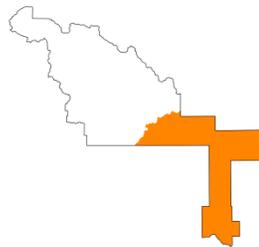




American white Pelicans – Idaho Fish and Game

Craters & Yale



Location and Context

The Craters & Yale subarea, predominantly comprised of the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, features a unique basalt and lava field landscape, worthy of national monument designation. Here, place-names like Bear Trap Cave, Piss Ant Butte, Cream Can Junction, and Snowdrift Crater dot the maps as landmarks. This southernmost portion of Blaine County represents outstanding lava flow landscapes of recreational and historic value.

The subarea includes a narrow 8-mile wide panhandle, stretching more than 30 miles south. This political boundary was created in 1895 to allow the newly created Blaine County to reach both the Oregon Short Line Railroad and the Snake River, accessing associated tax revenues. Yale is thought to have gotten its name from an 1883 water stop for the Oregon Short Line Railroad.

The subarea is bounded on the south by one of the region's most important migratory bird habitat areas, Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge and Lake Walcott.

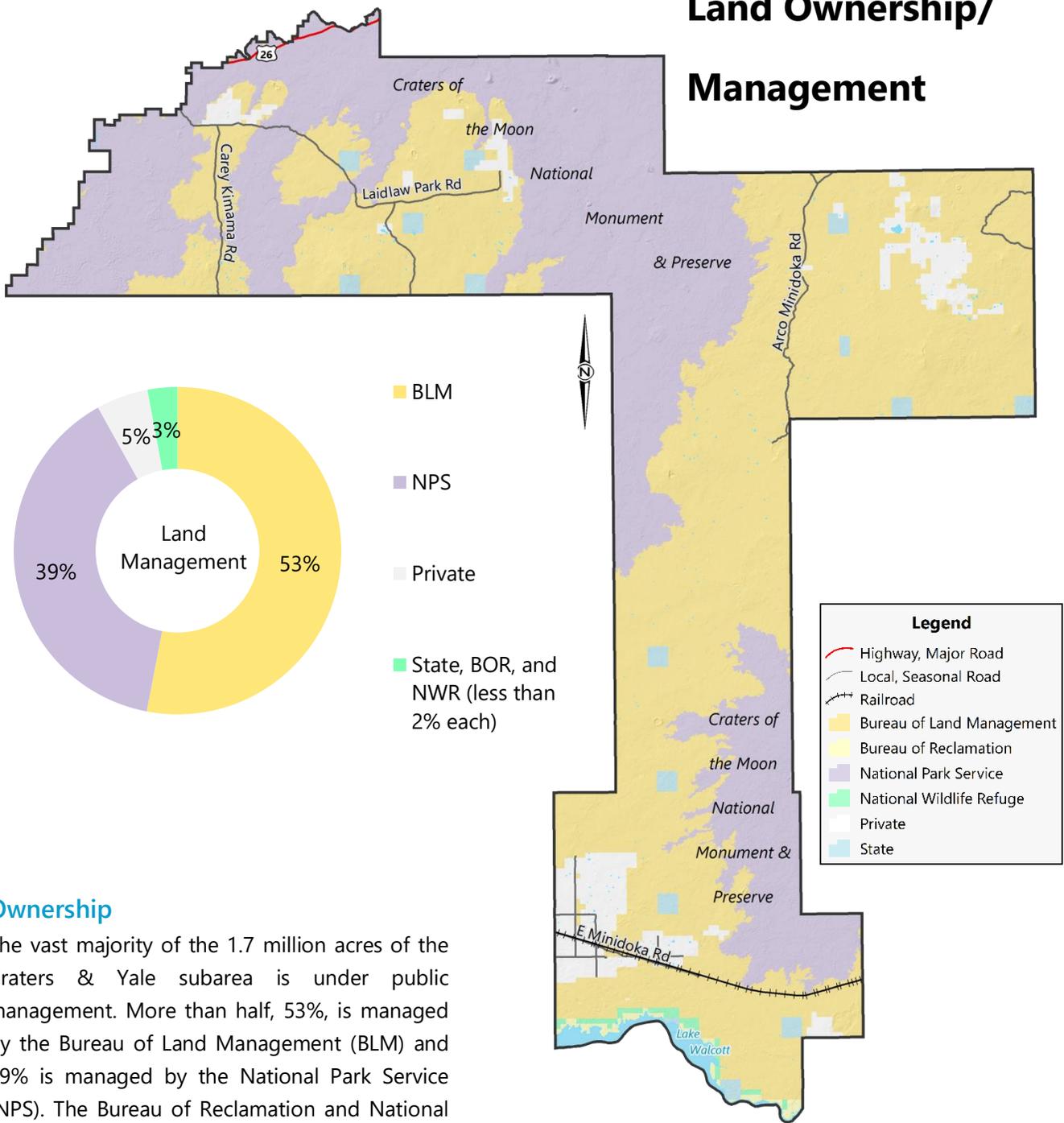
Managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, about half of the refuge's 20,699 acres is open water and wetlands. This refuge is home to over 235 species and is an Audubon-recognized Important Bird Area.

