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Dear Interested Public:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Winnemucca District Office (WDO), Black Rock Field Office (BRFO) has completed a preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Schoolhouse Butte Land Sale. Schoolhouse Butte is located in the Desert Valley area approximately 45 miles northwest of Winnemucca, Nevada. The parcels proposed for sale are portions of sections 16, 17 and 21, Township 38 North, Range 32 East, (see attached map).

The public land proposed for sale consists of approximately 440 acres of non-contiguous parcels surrounding existing private land to be auctioned through a modified competitive bid process. The starting bid would be the Fair Market Value (FMV) as determined by an approved appraisal.

The public is invited to review and submit comments on the preliminary EA for 30 days from the date of this letter. Timely submitted comments will be considered as part of the decision process. Please send written comments to Julie McKinnon, project lead, at the WDO address or email NV_WFO_Webmail@blm.gov with "Schoolhouse Butte (McKinnon)" in the subject line. Copies of this letter and map are also available on our NEPA webpage at www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/nepa0.html.

Public comments submitted for this project, including names and addresses of commenters will be available for public review at the WDO during regular business hours from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for federal holidays. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in our comment to withhold personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have any questions, please contact Julie McKinnon at (775) 623-1734 or at the above address.

Sincerely,

Dave Hays
Field Manager
Black Rock Field Office

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2010-0006-EA

Schoolhouse Butte Land Sale



March 2010

Prepared by:

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It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

BLM/NV/WM/EA-10/20+1792

DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2010-0006-EA

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**Proposed Land Sale
Schoolhouse Butte Parcels
Preliminary Environmental Assessment
Winnemucca District**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A formal nomination request was made to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to purchase lands identified within the Jackson Mountain Allotment to more efficiently manage their private agricultural operation.

Disposal of federal lands would increase Humboldt County’s tax base and have a positive effect on rural Nevada.

1.2. Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The Winnemucca District (WD), BLM, Black Rock Field Office (BRFO), in response to a nomination from the public to dispose of certain lands determined to be available for disposal, plans to conduct a modified competitive sale of federal lands located within Humboldt County, Nevada. The purpose of the sale would be to dispose of nominated lands, consisting of 11 parcels, totaling 440 acres more or less.

Legal Land Description

Section	Location	Acres
	T. 38 N., R. 32 E. M.D.B.&.M	
16	N½SW¼, SE¼SW¼, SW¼SE¼;	160
17	NE¼SE¼;	40
21	N½NE¼, SE¼NE¼, NE¼NW¼, S½SE¼.	240
Total Acreage		440

1.2.2 Need

The need for the action is for BLM to sell public lands that have been previously identified as potentially suitable for disposal in an approved land use plan or through an amendment to an existing plan, also, to balance land acquisitions and disposals.

The BLM has recently acquired lands in Humboldt County under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). Additionally, there are several SNPLMA nominations in process in Humboldt and Washoe Counties.

1.3 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan

The Proposed Action described in this EA is in conformance with the Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (MFP) (BLM 1982). The subject lands are also identified as Zone 3 lands in the Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (MFP) Lands Amendment approved in January 1999. Zone 3 lands are areas which may be suitable for disposal through transfer to another Federal Agency, exchange, or public sale. Since the lands are identified in a land use plan in effect as of July 25, 2000, the lands are eligible under the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (P.L. 106-248) (FLTFA) and any revenues from the sale of the lands would be deposited in the Federal Land Disposal Account created by FLTFA and could be expended in accordance with the law.

1.4 Relationship to Laws, Regulations and Other Plans

Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)

In 1976, with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), Congress mandated the BLM to retain most public lands, significantly reducing the acreage available for disposal. Select sales continue to remain an important component of the BLM's land management strategy, when these sales are in the public interest and consistent with publicly-approved land use plans. Undeveloped and unimproved lands, typically near growing communities, may be candidates for sale. These lands are predominantly located in 11 Western States and Alaska. Although the sale authority of the BLM is FLPMA, complimentary authorizations provide specific sale direction and use of sale receipts.

Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act

The Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), Public Law 106-248, became law on July 25, 2000. It provides for the sale of public lands identified for disposal under land use plans in effect as of the date of enactment. The revenue generated from FLTFA sales is split between the respective State (4%) for educational purposes or for the construction of public roads, and a special account (96%) available to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture for acquisition of land in certain federally designated areas, and for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the sale program.

Local Government Land Use Plans

The parcels of land requested to be sold by the BLM are located within unincorporated Humboldt County, Nevada, and are not specifically identified by any local government land use plans. However, in letters dated June 5, 2003, and June 22, 2005, and in a meeting on June 7, 2004, the Humboldt County Board of Commissioners has expressed support for the sale of these lands. Reasons cited for this support include placing more land on the property tax rolls and a general positive effect for rural Nevada. Because of this expressed support, disposal of the subject lands would be consistent with the planning goals of the local government.

It would be the buyer's responsibility to be aware of all applicable local government policies and regulations that would affect the public lands. It would also be the buyer's responsibility to be aware of existing or proposed uses of nearby properties. If conveyed out of Federal ownership, the lands would be subject to local land use planning/zoning requirements and any applicable reviews and approvals by the local government for any proposed future uses, and any such reviews and approvals would be the buyer's responsibility. No warranty of any kind shall be

given or implied by the United States as to the potential uses of the parcels, and conveyance of the parcels would not be on a contingency basis.

1.5 Issues

Public Outreach Conducted on Original Nomination

The WD BLM mailed an interested party letter to individuals, governments, and organizations on March 31, 2003, for a proposed land sale of approximately 9,141 acres of public land and held a public meeting on April 29, 2003, at the Humboldt County Library in Winnemucca, Nevada. Written comments were received. Based on internal and external scoping of the original nomination, numerous natural resource issues and public concerns were identified. Due to the issues identified, the proposed action was modified. In addition the modified proposed action alleviated many of the public concerns. The public concerns consisted of the loss of access to the Jackson Mountains and neighboring Wilderness areas and the general disapproval of the disposal of public lands. Access is no longer an issue under the modified proposed action.

BLM's internal and external scoping of the modified proposal, to dispose of public lands, and potential issues addressed are; what is the potential for impacts to air quality, cultural resources, invasive and non-invasive species, migratory birds, Native American religious concerns, surface and ground water resources, lands and realty authorizations, mineral resources, paleontology, rangeland management, recreation, social values and economics, soils, special status species, wildlife and vegetation? Are hazardous materials present on the lands to be disposed of?

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Proposed Action

The BLM proposes to hold a modified competitive sale of federal public land in Humboldt County, Nevada under the authority of, and in accordance with, applicable provisions of Sections 203 and 209 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (90 Stat. 2750, 43 U.S.C. 1713 and 1719) (FLPMA) and the Federal Lands Transaction Facilitation Act of 2000, commonly called the *Baca Bill* (Public Law 106-248). The lands being considered for sale consist of parcels totaling 440 acres, more or less. For the purposes of this analysis the proposed action will be referred to as Schoolhouse Butte parcels.

Legal Land Description

Section	Location	Acres
	T. 38 N., R. 32 E., M.D.B. & M	
16	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;	160
17	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;	40
21	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.	240
Total Acreage		440

The parcels would be sold through a modified competitive bidding process, offering the designated bidder the right of first refusal to purchase the lands at fair market value. A sealed bid procedure in which interested parties would be allowed to submit sealed bids accompanied by a bid deposit of guaranteed funds of not less than 20% of the bid amount. The minimum

acceptable bid would be the fair market value as determined by an appraisal. The parcels are identified as serial number N-85116, Schoolhouse Butte. Final payment would be due within 180 days of the sealed bid opening.

A mineral potential report and a supplemental mineral report were completed and determined a low to moderate potential for mineral interests. If the parcels of land are sold, all the mineral interests of no known value, locatable, saleable, geothermal and oil and gas, will be conveyed simultaneously as part of the sale. An offer to purchase the parcels at auction will constitute an application for conveyance of the mineral interests. In conjunction with the final payment, the applicant will be required to pay a \$50.00 non-refundable filing fee for processing the conveyance of mineral interests.

Unsold parcels may be offered at a later date under public auction or tendered for sale on the Internet.

2.1.1 Location of Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of parcels located in the Schoolhouse Butte area of the Winnemucca District. Detailed legal descriptions of the subject lands are provided in Appendix A, and parcel unit map is included in Chapter 10 as Figure 1.

2.1.2 Access

An improved gravel county road bisects portions of the subject property. The county would retain all rights-of-way through the properties after the transfer of ownership to facilitate administrative and public access and maintenance.

