BLM Sage Grouse Planning

BLM

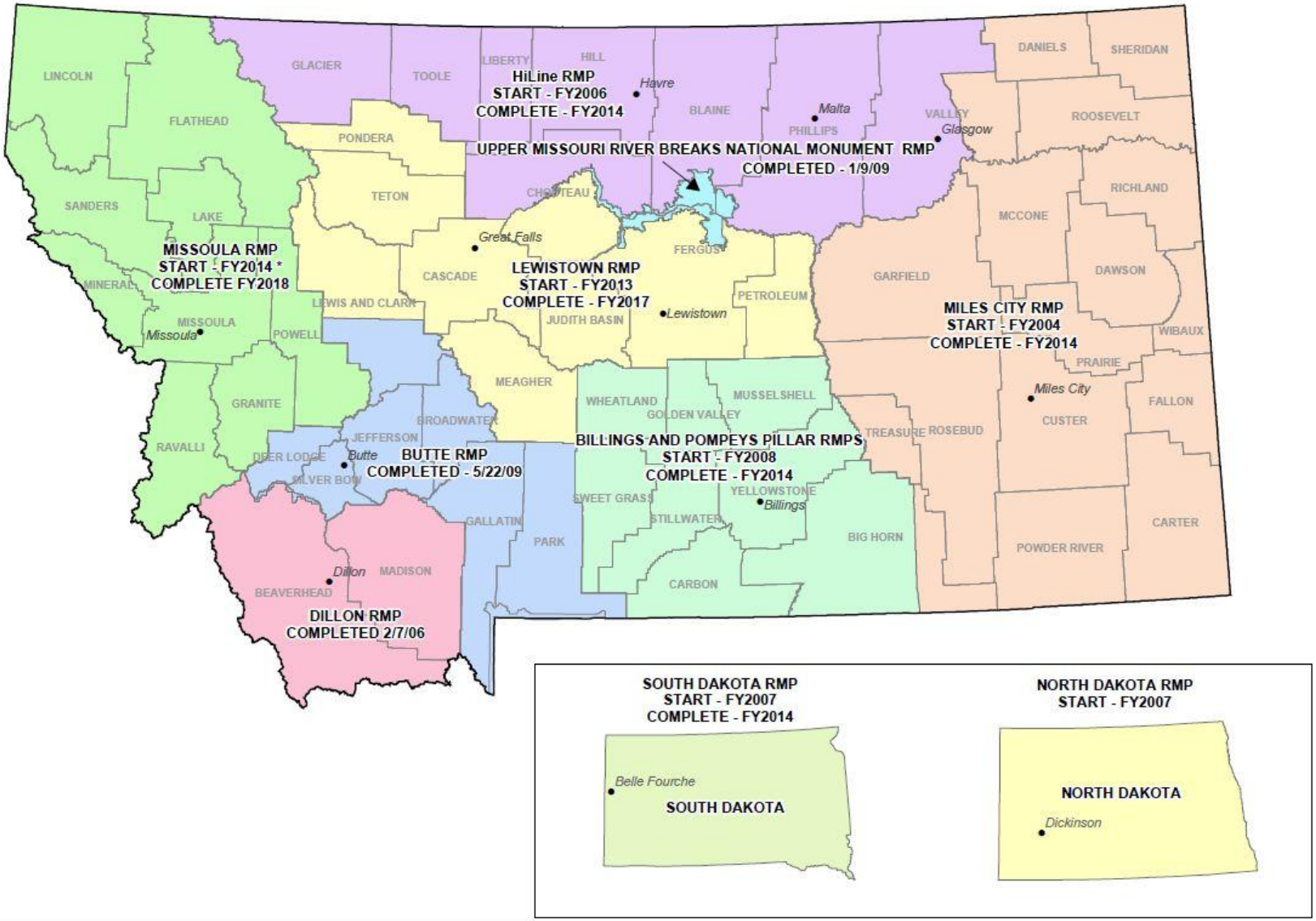
Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council

June 11-12, 2013

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ONGOING & FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING BOUNDARIES MONTANA/DAKOTAS