Craters & Yale extends farther from Blaine County's cities and services than any of the other subareas. It is sparsely populated, containing only about 12 households. All are located in the private agricultural lands at the southern end of the panhandle.



Land Uses Characteristics

Land Ownership/ Management

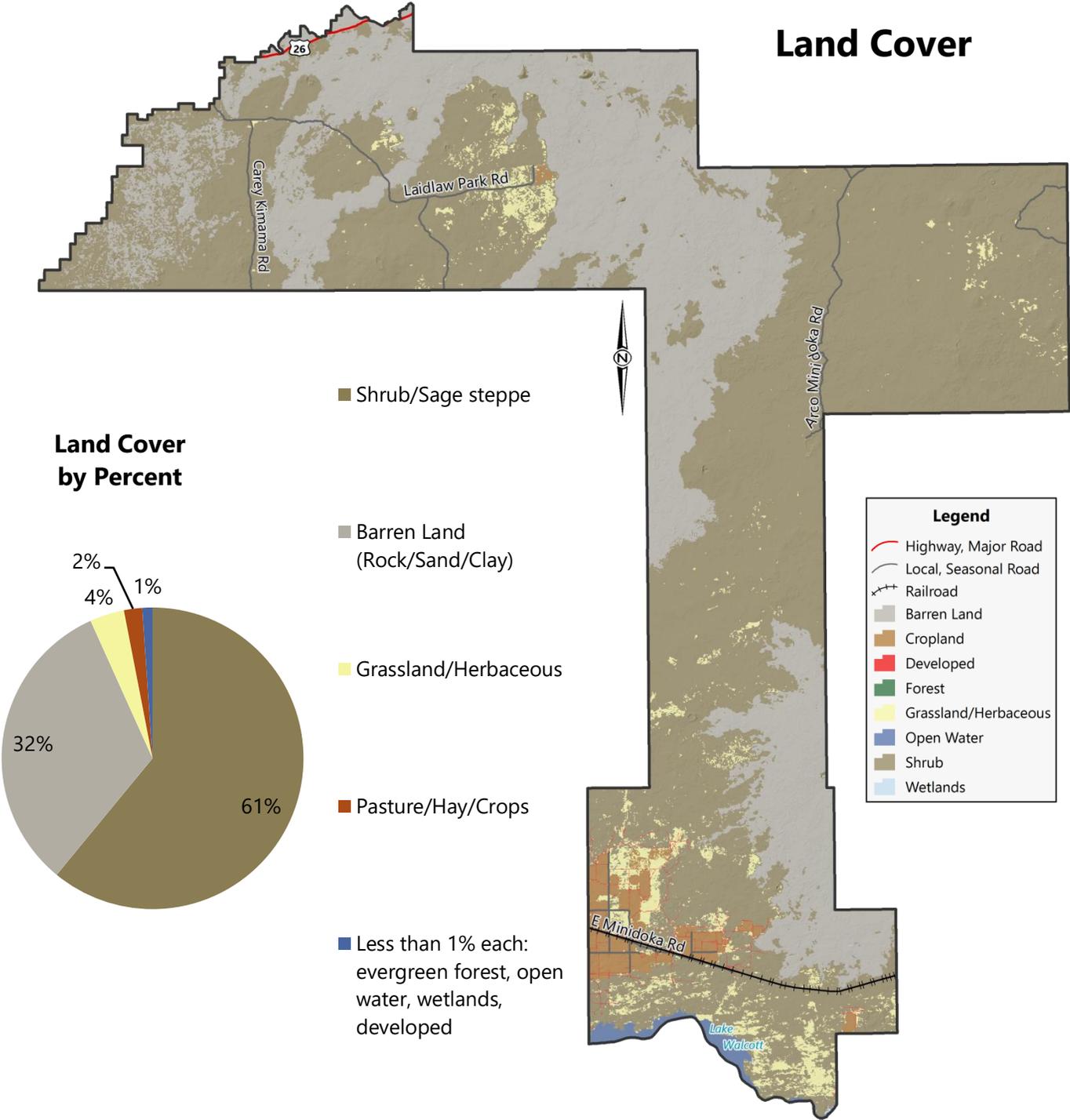


Ownership

The vast majority of the 1.7 million acres of the Craters & Yale subarea is under public management. More than half, 53%, is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 39% is managed by the National Park Service (NPS). The Bureau of Reclamation and National Wildlife Refuge lands are located near Lake Walcott. Small areas of Idaho Department of Lands are scattered throughout.

Just over 5 percent of the land is privately owned. Most of the private land is located in the in the extreme east, outside the Craters of the Moon, and in the southern part of the panhandle. A few isolated inholdings exist within the Craters of the Moon Monument & Preserve

Land Cover



Land Cover

Land cover includes vast landscapes of sage steppe, lava fields and flood basalt areas. Extensive sage grouse habitat has been identified in the sage steppe – approximately 437,000 acres or 76% of the land area.

In the south, about 2% of the land is in pasture, hay and crops. Less than 1% of the land is developed.

Existing Land Uses

The majority of the land area is public land including most notably the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve.

Adjacent to Lake Walcott, the Minidoka Wildlife Refuge covers 20,699 acres including open water and wetland.

Prime agricultural soils exist in the southern end of the Yale panhandle, with over 10,000 acres of farmland irrigated only by individual wells. Crops include hay, sugar beets and corn. Grazing occurs on both public and private lands in the area. Owners of these farmlands make up the small permanent population and the limited residential uses.

The Union Pacific Transcontinental Rail line crosses through the southern edge of the Yale subarea.

There are no stops in Blaine County. The Eastern Idaho Rail Line, which is the busiest short line in Idaho, connects in Minidoka, and serves numerous southern Idaho agricultural communities.