2.1.3 Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD)

The BLM is uncertain whether all of the parcels would sell and to what uses these lands would be put. Based on indications from interested parties, however, a likely RFD scenario would include:

The conversion of rangelands to croplands is expected in this parcel unit. This conversion would include removal of existing vegetation, leveling of the ground surface, seeding crops, fencing, and irrigation.

2.2 No Action Alternative

The parcels would remain public land under the no action alternative, and would be subject to all applicable public land laws and regulations. Under the No Action Alternative, the parcels would continue to be managed under multiple-use principles described in the FLPMA, and under the management prescriptions identified in the MFP.

2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

2.3.1 Original Proposal - Sale of 22,280 Acres

The request by the DeLong Ranches Inc., for BLM to offer public lands for sale identified approximately 22,280 acres. However, except for the 440 acres of land identified in the Proposed Action, the lands identified in the request cannot be considered for sale at this time. Approximately 11,690 acres have been designated for retention (Zone 1 lands) and sale of those lands would not be in conformance with the MFP, unless an amendment to the MFP designating the lands for possible disposal (Zone 3 lands) was initiated and approved. Because the BLM's Winnemucca District has initiated a Resource Management Plan (RMP) in Fiscal Year 2005, it has been decided that an amendment to the MFP would not be initiated. Any future designation of the lands for possible disposal may be incorporated into the RMP process, including public involvement, but it cannot be determined at this time as to whether or not the lands would be designated for possible disposal. Therefore, sale of these lands will not be further considered in this document.

After further consideration, it was determined to eliminate all lands from further consideration except those that are directly pertinent to the nominator's agricultural and grazing operations.

2.3.2 Divide Parcels into Smaller Parcels

The BLM considered an alternative that would divide the approximately 1,880 acres of public lands into smaller parcels described in the Proposed Action. However, BLM determined that while this alternative would provide land for sale, there were no issues that would be caused by the Proposed Action that would be resolved by such an alternative. To the best of BLM's knowledge, the size of the parcels identified in the Proposed Action would be consistent with local government planning and zoning requirements and recommendations in this instance, and consistent with the real estate market in the area. Environmental effects would be expected to be the same whether the lands would be offered for sale as two, or more than two, parcels.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate that the effects of a proposed action and alternative(s) on certain critical environmental elements be considered. Not all of the critical elements that require inclusion in this EA will be present, or if they are present, may not be affected by the proposed action and alternative (Table 1).

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted to determine whether recognized environmental conditions, solid waste, or physical hazards are present on the subject property and adjacent lands. There are no recognized environmental concerns. No hazardous substances or petroleum products have been stored, released, or disposed in excess of CERCLA reportable quantities.

In addition to the mandatory critical elements, there are additional resources that require impact

analysis relative to the proposed action and alternative. These are presented in 3.2 Additional Affected Resources.

3.1 Supplemental Authorities (Critical Elements of the Human Environment)

The following critical elements of the human environment are present and/or affected by the proposed action and alternative: air quality, invasive, non-native species, migratory birds, and water quality (surface and ground).

Table 1: Supplemental Authorities (Critical Elements of the Human Environment)

Supplemental Authorities	Present		Affected		Rationale
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Air Quality	Present		Affected		
ACEC's		Not Present		Not Affected	The proposed project is not located in or near any ACECs (BLM WFO 2002).
Cultural Resources	Present			Not Affected	See sections 3.12 and 4.1.2
Environmental Justice		Not Present		Not Affected	There are no environmental justice issues associated with the project (BLM WFO 2002).
Floodplains		Not Present		Not Affected	The proposed project is not located in any FEMA-designated floodplains
Invasive, Non-native Species	Present		Affected		
Migratory Birds	Present		Affected		
Native American Religious Concerns	Present			Not Affected	See sections 3.1.5 and 4.1.5
Prime or Unique Farmlands		Not Present		Not Affected	Soil unit 1010 is considered prime. No unique farmland in the area.
Threatened and Endangered Species*		Not Present		Not Affected	
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		Not Present		Not Affected	There is no hazardous waste on the parcels proposed for disposal.

Water Quality (Surface and Ground)	Present		Affected		
Wetlands and Riparian Zones**		Present		Not Affected	There is no riparian habitat within the sale areas (Covert 2007).
Wild and Scenic Rivers		Not Present		Not Affected	The proposed project is not located in or near any wild and scenic rivers (BLM WFO 2002).
Wilderness		Not Present		Not Affected	The northern proposed parcels are adjacent to the Jackson Mountain wilderness area. (BLM WFO 2002).

(Table 1 – Prime Farmlands –Map unit may meet the soil requirement for prime farmland if irrigated and reclaimed by reducing salinity and sodicity.)

3.1.1 Air Quality

The project area, Desert Valley, is considered “unclassified” relative to attainment of the federal air quality standards. Windborne dust from the Black Rock Desert in the late spring, summer, and early fall causes a degradation of the air quality in the area. In spring, fall, and winter dust from barren agricultural fields can contribute dust to the atmosphere for short periods during strong wind events. The subject lands are undeveloped with few industrial pollution sources. Wildfires in or outside the area, agricultural burns, or prescribed fires occasionally emit particulate matter (smoke) into the air, producing short-term deterioration of air quality. Vehicle traffic on unpaved roads contributes dust to the atmosphere from agricultural, recreational, and mining activities.

3.1.2 Cultural Resources

Desert Valley was dry, for a thousand years, by the time people entered the area. No extended occupation would be expected in this valley because of the lack of natural water sources. It may be predicted that middle Holocene deposits are located in the young sand dunes in Desert Valley. The criteria are dependable water and sufficient seed crops, such as Indian Rice Grass. Bottle Creek Slough seems to have been a local (and seasonal) water source in the northern part of the valley. The small playas in the southern area of Desert Valley have dunes associated with them and may be another area of occupation. Here, also, the water would have been seasonal. Early conclusions were that this is an area where people passed through to other destinations. In this case, regular but brief stops would have left cultural deposits through time.

Historically, the greater Schoolhouse Butte area has been used for ranching, homesteading, farming and mineral exploration.

Schoolhouse Butte is comprised of several 40 and 80 acre segments surrounding the Trout Creek Ranch. Section 16 has a series of ditches, probably in current use for irrigation. Class III inventory was recommended in Section 16. Section 17 has an improved campsite adjacent to the north fence of the Trout Creek Ranch and local traffic has formed a road which goes through this parcel outside the ranch fence. A Class II inventory was recommended. In Section 21 no inventory was recommended in 2005 (see Zerga 2005). However, BLM Humboldt River Field Office felt it prudent to examine the 80 acre parcel in the southeast corner of section 21 with a Class III inventory. This inventory was conducted in July of 2008. No cultural resources were located (Haynal 2009).

No cultural resources were identified during the course of any of these inventories.

3.1.3 Invasive, Non-Native Species

Several laws authorize control of noxious weeds on public land under the BLM's administrative jurisdiction (e.g., The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (1972), Federal Noxious Weed Act (1974), FLPMA (1976), Public Rangelands Improvement Act (1978).

Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapter 555.05 defines "noxious weeds" and mandates land owners and land management agencies to include control of noxious weeds on lands under their jurisdiction.

Nevada has listed 47 non-native invasive plant species that require control. The subject lands have not been inventoried for noxious weeds and one or more of these species may be present.

3.1.4 Migratory Birds

Migratory birds are protected and managed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 *et. Seq.*) and Executive Order 131966. Under the MBTA nests (nests with eggs or young) of migratory birds may not be harmed, nor may migratory birds be killed. Executive Order 13186 directs federal agencies to promote the conservation of migratory bird populations.

Most of the parcels are characterized by salt desert shrub and/or sagebrush vegetative communities. Migratory birds associated with these vegetative communities may include: black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), canyon wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*), gray flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*), green-tailed towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), western meadowlark

(*Sturnella neglecta*), and vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*) (Great Basin Bird Observatory, 2003).

The burrowing owl, loggerhead shrike and vesper sparrow are BLM designated sensitive species.

3.1.5 Native American Religious Concerns

The parcels are located in the traditional territory of Northern Paiute peoples. At present, it is not known if there are places in the area that are of traditional or religious significance to these groups. A notification letter was forwarded to the Lovelock Paiute Tribe, Ft. McDermitt Tribe, and Winnemucca Indian Colony describing the proposed action and inviting them to express concerns in 2004. In March of 2008 follow up letters were sent to the same tribes, along with the Summit Lake Paiute. On April 15, 2008, Dr. Patrick Haynal talked to Ron Johnny, Environmental Coordinator for the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe. He expressed concerns that Northern Paiute have not surrendered traditional rights to hunt, gather, and practice traditional ceremonies. He recommended I talk to Linda Ayer, Chairperson of the Winnemucca Colony, since the land in question was traditionally used by those Northern Paiute. Dr. Haynal talked to Chairperson Ayer on April 21; she expressed no concerns at that time.

