

Refuge, Region, and Headquarters: Transportation Planning with US Fish and Wildlife Service



Presented by: Nate Begay and Jennifer Owen-White, Valle de Oro NWR

Webinar logistics

- Duration is 11:00 – 12:00 PM Eastern
- Webinar – recorded and archived. For quality of recording, please stay muted during presentation
- At the end there will be time for Q&A
- Please feel free to use the chat to ask questions or provide comments

Goal of this Webinar

To document and archive the work completed by the PLTF at the Valle de Oro NWR, FWS Southwest Region 2, and FWS Headquarters from 2020-2022, including his lessons learned and tips and tricks for applying these to other USFWS units.

Agenda

1. Introduction to the PLTF Program
2. Introduction by Refuge Manager
3. Valle de Oro NWR
4. FWS Region 2
5. FWS Headquarters
6. Lessons Learned
7. General Suggestion
8. Q & A



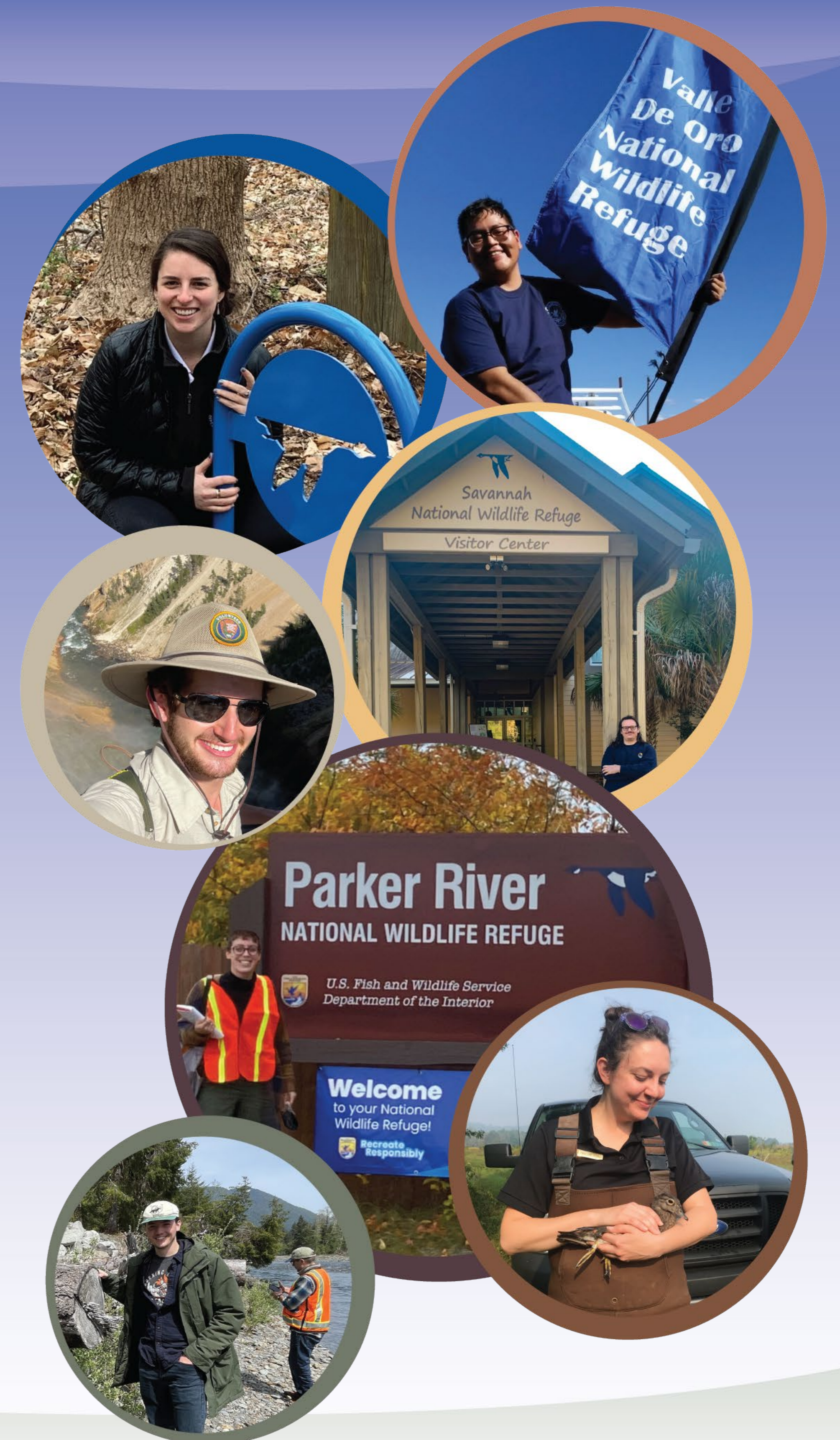
PLTF Program Introduction

- Began in 2012
- Modeled after the NPS Transportation Scholars Program
- Currently serves USFWS and NPS
- Full time, paid fellowship with benefits
- 12 to 24-month position with the possibility of extension/promotion
- Locations across the U.S. at select National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges



Our fellows...

- Provide transportation and planning support to National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges
- Develop transportation solutions that preserve valuable resources and enhance visitor experience
- Experience work at park/refuge, regional office, and national headquarters levels
- Work, learn and grow through orientation, conferences, guest lectures, and mentorship



Today's Presenters




Jennifer Owen-White
Refuge Manager
Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)



Nate Begay
Public Lands Transportation Fellow (PLTF)
Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge





Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) would like to humbly acknowledge that Valle de Oro NWR sits upon over 570 acres of ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Tiwa People. The Tiwa people have stewarded these lands for generations and, in the case of Valle de Oro NWR, continue to play a vital role in its protection, restoration, and prosperity.

We also acknowledge that this refuge would not exist without the grassroots community movements led by the passionate people of Mountain View. Our host community.

We ask that you take a moment to reflect on your place on this land to help move from a place of ownership and conflict to one of respect, trust, and community.

Safe Place Policy



- At Valle de Oro NWR, we have a non-discrimination and Zero Tolerance Policy- a Safe Place Policy- at the refuge, where our tagline is “Growing a safe and healthy environment for wildlife and people.”
 - *Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge strives to create and foster an inclusive experience for all visitors, volunteers, interns, partners, and employees. We wish for the refuge to be a safe and healthy environment for wildlife and people.*



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Urban Wildlife Conservation Program



search

HOME | ABOUT | URBAN WILDLIFE | URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE PARTNERSHIPS | PARTNERS | URBAN NEWS



USFWS Expands Urban Wildlife Conservation Program

\$2.35 million for innovative partnerships to engage local communities, advance wildlife conservation, reach the next generation of conservation leaders »

Urban Wildlife Conservation Program

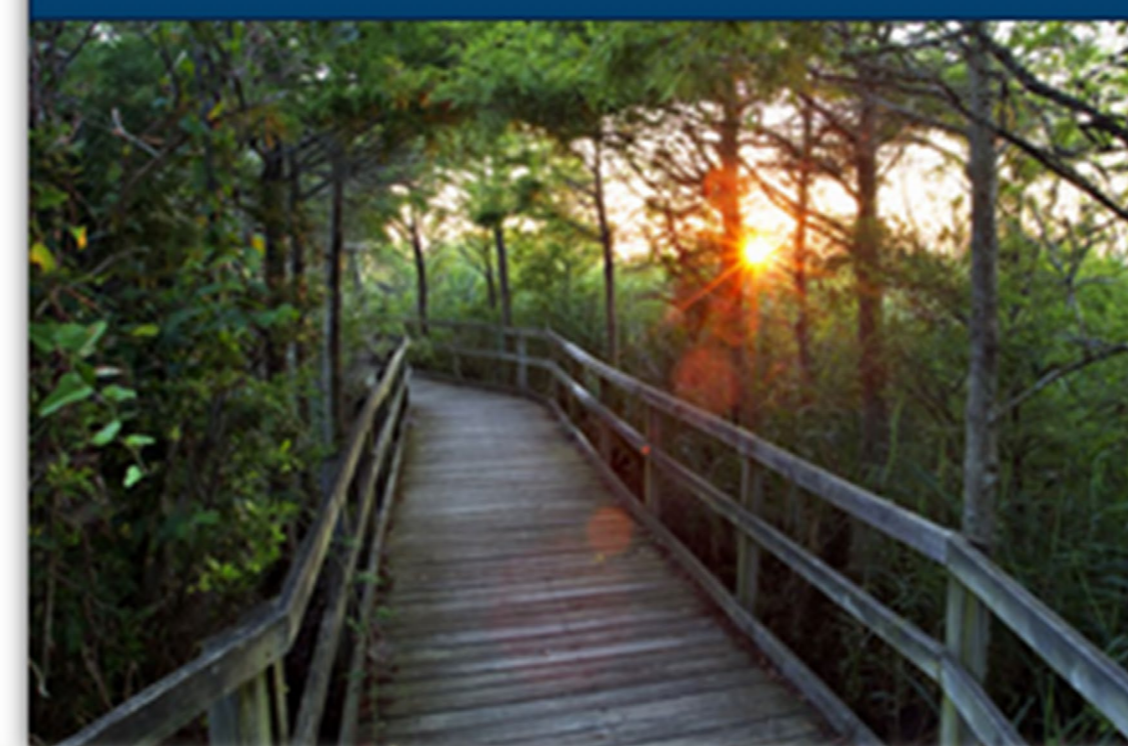
Goal: To create a connected conservation community

To garner broad support for conservation, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service must provide a reason, and opportunities, for urban residents to find, appreciate, and care for nature in their cities and beyond. Therefore, engaging our urban neighbors, and fostering a sense of stewardship, reflects the heart of the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program.

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE



WHERE WE ARE



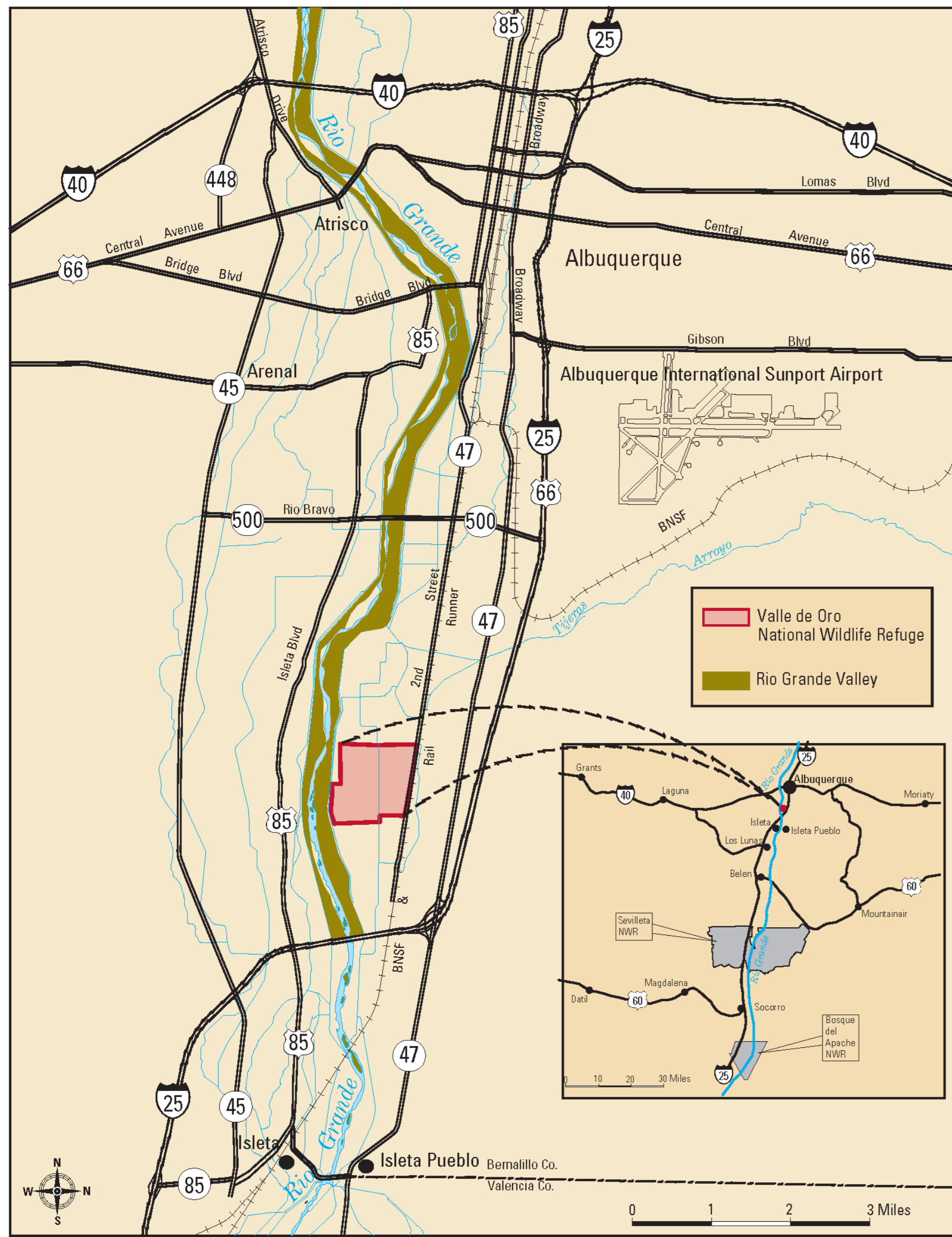
KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY



Standards of Excellence

- Know and Relate to the Community
- Connect Urban People with Nature via Stepping Stones of Engagement
- Build Partnerships
- Be a Community Asset
- Ensure Adequate Long-Term Resources
- Provide Equitable Access
- Ensure Visitors Feel Safe and Welcome
- Model Sustainability





VALLE DE ORO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

VISION

- WHAT WE STRIVE TO BE -

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge uses an innovative and collaborative approach to connect people with wildlife, plants and the land by providing equitable and just ways to deepen personal relationships with nature. The refuge balances healthy natural habitat management with opportunities for education, visitor engagement, youth employment, community involvement and stewardship.



