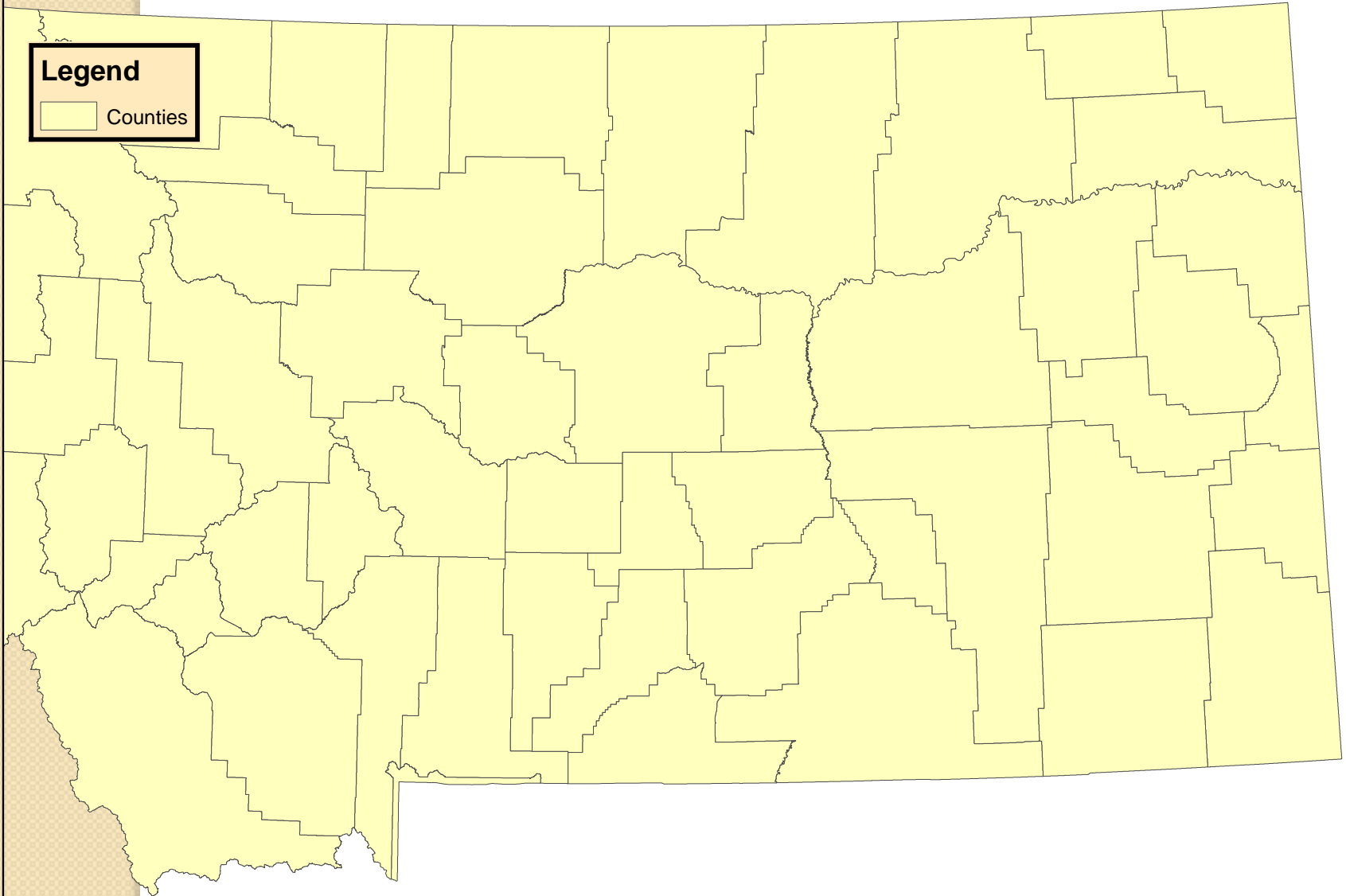
- Broad criteria
 - Areas of greatest abundance
 - Areas important for connectivity beyond MT
- Purpose
 - Strategically target conservation and protection
 - Avoid or manage development
 - Secondly, heightened mitigation requirements (e.g., energy developments)