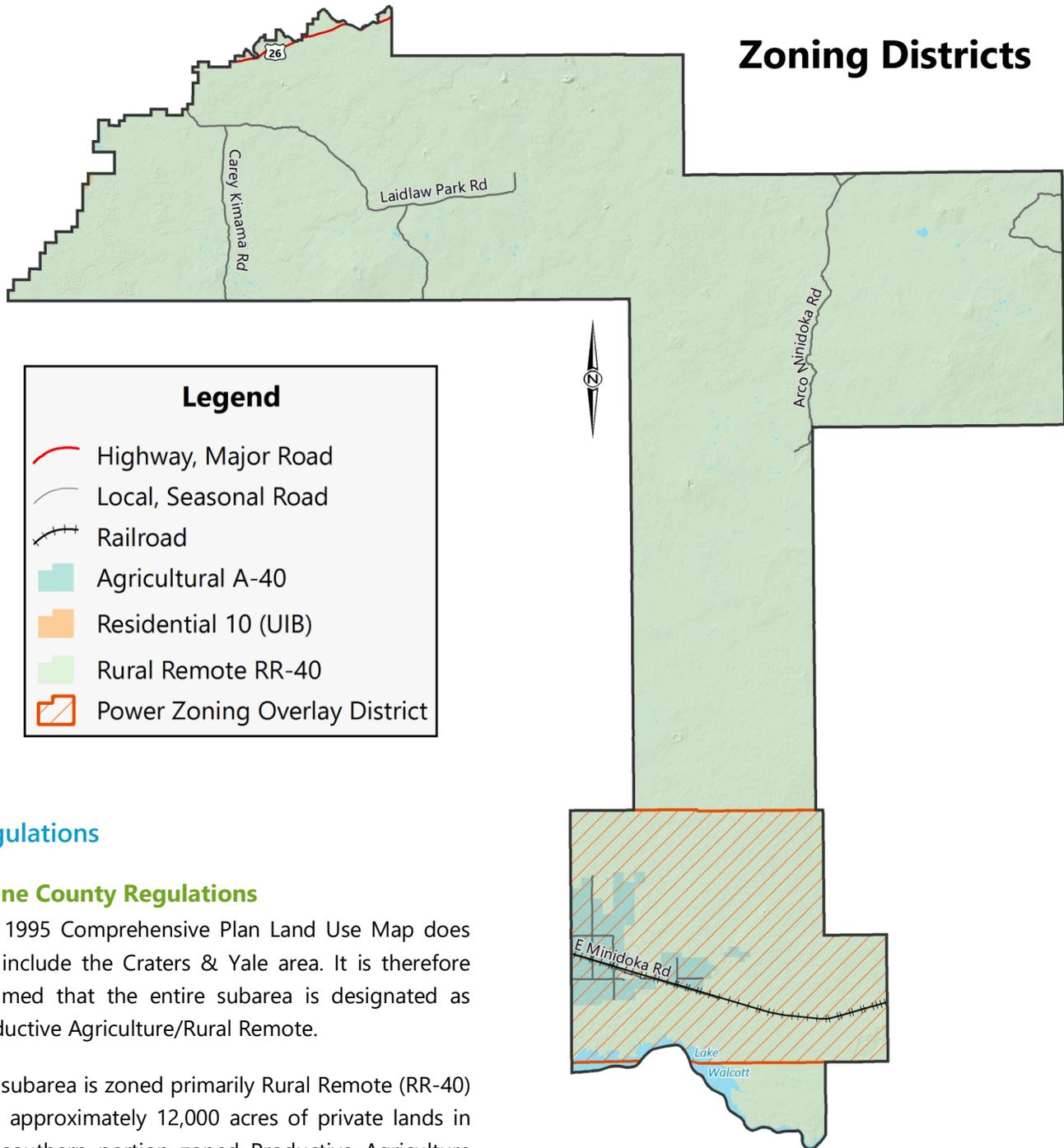
Two remote air strips are within the Blaine County portions of the monument: Hollow Top Landing Strip near the Snowdrift Crater, and the Bear Trap Landing Strip by the Bear Trap Cave.

Major gas and power lines also cross through the southern part of the subarea. The portion of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project that crosses the panhandle is a transmission line that was built to operate at 500kV but has been operated at 345kV. Conversion to 500kV would only require changes in the line's terminating substations (not in Blaine County), which is part of the Gateway West plan.



Photo credit – Carol Waller

Zoning Districts



Regulations

Blaine County Regulations

The 1995 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map does not include the Craters & Yale area. It is therefore assumed that the entire subarea is designated as Productive Agriculture/Rural Remote.

The subarea is zoned primarily Rural Remote (RR-40) with approximately 12,000 acres of private lands in the southern portion zoned Productive Agriculture (A-40). The very southern end of the peninsula is within the deer winter range of the Wildlife Overlay District.