BLM

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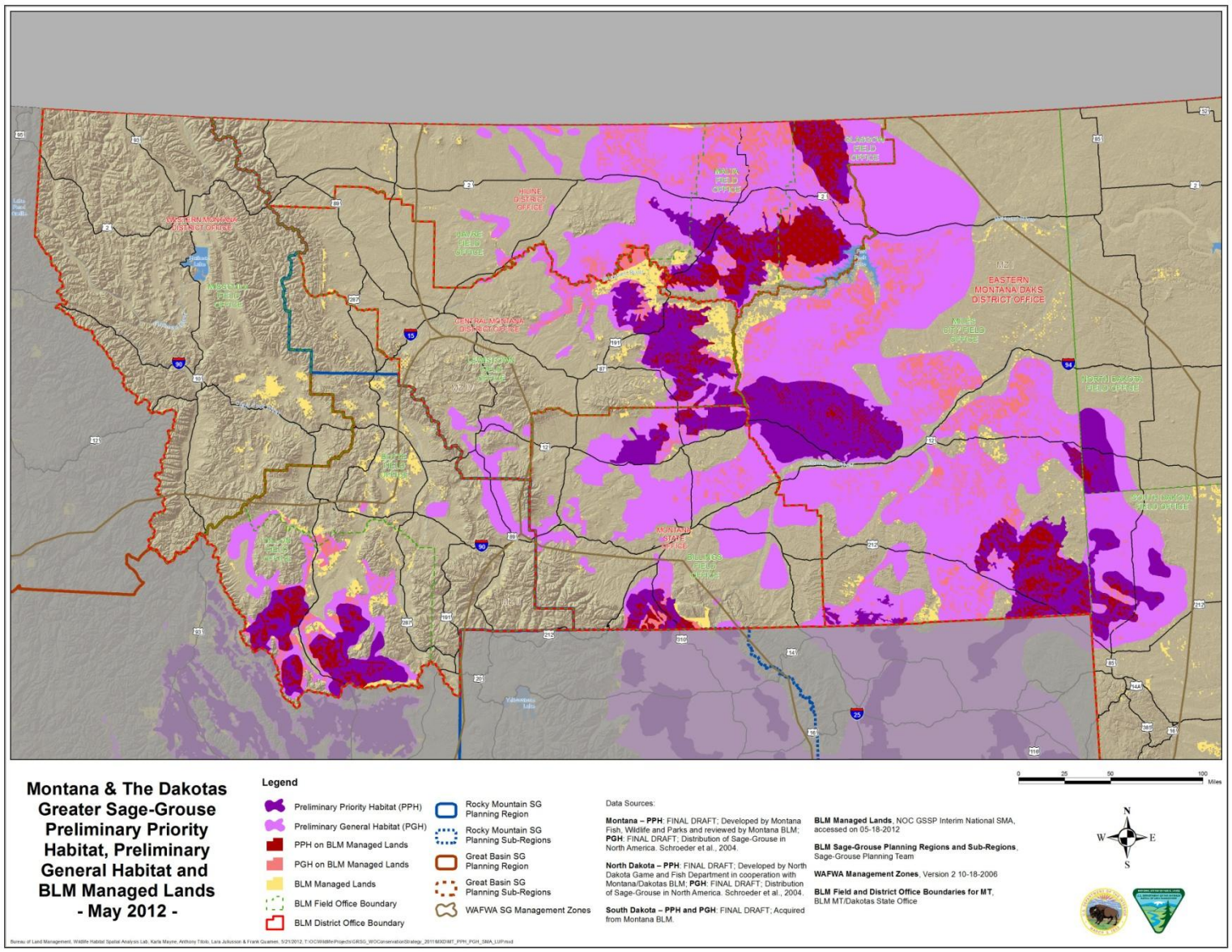
Montana/Dakotas BLM Lands and PPH & PGH



BLM
Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

Resource Management Plans (RMP)

An RMP:

Describes broad multiple-use direction for BLM-administered public lands that focuses on what resource conditions, uses and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time.

Establishes desired outcomes (goals and objectives) for resource management and includes measurable steps, management actions, and allowable uses to achieve the desired outcomes.

Provides the framework for subsequent implementation decisions carried-out through project specific or activity level plans.

• An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) accompanies the RMP to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the environmental issues and impacts for the alternatives analyzed in detail.

Lands and Realty Land Use Plan Decisions

Identify the following consistent with the goals and objectives for natural resources within the planning area

- Where and under what circumstances authorizations for use, occupancy, and development (such as major leases and land use permits) may be.

- Existing and potential right-of-way corridors (potential corridors include existing right-of-way routes with the potential for at least one additional facility and thus can be considered a corridor if not already designated) to minimize adverse environmental impacts and the proliferation of separate right-of-ways.

- Existing and potential development areas for renewable energy projects (e.g., wind and solar), communication sites, and other uses.

- Right-of-way **avoidance** or **exclusion** areas (areas to be avoided but may be available for location of right-of-ways with special stipulations and areas which are not available for location of right-of-ways under any conditions).

- Terms and conditions that may apply to right-of-way corridors or development areas, including best management practices to minimize environmental impacts and limitations on other uses which would be necessary to maintain the corridor and right-of-way values.

Avoidance Area

A designated area to be avoided but which may be available for location of right-of-ways with special stipulations and considerations.

Exclusion Area

A designated area which is not available for location of right-of-ways under any conditions.

Interim BLM Management for Sage-Grouse

Instruction Memorandum No. 2012-043 (Dec. 22, 2011)

Policy/Action: As summarized in the BLM's National Strategy, emphasis for protecting and managing Greater Sage-Grouse habitat incorporates the following principles:

1) Protection of unfragmented habitats;
2) Minimization of habitat loss and fragmentation; and
3) Management of habitats to maintain, enhance, or restore conditions that meet Greater Sage-Grouse life history needs.

Habitat is defined as follows:

Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) comprises areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable Greater Sage-Grouse populations. These areas would include breeding, late brood-rearing, and winter concentration areas.

Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) comprises areas of occupied seasonal or year-round habitat outside of priority habitat. These areas have been identified by the BLM in coordination with respective state wildlife agencies.

Interim Guidance in General Habitat

These policies and procedures differ from those applied to PPH, and are not specific to any one program or activity.

- Consider and analyze management measures to reduce direct, indirect, and cumulative adverse effects on Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat.
- Consider deferring authorizations where appropriate, depending on local characteristics, new science, and/or data, and relative habitat importance if authorizations could result in Greater Sage-Grouse loss in PPH.
- Consider offsite mitigation measures in collaboration with state wildlife agencies and project proponents when authorizing activities.
- Evaluate and address anticipated fence collision risks within 1.25 miles of leks and other seasonal habitats. Modifications of this distance are acceptable if analysis suggests deviation is warranted.