0 40 80 160 Miles

Legend



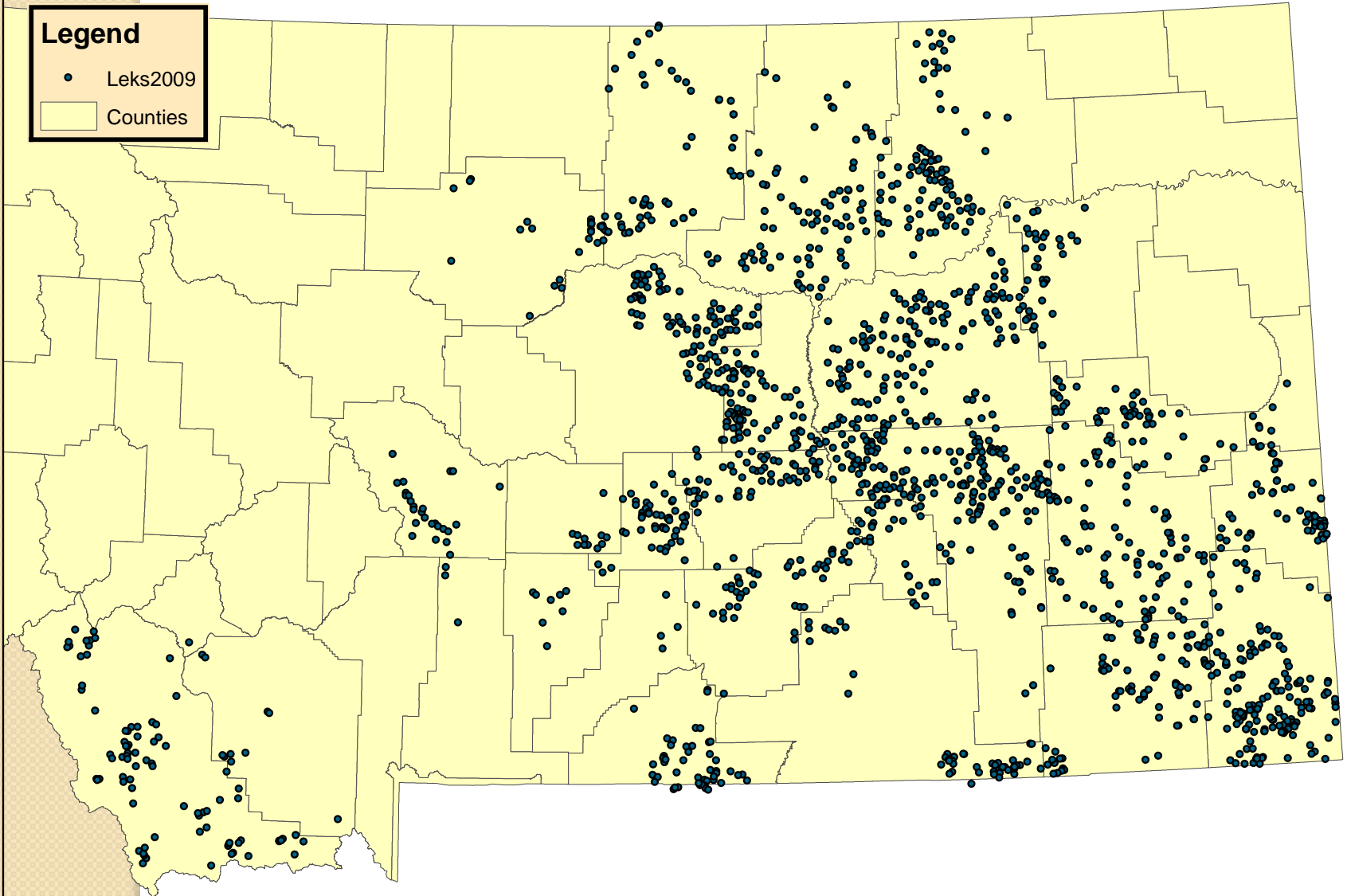
Counties



0 40 80 160 Miles

Legend

- Leks2009
- Counties



Legend

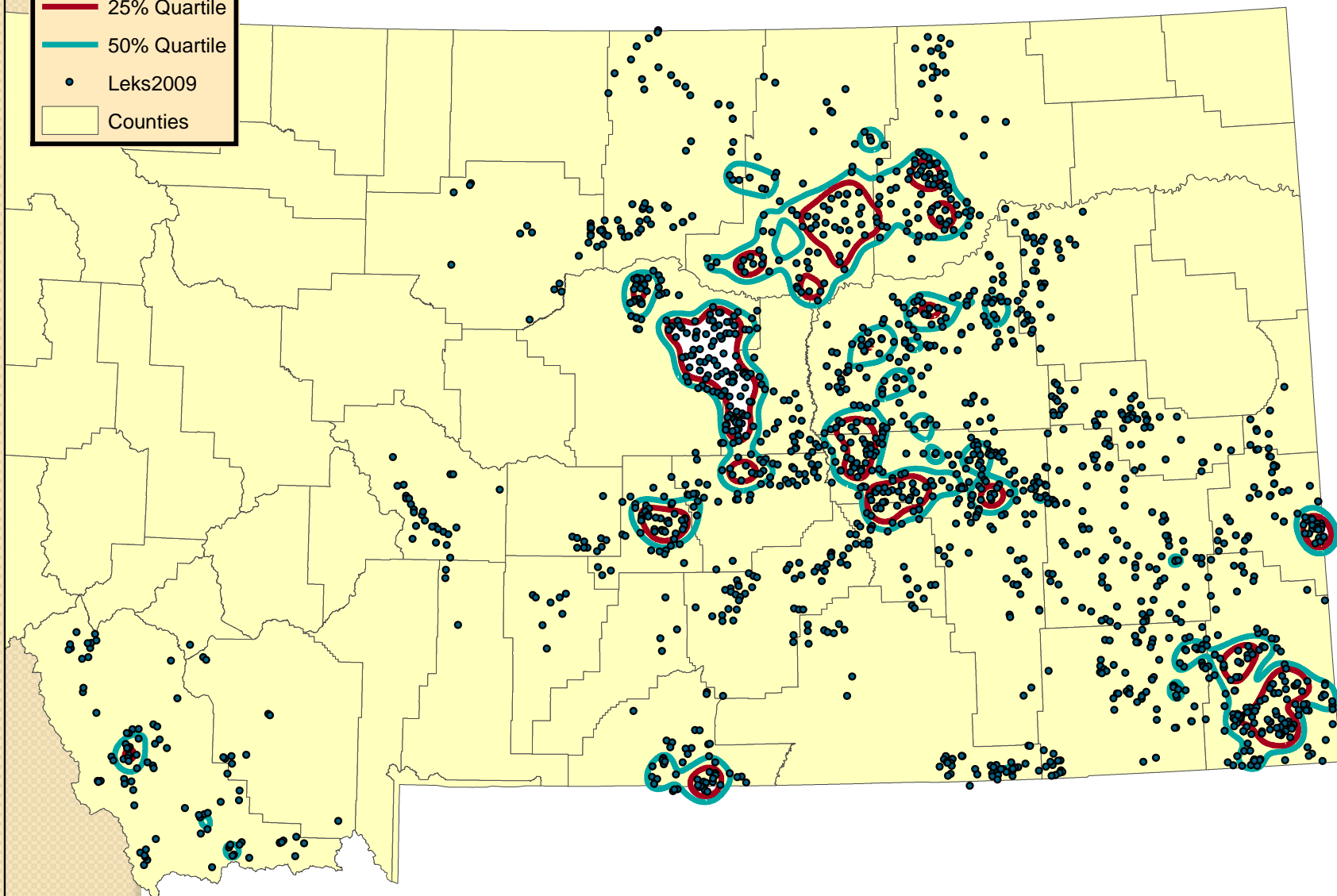