The County adopted a "Power Zoning Overlay District" in 2008 to designate an area in the County suitable for locating 230KV and higher voltage transmission lines, and limit the possibility of such lines in other parts of the County

The "Power Zoning Overlay District" applies solely to an area within the subarea's peninsula. This is a designated corridor for high voltage power transmission lines. Siting of these lines requires a Conditional Use Permit. (See also National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors in the Public Services, Facilities and Utilities Chapter.)

BLM and National Park Service Regulations and Management

Craters of the Moon National Monument was established in 1924 to "preserve the unusual and weird volcanic formations." It was expanded in 1962 and again in 2000 to the current 750,000-acre "Monument and Preserve." The BLM and the National Park Service manage it cooperatively.

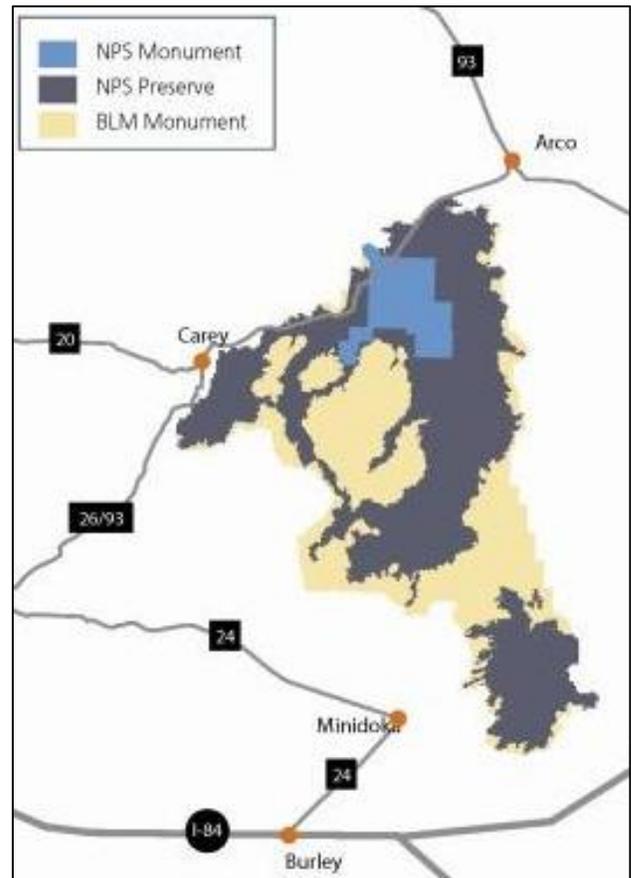
There are 3 administrative units, shown in the map on this page:

- Craters of the Moon National Monument (National Park Service)-Part of the National Park System; no hunting or grazing are permitted here. Shown in blue.
- Craters of the Moon National Preserve (National Park Service)-Part of the National Park System; hunting is permitted here but no grazing. Shown in gray.
- Craters of the Moon National Monument (Bureau of Land Management)-Part of the National Landscape Conservation System; hunting and grazing are permitted here. Shown in gold.

Portions of the BLM lands throughout the subarea are designated Wilderness Study Areas, federal lands managed so as not to impair their ability to be designated as Wilderness in the future. There are also 437,000 acres of Sage Grouse Conservation Areas¹ in the subarea.

The BLM manages a variety of grazing permits throughout the subarea. While it is not possible to determine the exact number of animals permitted in the subarea, the permits allow for cows, sheep and horses.

The NPS systematically treats nonnative and noxious weeds across the Craters of the Moon. Treatment strategies vary depending on the area of interest, park resources at risk, past treatment history, topography and isolation, and the type of land



designations (research natural area, wilderness, etc.). Generally the park focuses on eradicating small isolated populations while suppressing larger infestations (primarily along roads) to prevent them from invading other areas.