VALLE DE ORO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



-VALUE STATEMENTS-

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge staff, interns and volunteers are committed to the following values as fundamental and foundational principles of the refuge. *These values guide how we work and interact with one another, our partners and our greater community.*

ACCESSIBLE AND JUST

Providing equitable and inclusive opportunities and meaningful connection to nature for people of diverse backgrounds, economic standings, abilities and ages.

INTENTIONAL AND ADAPTABLE

Consciously working toward a shared vision and goals and continuously reflecting and sharing successes, mistakes and lessons learned.

RESPECTFUL AND KIND

Honoring the knowledge of our mission, staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, stakeholders, community and surrounding cultures. Refuge staff are approachable, respectful, kind, and actively listen to the needs and concerns of others (colleagues, volunteers, partners and community members) and respond appropriately in thoughtful ways.

COLLABORATIVE

Intentionally and collaboratively working with colleagues, partners, volunteers and community members to make decisions and take action. We believe that our combined effect is greater when we work together and have many voices at the table.

INNOVATIVE AND CONTINUALLY LEARNING

Taking risks to broaden the scope and depth of work accomplished in the field of conservation to include: community engagement, art, culture, technology, social and environmental justice. Committing to continuously learn from each other, community members, partners and stakeholders to keep approaches fresh and relevant.

CREDIBLE

Building and maintaining trust in the community, working to be transparent, realistic and patient with staff, partners and community members as the refuge grows and changes.

Introduction

Name: Nate Begay

Primary Refuge: Valle de Oro NWR

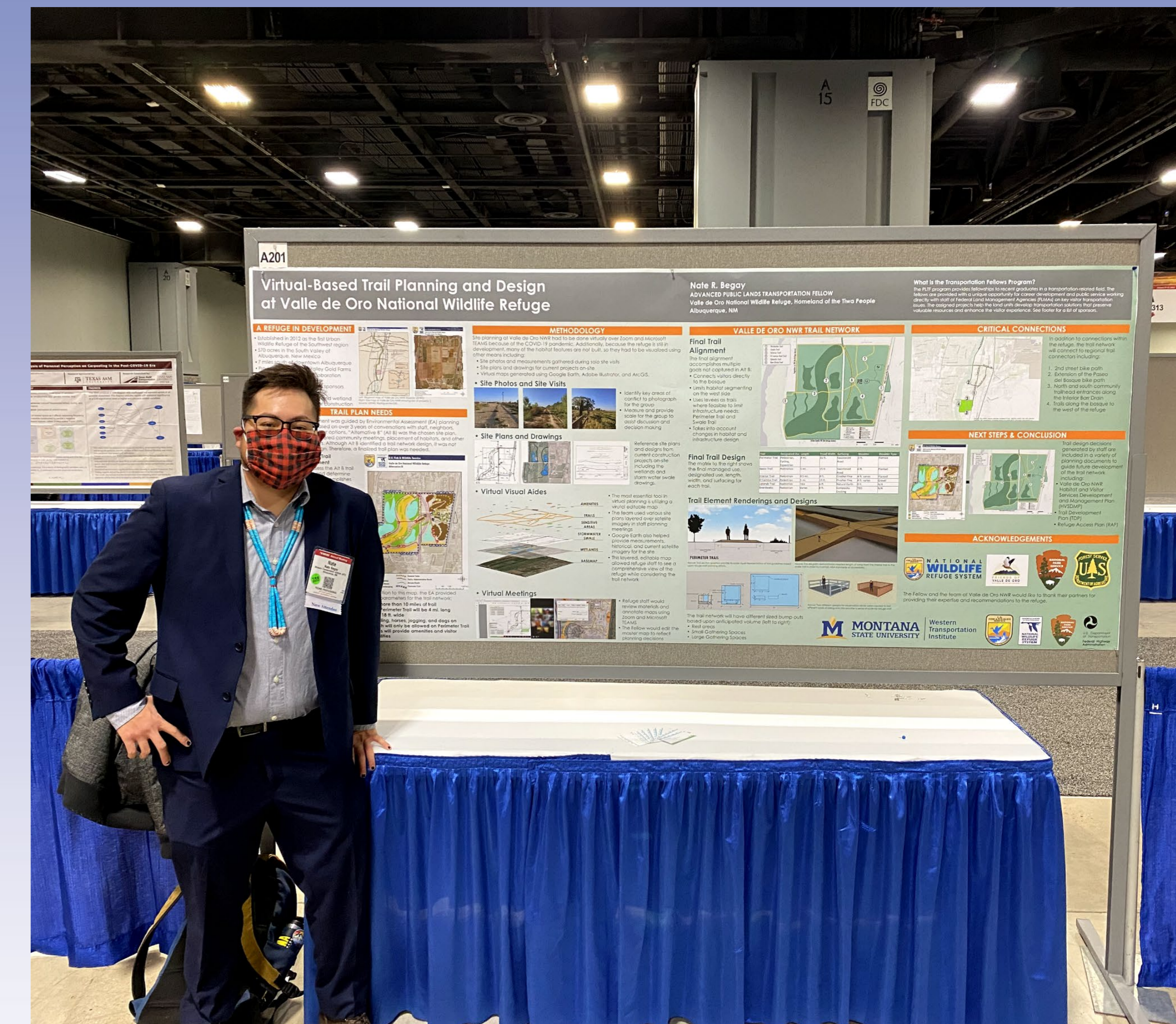
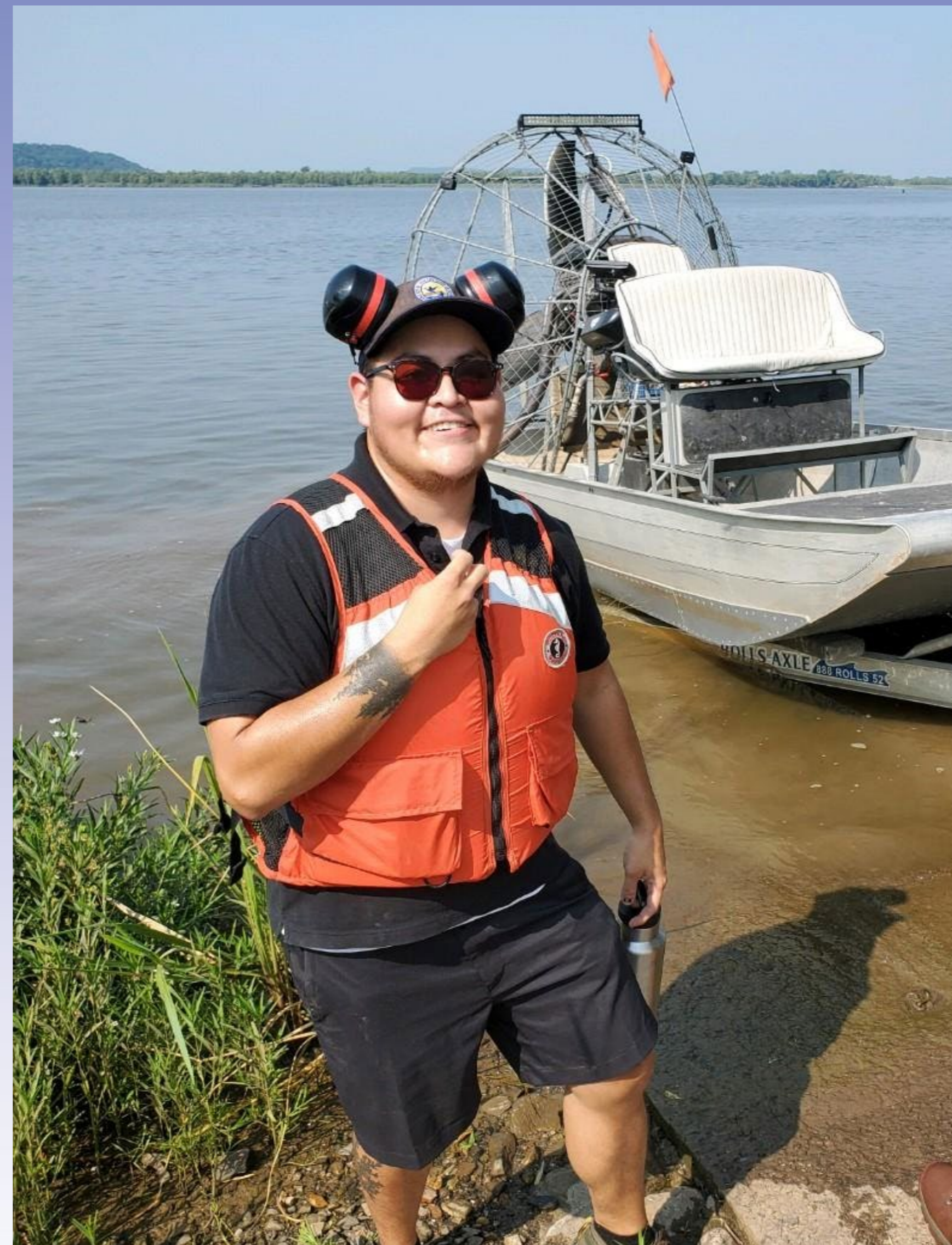
Start Date: September 3, 2019

Place of Birth: Gallup, NM

Educational Background: M.C.R.P. and B.A. in Environmental Planning and Design, University of New Mexico

Academic Focus: Physical planning and design, historic preservation, cultural planning and community development

Fun Fact: Nate applied for this program while he was working in the backcountry in Colorado