— 25% Quartile

— 50% Quartile

• Leks2009

□ Counties

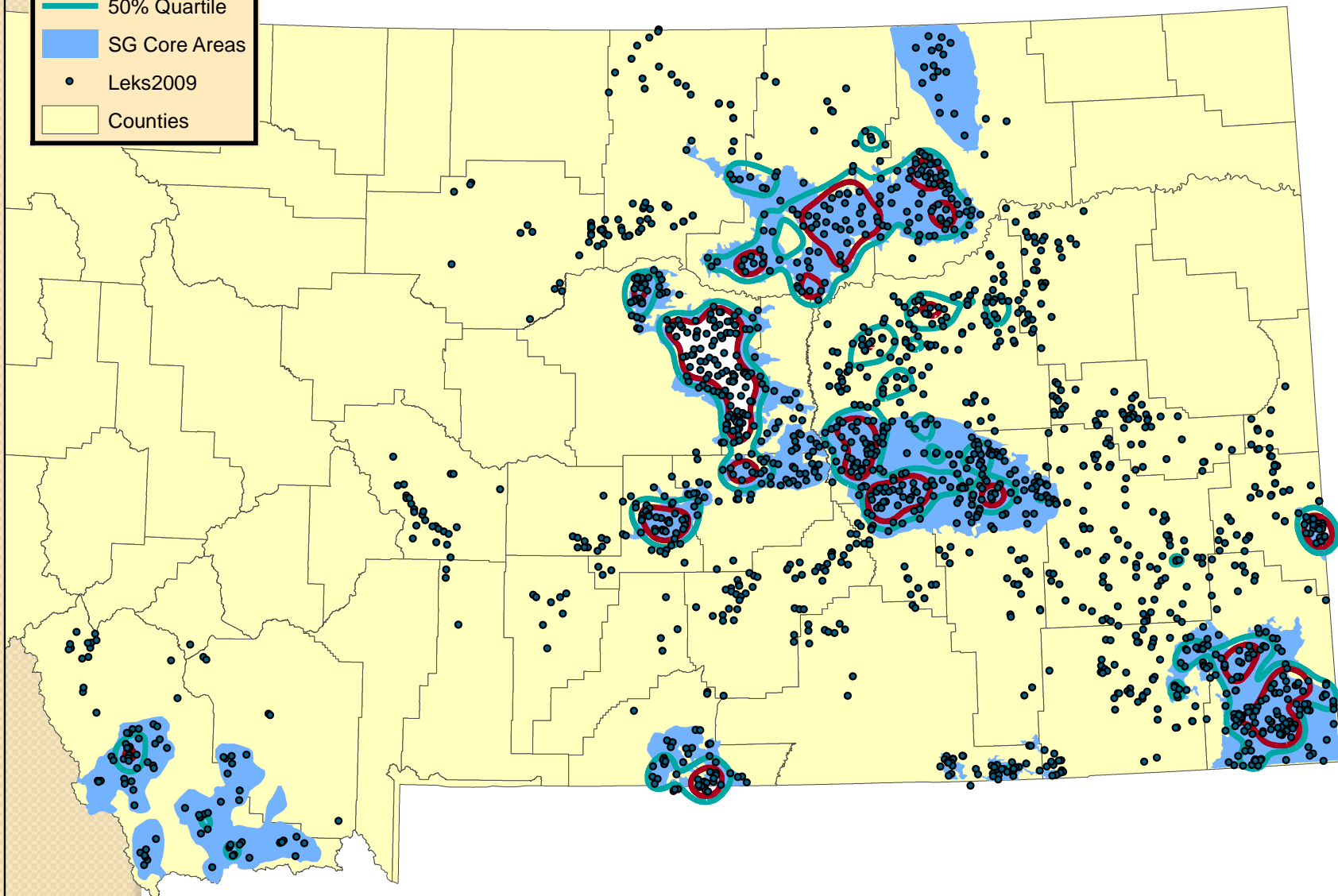
0 40 80 160 Miles



Legend

- 25% Quartile
- 50% Quartile
- SG Core Areas
- Leks2009
