

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area O & M

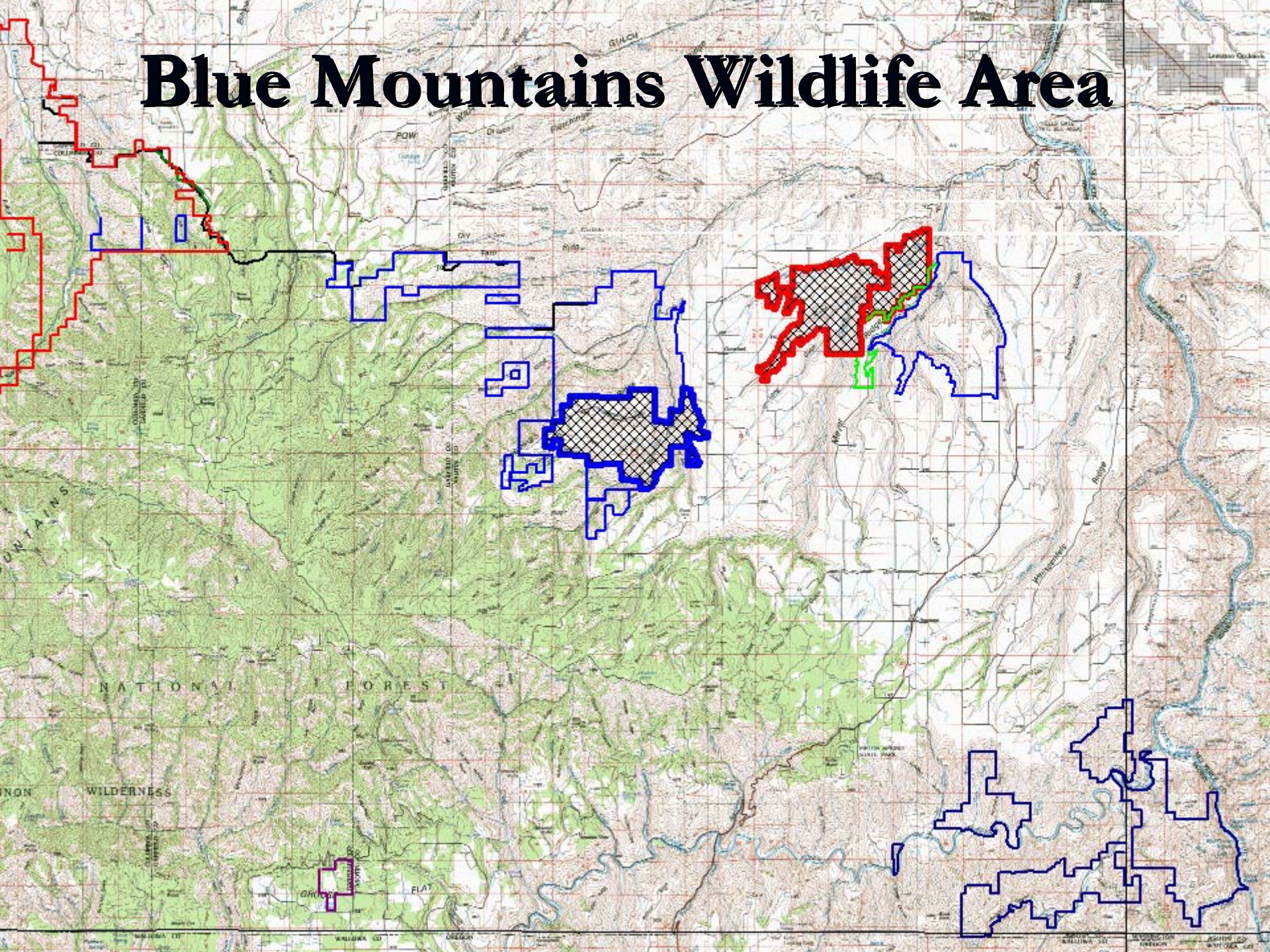
BPA Project # 2006-005-00



Washington
Department of
FISH AND
WILDLIFE

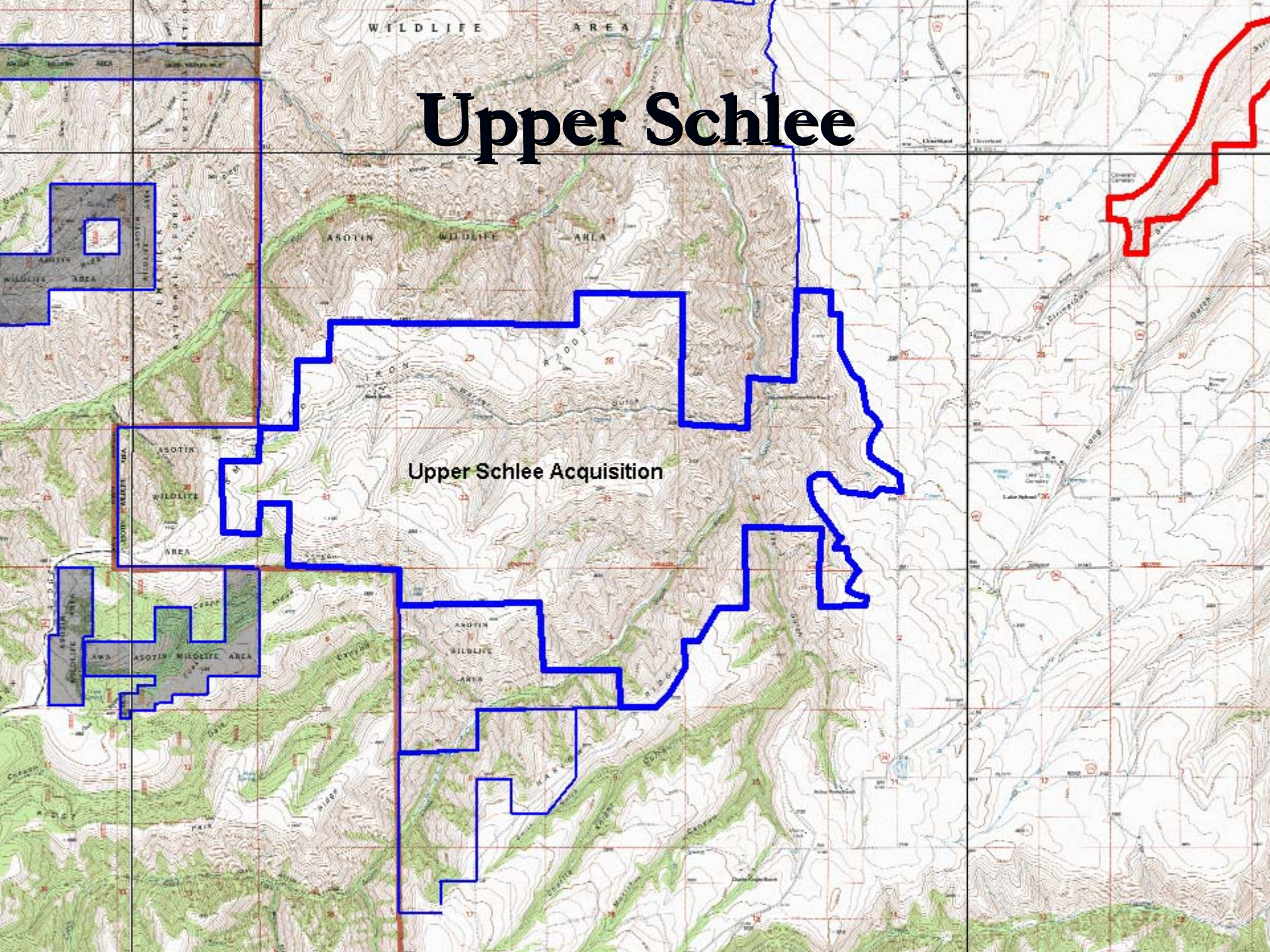
Presentation to ISRP
March 2009
Bob Dice

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area



Upper Schlee

Upper Schlee Acquisition



Upper Schlee – Smoothing Iron

- Approximately 5,500 acres in size.
- Originally surrounded by WDFW lands.
- Long sought after by agency for acquisition.
- High value placed on it for elk.
- Had over 100 years of history as a cattle and wheat ranch before acquisition.
- Part of winter range closure area for big game.