3.1.6 Water Resources (Surface and Ground)

Water sources, though scarce, are located within the parcels. There is no naturally occurring surface water sources located within the parcel unit. Although empirical data is not available, it is apparent that groundwater is present. With regard to the Schoolhouse Butte parcels groundwater is most likely present and is being developed on nearby private sections. Occasionally, excess irrigation (tail water) water may inundate small portions of the Schoolhouse Butte parcels.

3.2 Additional Affected Resources

In addition to the supplemental authorities, the following resources are present and affected by the proposed action and described in this section: Lands and Realty, Minerals, Paleontology, Rangeland Management, Recreation, Social Values and Economics, Soils, Special Status Species, Wildlife and Vegetation.

3.2.1 Lands and Realty

There are three authorized term linear rights-of-way (ROW) and one term site type ROW that encumber sections 16 and 17 in T. 38 N. R. 32 E., of the parcels proposed for sale. The Holder's of these ROW's have requested that portions of the rights-of-way encumbered by the land sale be converted to rights-of-way in perpetuity. Listed below are the existing rights-of-way:

Authorized Rights-of-Way (ROW)

Case Files	Authorized Holder	Type	Total Width
NVN-002346	Harney Electric Cooperative	24.9kV power line	20 feet
NVN-60463	Oregon-Idaho Utilities	Buried fiber optic cable	15 feet
NVN-61117	Humboldt County	Road maintenance camp site	0.252 acres
NVN-81443	Humboldt County	Improved gravel road	varies

3.2.2 Minerals

A review of the original Mineral Report, April 7, 2005, by Rod Herrick for Land Sale N-65802, was made on May 22, 2008. The findings are as follows:

- There is low to moderate potential for geothermal resources based on a significant amount of direct evidence.
- The parcels are not prospectively valuable for petroleum resources or solid leasable minerals. A minimal amount of direct evidence supports this conclusion.
- There is low potential for locatable minerals based on a significant amount of direct evidence.
- There is low potential for quality mineral materials based on significant direct evidence.
- No mineral resources are to be retained.

3.2.3 Paleontology

The Schoolhouse Butte parcels fall within Potential Fossil Yield Category 3. Under current guidelines field inventory is not required. There are no known fossil locations within one mile of the parcels.

3.2.4 Rangeland Management

The parcels to be sold under the proposed action are located within the Jackson Mountain Allotment. Under the current grazing permit there is a permitted use of 11,880 animal unit months (AUMs). Of the 11,880 AUM's permitted, 8,857 AUM's are currently in active use, the other 3,023 AUM's are in suspended use.

The area around the Schoolhouse Butte parcels is grazed yearly between 06/01 to 10/15.

The Jackson Mountain Allotment is approximately 375,806 acres in size, of which approximately 364,991 are public acres. If these public lands are indeed sold it would reduce the public acres within the allotment to approximately 364,551 acres. It would be the responsibility of the new landowner to fence the newly acquired land because Nevada is a "fence out" state, meaning in order to control access of livestock onto private property, it must be fenced if the landowner wishes that no livestock graze these private lands.

3.2.5 Recreation

Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and hunting are the predominant recreational uses in the area of the proposed sale. Types of OHVs used for this type of recreation are typically four-wheel drive vehicles and all terrain vehicles.

3.2.6 Social Values and Economics

This section discusses the Social and Economic resources of the region of influence (ROI). Humboldt County is identified as the ROI for Social and Economic analysis for the proposed action. Social and Economic conditions addressed include population and employment.

The proposed sale parcels are located in the south central portion of Humboldt County approximately 40 miles west of Winnemucca. Humboldt County is bordered by Elko County on the east, Lander County on the southeast, Pershing County on the south, Washoe County on the west, and Oregon on the north (BLM 2006c). In 2000, it ranked ninth among the seventeen Nevada counties in population and fourth in area. Humboldt County is sparsely populated, with most of its population living in the only incorporated city, Winnemucca. The most rapidly growing area of the county is Grass Valley, which is adjacent to and immediately south of Winnemucca. Other urban areas in the county include Denio, McDermitt, Orovada, Paradise Valley, and Golconda. See Chapter 10, Figure 2.

Population

According to 2008 US Census Bureau information, Humboldt County has a population of 17,763. This represents a 10.3 percent increase over the 2000 census.

Population fluctuations in Humboldt County are due to trends in the mining and farming industries. Mining replaced farming as the dominant economic sector in Humboldt County's economy, affecting employment, personal income, and other regional economic sectors (BLM 2006c).

Employment

The unemployment rate in Humboldt County was 8.6 percent in December of 2009, which was 4.4 percent lower than the statewide unemployment rate of 13 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Table 3 provides a breakdown of Humboldt County's employment by sector and average growth between 2001 and 2008. The sector with the largest number of jobs is Natural Resources and Mining. The largest growth sector within Humboldt County was the Professional and Business Services. The Information, Financial Activities, and Leisure and Hospitality sectors all experienced declines in employment during the period.

Overall Humboldt County experienced a 13.90 percent growth in employment between 2001 and 2008.

Table 2. Economic Analysis

County Employment by Sector (2001-2008)			
Sector	2001	2008	Percent Change
Natural Resources and Mining	1530	1778	16.21%
Construction	240	353	47.08%
Manufacturing	309	312	0.97%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1409	1410	0.07%
Information	103	80	-22.33%
Financial Activities	127	105	-17.32%
Professional and Business Services	246	484	96.75%
Education and Health Services	159	304	91.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	1184	1182	-0.17%
Other Services	109	160	46.79%
Unclassified	3	4	33.33%
Total	5419	6172	13.90%

Source: US Census Bureau 2008; Bureau of Labor Statistics

3.2.7 Soils

Soil types, each with different levels of agricultural potential, are represented (Table 4). Soils information is extracted from the Soil Survey of Humboldt County Nevada, West part (760), 2003.

As indicated in Table 3, two discrete soil associations are found within the Schoolhouse Butte parcels. See Chapter 10, Figure 3.

Table 3. Soils found in the Schoolhouse Butte Parcels

Map Unit Number	Name	Acres	Irrigated Capability Class	Erosion Hazard Wind	Erosion Hazard Water
1000	Broyles fine sandy loam, 0-2% slopes	108	4e-3e	Slight	Slight
1010	Bubus very fine sandy loam, 0-2% slopes	346	4s-4s-3e	Slight	Slight

*Soils in irrigated capability 1 through 4 are suitable for the production of commonly growing field crops. The degree of the soil limitations affecting production increases progressively from class 1 to class 4.

3.2.8 Special Status Species

The Nevada Natural Heritage (NNH) data base (April, 2008) and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Diversity data base (August, 2007) were consulted for the possible presence of endangered, threatened, candidate and/or sensitive plants or animal species. No endangered, threatened, candidate or sensitive plant or animal species were identified on any of the proposed sale parcels.

Sensitive Species

Sensitive species are species that require special management consideration to avoid potential future listing under the Endangered Species Act and that have been identified in accordance with procedures set forth in BLM Manual 6840. BLM policy in BLM Manual 6840.06, states, "Actions authorized by the BLM shall further the conservation and/or recovery of federally listed species and conservation of Bureau sensitive species. Note that "conservation" has a different meaning depending on whether it is referring to ESA listed species or Bureau sensitive species. See glossary. Bureau sensitive species will be managed consistent with species and habitat management objective in land use and implementation plans to promote their conservation and to minimize the likelihood and need for listing under the ESA".

Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

According to the Winnemucca District sage grouse database, none of the parcels are located within a sage grouse population management unit. Surprisingly, there is a lek located on private land in T., 38 N., R. 32 E., sec. 21. The lek was checked in 2007 and its status has been determined as unknown. However, a note on the lek data base states that the lek might be removed from the database since its location is in an agricultural field.

Pygmy Rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*)

In the Great Basin the pygmy rabbit is typically restricted to the sagebrush-grass complex. A dietary study of pygmy rabbits showed that they were dependent on sagebrush year round. Sagebrush was eaten throughout the year at 51% of the diet in summer and 99% in the winter. They also showed a preference for grasses and to lesser extent forbs, in the summer (Green and Flinders, 1980). These data seem to indicate that pygmy rabbits require sagebrush stands with an under story of perennial grasses to meet their dietary requirements. Since big sagebrush is found on the parcels, a pygmy rabbit inspection/inventory of them was completed on 04-29-08. The inspection/inventory of the parcels did not reveal the presence of pygmy rabbits and/or suitable habitat.