- Counties

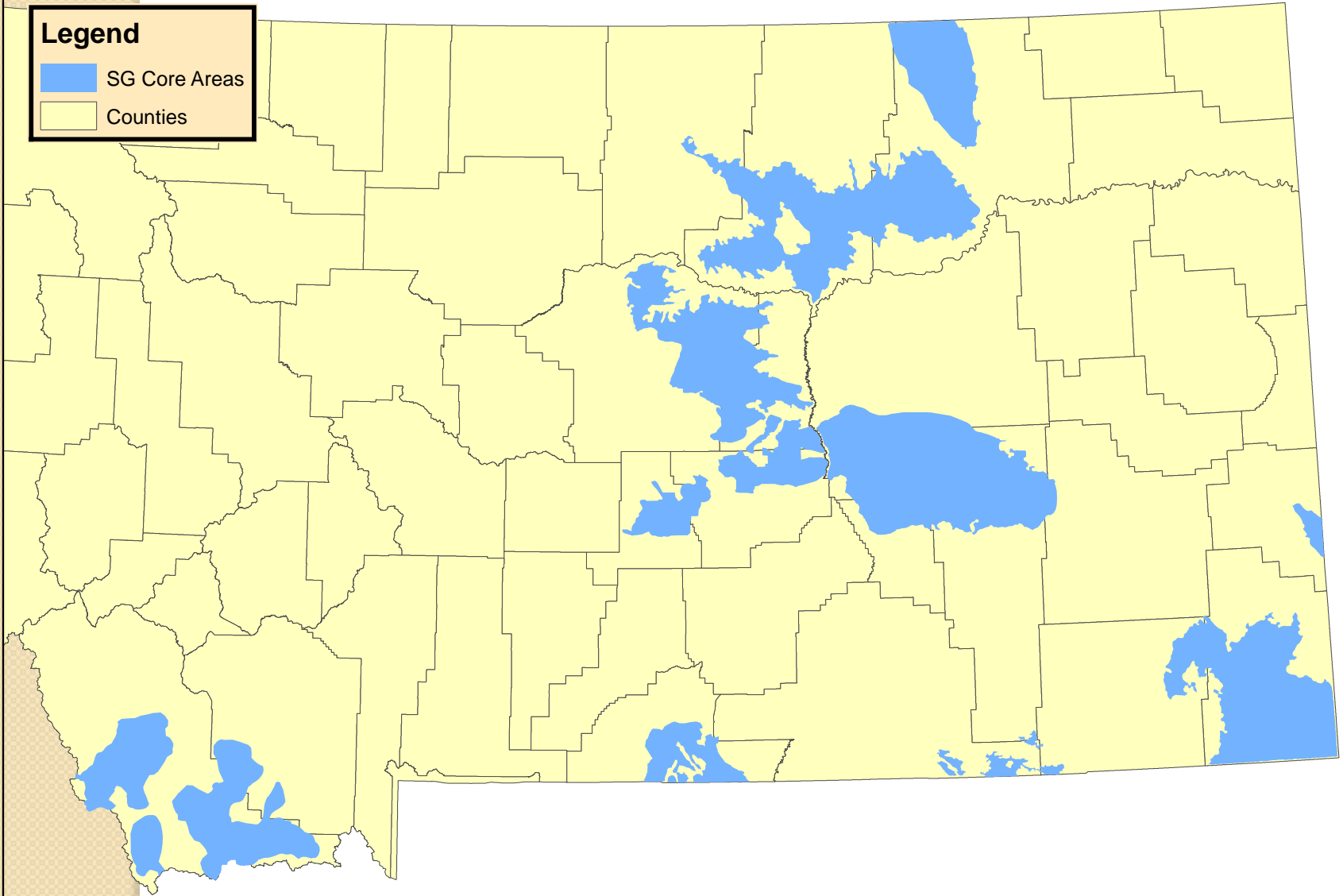
0 40 80 160 Miles



0 40 80 160 Miles

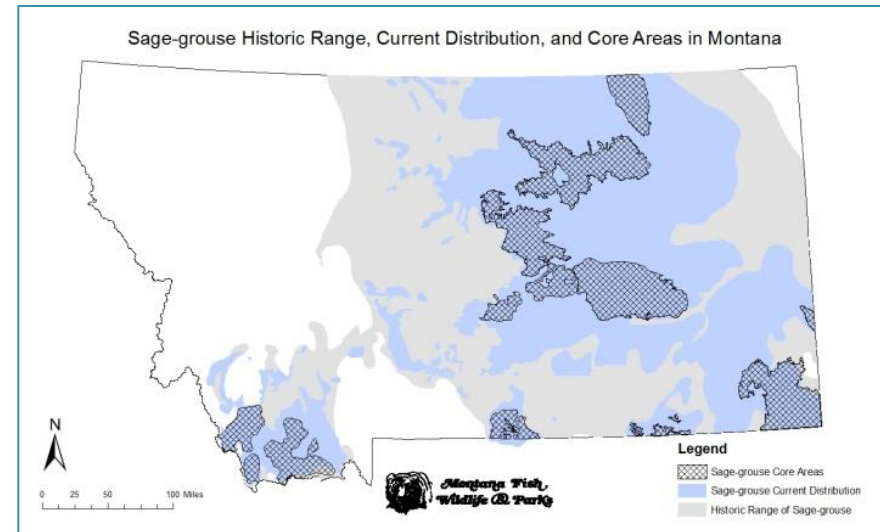
Legend

- SG Core Areas
- Counties