Fellow's Projects

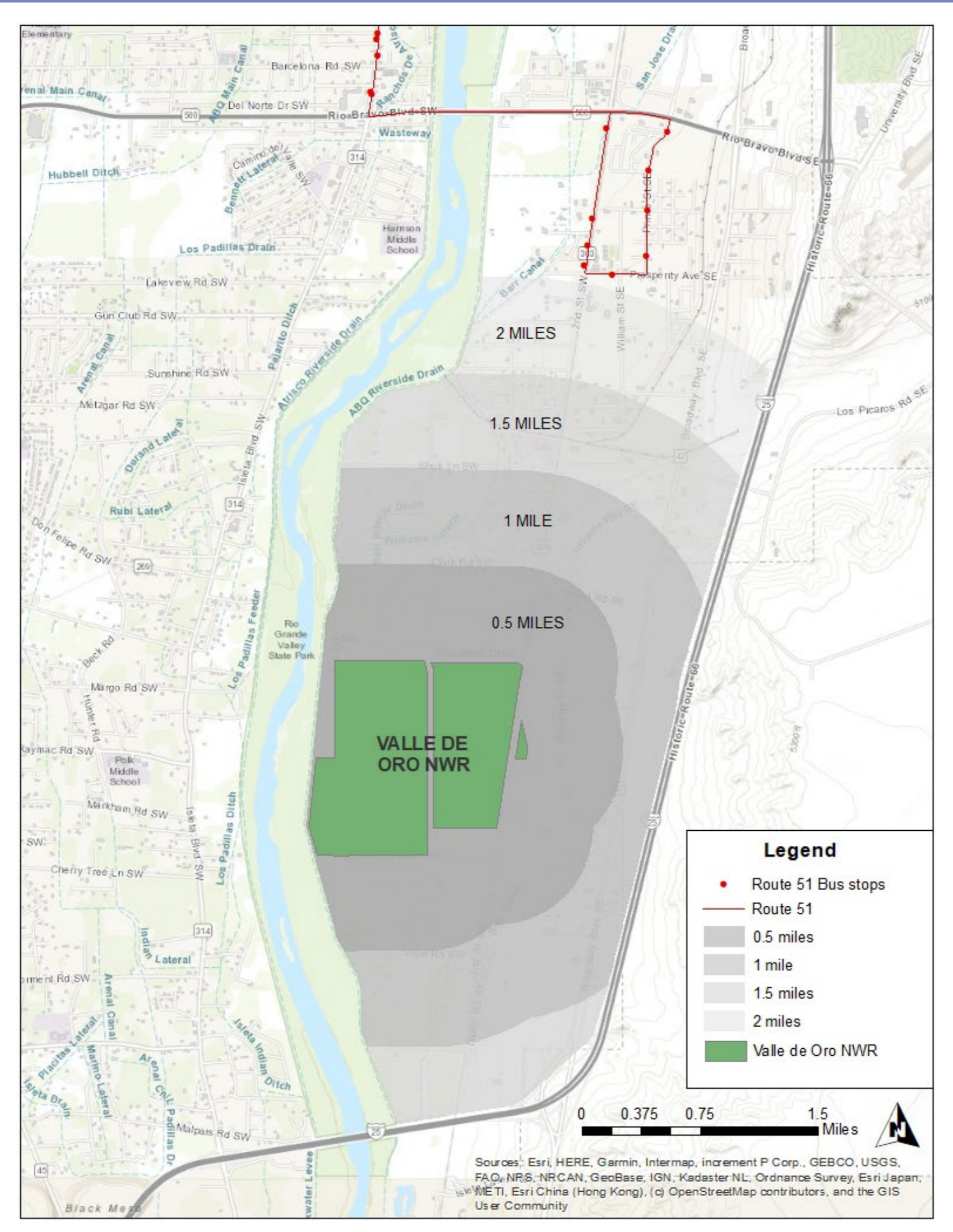
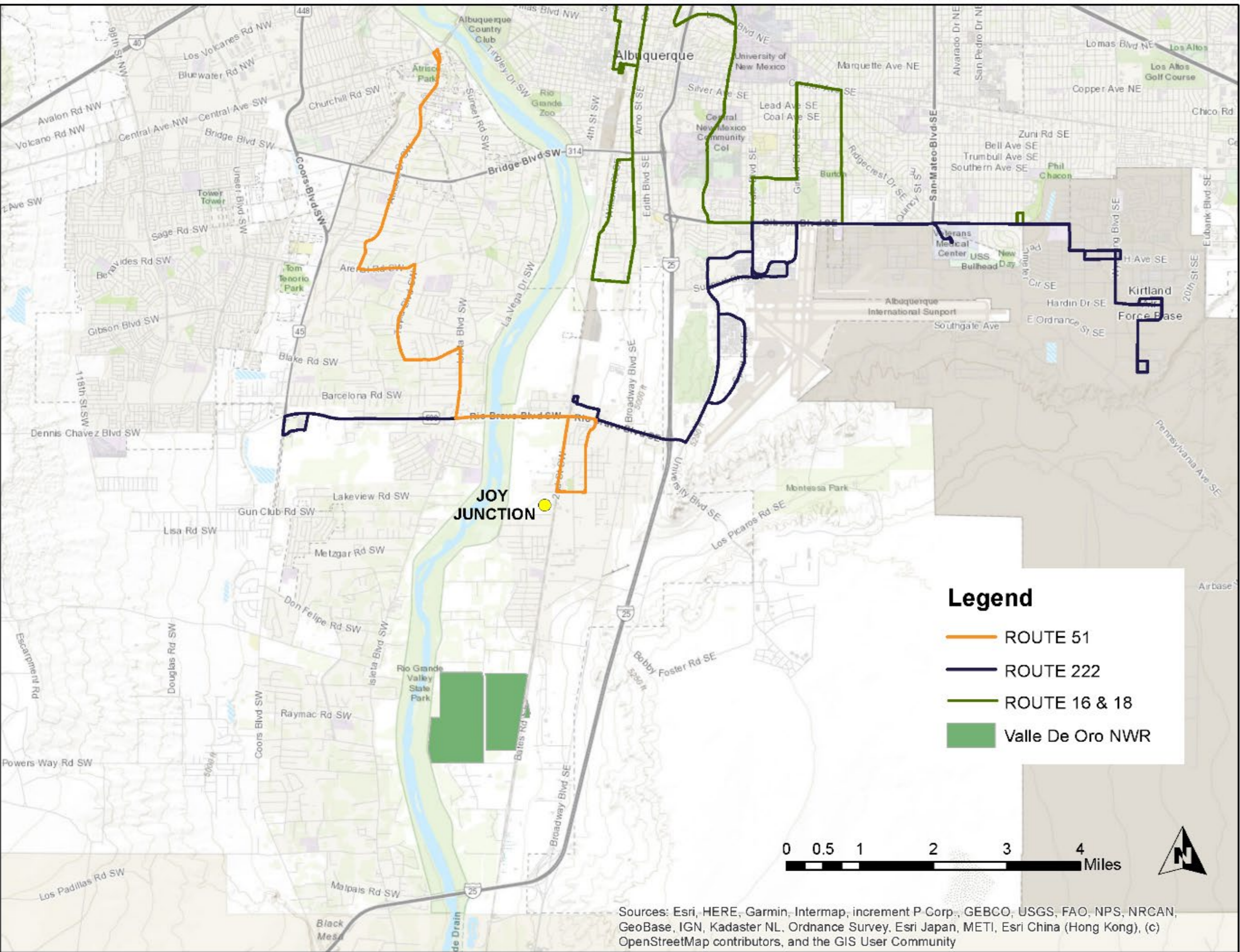
- Refuge
 - **Bus Service**
 - **Trail Planning for Trail Network**
 - **Trail Development Plan**
 - Trail Funding application
 - **Refuge Access Plan**
 - **Digital Docent**
 - **Toxic Tour**
 - EV Charger Documentation
- Region 2
 - **FLAP Application for Sequoyah NWR**
 - **Canadian River Aerial Ball Markers**
- Headquarters
 - PLTF Project Scoping
 - **Volpe Cycling Impact Study and Decision-making Tool**
 - Transportation SharePoint Edit

A wide-angle landscape photograph of the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. The foreground shows a dirt path and a wooden fence. The middle ground is filled with a dense line of trees, some with brown leaves and others bare. In the background, three prominent, rounded mountains rise against a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A semi-transparent white box with a thin black border is centered over the image, containing the title text.

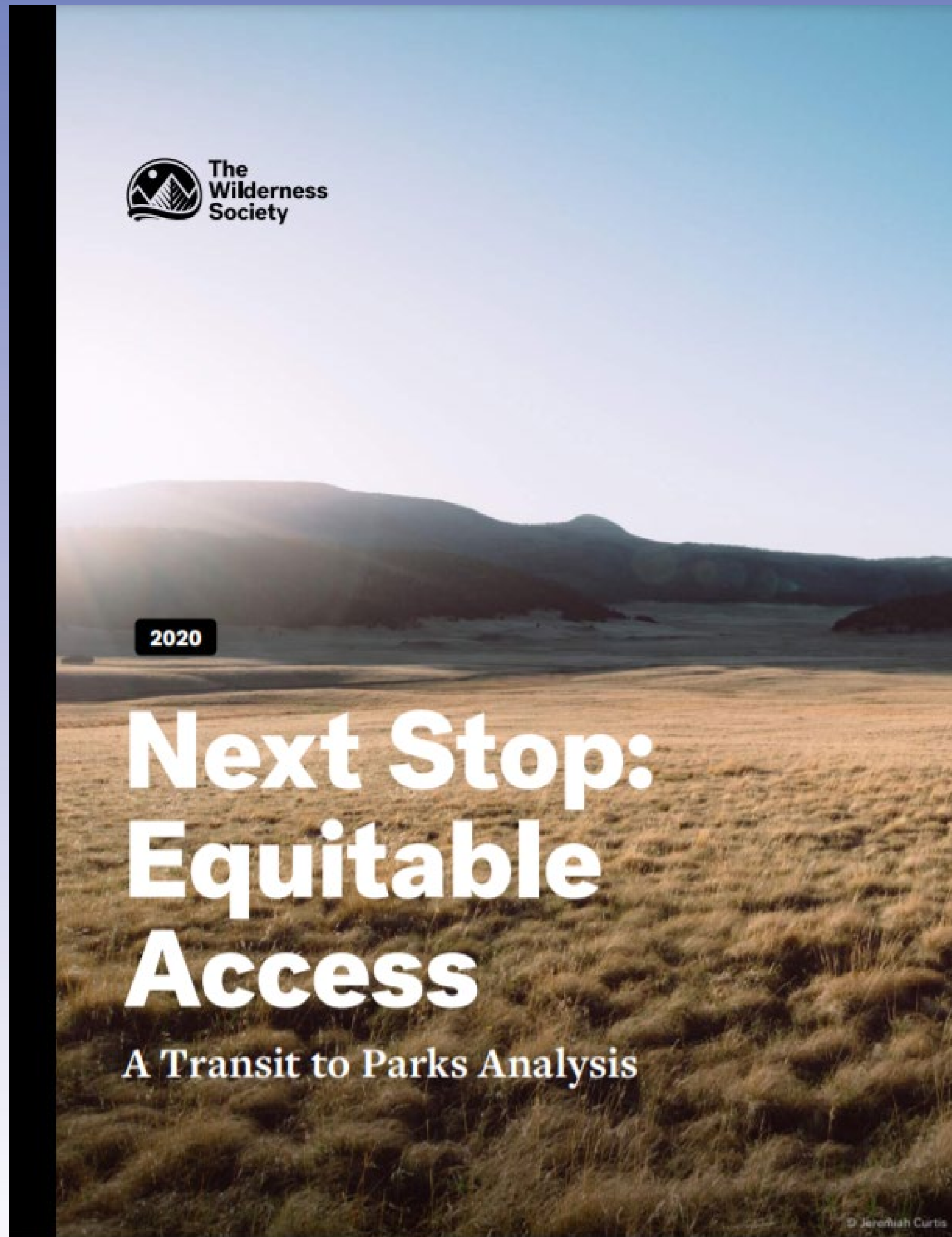
Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

Bus Service

- Route 51
 - Stops 2.5 miles north of the refuge
- Bike route connection to the station
- Refuge built bus turn around in parking lot
- Needs:
 - Funding for bus vehicle
 - Funding for operations and maintenance
 - Bus shelters and signage