As stated in section **3.1.4 Migratory Birds**, the following sensitive bird species may be found on the subject parcels:

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*)

Burrowing owls may be found in sagebrush/bunchgrass vegetative communities. They are dependent on burrowing mammal populations for maintenance of nest habitat. Dense stands of grasses and forbs within owl home ranges support populations of rodent and insect prey.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Loggerhead shrikes may be found in sagebrush/bunchgrass vegetative communities. These birds would benefit from habitat with a diverse structure and species composition. Healthy sagebrush communities would provide these habitat characteristics.

Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*)

The vesper sparrow typically inhabits sagebrush-grass vegetative communities. It differs greatly from the loggerhead shrike in its foraging habits. It forages on the ground and eats mostly seeds from grasses and forbs and will also eat insects when they are available (Paige and Ritter, 1999).

3.2.9 Wildlife

Terrestrial wildlife resources on the parcels are typical of the Northern Great Basin. A wide variety of wildlife species common to the Great Basin ecosystem may be found on the parcels. Common wildlife species occurring on the parcels may include badger (*Taxidea taxus*), blacktailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), and coyote (*Canis latrans*). Various small common mammals, primarily rodents, and common reptiles may be found on the parcels. There are no aquatic and /or fisheries habitats on these parcels, therefore, fisheries will not be addressed further in this document.

These parcels fall within an area designated for mule deer habitat as agriculture lands/unique habitat. Additionally, pronghorn antelope are frequently seen in the alfalfa fields that adjoin these parcels and likely use them for cover after feeding. The antelope habitat has been classified as all months. Deer and antelope are probably attracted to the area by plentiful water, cover and alfalfa. It is likely there are year-round resident herds in the vicinity of the parcels.

There are no other big game species inhabiting the area. California quail (*Callipepla californica*) may inhabit some of the adjacent private land and may make use of portions of the parcels.

3.2.10 Vegetation

The dominate potential vegetation in the Schoolhouse Butte parcel consists of two vegetation types Shadscale/Bud sagebrush *Atriplex confertifolia*/*Picrothamnus desertorum*; Shadscale/Black greasewood *Atriplex confertifolia*/*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*; refer to the potential vegetation map in Chapter 10, Figure 4.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Assumptions for Analysis

In order to analyze the potential environmental impacts of title transfer of the parcels under the Proposed Action, and the environmental impacts of retention of title under the No Action Alternative, certain assumptions have been made as to the potential future uses of the parcels. It should be noted that the act of transferring title to real property causes no direct impacts to the environment. Impacts to the environment analyzed in this EA are indirect impacts. If the lands

would be conveyed out of Federal ownership, all actual development would be subject to local government review and approval, including zoning changes and permits for construction projects. BLM would have no control over any future use or development of the land once privatized. Upon issuance of patent, the lands would no longer be administered through the WD or under the jurisdiction of the DOI.

However, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires indirect impacts of a proposed action to be analyzed. Because BLM would have no control over future uses or development of the land, BLM has made certain assumptions regarding future uses in order to analyze the indirect impacts of future potential uses of the parcels.

The BLM is uncertain whether all of the parcels would sell and to what uses these lands would be put. Based on indications from interested parties, however, a likely RFD scenario would include:

The conversion of rangelands to croplands is expected in this parcel unit. This conversion would include removal of existing vegetation, leveling of the ground surface, seeding crops, fencing, and irrigation.

Under the Proposed Action, the parcels, if conveyed into private ownership, would be subject to all applicable land use regulations of Humboldt County. Given the location of the parcels, the distance to Winnemucca (the nearest community), and uses of private lands in the area, it is assumed the parcels would continue to be used for agricultural purposes (livestock grazing/ranching and farming) in both the short- and long-terms. Although the lands would be offered modified competitive and it is not known who the purchaser may be, even though the designated bidder can meet a high bid, future use of the lands is considered to be the same, regardless of the purchaser. This indication of future use would not be binding on a purchaser of the parcels and would not guarantee land uses would not be different than described, but any substantial change would be subject to the review and approval of Humboldt County and its public involvement processes and requirements.

Under the No Action Alternative, the subject lands would continue to be managed under multiple-use principles described in the FLPMA, and under the management prescriptions identified in the MFP. Although this management could change in the future, any substantial change would be subject to environmental analysis and public involvement in accordance with the BLM's planning and NEPA regulations and guidance. Even though the parcels could be considered for conveyance out of Federal ownership (disposal) through another sale or exchange proposal, the description of effects under the No Action Alternative assumes continued ownership by the United States.

4.1.1 Air Quality

Proposed Action

Air quality in the vicinity of the Schoolhouse Butte parcels could be affected by changes in the vegetative cover through cultivation of these lands. Dust generated by the cultivation and vehicle emission could add particulate matter to the atmosphere. Burning of fields or weeds could occur on the parcel, generating smoke and ash. In general, these impacts are short-

term and localized. Adverse impacts to air quality could be reduced through dust suppression techniques such as the application of water to roads or bare ground or by maintaining a cover crop.

No Action Alternative

There would be no impacts to the air quality. There would be no new impacts to air quality from the No Action Alternative. Air quality would remain the same.

4.1.2 Cultural Resources

Proposed Action

There are no identified cultural resources; therefore, the proposed action should have no effect.

No Action Alternative

No impacts would occur.

4.1.3 Invasive, Nonnative Species

Proposed Action

If the land is converted to agricultural production, existing noxious weed populations would likely be controlled so that crop production is not reduced. Any populations of listed noxious weeds present on the subject lands would become the responsibility of the purchaser, and would require control as described under NRS Chapter 555, which mandates land owners to control noxious weeds.

No Action Alternative

If the property is not offered for sale, the land would remain rangeland. Any existing noxious weed infestations would eventually be identified as a result of on-going noxious weed inventories conducted by the WD. These weed locations would then be included in the WD weed control program.

4.1.4 Migratory Birds

Proposed Action

The conversion of the Schoolhouse Butte parcels from native vegetation to agricultural crops would result in the displacement of migratory bird species associated with the existing vegetation. Establishment of cropland would result in a conversion of the existing habitat but it would become habitat for a different suite of migratory birds. Given the relatively small acreage involved, it is not anticipated that the proposed action would result in a measurable affect to migratory bird populations.

No Action Alternative

This alternative would have no effect on migratory birds.

4.1.5 Native American Religious Concerns

Proposed Action

If these parcels were transferred to private ownership, access to the land for gathering and hunting (or other activities) would be closed or limited at the discretion of the owner(s).

No Action Alternative

No impacts to Native American religious concerns would occur.

4.1.6 Water Resources (Surface and Ground)

Proposed Action

It is reasonably foreseeable that all of the requested acreage within this parcel unit could be used for irrigated agriculture. The likely source of irrigation water for this development is groundwater. The irrigation wells that would be necessary to support the cultivation would likely be developed in the large alluvial aquifer, as are the existing wells. According to the Nevada State Engineer's web site, the Schoolhouse Butte parcel is located in hydrographic basin 31, Desert Valley. Desert Valley is a designated basin with no preferred uses. The perennial yield is considered to be 9,000 acre feet per year and the currently committed resources are in excess of 38,000 acre feet. It is unlikely that the State Engineer would grant any new appropriations to support the use of this parcel for irrigated agriculture. For the reasonably foreseeable development scenario to occur, this would require the transfer of existing permitted water rights for use at this location. The successful bidder may also choose to raise an alternative crop that does not require irrigation. In either event, it is unlikely that additional water (beyond what is currently permitted) would be available, so no new impacts to water resources would occur. The nearest surface water source on public land is located more than 3 miles away.

No Action Alternative

There would be no impacts to water resources resulting from the No Action alternative.

Additional Affected Resources

4.1.7 Lands and Realty

Proposed Action

Converting the existing term rights-of-way to perpetuity would allow the Holders to retain the rights-of-way as is, therefore, there would be no impacts to the existing rights-of-way.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative the lands would remain in Federal ownership and managed for multiple use principles as identified in the current Land Use Management Plan. The existing rights-of-way would remain under the term schedule currently in force with the right of renewal. There would be no impacts to the existing rights-of-way.

4.1.8 Minerals

Proposed Action

As required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, (P. L. 94-579 Sec. 209. (43 U.S.C. 1719)) BLM may convey the federally owned mineral interest only when the authorized officer determines that it has no known mineral value. The Mineral Report “Review of the DeLong Farms Land Sale N-65802, Supplemental Mineral Report”, May 22, 2008, by Robert L. Lutz, has determined that there are either no known or that there is low potential for locatable, leasable, saleable and fluid resources. Therefore, these mineral resources should be disposed of with the surface estate.

No Action Alternative

No impacts are expected under the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the Federal government would retain the mineral interests.