Cheatgrass is treated around park facilities and hiking trails, and continues to be a consideration for post wildfire rehabilitation efforts.

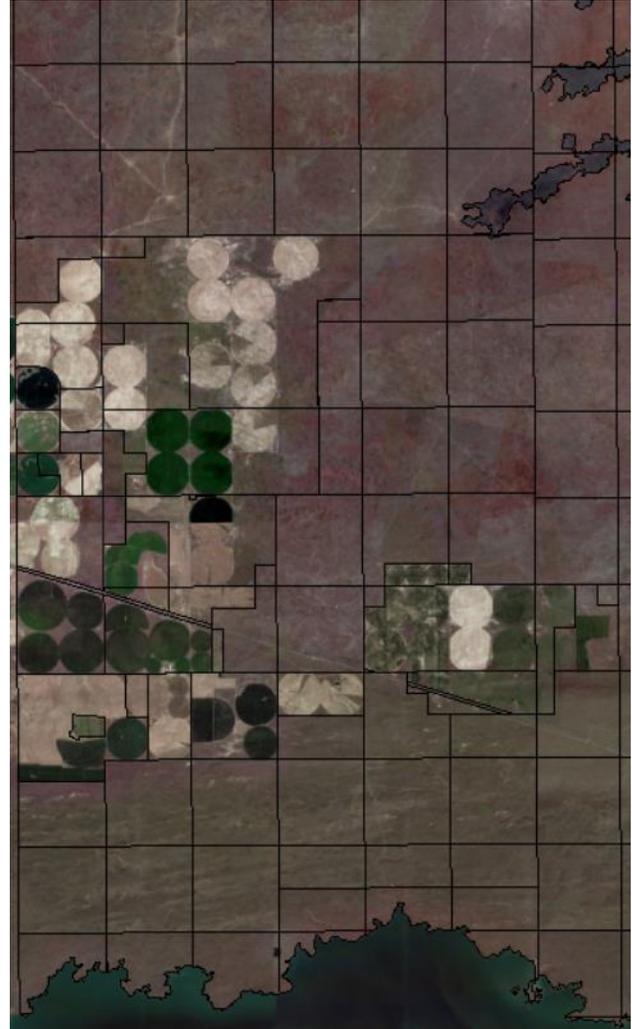
¹ As identified by the Idaho Task Force

Buildout Analysis

To create this analysis, the GIS Department utilized zoning and other informational layers. There are few environmental development constraints in the subarea; that is, no areas of 25 percent slope or conservation easements that would decrease the potential number of residential units. The amount of privately owned land is very small, and nearly all of the private land zoned Rural Remote-40 is extremely remote. While the number of “Remaining Potential Units” shown in the table below is high, there is little to no infrastructure to serve new development, making this land very unlikely to be developed in the life of this plan.

Individual parcels with the greatest residential development potential include multiple parcels of 80 to more than 2,000 acres in size in the southern panhandle. However, these are nearly all in irrigated crops (see aerial photograph to the right). Pressure for residential development does not appear imminent.

No land is zoned for industrial or commercial uses.



Craters & Yale Study Parcels*

Zone	Acres	Divider	Potential Buildout Units	Existing Units	Remaining Potential Units
A-40	12,163	40	304	13	291
RR-40	16,782	40	419	0	419
Totals	28,945		723	13	710

*Does not include public lands.

Land Use Map

The proposed land use classification map (next page) includes areas of Productive Agriculture in the southern panhandle. A few other privately owned parcels are designated as Rural and Remote. The vast majority of the land in this subarea is public land, designated as Resource Conservation.

Land Use Map – insert ledger size map here



Lake Walcott – IDFG

Issues and Opportunities

Community Input

A survey was mailed to the 34 private property owners in the Craters & Yale area in September 2017. Nine property owners responded to the survey. Five of the 9 live in the subarea, and three have lived there for over 20 years. Their input has been useful in developing the Issues and Opportunities section below. (The complete online survey results are found in the appendix.)