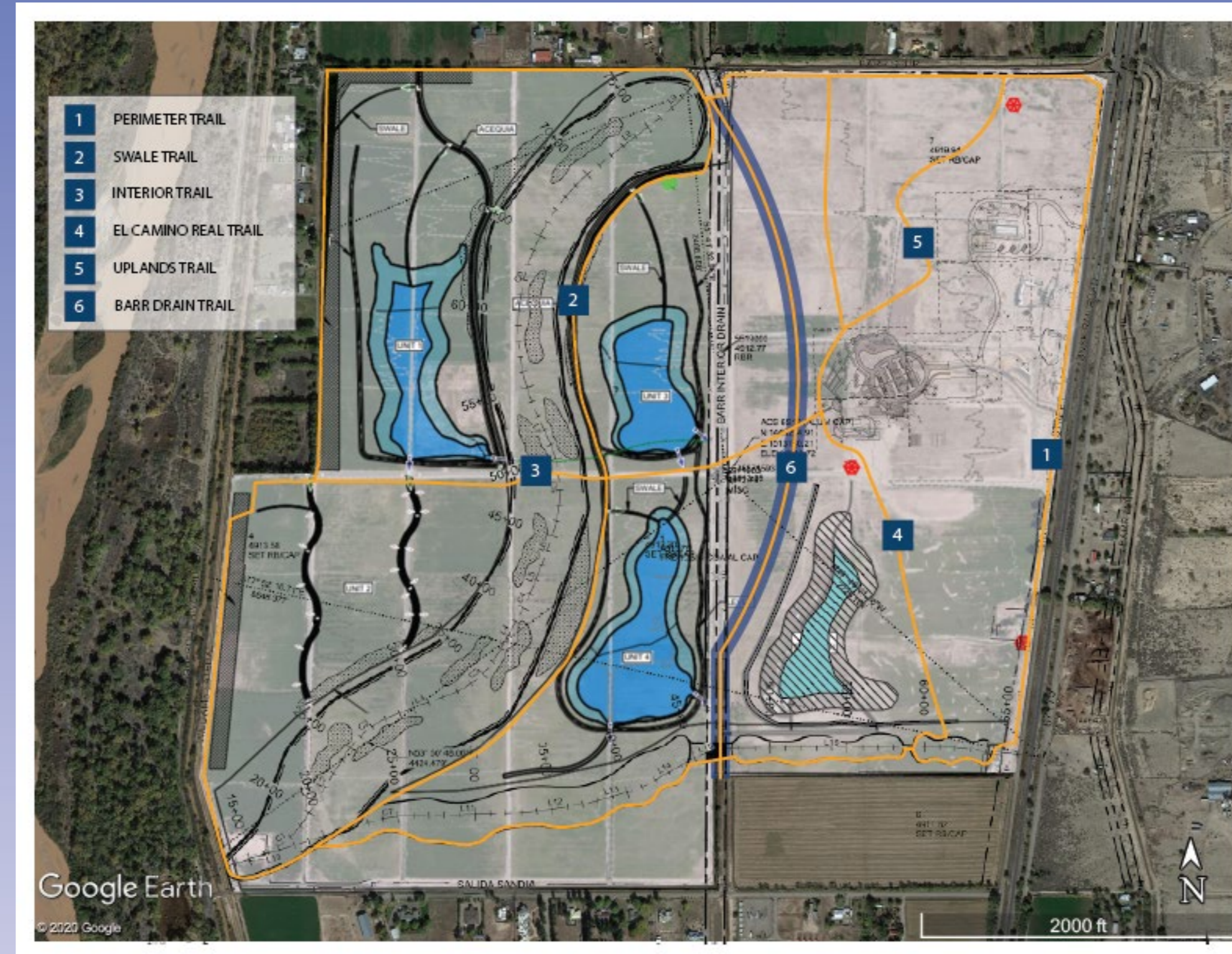


Bus Service

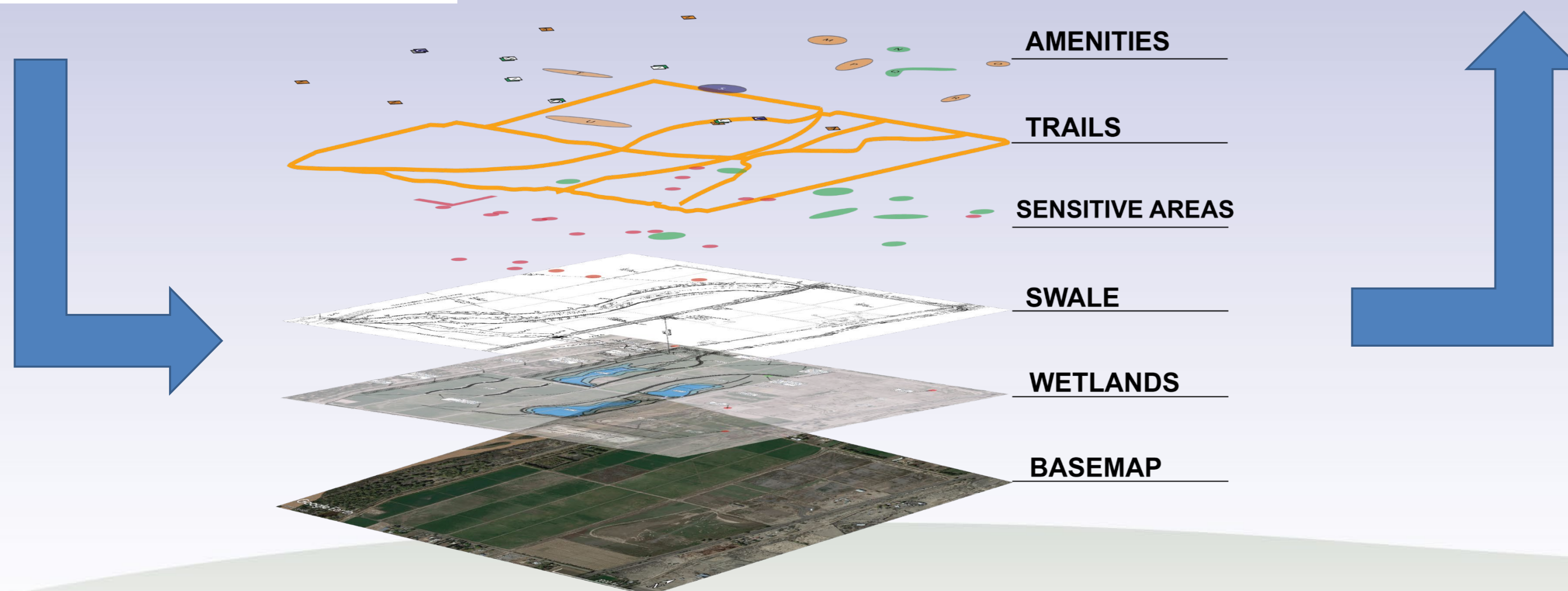


- Partnership with The Wilderness Society Urban 2 Wild Coalition
- Combining efforts to get access to park space across the city
- Success with the Zero Fares Pilot program
- Carrying this momentum forward with ABQ Ride network redesign

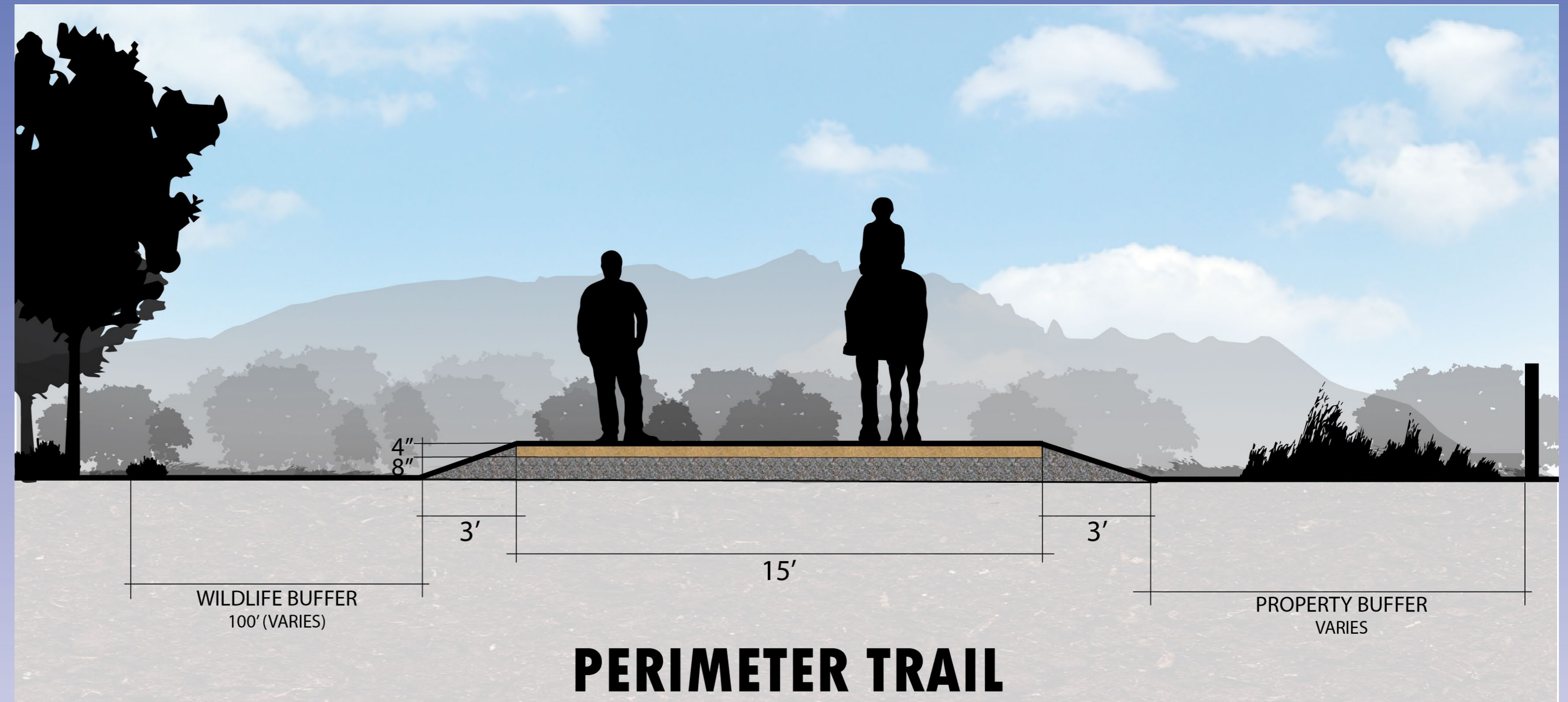
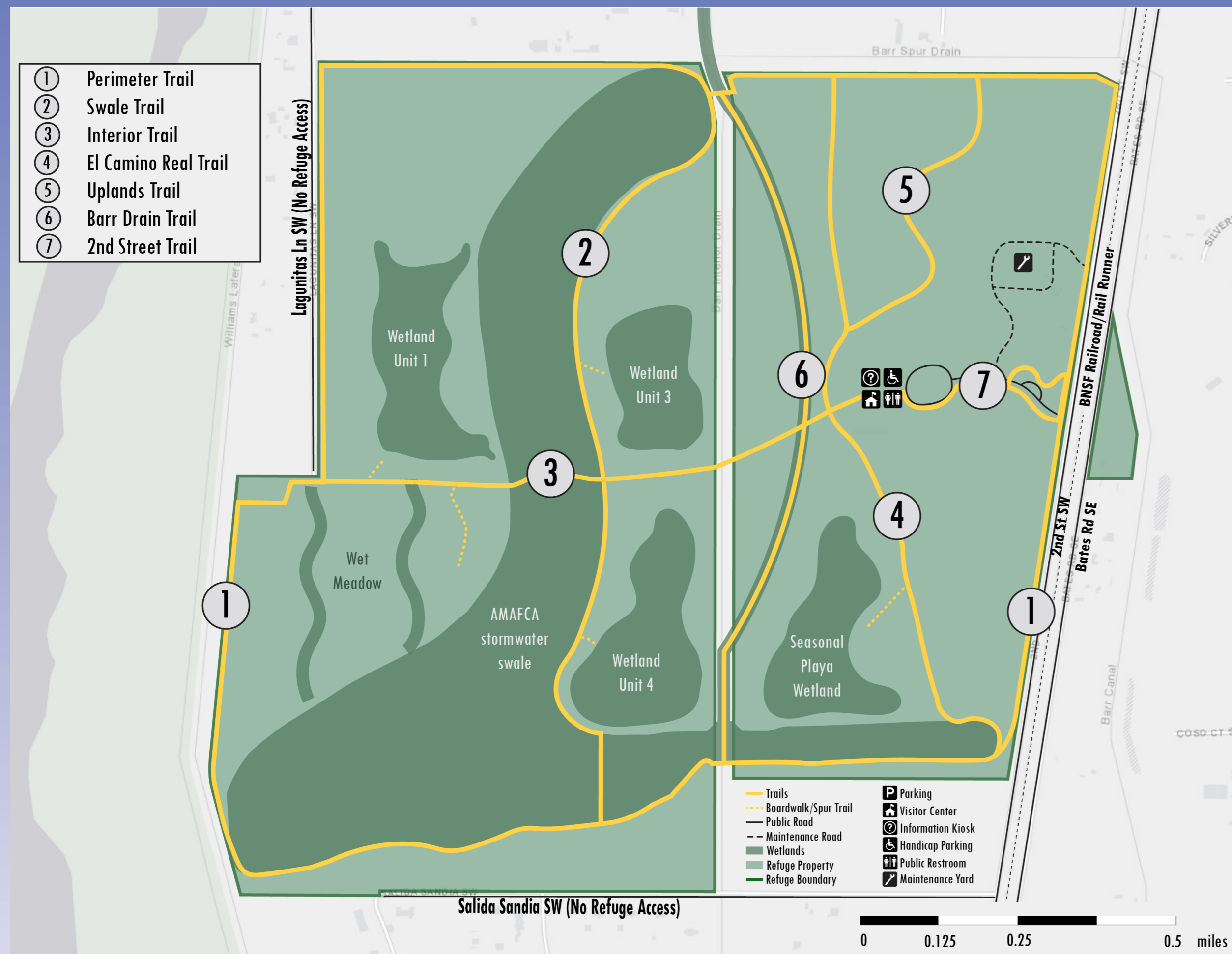
Trail Planning