Interim Guidance on Rights-of-Way (ROW) in Priority Habitat

(e.g., Renewable Energy Projects, Roads, Powerlines, Pipelines)

Existing Authorized ROW (i.e., permit has been issued and the project may have been constructed)

- Where Greater Sage-Grouse conservation opportunities exist, BLM field offices should work in cooperation with rights-of-way (ROW) holders to conduct maintenance and operation activities, authorized under an approved ROW grant, to avoid and minimize effects on Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

- When renewing or amending ROWs, assess the impacts of ongoing use of the ROW to Greater Sage-Grouse habitat and minimize such impacts to the extent allowed by law.

Pending and Future Proposed Applications

- Conduct pre-application meetings for all new ROW proposals consistent with the ROW regulations (43 CFR 2804.10) and consistent with current renewable energy ROW policy guidance (WO-IM-2011-061, issued February 7, 2011).

- For pending applications, assess the impact of the proposed ROW on Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat, and implement the following:
    - Ensure that reasonable alternatives for siting the ROW outside of the PPH or within a BLM designated utility corridor are considered and analyzed in the NEPA document.
    - Identify technically feasible best management practices, conditions, etc. (e.g., siting, burying powerlines) that may be implemented in order to eliminate or minimize impacts.

- For ROWs where the total project disturbance from the ROW and any connected action is LESS THAN 1 linear mile, or 2 acres of disturbance, develop mitigation measures related to construction, maintenance, operation, and reclamation activities that, as determined in cooperation with the respective state wildlife agency, would cumulatively maintain or enhance Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.

For ROW applications where the total project disturbance from the ROW and any connected action is GREATER THAN than 1 linear mile or 2 acres of disturbance, it is BLM policy that where a field office determines that it is appropriate to authorize a ROW, the following process must be followed:

- The BLM will require the ROW holder to implement measures to minimize impacts to sage-grouse habitat.

- The BLM will, to the extent possible, cooperate with project proponents to develop and consider implementing appropriate offsite mitigation that the BLM, coordinating with the respective state wildlife agency, determines would avoid or minimize habitat and population-level effects.

- Field offices retain the discretion to reject or deny a ROW application, where appropriate, or defer making a final decision on an application until the completion of the LUP process described in the *National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy* for the affected area.

National Technical Team (NTT)
National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures/Planning Strategy
December 21, 2011

Lands/Realty

The Lands and Realty program primarily influences rights-of-way (ROWs), land tenure adjustments, and proposed land withdrawals. Existing and proposed developments for ROWs (such as powerlines, pipelines, and renewable energy projects) and access to various mineral claims or energy development locations have the **potential to cause habitat loss and fragmentation that decreases habitat and population connectivity**.

Roads also create corridors that facilitate **spread of exotic plant species** (Gelbard and Belnap 2003). In addition, roads and infrastructure networks can increase sage-grouse mortality from **increased predation** and collisions with vehicles. Sage-grouse may avoid areas because of **noise** from vehicle traffic (Lyon and Anderson 2003). Adjustments for land tenure and strategically-located land withdrawals can be used to increase connectivity within sage-grouse populations and sagebrush habitats (Knick and Hanser 2011).

In addition, **land acquisitions and withdrawals may be important conservation strategies** because increased development on private lands, which is not subject to mitigation, will focus greater needs for conservation of sage-grouse and sagebrush on public lands (Knick et al. 2011).

Rights of Way

Priority sage-grouse habitat areas:

Make priority sage-grouse habitat areas exclusion areas for new ROWs permits. Consider the following exceptions:

- Within designated ROW corridors encumbered by existing ROW authorizations: new ROWs may be co-located only if the entire footprint of the proposed project (including construction and staging), can be completed within the existing disturbance associated with the authorized ROWs.

- Subject to valid, existing rights: where new ROWs associated with valid existing rights are required, co-locate new ROWs within existing ROWs or where it best minimizes sage-grouse impacts. Use existing roads, or realignments as described above, to access valid existing rights that are not yet developed. If valid existing rights cannot be accessed via existing roads, then build any new road constructed to the absolute minimum standard necessary, and add the surface disturbance to the total disturbance in the priority area. If that disturbance exceeds 3% for that area, then make additional effective mitigation necessary to offset the resulting loss of sage-grouse.

- Evaluate and take advantage of opportunities to remove, bury, or modify existing power lines within priority sage-grouse habitat areas. Sage-grouse may avoid powerlines because of increased predation risk (Steenhof et al. 1993, Lammers and Collopy 2007). Powerlines effectively influence (direct physical area plus estimated area of effect due to predator movements) at least 39% of the sage-grouse range (Knick et al. 2011). Deaths resulting from collisions with powerlines were an important source of mortality for sage-grouse in southeastern Idaho (Beck et al. 2006, 75 FR 13910)

- Where existing leases or ROWs have had some level of development (road, fence, well, etc.) and are no longer in use, reclaim the site by removing these features and restoring the habitat.

Rights of Way

General sage-grouse habitat areas:

- Make general sage-grouse habitat areas “avoidance areas” for new ROWs.
- Where new ROWs are necessary, co-locate new ROWs within existing ROWs where possible.