4.1.9 Paleontology

Proposed Action

The Schoolhouse Butte parcels fall within Potential Fossil Yield Category 3. Under current guidelines field inventory is not required. There are no known fossil locations within one mile of the parcels. No affects to this resource are anticipated under the proposed action.

No Action Alternative

No impacts are expected under the No Action Alternative.

4.1.10 Rangeland Management

Proposed Action

The proposed action would result in a slight reduction in public land acres located in the Jackson Mountain Allotment. This action would also reduce the permitted AUM’s under the grazing permit by 46 AUM’s or approximately 0.5 percent. This would change the active grazing use AUM’s from 8,857 to 8,811 AUM’s. Based on the low number of AUMs and public land acreage within the Jackson Mountain Allotment that would be affected, the proposed action would have little effect on the grazing permit as well as the grazing management within the allotment.

No Action Alternative

Impacts to range resources would not occur.

4.1.11 Recreation

Proposed Action

Under the proposed action alternative, the use of these parcels would not be available to the general public for recreational purposes. This would result in a net decrease of the availability of recreational opportunities involving off highway vehicle use and hunting by the general public. Under the proposed action alternative the acres proposed for purchase,

which would then be withdrawn from public use, are a very small portion of the total public land available in the area for recreational use.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative impacts to recreation would not occur.

4.1.12 Social Values and Economics

Proposed Action

There would be no direct impacts to the Social and Economic values by the disposal of this parcel unit.

The proposed action would likely result in the subject lands being developed as farm lands. The amount of lands being placed into agricultural production is small in comparison to existing neighboring agricultural lands. The conversion of these lands to private lands and placing them into agriculture production would increase the Humboldt County tax role slightly. It would not be expected that the farm labor sector would see an increase, as the lands are not of sufficient size as to require additional farm laborers to work on the lands.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative the lands would not be transferred into private ownership and Humboldt County would not realize private property taxes for these lands.

4.1.13 Soils

Proposed Action

Changing land use from rangeland to agricultural land would expose soils to increased erosion during initial development and when land is barren, primarily from wind erosion. Wind erosion impacts would be low or moderate depending on the length of time soil is bare. Once the area is irrigated and vegetation is established, wind erosion hazard would be reduced.

Surface soil chemistry would change as soluble salts are leached deeper into the soil profile. Fertilizers, amendments, herbicides, and pesticides could be applied, altering soil chemistry.

Soil physical properties, especially soil surface structure would change from platy to granular through leveling and plowing. This change of structure would increase infiltration rates.

Soil biological crusts would be most likely eliminated.

No Action Alternative

There would be no new impacts to soils from the No Action Alternative. Soils properties would remain unchanged.

4.1.14 Special Status Species

Proposed Action

If the proposed action results in the conversion of rangeland to agricultural uses as described in the RFD scenario, the species associated with the native vegetative habitat would be displaced. These impacts would be localized and relatively minor when considered on a landscape scale.

No Action Alternative

This alternative would have no effect on special status species.

4.1.15 Vegetation

Proposed Action

Conversion to agricultural lands would require the removal of existing vegetation (shadacale, bud sagebrush and black greasewood) from the Schoolhouse Butte parcel. These plants are common throughout the valleys within the Winnemucca District. Most likely alfalfa and small grains would be the common crops grown. Native plants would be eliminated on the 440 acre parcel.

No Action Alternative

There would be no new impacts to vegetation from the No Action Alternative. Vegetation composition and plant species would remain unchanged.

4.1.16 Wildlife

Proposed Action

If the proposed action results in the conversion of rangeland to agricultural uses as described in the RFD scenario, the species associated with the native vegetative habitat would be displaced. These impacts would be localized and relatively minor when considered on a landscape scale. The conversion would likely benefit mule deer, antelope, and California quail, since they often utilize cultivated areas.

No Action Alternative

This alternative would have no effect on wildlife.

5.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA defines a cumulative impact as: “The impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.” Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

Cumulative Assessment Area

The Schoolhouse Butte parcels are located in the Trout Creek/Shawnee Creek watershed and for the purposes of this analysis will be the cumulative assessment area, see Appendix B, Figure 5. This area consists of approximately 159,163 acres of which 152,098 acres are public and 7,138 are private. The area is bounded on the north by the North Jackson Mountains, on the south by the Jungo Hills on the west by the eastern foothills of the Jackson Mountains and on the east by the west flank of the Slumbering Hills.

Portions of three different grazing allotments are represented in this assessment area. These allotments are Bottle Creek, Jackson Mountains, and Desert Valley.

5.1 Past and Present Actions

On the basis of aerial photographic data, agency records and GIS analysis, the following past and present actions, which have impacted the assessment area to varying degrees, have been identified: livestock grazing, road and infrastructural development, mining, agricultural development, wildfire, recreational activity, and geothermal exploration.

Livestock Grazing – Portions of 3 different grazing allotments are represented in this assessment area. These allotments are Bottle Creek, Jackson Mountains, and Desert Valley.

In order to improve management of the allotments, a variety of range improvement projects have been implemented through the years. These include fences, water pipelines, wells and troughs.

Roads and Infrastructural Development – A variety of roads and infrastructure have been developed within the assessment area. In terms of both length and area, unimproved roads are dominant. Most of these roads have their origin in mining exploration and ranching access and only a few are regularly maintained.

Both surface and subsurface telephone and electric transmission lines are also common in the assessment area. These lines provide utility service to isolated ranches in the area and surrounding regions. The majority of the lines are conveyed by power poles, though some more recent telephone cables have been installed underground. In general, these lines parallel existing roads, though some also run cross-country.

Other infrastructural developments include a telecommunication site and an associated access road and utility service lines.

Mineral Related Activities – There has been periodic exploration within the cumulative assessment area, currently there are two notice level (5 acre or under) mineral exploration activities occurring within the southwest portion of the cumulative assessment area. Mineral exploration activities involve drill pads and exploration roads.

There is a 12 acre gravel pit along Bottle Creek road in the center of the cumulative assessment area.

Agricultural Development– The cultivation of hay crops, primarily alfalfa, is a prominent activity on private land within the assessment area.

Wildfire – There have been two wildfire occurrences, one in the southwest corner and one on the westside of the cumulative assessment area in the past 10 years.

Recreational Activity- Recreational activities in the assessment area include relatively dispersed pursuits such as hunting, hiking, rock hounding, and more concentrated activities such as OHV use.

5.2 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

All of the past and present actions discussed above are expected to persist into the foreseeable future, though the relative intensity of these actions could vary depending on a variety of economic and other factors.

Livestock Grazing - The intensity and character of livestock grazing is anticipated to remain consistent into the foreseeable future.

A grazing permit renewal Environmental Assessment will be conducted in the future involving the Bottle Creek, Desert Valley and Jackson Mountain Allotments that are within the Schoolhouse Butte cumulative assessment area. There is a drift fence proposed as part of the Desert Valley grazing permit renewal process that would involve approximately 2 miles of fence within the cumulative assessment area.

Roads and Infrastructural Development - At present, there are no known proposals to construct, alter, or improve roads within the assessment area. Reasonably foreseeable future actions associated within the assessment area are likely to be roads limited to grading or other maintenance of road surfaces.

There are water, power and gas lines associated with private parcels within the cumulative assessment area.

Recreation - Recreational use is expected to increase, approximately five percent annually, as a result of population growth and family oriented activities. Some activities such as hunting and off-road vehicle use will likely continue and/or increase over time (Winnemucca RMP AMS, 2005).

Wildfire – While the occurrence of wildfire is unpredictable, it is likely, based on historical patterns, that wildfire will again burn parts of the assessment area. BLM fire management policy states that wildfire will be aggressively suppressed, which makes it likely that suppression techniques such as the construction of dozer lines, the cross-country travel of engines, the implementation of retardant drops, and the establishment of base camps for fire fighters are reasonably foreseeable.

5.3 Cumulative Impacts to Affected Resources

Impacts associated with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are generally created by ground or vegetation-disturbing activities that affect natural and cultural resources in various ways. Of particular concern is the accumulation of these impacts over time. This section of the EA considers the nature of the cumulative effects and analyzes the degree to which the proposed action and alternatives contribute to the collective impact.

Assumptions for Analysis

No cumulative impacts are expected under either alternative to the following resources: Cultural Resources, Economics, Lands and Realty, Minerals, Native American Religious Concerns, Paleontology, Rangeland Management, Recreation, Social Values and Water Quality, therefore these resources will not be carried forward.

Inter-related resources with similar impacts have been grouped together for the cumulative impacts analysis.

The following sections discuss the incremental impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action alternative when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities within the cumulative impact assessment areas.