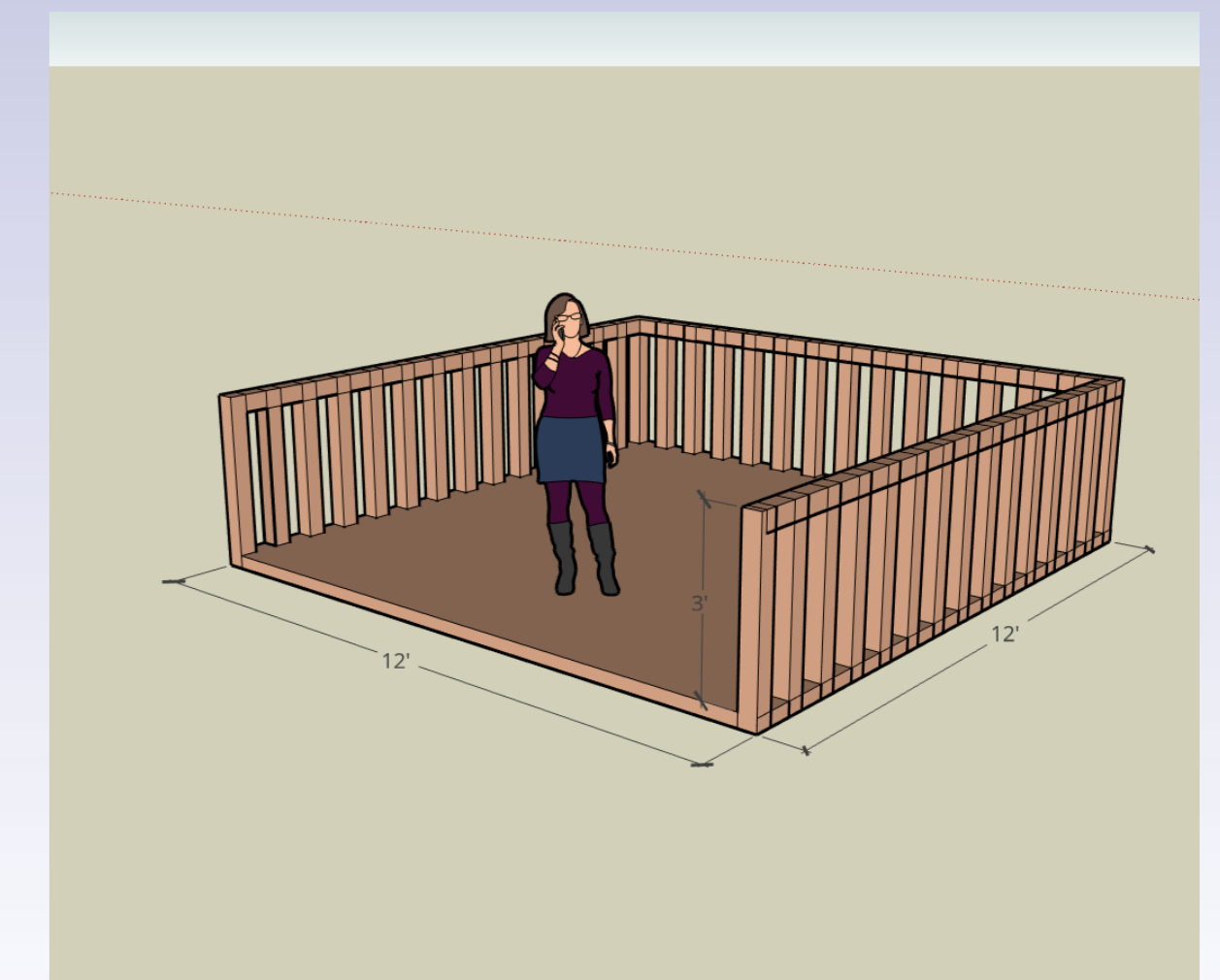
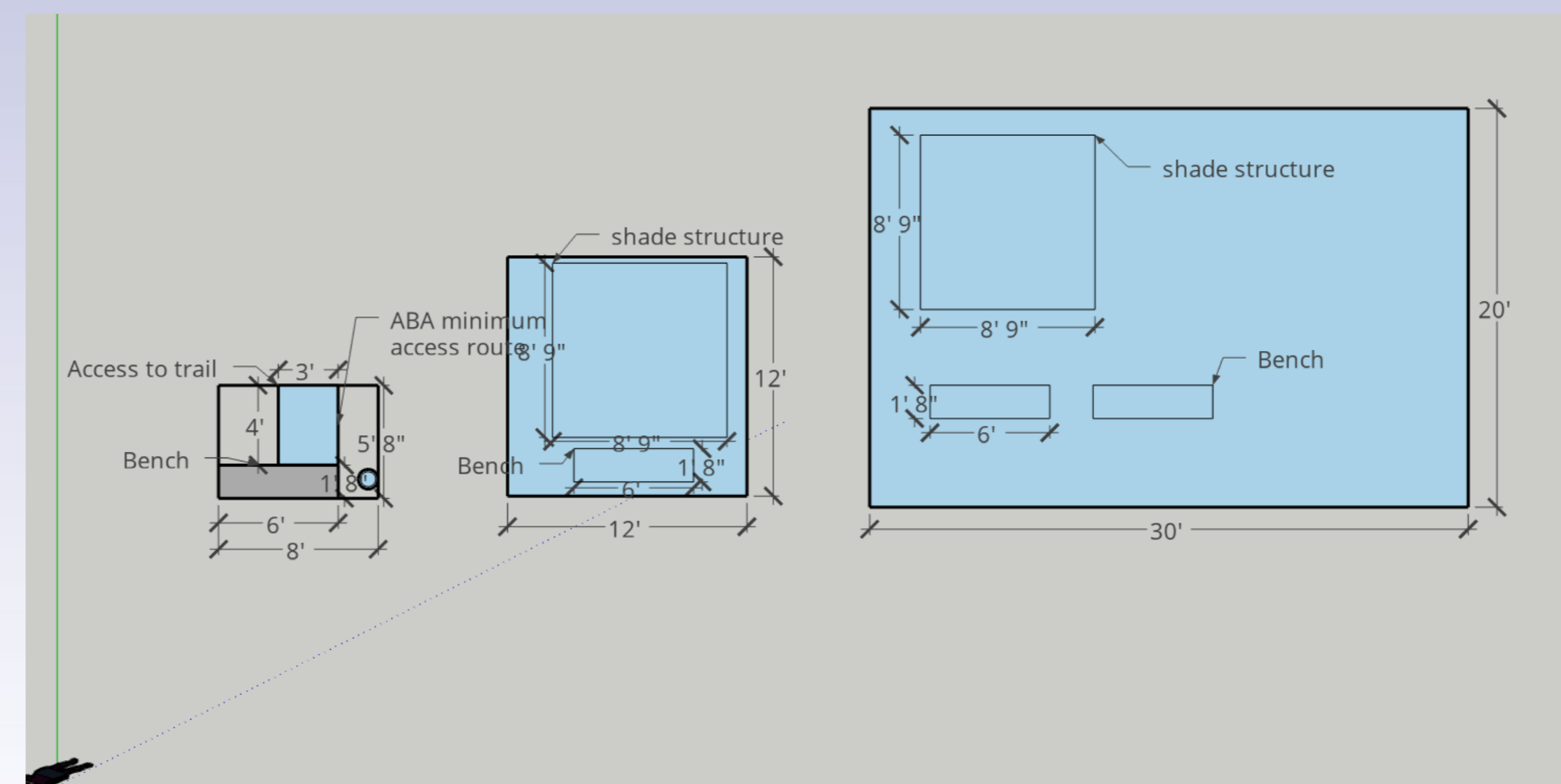
- Focus on defining design specifics for the trails:
 - Alignment
 - Surfacing
 - Width and Height
 - Wildlife Buffers
 - Bumpouts and Spur Trails
 - Amenities



Trail Planning



Trail	Designated Use	Length	Tread Width	Surfacing	Shoulder	Shoulder Type
Perimeter Trail	Pedestrian, Cycling, Equestrian	4 mi.	15 ft.	Sweetened Road	3 ft.	Planted
Swale Trail	Pedestrian	1 mi.	15 ft.	Sweetened Road	6 ft.	Planted
Interior Trail	Pedestrian	0.5 mi.	8 ft.	Crusher Fine	4 ft. varies	Planted
El Camino Trail	Pedestrian	1 mi.	10 ft.	Crusher Fine	4 ft. varies	Gravel
Uplands Trail	Pedestrian	TBD	6 ft.	Natural Earth	0 ft.	N/A
Boardwalks	Pedestrian	Varies	8 ft.	Composite Decking	TBD	N/A

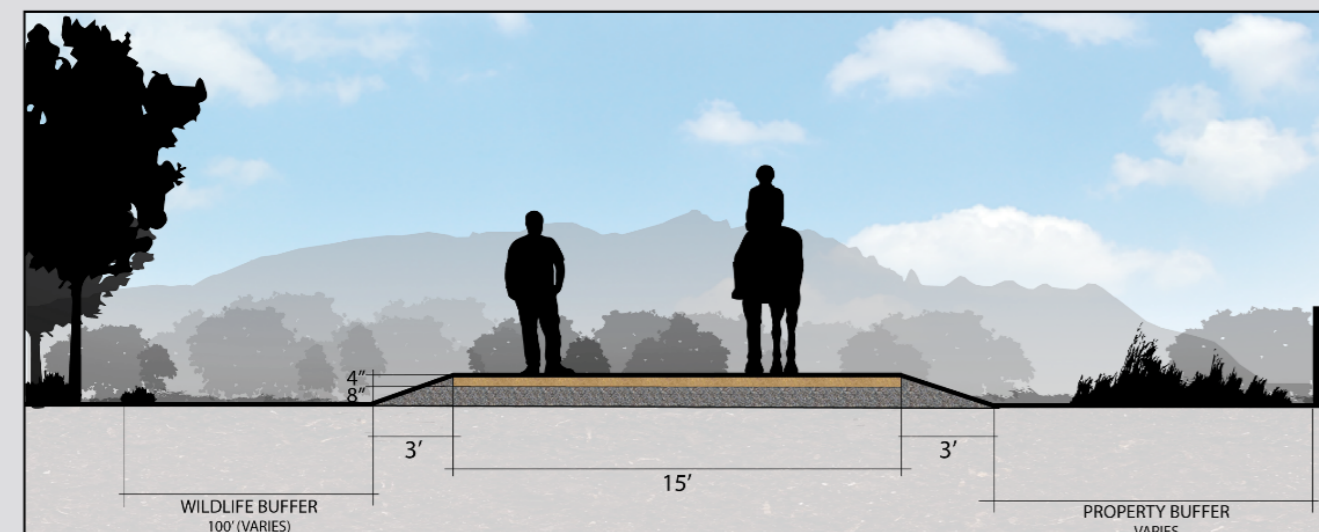


Trail Development Plan

- Existing conditions
- Needs analysis
- Proposed design guidelines
- Trail Profiles
- Implementation



PERIMETER TRAIL



Width	15 ft with 3 ft shoulder (1.5' each)
Height	1-2 ft
Length	4 mi.
Surface	AMAFCA Base Course Aggregate Mix
Corridor	12 ft.
User Group	Pedestrians, Cyclists, Horseback, Vehicles, Buses

The perimeter trail is a 4 mile loop trail that circumvents the boundary of the refuge and will allow the most user groups, providing access to all other trails throughout the refuge. This trail is 4 miles long, running along the trail boundaries and along the north levee road on the east-west running AMAFCA storm water swale. This trail will provide the access for all user groups allowed on refuge trails including pedestrians, cyclists, horseback riders, occasional personal vehicles users, and buses for field trips.

This trail will be approximately four miles long with a fifteen foot wide tread and a three foot wide shoulder on either side. Trail height will range throughout the trail network but will range from one to two feet height from grade depending upon location. The Perimeter Trail will have a look and feel that is as close to a natural earth trail as possible.

As the trail which will be open to the most user groups and be the most highly trafficked, the perimeter trail surfacing must be able to accommodate the expected traffic and provide a quality experience for all user groups. Working alongside AMAFCA, the Perimeter trail will be designed based upon some of their other levee roads. Surfacing for the Perimeter trail will be an AMAFCA base course aggregate mix called "sweetened road" by AMAFCA. This surface will provide a hard, compacted surface that can sustain vehicle traffic yet provide a natural look and feel through material texture and color. Sub-base will be a compacted base course as determined by AMAFCA.