Big Game Winter Range Gate



Canyons and Ridges



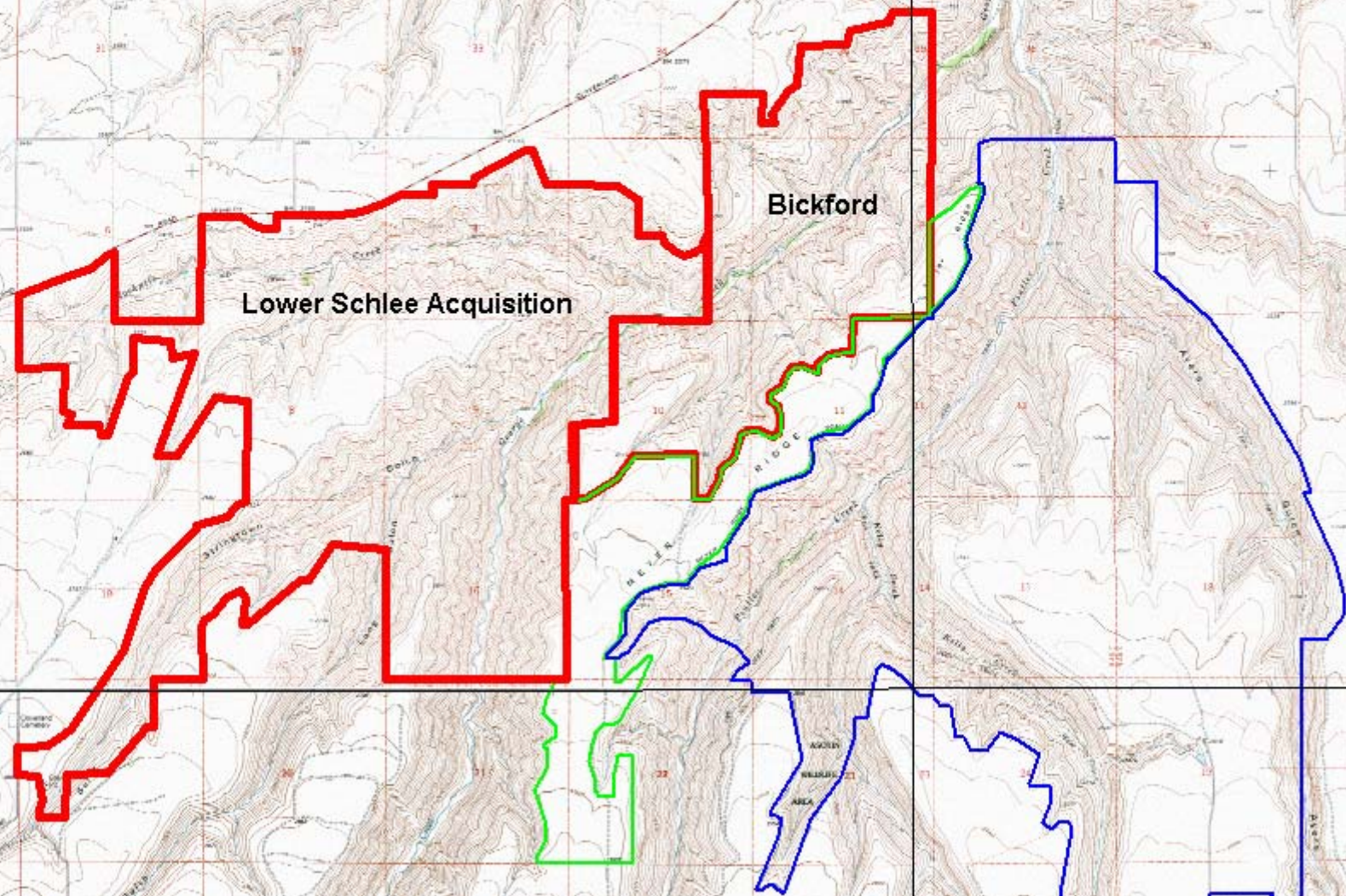
South Fork of Asotin Creek



South Fork of Asotin Creek



Lower Schlee & Bickford



Lower Schlee Acquisition and Bickford

- Approximately 5,240 acres in size.
- George Creek and Rockpile Creek.
- Ridge in between with 360 Acres CRP.
- Schlees would not sell upper parcel unless agency agreed to purchase lower parcel.
- Mostly used for cattle production with some farming. Poor farm ground.
- 100 acres farm ground on Bickford off Meyer's Ridge.

George Creek



Rockpile Creek



Upper Schlee Management Issues

- Control noxious weeds.
- Maintain boundary stock fences.
- Maintain buildings, parking areas and water systems.
- Agricultural field restoration – 475 acres.
- Big-game forage plots – 125 acres.

Smoothing Iron Weeds

Scotch Thistle



Sulfur Cinquefoil



Upper Schlee Weeds

- Musk Thistle – designated Class B noxious weed by the State of Washington.
- Smooth Brome – encroaching into native grass from CRP and Ag fields.
- Jointed goat-grass – typically found in grain field areas and is encroaching into native bunchgrass.
- Scotch thistle and sulfur cinquefoil mostly in riparian areas.

Rare Plants

- Upper Schlee has a healthy population of Spalding's Catchfly. Federally threatened plant
- Documented in 2008.
- Encroaching smooth brome, medusa head, and other weeds will be a management challenge.