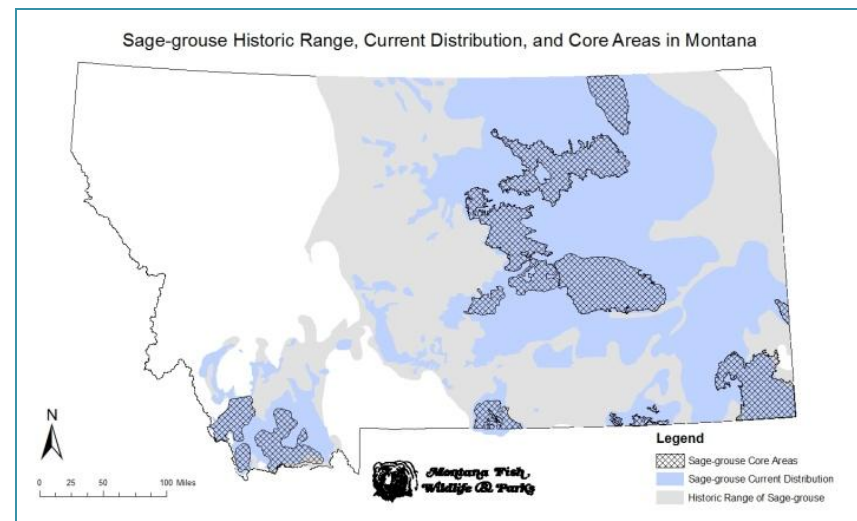
Core Areas

- Completed 2009
- Based on:
 - Lek density
 - Telemetry data
 - Habitat suitability
- Include:
 - 56% of leks in Montana
 - 71% of displaying males