TRAIL FACILITIES

The Perimeter Trail has some of the most major facilities along its alignment including the visitor center entrance, outdoor classroom, and entrances through the Interior Barr Drain. The outdoor classroom and visitor center will provide the most visitor facilities than any other area along the trail. In addition to multiple amenities, the outdoor classroom will provide a shaded outdoor gathering space, bathrooms, parking lot, bike racks, and hitching posts. This entrance will also have art installations by ALMA near the entrance to the bosque. The Perimeter Trail will have multiple bump outs with the Outdoor Classroom being the primary visitor facility along the trail. Amenities are as follows:



TYPE	QUANTITY	LOCATION
Benches	12	A, B, U, E, F, G, K, L, M, N, O, R
Trash Receptacles	5	G, F, M, U, A
Dog Waste Stations	5	G, F, M, U, A
Bike Rack	1	G
Bike Repair Station	1	G
Large Shade Structure	1	G
Small Shade Structure	1	A

LARGE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

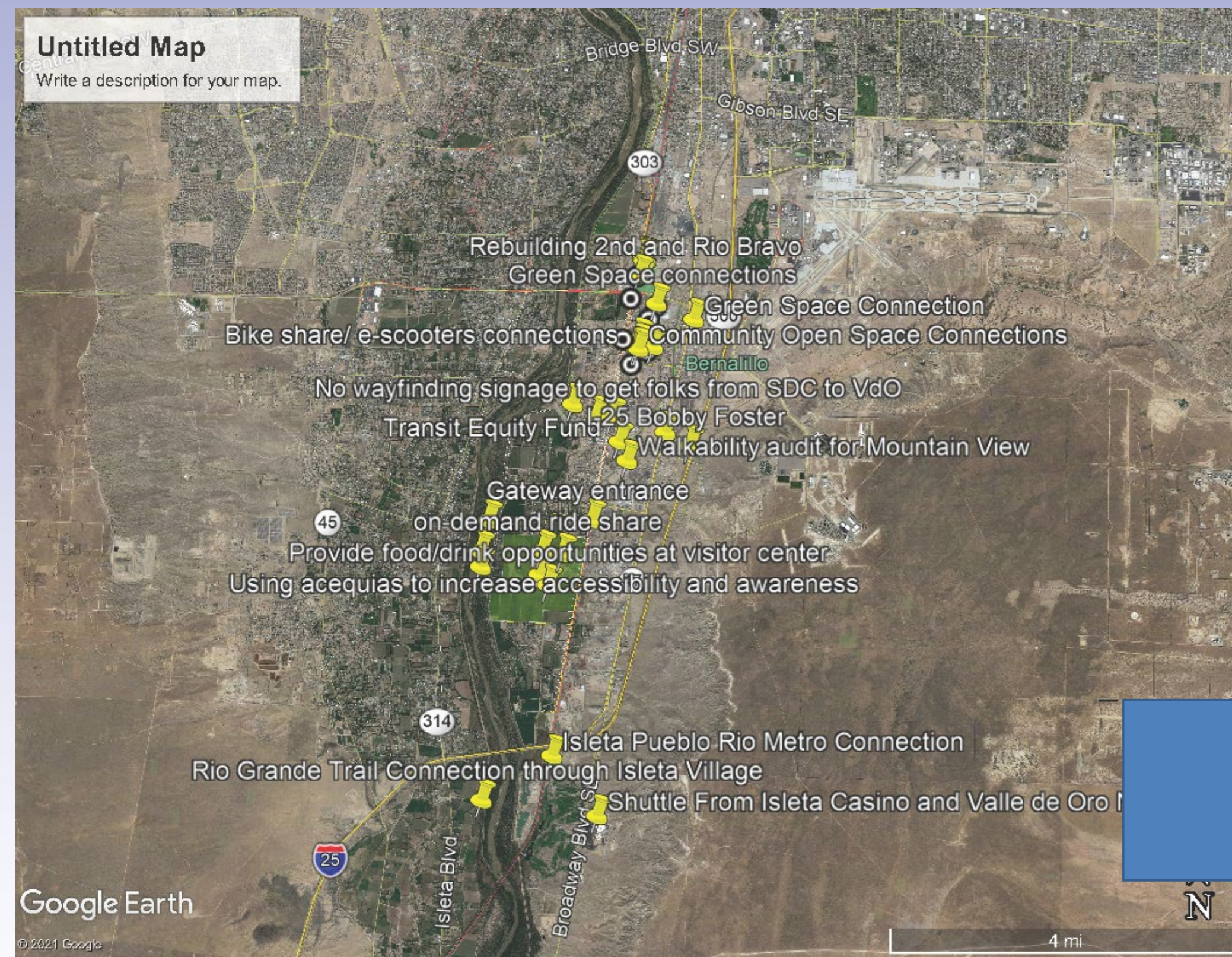
INFRASTRUCTURE	DESCRIPTION
1 Outdoor Classroom Facilities	The outdoor classroom will involve a shade structure, berm, restrooms, trails, picnicking area, bike racks, bike repair station, and horse hitching post.
2 Outdoor Classroom Parking Lot	In addition to the outdoor classroom space, there will also be a parking lot installed along the Perimeter Trail for field trips, partners, and occasional visitor vehicles.
3 Outdoor Classroom Acequia Crossing	Install an at-grade crossing at the acequia east of the outdoor classroom. Ensure this crossing will be able to accommodate school buses.
4 Interior Barr Drain Crossings	There will need to be crossings installed at the north and south entrances at the Interior Barr Drain. These crossings are included in the AMAFCA swale construction plans.
5 Connection to 2nd street trail and Visitor Center	Plan and design interaction with entrance road and 2nd street trail to ensure accessibility and safety of trail.
6 Playa Drain Crossing	Install an at-grade crossing at the drain east of the Playa. Ensure this crossing will be able to accommodate school buses.

CHALLENGES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

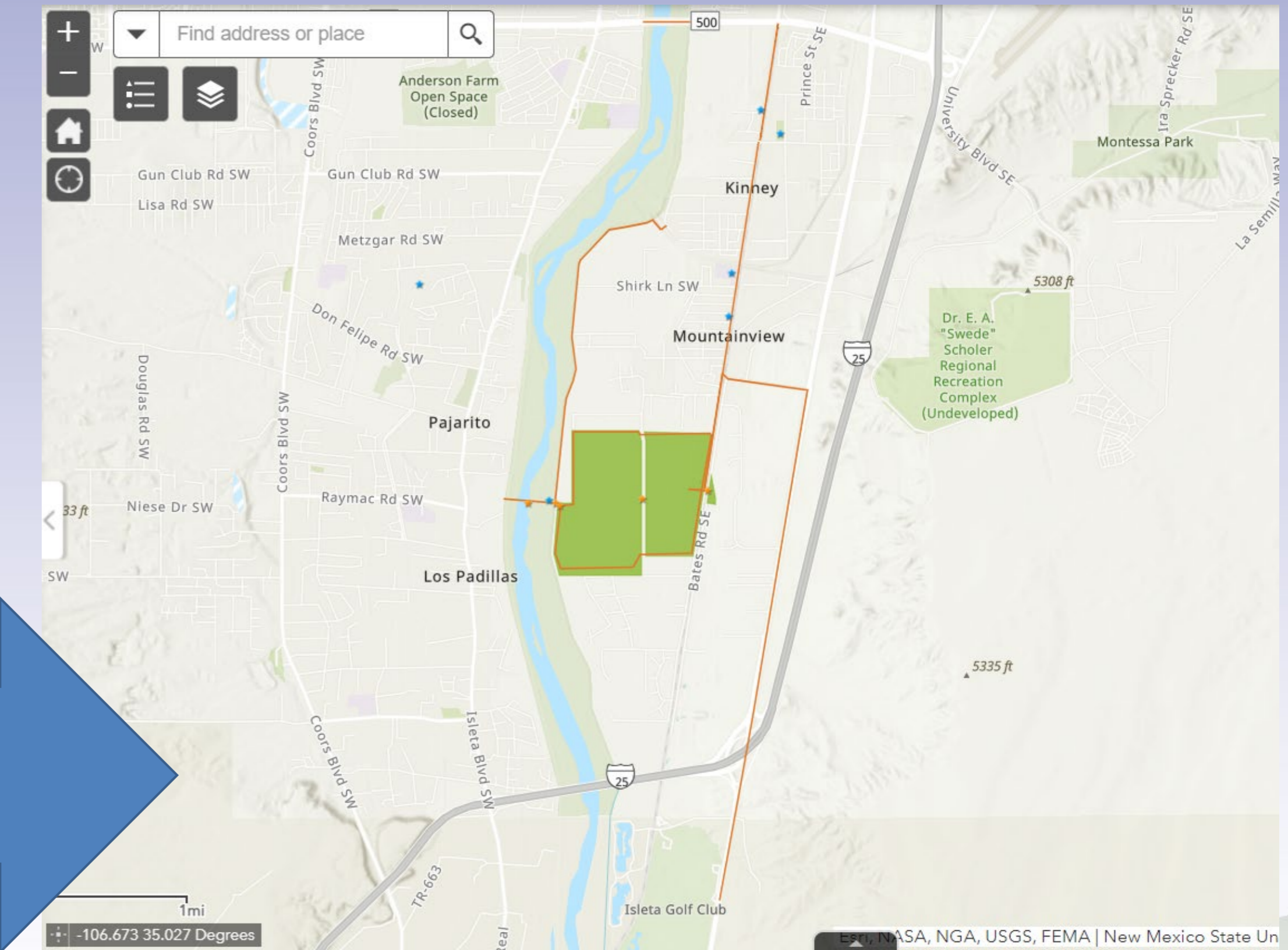
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Refuge Access Plan

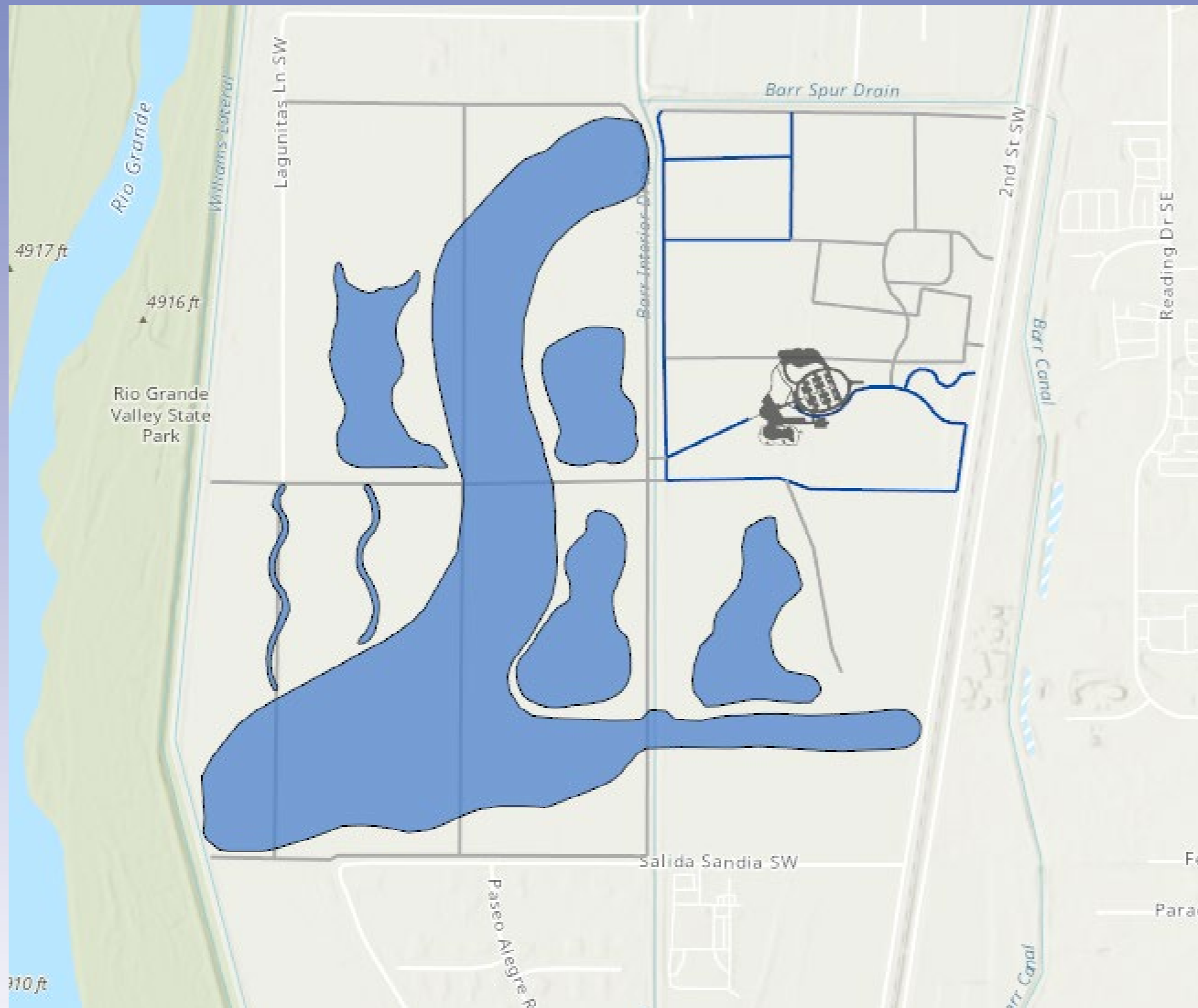
- Compile needed background information and begin initial planning phase
- Plan and host a stakeholder meeting and tour with partners
- Debrief with refuge staff, compile information gathered at meeting, and develop a list of projects
- Rate and score projects based upon rubric
- Generate report based on findings