5.3.1 Air Quality

Impacts from Past and Present Actions

Past and present actions have generated fugitive dust, principally from surface disturbing activities, such as, agricultural activities, travel on unpaved roads, OHV use, and livestock activities.

Impacts from Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Reasonably foreseeable future actions are expected to add to fugitive dust and vehicle emissions, although the increases could vary depending on a variety of factors. Recreation, wildfire, and development of new agricultural lands would add emissions. These emissions would be localized of limited extent and would have a minimal impact to air quality.

Cumulative Impacts

Proposed Action

Fugitive dust and vehicle emissions would be generated by the proposed action. These emissions would be localized. As a result, the potential for cumulative impacts from the proposed action are minimal.

No Action Alternative

No project activities would be undertaken if the No Action Alternative were selected. There would be no cumulative effects on air quality from this action. The area would continue to be managed under multiple-use principles and subject to environmental analysis and public involvement.

5.3.2 Invasive, Nonnative Species

Impacts from Past and Present Actions

Past impacts from road maintenance, fire, gravel pits, livestock grazing, agriculture, recreation and other ground disturbing activities have introduced and spread invasive species throughout the assessment area. Current implementation of best management practices in ground disturbing activities has helped reduce the spread of invasive species. Treatments of infestations have been occurring on public and private land within the assessment area which has reduced the spread of invasive species. Recently, increases in recreation and OHV use within the assessment area has increased the spread of invasive species by the creation of new roads and trails which act as routes for weed spread.

Impacts from Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Future increases in recreation are likely to further increase the spread of invasive species into more of the assessment area. The increase in recreation is also likely to introduce more invasive nonnative species that are currently not present within the assessment area from other locations. The occurrence of fire would likely remain at the same level or could increase, which may advance the spread of invasive species through the assessment area.

Cumulative Impact

Proposed Action

This area would likely be converted to agriculture, which are areas prone to invasion by invasive species, however, increased treatment would also likely result. Other activities that introduce and spread invasive species would not be present were the area converted to agriculture. The cumulative impact from the proposed action for this parcel would be minimal.

No Action Alternative

No project activities would be undertaken if the No Action Alternative were selected. There would be no additional cumulative effects on invasive species, though other actions that spread invasive and nonnative species would still occur. The area would continue to be managed under multiple-use principles and subject to environmental analysis and public involvement.

5.3.3 Migratory Birds, Special Status Species, and Wildlife

Impacts from Past and Present Actions

Impacts from actions that clear the surface of vegetation have the greatest immediate impact, since they result in the removal of all vegetation. Roads would fall into this category, but they are linear and don't typically result in very great localized impacts. Other surface clearing activities such as drill pads are often small and localized.

The impacts from grazing tend to be spread out over large areas and the intensity of impacts varies somewhat with distance from water. Impacts from grazing tend to result in alteration of habitat with the possible change in the abundance and diversity of plant species.

Impacts from recreation tend to be dispersed and probably of little consequence. To date wildfire has had limited effects.

Impacts from Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Impacts would be very similar to those described under **Impacts from Past and Present Action** and would be of low intensity and limited scale.

Cumulative Impact

Proposed Action

The impacts from the proposed action are very limited and in effect are merely a conversion of habitat on limited acreage. The incremental impacts of the proposed action when combined with other impacts are negligible.

No Action Alternative

No measurable cumulative impacts are anticipated. The area would continue to be managed under multiple-use principles and subject to environmental analysis and public involvement.

5.3.4 Soils and Vegetation

Impacts from Past and Present Actions

Past and present actions have disturbed soils, creating erosion by the removal of vegetation, principally from livestock grazing, infrastructure for agricultural and mining activities, and recreation activities. These disturbances are localized having a minimal impact to soil and vegetation.

Wildfires have had a high impact on soils and vegetation in the cumulative impacts assessment area. Native vegetation has been greatly reduced and replaced by cheatgrass. Substantial soil degradation and erosion has occurred.

Impacts from Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Reasonably foreseeable future activities would continue to slightly impact the soils and vegetation within the cumulative impacts assessment area due to disturbance and /or vegetation removal. Recreation, mining, energy development, and development of new agricultural lands would disturb soils and vegetation. These disturbances would affect a small percentage of the cumulative assessment area and would be localized having a minimal impact to soil and vegetation.

Cumulative Impact

Proposed Action

Soil and vegetation disturbances would occur from the proposed action. These disturbances would be localized. The proposed action disturbances would affect approximately 440 acres of shadscale/black greasewood vegetation types. These plants communities are common in the cumulative assessment area. As a result, the potential for cumulative impacts from the proposed action to soil and vegetation are minimal.

No Action Alternative

No project activities would be undertaken if the No Action Alternative were selected. There would be no cumulative effects on soils and vegetation. The area would continue to be managed under multiple-use principles and subject to environmental analysis and public involvement.

6.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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Derek Messmer, Noxious Weeds, Rangeland Management
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Mike Zielinski, Soils

7.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Native American Tribes Contacted

Ft. McDermitt Tribal Council
Lovelock Paiute Colony
Winnemucca Indian Colony
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe

8.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

See section 1.4 Issues, for public outreach during scoping.
The Preliminary Environmental Assessment will be made available 30 days for public review.

9.0 REFERENCES

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10. MAPS

Schoolhouse Butte Parcels

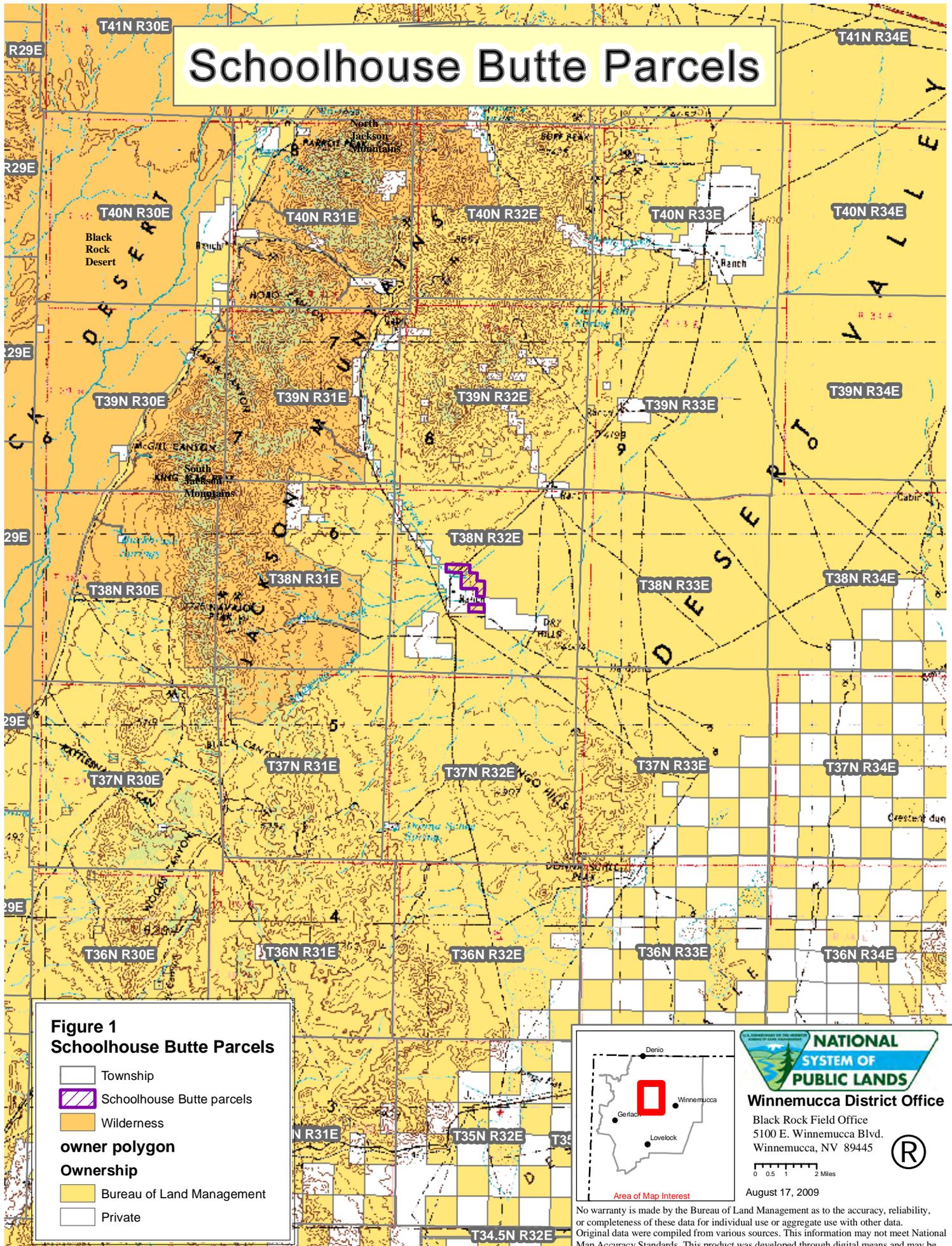
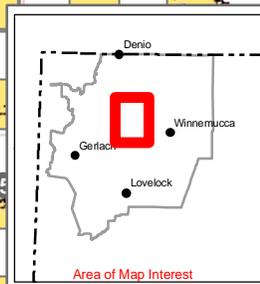