Infrastructure

There are limited primary roads in the Craters & Yale area. Only East Minidoka Road, (which bisects the southern portion of the subarea) is paved for approximately 5 miles east of Highway 24. There are several maintained gravel roads: East Minidoka Road, Carey-Kimama Road, Arco/Minidoka Road, Yale Road, Miller Road, Main Line Road, Split Butte Road, Minidoka Desert Road and Laidlaw Park Road.

Roads in this subarea are up to 1-1/2 hours from the Blaine County Road and Bridge Shop. The Road and Bridge Department works cooperatively with the BLM on road maintenance, with the BLM maintaining portions of County roads in the northern parts of the panhandle (such as the Arco/Minidoka Road) and the County maintaining portions of BLM roads (Laidlaw Park Road). County roads in the northern portion of the subarea are not maintained in the winter. Roads in the southern portion are plowed with the assistance of a seasonal employee who lives in the area. These County roads are typically graded one time per year in the spring.

While area roads do not see heavy volume, some do experience measurable wear and tear from heavy farm and ranch equipment. Spring flooding in 2017 damaged the paved portions of East Minidoka Road, resulting in the need to reduce paved portions east

of Miller Road. Unpaved roads are often primitive, and can be impassable in winter and in wet spring conditions. Some survey respondents commented on area roads, noting that maintenance could be improved.

No central water or sewer service exists in the area. Properties are served by individual wells and septic systems.

Tourism and Recreation

Craters of the Moon

1,100 square miles in size, Craters of the Moon Monument and Preserve is roughly the size of Rhode Island. In 2016 the monument recorded over 255,000 visitors. Craters of the Moon averages 400-500 vehicle-visits per day in summer months. Events such as the 2017 solar eclipse can cause increases in visitation – the weekend prior to the total solar eclipse saw about 2,000 vehicles per day. Visitors to Craters of the Moon in 2015 spent \$8.4 million dollars in communities near the park, supporting 133 jobs in the local area ². Motorcycle and mountain biking use also occur throughout the area, subject to regulations.

Dark Skies

The International Dark-Sky Association has granted silver-tier International Dark Sky Park status to Craters of the Moon National Monument. “The Milky Way stretching across the park’s incredibly dark night sky is a sight many visitors will never forget,” said Craters of the Moon Superintendent Wade Vagias. “With this designation, the International Dark-Sky Association recognizes the importance of the natural darkness found here.”

According to a news release from the National Park Service, monument staff have ensured that park lighting is “night-sky friendly.” Natural darkness is also recognized in park management documents, which clearly state the value of night skies and the park’s commitment to protect them. The Park Service stated that as a newly designated International Dark Sky Park, Craters of the Moon will remain committed to mitigating light pollution within monument boundaries and showcasing dark night skies for visitors.



² 2015 National Park Service Economic Report

Lake Walcott

Lake Walcott is lightly used by Blaine County residents but is easily accessible from Interstate I-84. It is the site of the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge and an Audubon-recognized Important Bird Area (IBA).