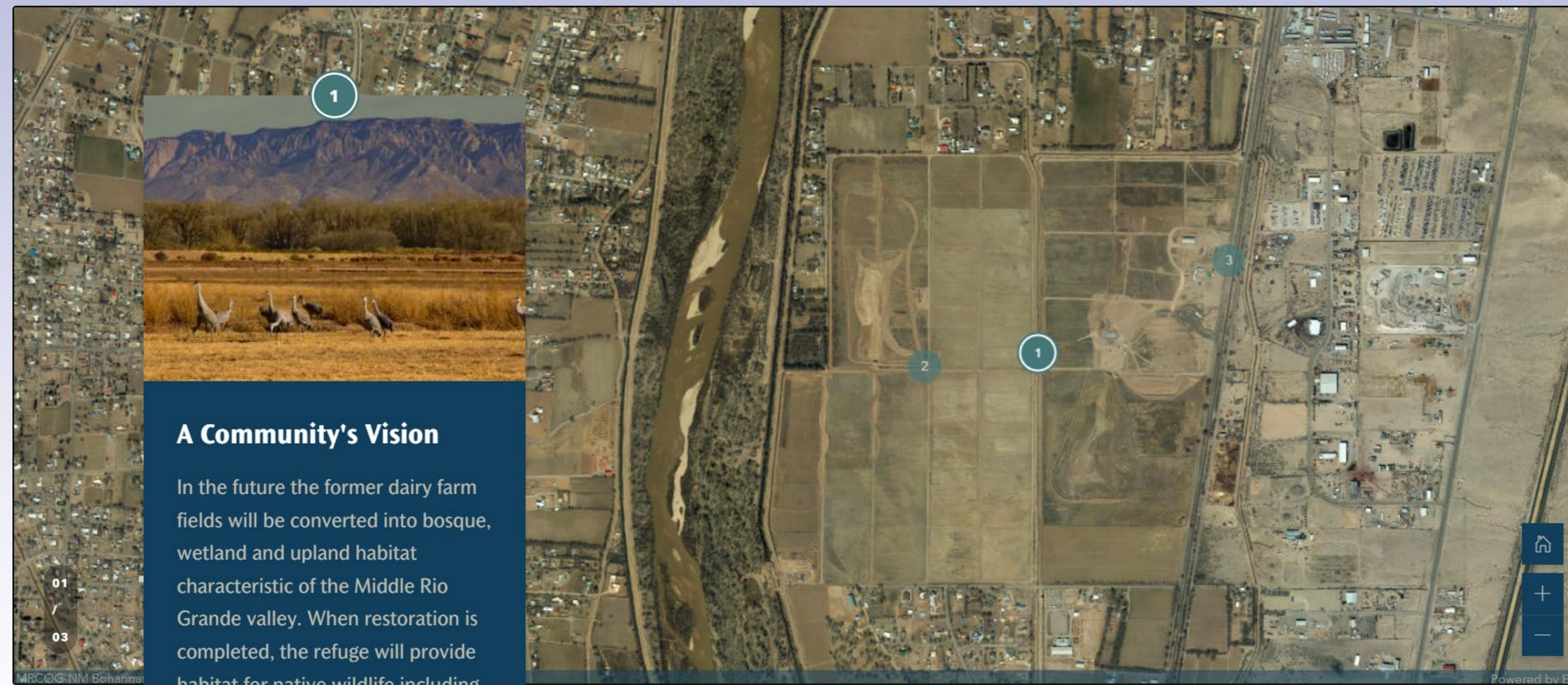
RAP Stakeholder Meeting Comments			
Transit	Bike/Ped	Roadways	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Center MVCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paseo del Bosque Trail Extension Bosque Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection between Acequias Rio Grande Trail Connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bobby Foster I-25 Interchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Transporting Kids on Field Trips through cost share
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rail Runner Greenspace Connection Isleta Pueblo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better bike/ped Infrastructure at Rail Runner Walkability Study in Mountain View 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price Street Pedestrian Improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement Opportunities Advertisement with Rail Runner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barrier — Shuttle Funding Isleta Pueblo Shuttle Nature Shuttles Greenspace Connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bike Share/E-scooters at VdO and MV Safety Rio Bravo Connection No food nearby for bike/ped Entrances and Exits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rio Bravo Bridge Repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive City/Regional Outdoor Recreation Map New Entrances to the Refuge River Floating connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share last mile connections 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd street trail expansion 2nd Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Diversion Channel Bridge 2nd street development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wayfinding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage on trails local/highway wayfinding signage



Digital Docent



Toxic Tour

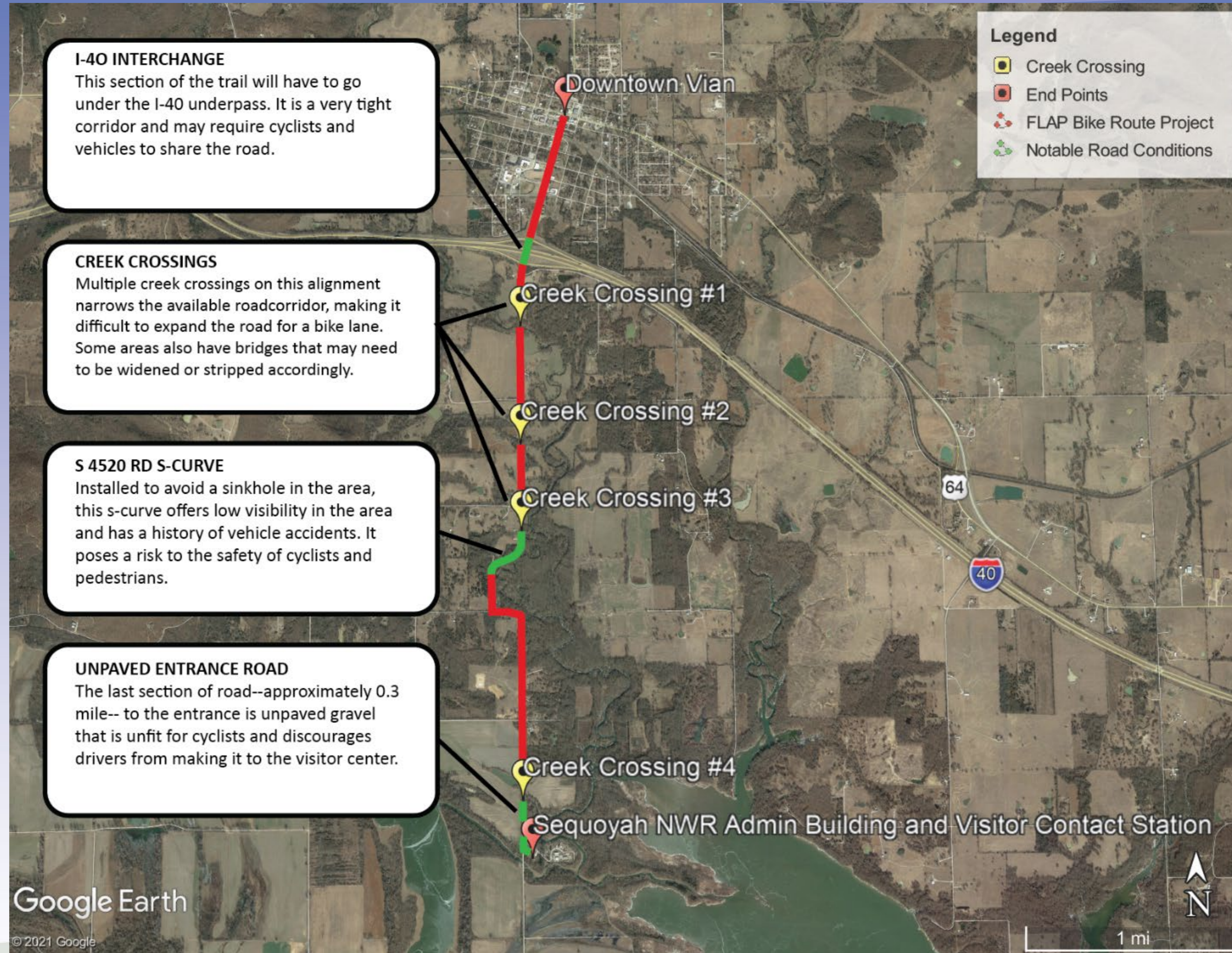


- Translate in-person tour into ESRI Storymap
- Focus on providing the community with info and resources
- Meet with partner groups to determine a message
 - What makes this story special and worth telling?
 - What is most compelling with this story?
 - What actions can we ask of the community?

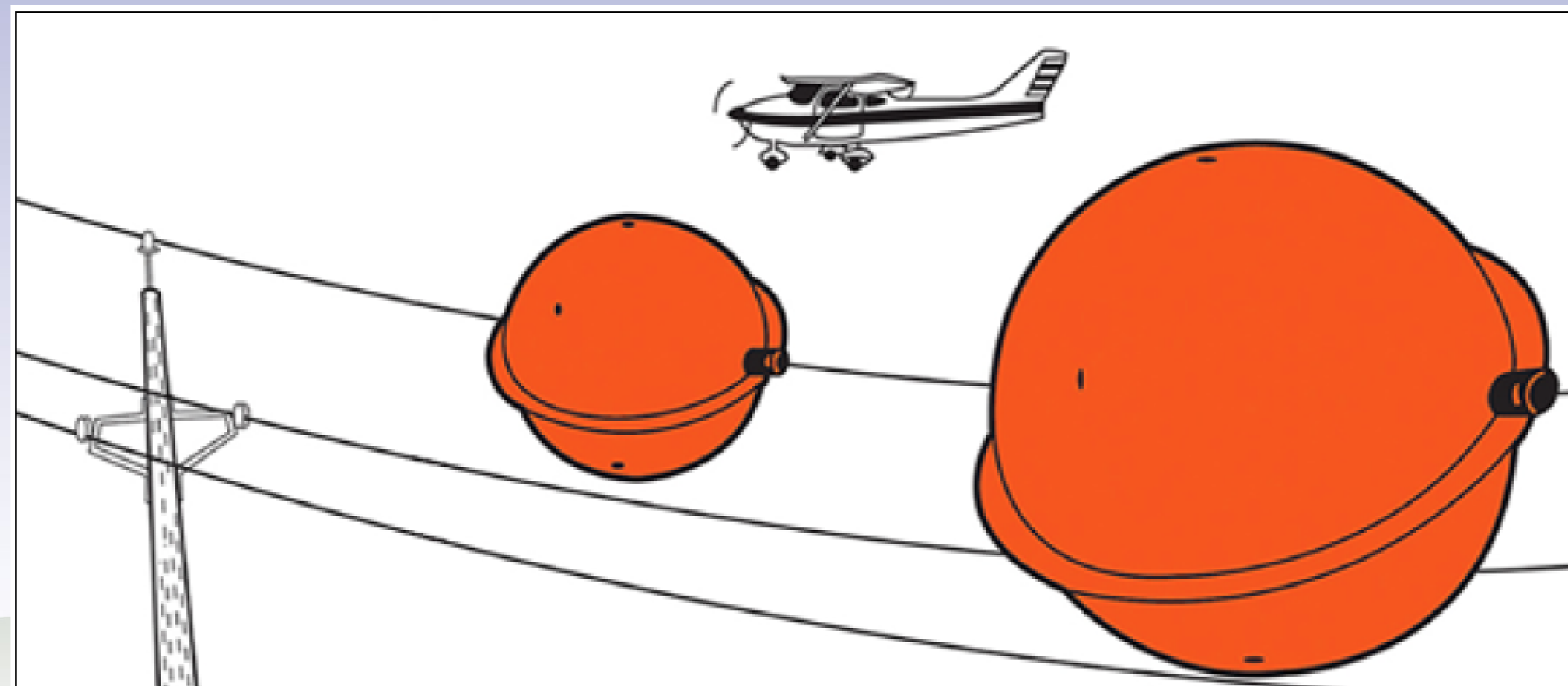
A photograph of a dense forest with many green trees and a path leading through them. The trees are tall and thin, with a thick canopy of green leaves. The ground is covered in a layer of brown leaves and some green plants. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Region 2: Southwest Region