Boundary Stock Fences



Smoothing Iron Buildings



Smoothing Iron Buildings



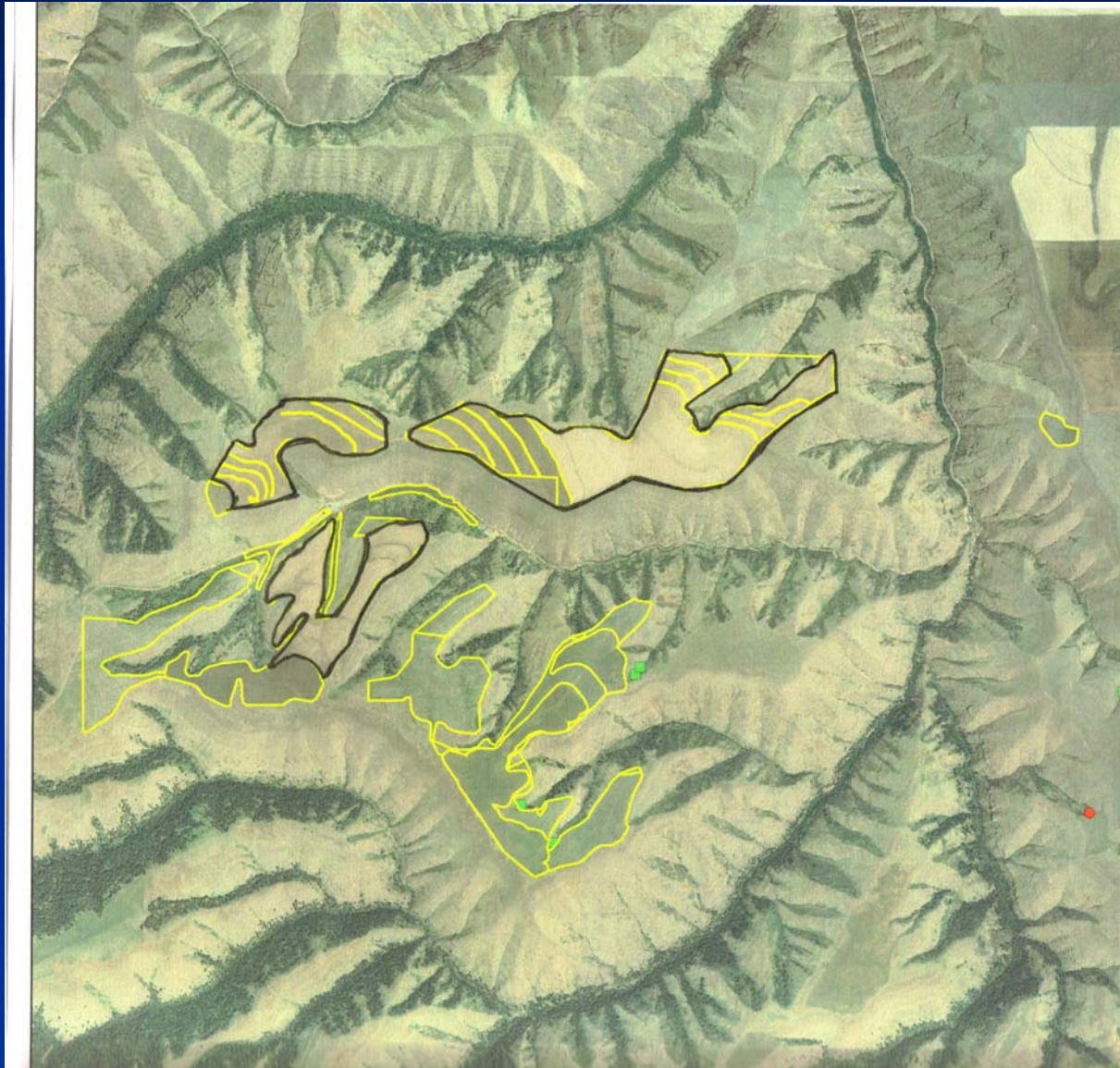
Buildings and Parking Areas



Smoothing Iron Wheat Fields

- Sharecropper abruptly walked away from wheat farming in spring 2008.
- Fields were in wheat stubble from 2007 and had to be treated.
- Input costs and access too difficult.
- Little interest from other local farmers.
- Seeded to 4 species mix of native grass.