Figure 1
Schoolhouse Butte Parcels

-  Township
-  Schoolhouse Butte parcels
-  Wilderness
- owner polygon**
- Ownership**
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Private



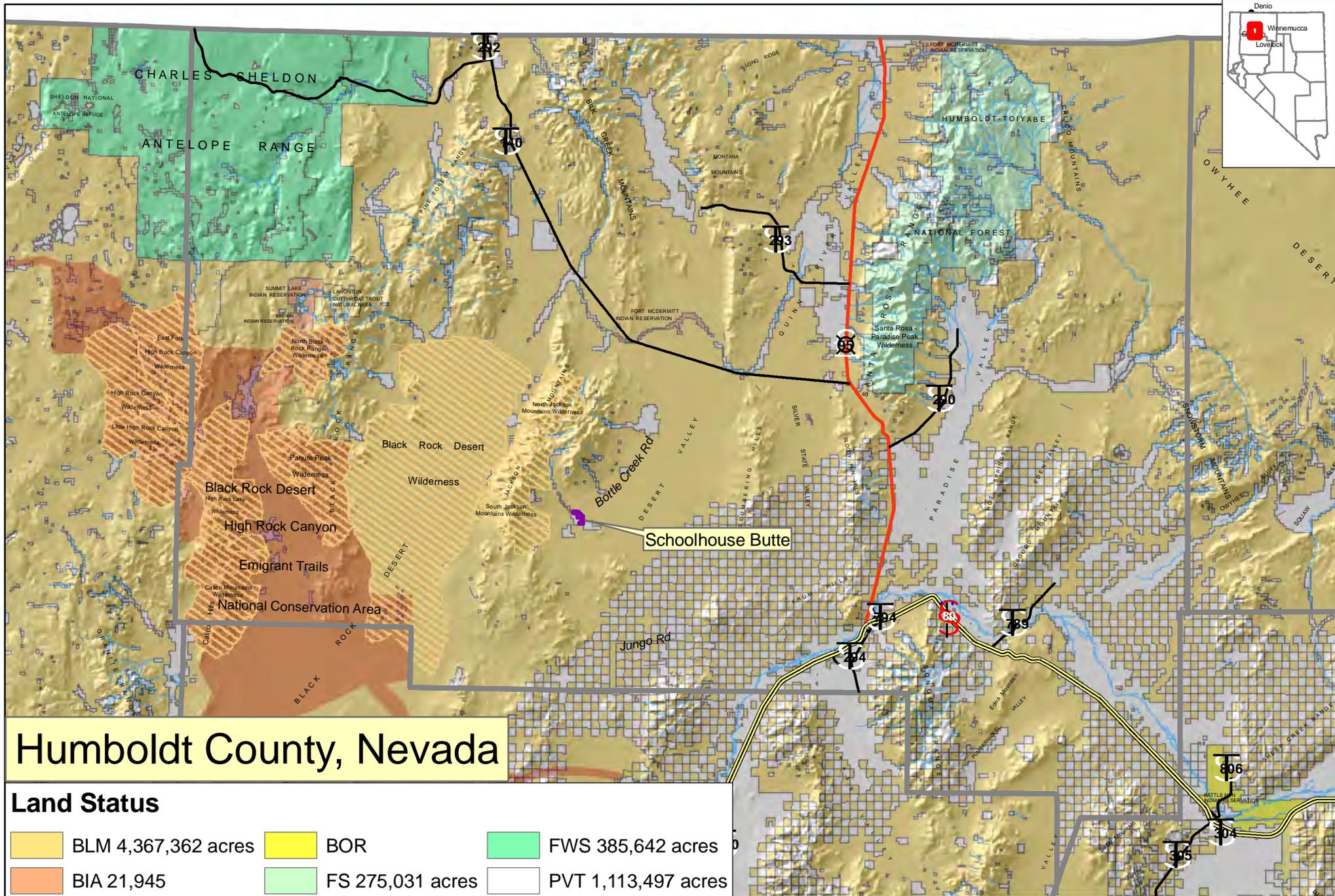
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0 0.5 1 2 Miles

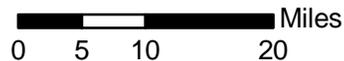
August 17, 2009

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Figure 2

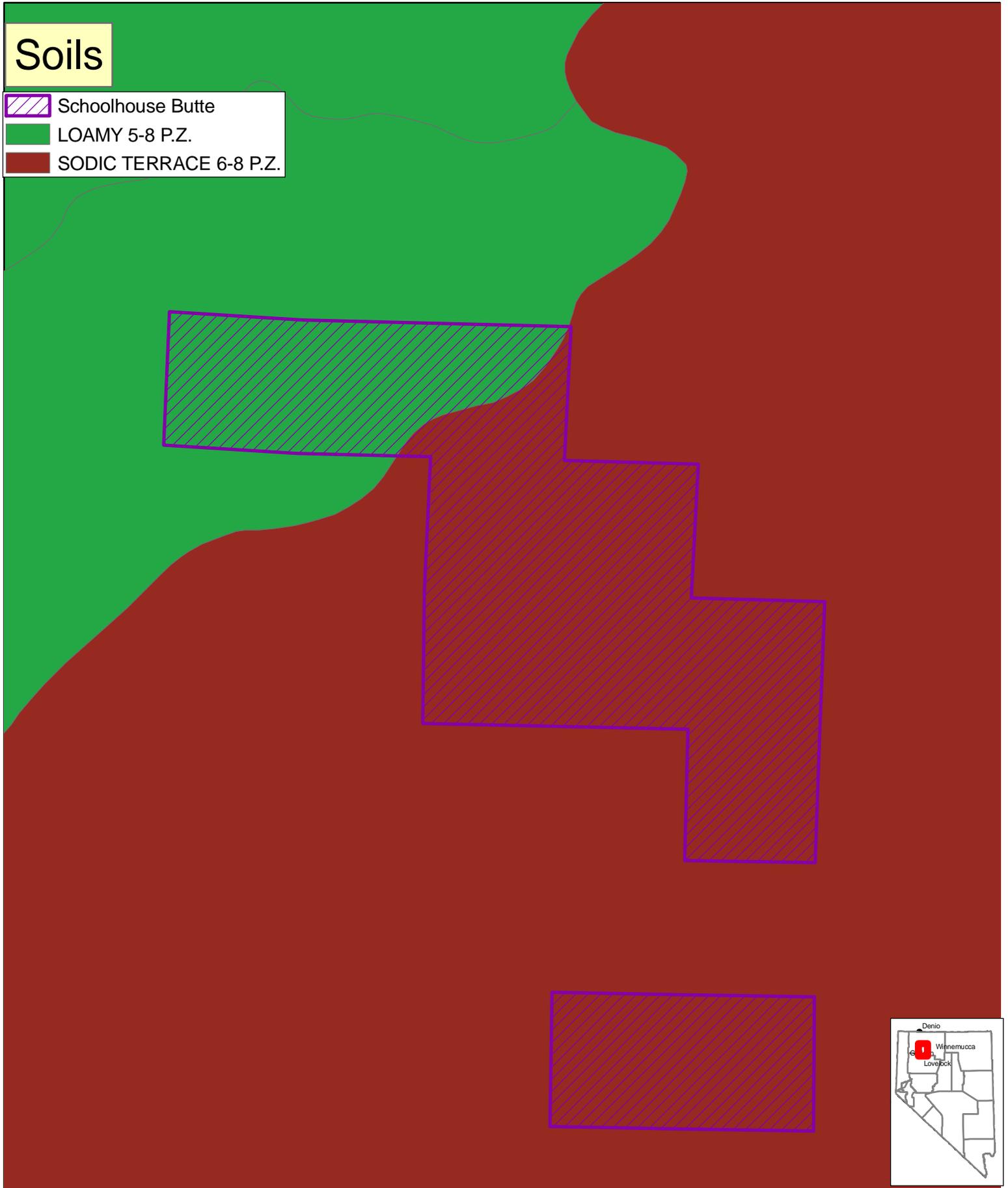


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Map Date: March, 2010

Soils

-  Schoolhouse Butte
-  LOAMY 5-8 P.Z.
-  SODIC TERRACE 6-8 P.Z.