Range of Alternatives for ROWs

in General and Priority Habitat
in BLM Resource Management Plan revisions and amendments
in Montana

Rights-of- Way	Current Management	Resource Conservation	Resource Use
General Habitat	**OPEN**	**EXCLUSION**	**AVOIDANCE**
Priority Habitat	**OPEN**	**EXCLUSION**	**AVOIDANCE**

Range of Alternatives for Wind ROWs

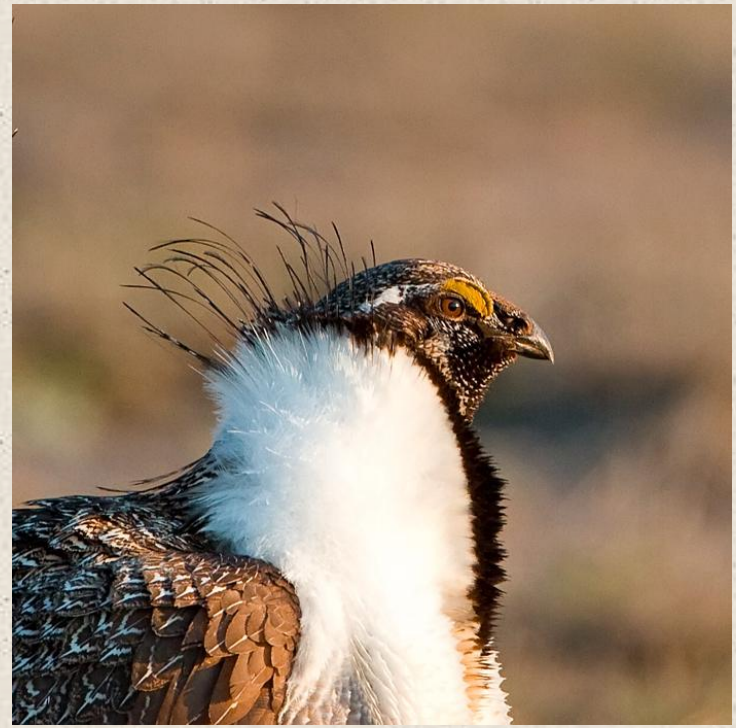
in General and Priority Habitat
in BLM Resource Management Plan revisions and amendments
in Montana

Wind	Current Management	Resource Conservation	Resource Use
General Habitat	**OPEN**	**EXCLUSION**	**AVOIDANCE**
Priority Habitat	**OPEN**	**EXCLUSION**	**AVOIDANCE**

ROW	Preferred Alternative*
General Habitat	**AVOIDANCE**
Priority Habitat	**AVOIDANCE**

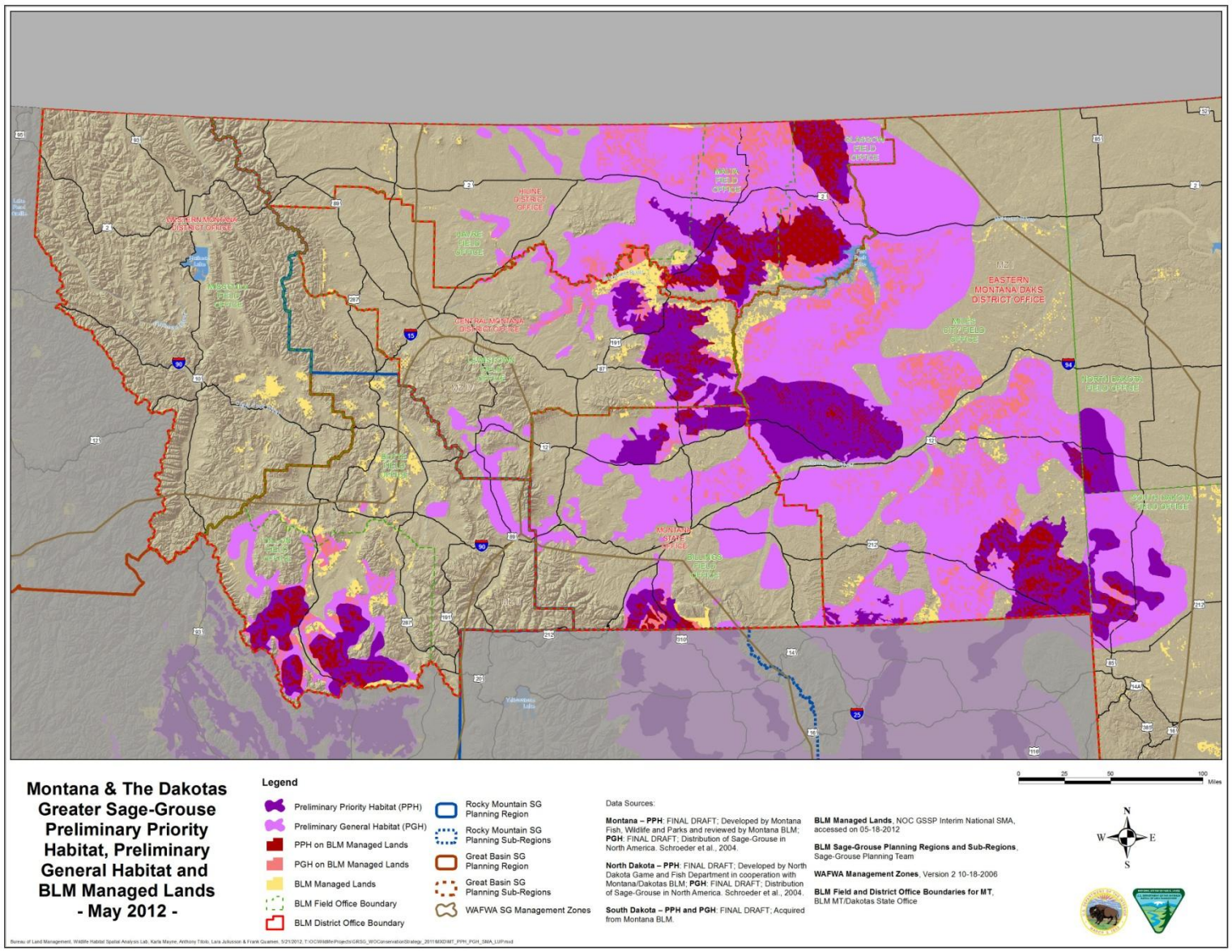
Exceptions:

Lands within 2 miles of a lek are designated as Avoidance areas in the Miles City RMP because of the fragmented land ownership pattern throughout the priority areas.



* Miles City, HiLine and Billings RMPs

Montana/Dakotas BLM Lands and PPH & PGH



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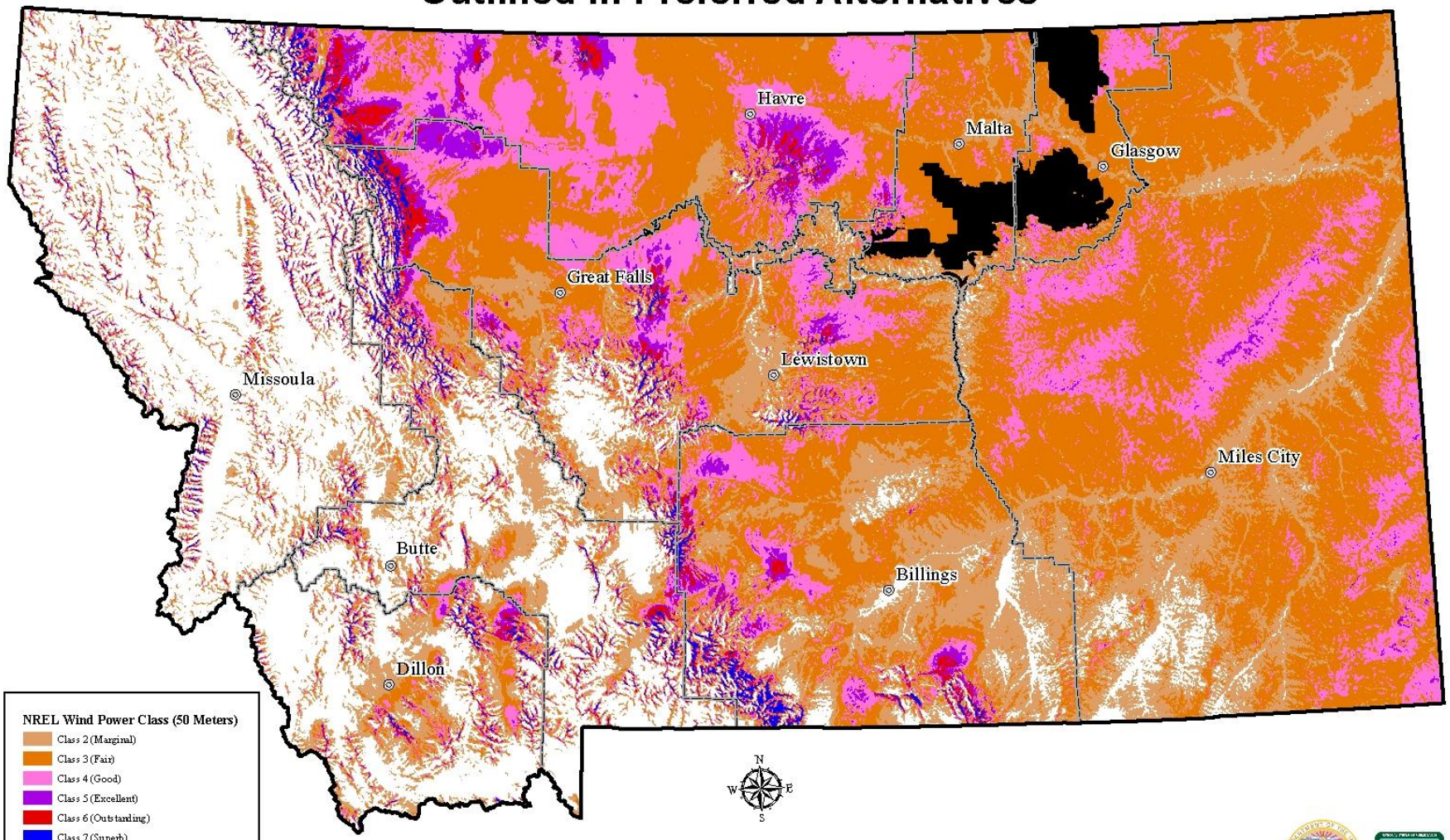
Wind	Preferred Alternative*
General Habitat	**AVOIDANCE**
Priority Habitat	**AVOIDANCE**

Exceptions:

The HiLine RMP preferred alternative excludes Wind in PPH. This is based on the land ownership pattern (predominately BLM) in this priority area.