Smoothing Iron Ag Fields



Smoothing Iron Fields

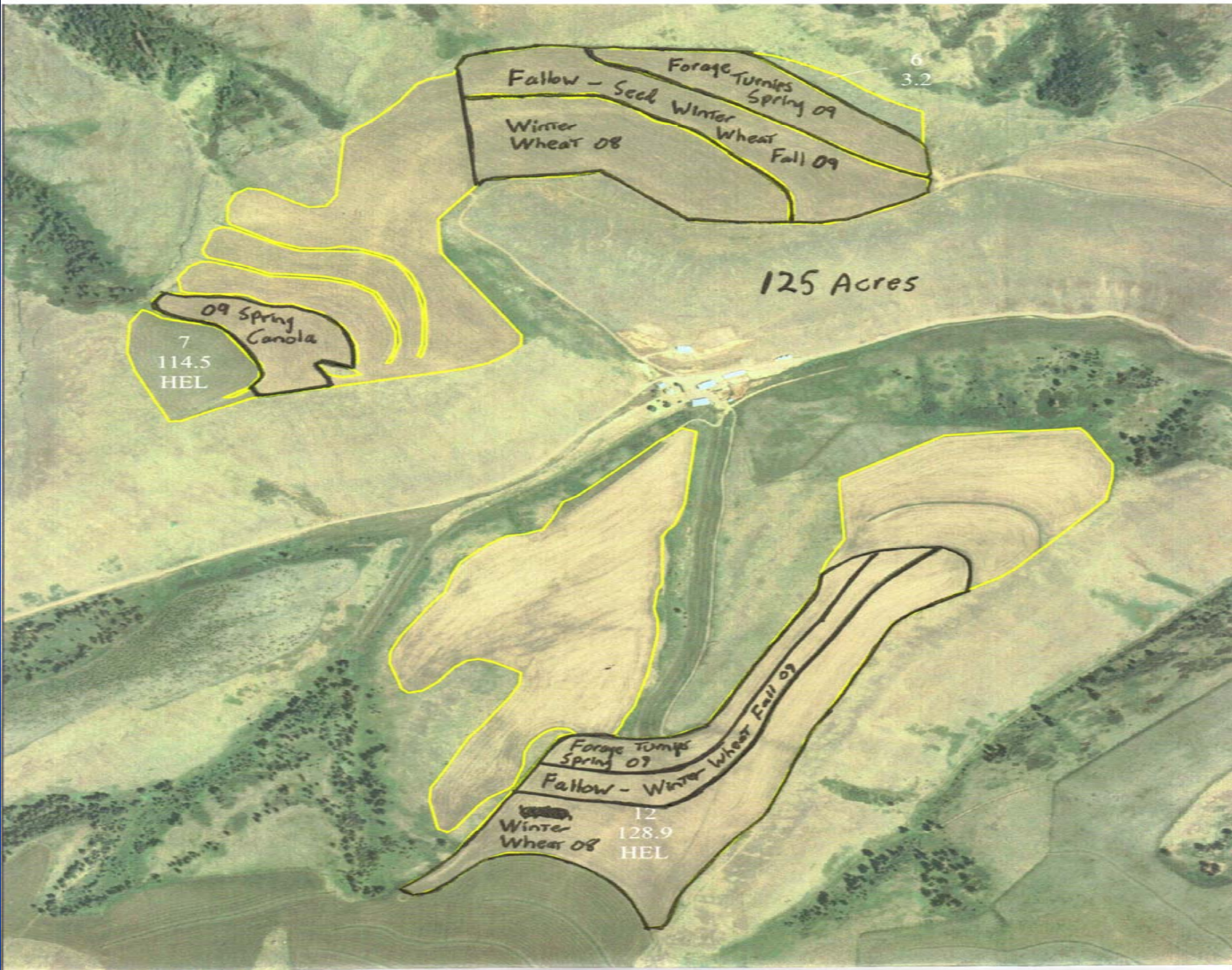


Native Grass Seeding


- 475 acres seeded fall of 2008.
- Will require herbicide application to control broad leaf weeds until grass establishes.
- May also require mowing for further weed control.
- Controlled burning may be in order in the future if grass stand becomes decadent.

Annual Forage Crops

- Annual crops have always been raised on Smoothing Iron and have always been attractive to elk.
- Annual forage crops will help retain elk on State Land and away from private property where damage situations could occur.



George Creek Weeds

- Majority of weeds found in riparian areas.
 - Rush Skeleton Weed.
 - Mediterranean Sage.
 - Scotch Thistle.
 - Yellow Starthistle.
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George Creek Weed Areas



Lower Schlee & Bickford Fences

- Entire unit burned in 2007 Rockpile Fire.
- 10.3 miles of boundary fence destroyed.
- State rebuilding burned sections. Project cost paid by State \$880,000.
- Wildlife Area staff maintain and repairing other sections not under contract for replacement.

Lower Schlee Fence Work



Rockpile Creek Fence



Bickford and Lower Schlee Fences

Contractor built



Bickford Barn



Overall Objectives – Upper Schlee

- Continue to convert Ag fields and CRP fields seeded to Smooth Brome to Native Grass.
- Control noxious weeds, restore riparian areas.
- Maintain boundary stock fences.
- Maintain buildings and infrastructure.
- Future Sharp-tailed Grouse reintroduction?

Overall Objectives – Lower Schlee and Bickford

- Control noxious weeds, restore riparian areas.
- Maintain boundary stock fences.
- Maintain infrastructure.
- Establish additional woody vegetation in riparian areas if necessary.
- Maintain approx. 4000 upland and riparian shrubs planted in 2007-08.

Monitoring

- Monitoring to be accomplished by a team of *WDFW* Technicians who will monitor all *WDFW* wildlife area BPA projects statewide.

Budget

- *WDFW* funding request:
- 2010- \$152,632.00
- 2011- \$155,123.00
- 2012- \$157,688.00
- Total- \$465,443.00

Volunteers

- Groups: RMEF, Backcountry Horsemen, Audubon, and Native Plant Society.
- Installed guzzlers, fence projects, building maintenance, weed control, and surveys.

RMEF Volunteers



Questions?