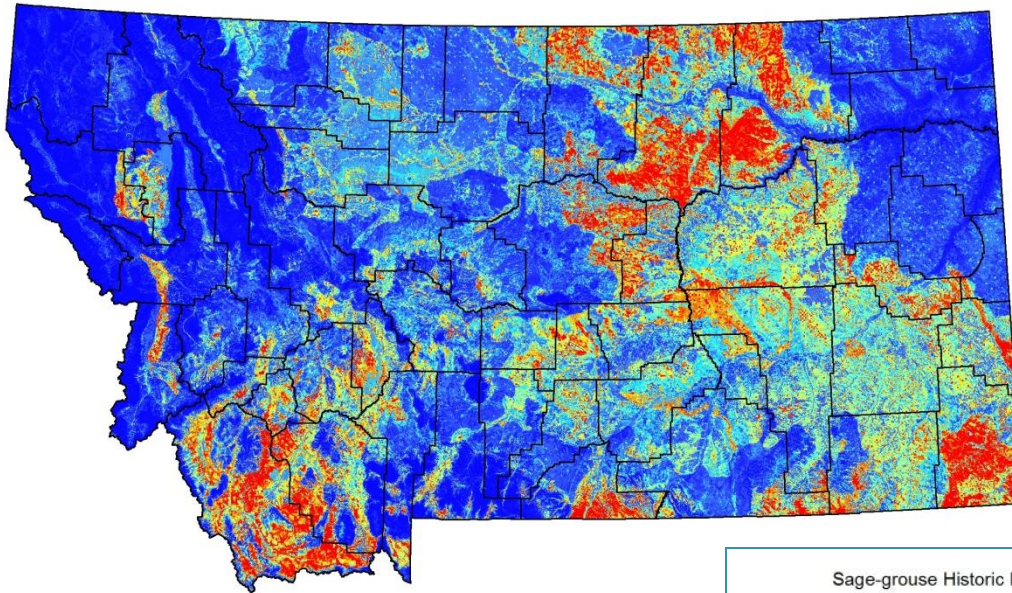


Core Areas

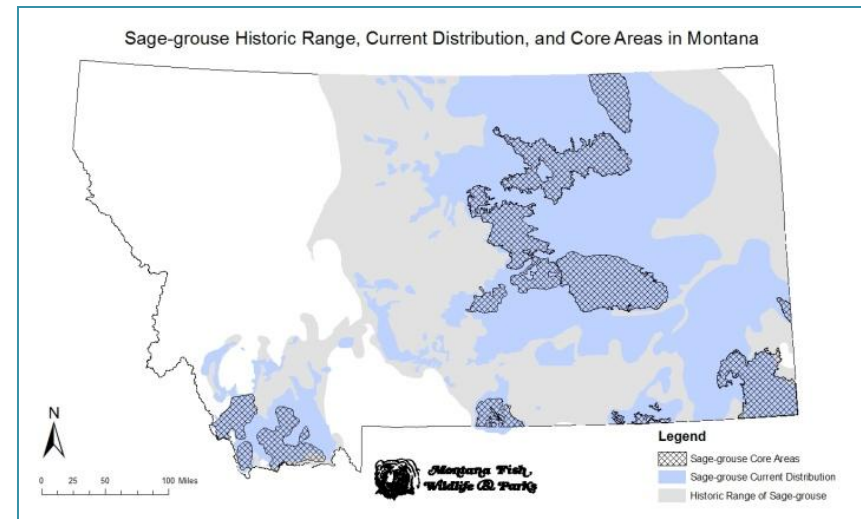
- Conservation Objectives Report
 - Priority Areas for Conservation
- NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative
 - Core areas
- BLM Resource Management Plans
 - Priority habitat



Core Areas



Habitat Suitability
Model -
Brewer's Sparrow



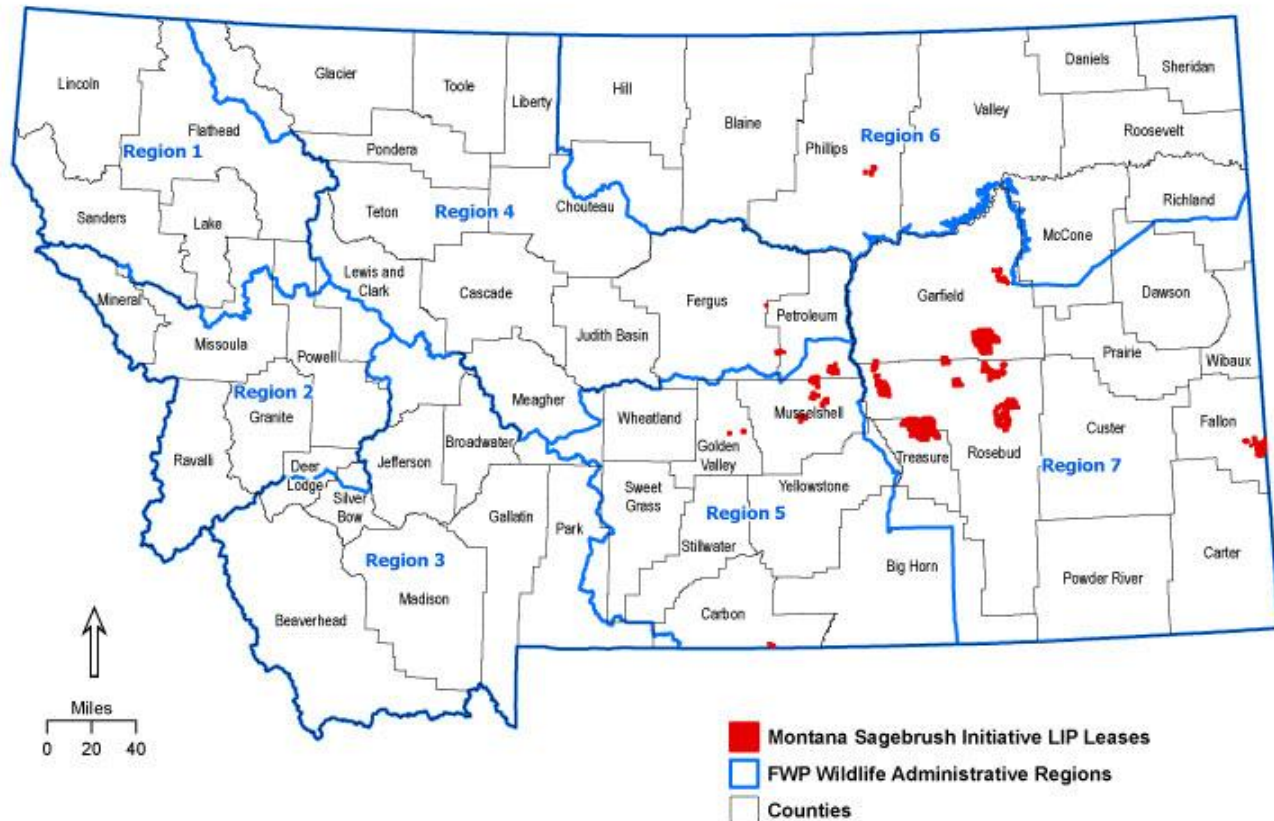
Working Lands

- Sustainable grazing can be an effective conservation tool
 - Helps to keep ranchers ranching
 - Keeps sagebrush habitats intact
 - Limits conversion of rangeland to other habitat types
 - Enhances grasses and forb production