* Miles City, HiLine and Billings RMPs

Wind Exclusion Areas Based On Proposed Sage-Grouse Management Outlined in Preferred Alternatives



NREL Wind Power Class (50 Meters)

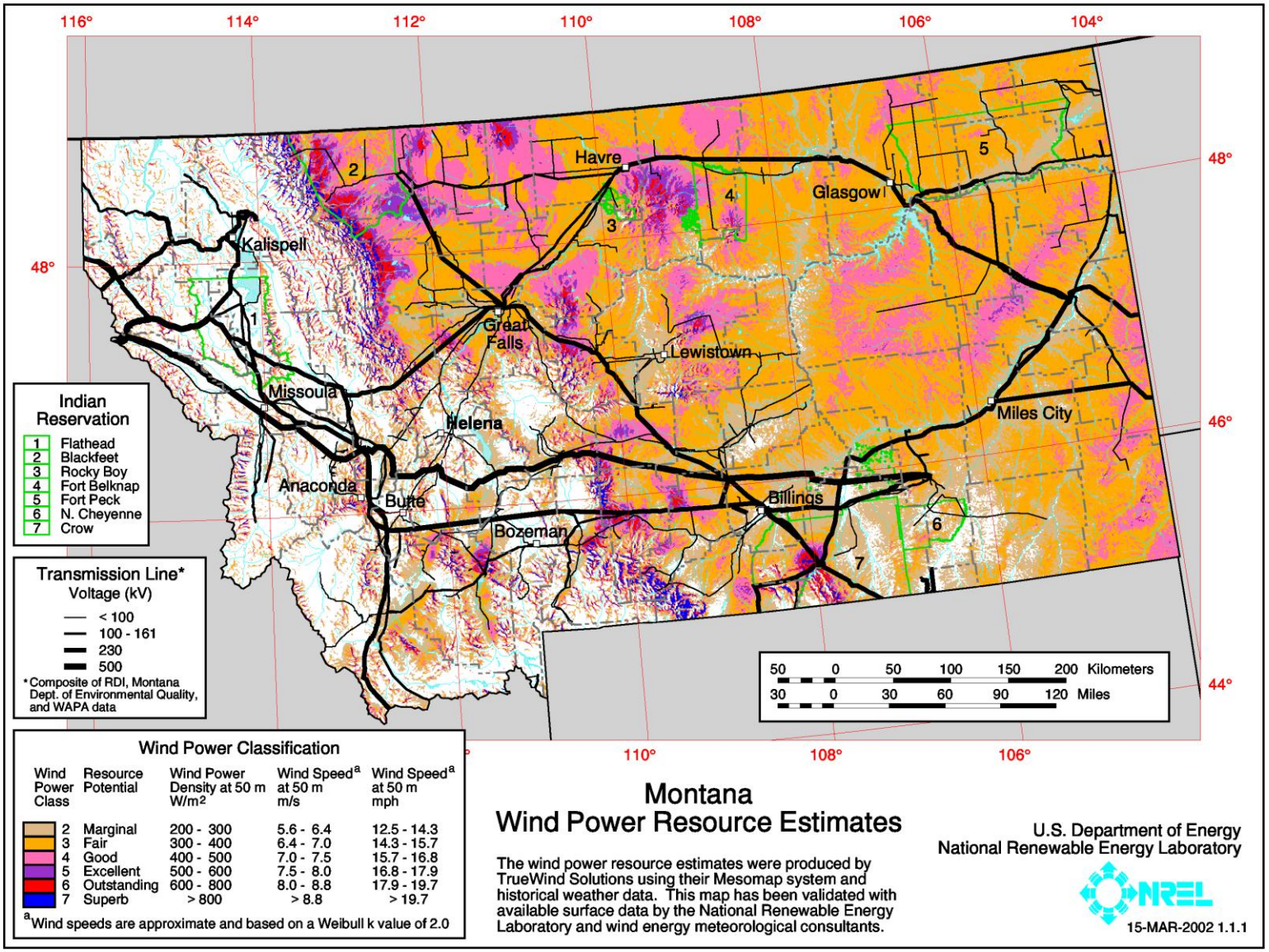
- Class 2 (Marginal)
- Class 3 (Fair)
- Class 4 (Good)
- Class 5 (Excellent)
- Class 6 (Outstanding)
- Class 7 (Superb)

Wind Exclusion Area

- Sage Grouse PPH

Date: 6/10/2013

GIS data was developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory ("NREL"), which is operated by the Midwest Research Institute for the U.S. Department of Energy ("DOE").


116°
114°
112°
110°
108°
106°
104°
48°
46°
44°
Havre
Glasgow
Kalispell
Great Falls
Lewistown
Missoula
Helena
Miles City
Anaconda
Butte
Billings
Bozeman
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Indian Reservation
1 Flathead
2 Blackfeet
3 Rocky Boy
4 Fort Belknap
5 Fort Peck
6 N. Cheyenne
7 Crow
Transmission Line*
Voltage (kV)
< 100
100 - 161
230
500
* Composite of RDI, Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality, and WAPA data
50 0 50 100 150 200 Kilometers
30 0 30 60 90 120 Miles
Wind Power Classification
Wind Power Class | Resource Potential | Wind Power Density at 50 m W/m2 | Wind Speed[a] at 50 m m/s | Wind Speed[a] at 50 m mph
2 Marginal 200 - 300 5.6 - 6.4 12.5 - 14.3
3 Fair 300 - 400 6.4 - 7.0 14.3 - 15.7
4 Good 400 - 500 7.0 - 7.5 15.7 - 16.8
5 Excellent 500 - 600 7.5 - 8.0 16.8 - 17.9
6 Outstanding 600 - 800 8.0 - 8.8 17.9 - 19.7
7 Superb > 800 > 8.8 > 19.7
[a]Wind speeds are approximate and based on a Weibull k value of 2.0
Montana
Wind Power Resource Estimates
The wind power resource estimates were produced by TrueWind Solutions using their Mesomap system and historical weather data. This map has been validated with available surface data by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and wind energy meteorological consultants.
U.S. Department of Energy
National Renewable Energy Laboratory
NREL
15-MAR-2002 1.1.1