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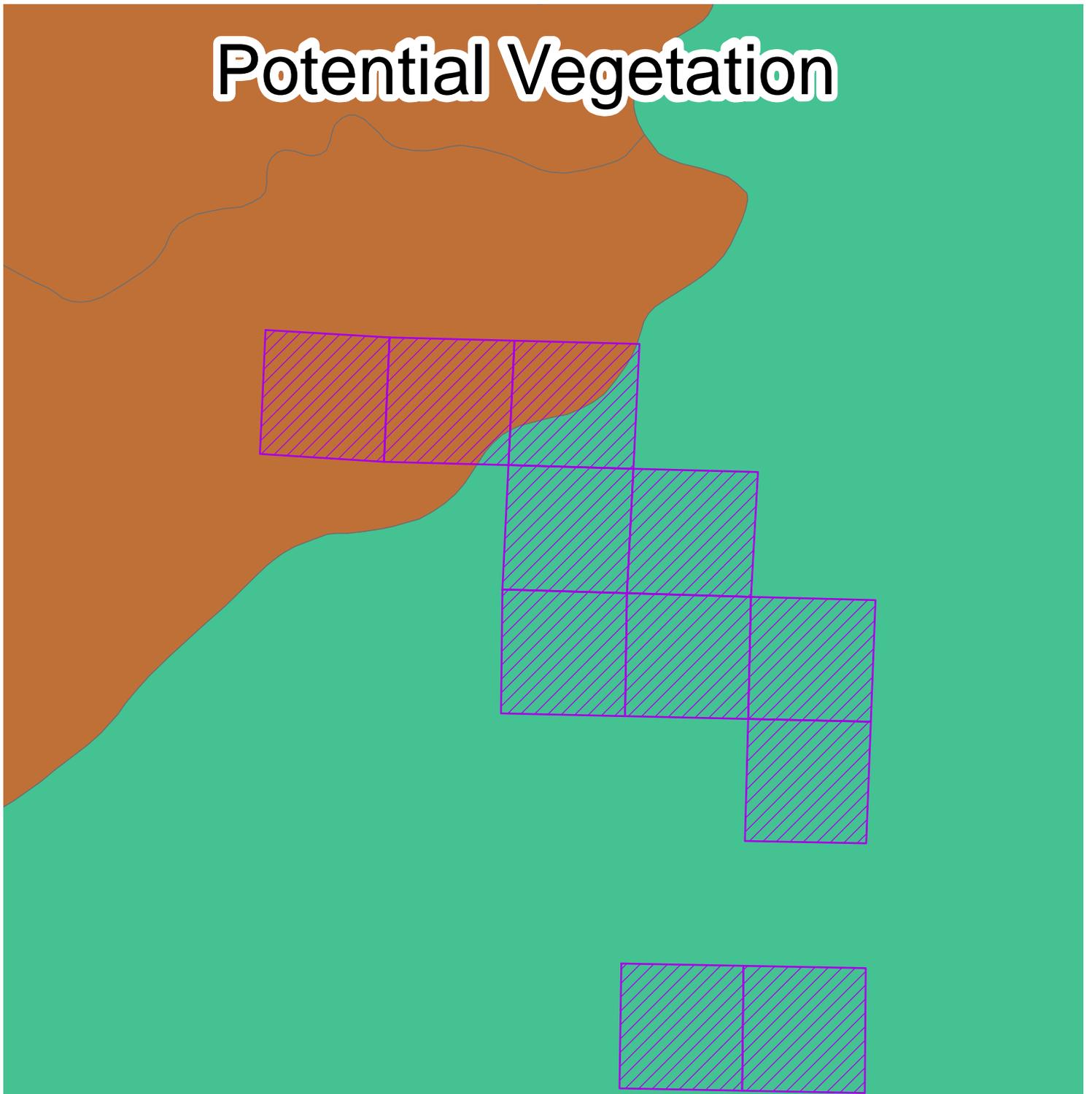
Figure 3



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Map Date: March 2010

Potential Vegetation



Legend Figure 4

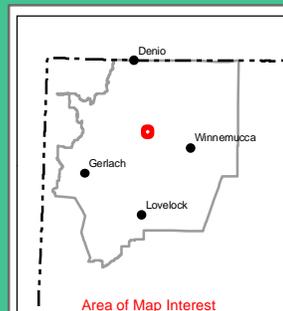
Parcels

 Schoolhouse Butte

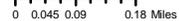
Potential Vegetation (Habitat Type)

 ATCO-ARSP5/ELEL5-ACHY

 ATCO-SAVE/ELEL5

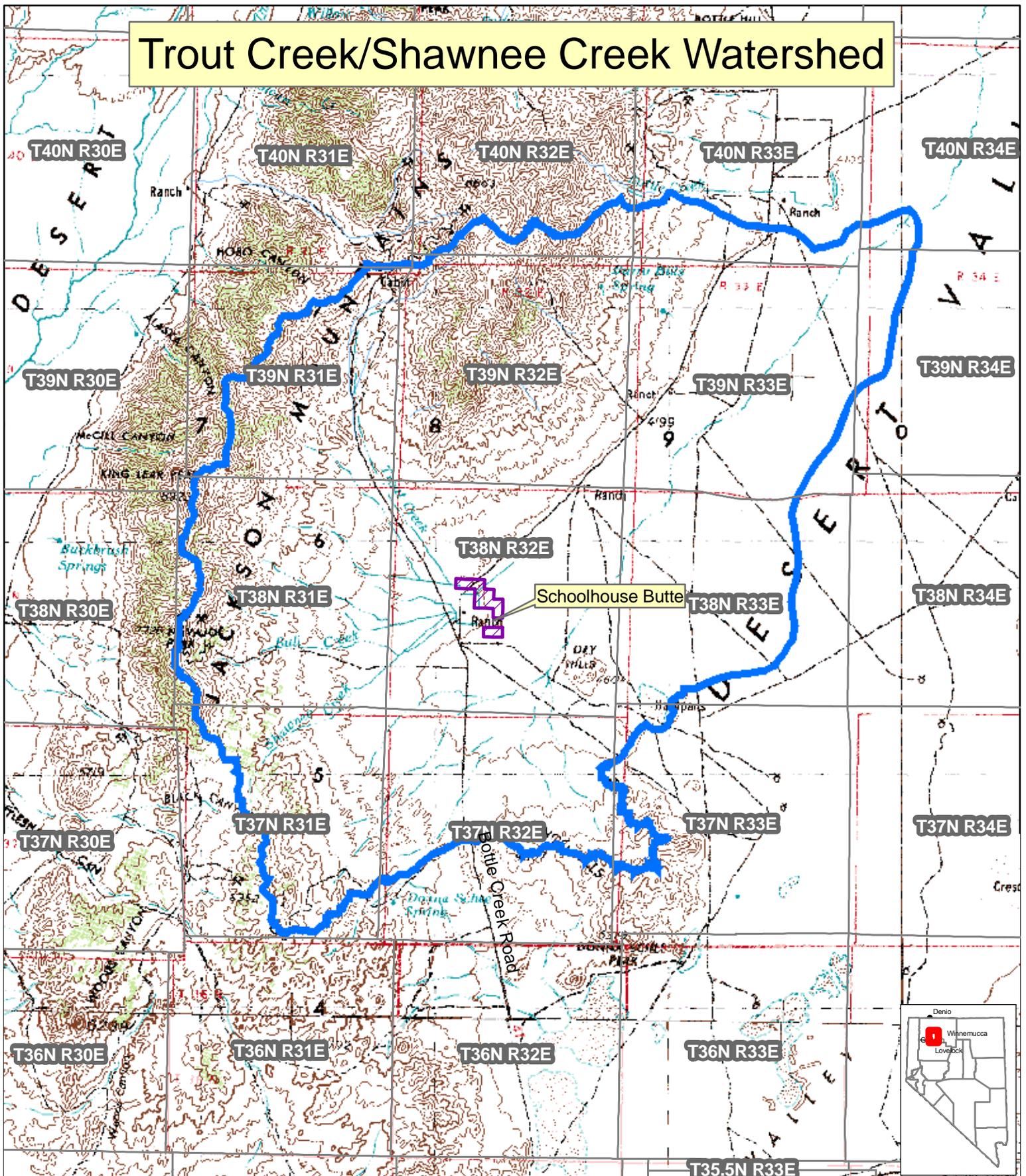


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Trout Creek/Shawnee Creek Watershed



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Figure 5

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- Schoolhouse Butte
- Cumulative Assessment Area