What's good for cows is good for grouse! MACD

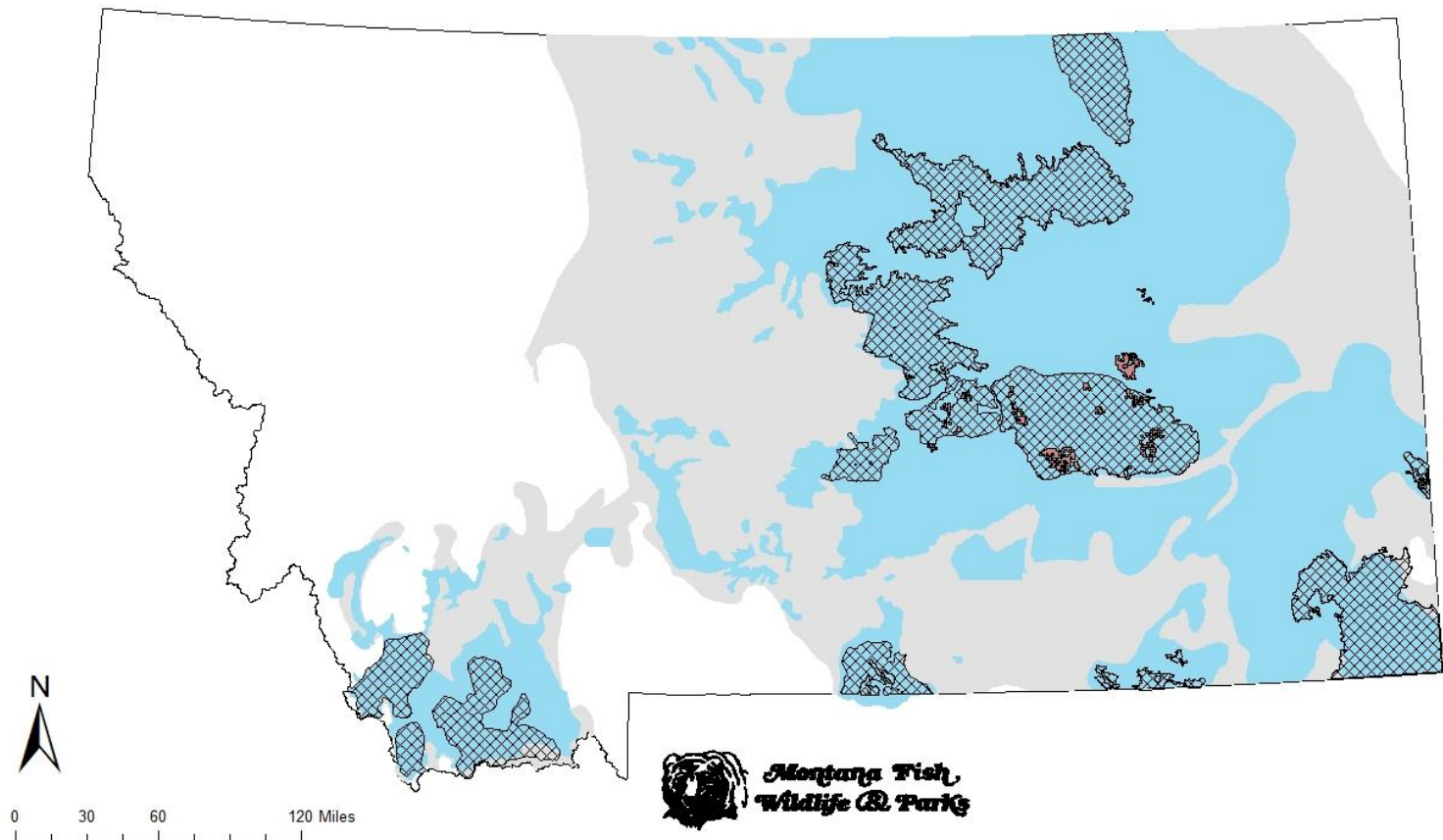
Working Lands

- Montana Sagebrush Initiative



Working Lands

- Montana Sagebrush Initiative



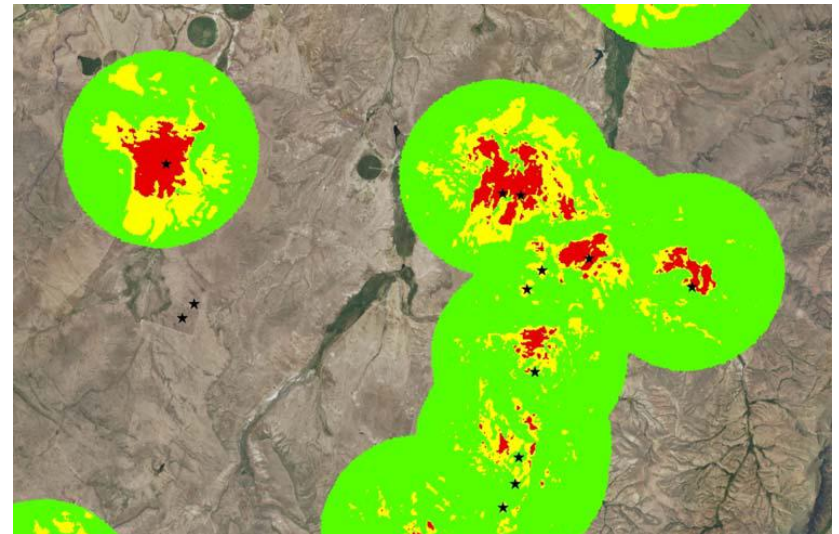
Working Lands

- Grazing management
 - Montana Sagebrush Initiative
 - Grazing plans
 - Financial assistance for grazing management infrastructure (FWP and NRCS)
 - BLM grazing management – RMP Process