Section 368 Federal Energy Corridors

designated by West Wide Energy Corridor study—January 2009

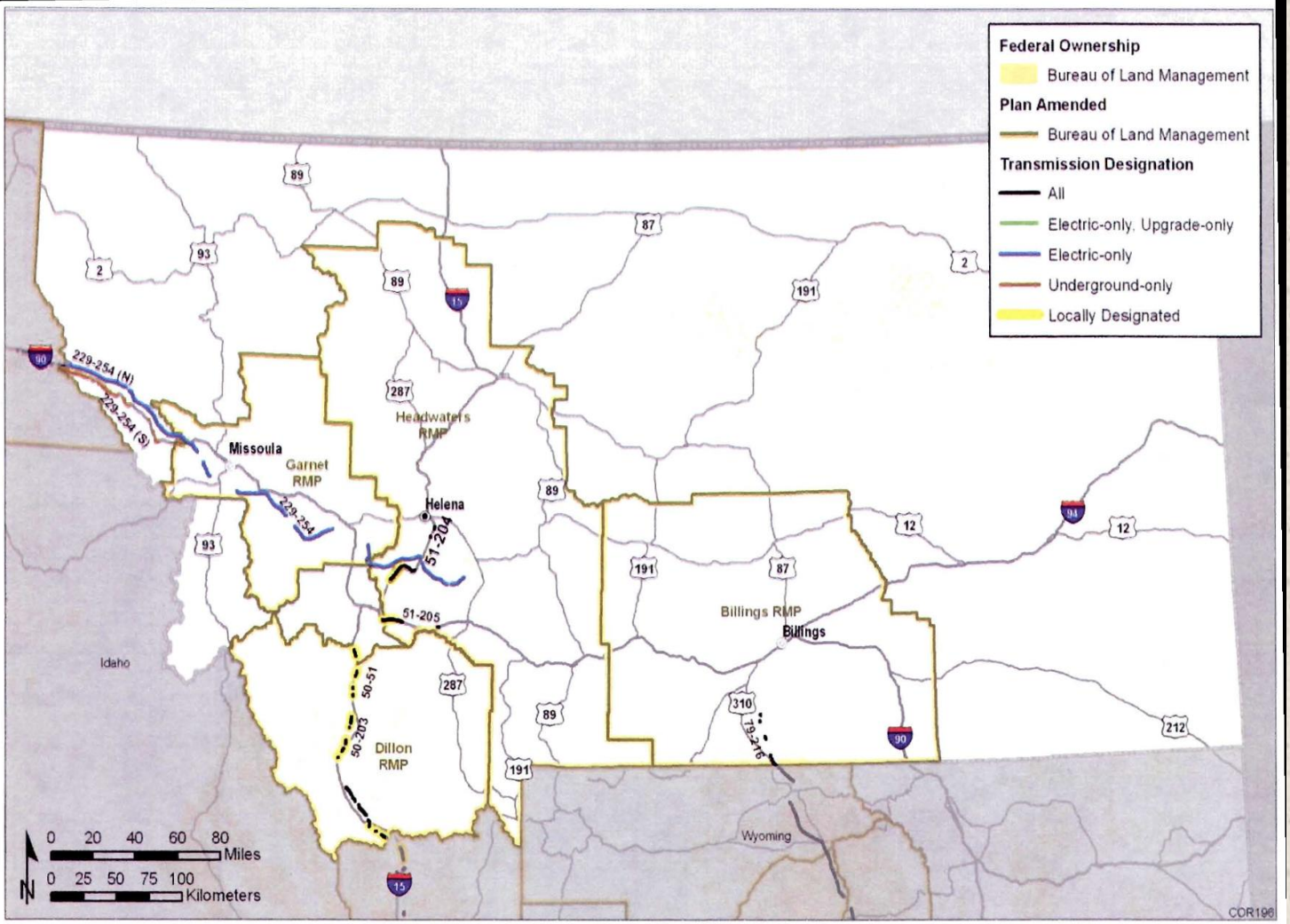


FIGURE A-5: BLM Resource Management Plans in Montana Amended by this ROD

A-23

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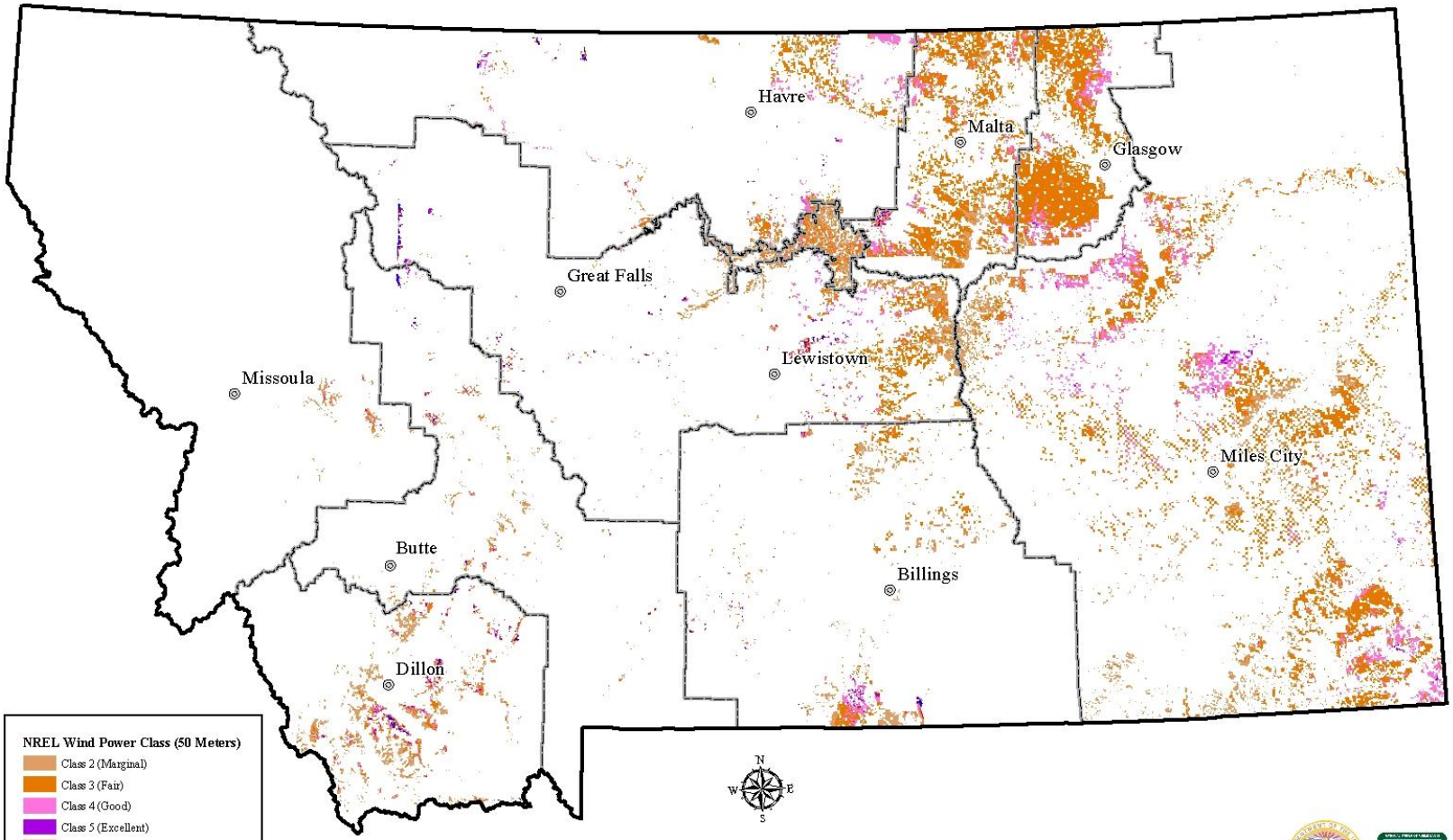
Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

Corridors of Concern

- Settlement of a lawsuit on the 368 corridor process identified Corridor 79-216, extending from south central Montana into Wyoming as a "Corridor of Concern" related to sage grouse.