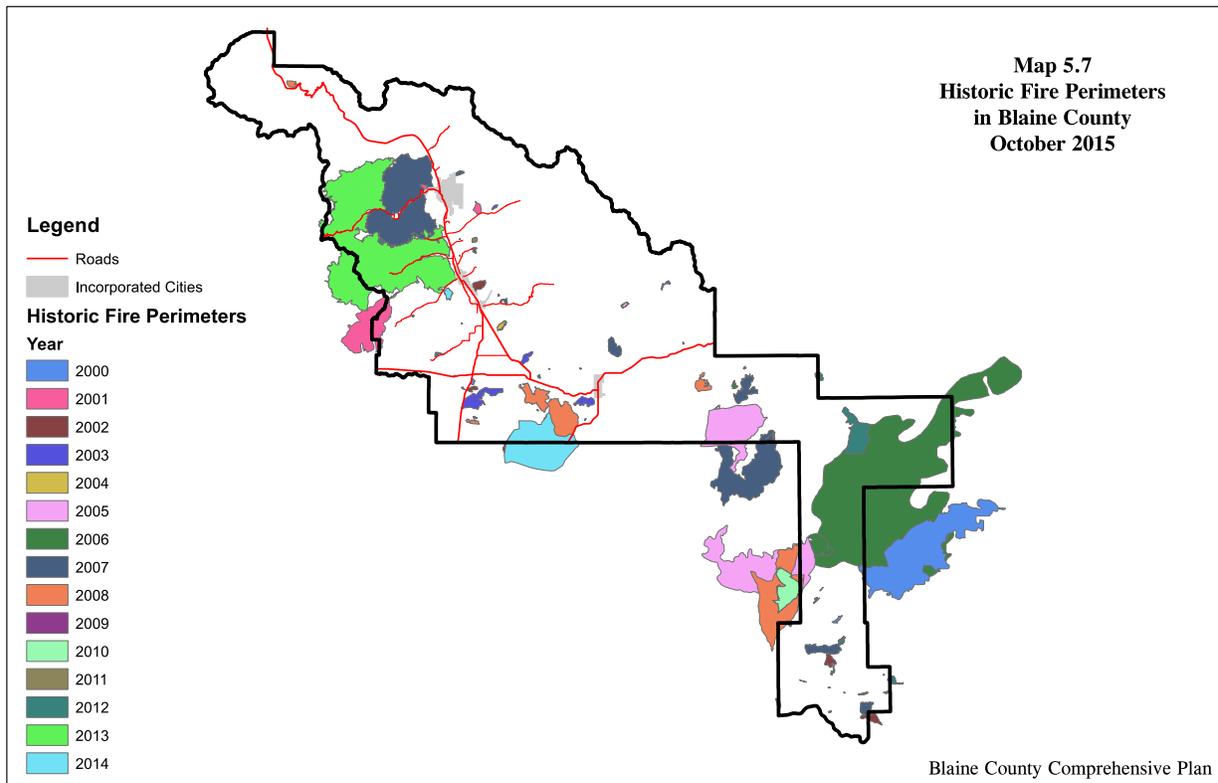
Agriculture

Survey respondents value most highly the rural and agricultural landscape of their area, and the highest scoring element of “rural landscapes” was “farm fields and pastures. Farming, ranching and water issues were mentioned in some of the open ended responses as well. The Road and Bridge manager

observed that the heavy agricultural trucks and equipment are hard on the roads, and the survey indicated that road maintenance is a concern of some. Keeping roadways adequately maintained to support agricultural activities in this remote area will require ongoing attention.

Wildfires

A major fire burned through the central portion of the subarea in 2006, with other large fires within or nearby in 2000, 2005, 2007 and 2008. The 2006 fire was similar in size to the 2013 Beaver Creek Fire (114,900 acres³). The remoteness of the area is likely to make early detection of a wildfire difficult.



³ Located in Blaine and Camas Counties

Remoteness

In the online survey, only two residents identified the distance to services, businesses and shopping as a challenge of being far from the County seat and the central part of the County. Five of the seven survey respondents who answered this question identified Rupert as their primary town for goods and services.

Five respondents said they value being “a bit off the radar with not too much regulation.” No specific issues for land use planning in this subarea have been identified.



Desired Outcomes

Policy Statements:

- C&Y-1 Implement road improvements identified in the 2012 Blaine County Transportation Plan. Conduct ongoing maintenance of E. Minidoka Road to support agricultural activities.
- C&Y-2 Explore partnerships with other local service providers and contractors to retain or improve service provision in remote areas
- C&Y-3 Collaborate with federal land planners to comply with the Dark Sky Park.
- C&Y-4 Continue to work with land managers in and around Craters of the Moon Monument to protect the resources in the monument.
- C&Y-5 Continue cooperative weed management in this area with agency partners.