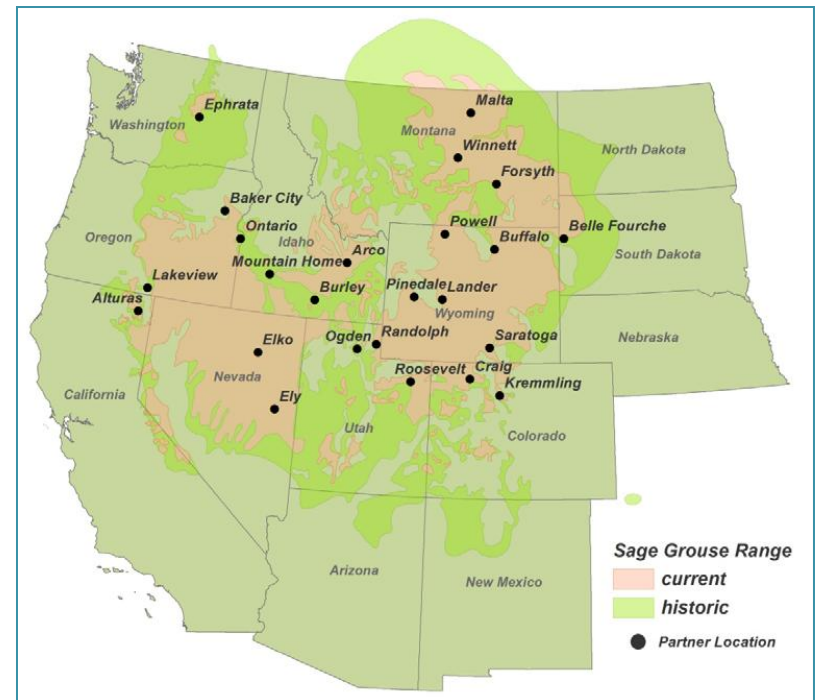
Working Lands

- Grazing management (cont.)
 - Fence marking partnership
 - Prioritize areas of high collision risk in core areas
 - BLM/NRCS/MACD/IWJV/FWP
 - Anticipate population level response



Working Lands

- Farm Bill policy
 - Disincentives for sod-breaking
- Farm Bill Partner Biologists in MT
 - Forsyth
 - Malta
 - Glasgow
 - Dillon



Working Lands

- Research near Roundup
 - Evaluate sage-grouse response to grazing management implemented under SGI



Working Lands

- Conservation Easements
 - Limit habitat conversion



FWP General Recommendations

- Subdivision Development
 - Minimize fragmentation; cluster development
- Energy Development & Infrastructure
 - Oil and gas
 - Minimize disturbance; limit habitat conversion & fragmentation
 - Co-locate development, infrastructure
 - Wind
 - Minimize direct mortalities; limit habitat conversion & fragmentation
 - Co-locate infrastructure

Population Monitoring

- Count displaying males on leks annually
 - Index of relative lek attendance and trends
 - Not an estimate of abundance or long-term population change
- Adaptive Harvest Management
 - Use lek counts to inform hunting regulations
 - Conservative limits



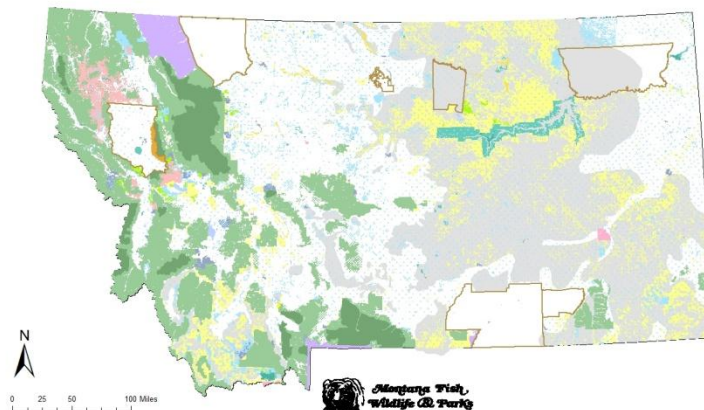
Regulatory Mechanisms

- BLM Resource Management Plans
- USFWS assurance to landowners applying practices through Sage-grouse Initiative



What's Missing?

- Regulatory nexus with state and private lands conservation (beyond SGI)
- Strategy for sage-grouse conservation across multiple land uses and ownerships (landscape level conservation)



Executive Order

- Governor Bullock's Executive Order
 - Major threats
 - Habitat fragmentation from energy
 - Conversion of habitat for agriculture and subdivisions
 - Lack of regulatory mechanisms
 - Secondary threats
 - WNV
 - Grazing
 - Collisions
 - Prescribed fire
 - Conifer expansion