- No changes at this time in corridor designation; any proposals for amendments or new ROWs within corridors receive standard NEPA analysis with special emphasis on potential sage grouse impacts.

Wind Power Classes on BLM Lands in Montana



Date: 6/10/2013

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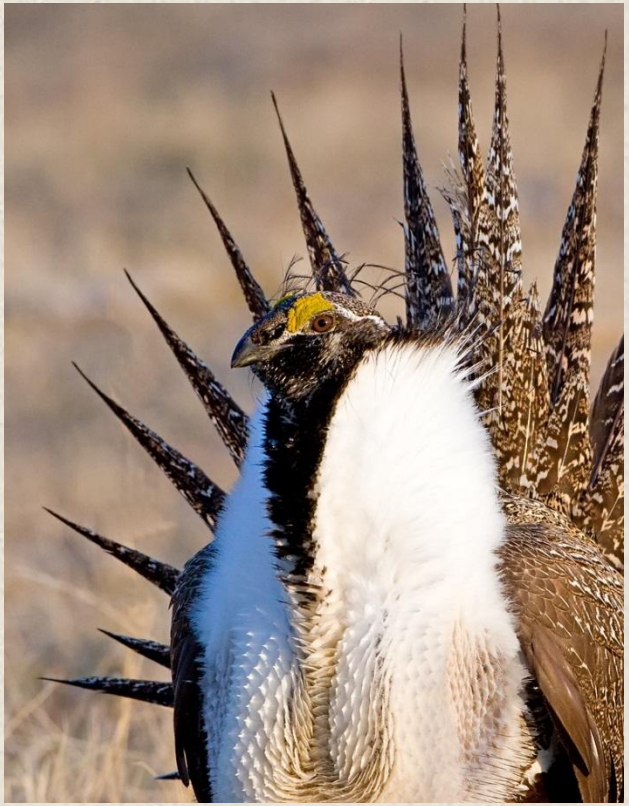
BLM philosophy of ROW management based on land ownership patterns

Avoidance – flexibility to work across intermingled land ownerships to optimize siting and avoid impacts

Exclusion – optimize conservation where BLM manages most of the priority landscape.