Sequooyah NWR FLAP Project

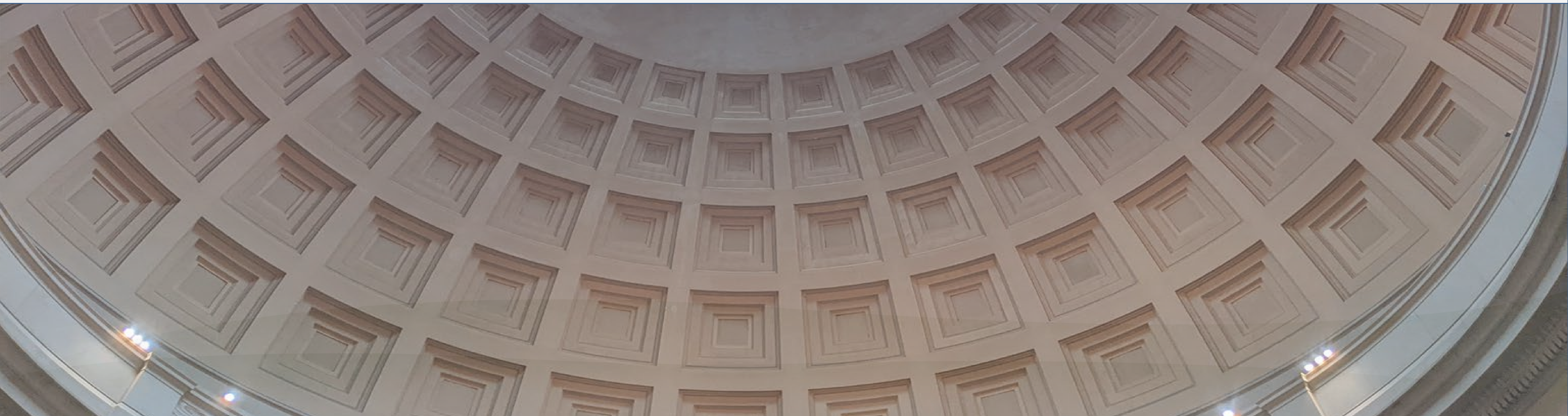


Canadian River Aerial Ball Markers





USFWS Headquarters



Headquarters Projects

Cycling Impacts on National Wildlife Refuges



DRAFT September 2021

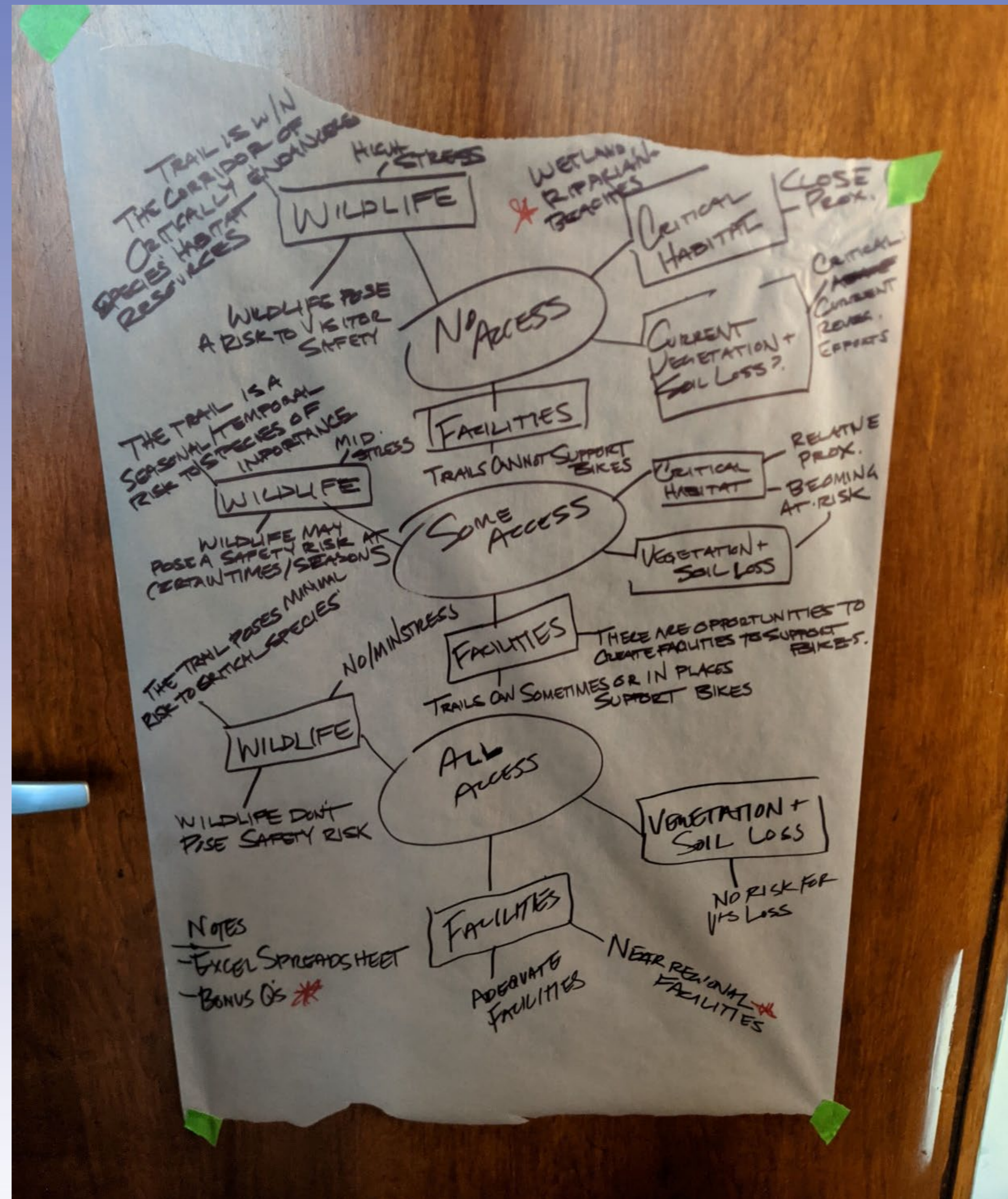
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Prepared for:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

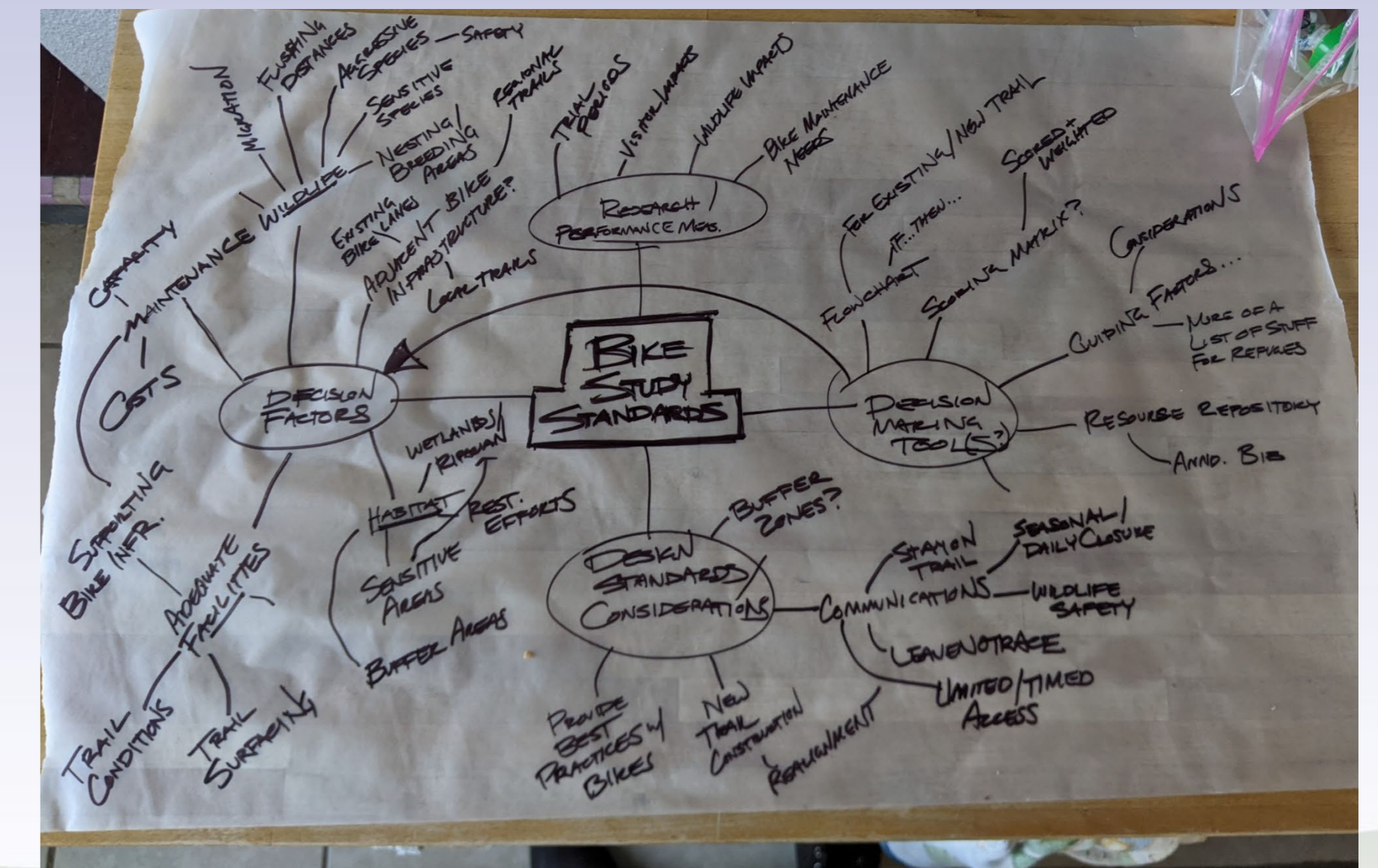


U.S. Department of Transportation
John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center

Volpe



- Volpe Cycling report decision making tool
 - Translate the report into a decision making tool for refuge managers
- PLTF HQ Rotation project scoping
 - Scheduling projects out to ensure projects move forward as they're past from fellow to fellow
- SharePoint update
 - Provide recommendations for how best to use the Transportation branch SharePoint site



Lessons Learned

- Your partners are your greatest asset
- If something isn't working, take time to step back and reassess
- Think long term, solve problems before they arise
- Its okay if you don't have all of the answers
- Remember why the work is important!

General Suggestions

- Learn to recognize which projects are sprints and which are marathons
- If you're able to build support, partnership, and buy-in, projects will last far beyond when you leave
- Keep in contact with partners even when not directly working with them anymore
- Follow up!
- Get to know your fellow Fellows, you all share more in common than you think!
- Enjoy your time working as a PLTF, it will be the most unique job you'll ever have

Thank You

Including, but not limited to:

- Jennifer Owen-White, Katie McVey, Ariel Elliott, Teresa Skiba, Dakota Dominguez, Brittany Chavarria, Cherry Bell, Joe Mackey, Melanie Dabovich, and the rest of the VdO Team
- Region 2 RTC Bruce Hickson and other FWS Regional Staff
- Aryn LaBrake and Dave Barber and the rest of The Friends of VdO
- Natalie Villwock-Witte, Jaime Sullivan and WTI staff
- Fellows Naomi Fireman, Tommy Eglund, Ella Weber, Taylor Long, Charlie Gould, and Pat McMahan
- Darrin Unruh and Chad Ford at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge
- Laura Wharton, Eric Bergey, and the Transportation staff at HQ
- Richard Moore, Sofia Martinez, and the folks at the Los Jardines Institute
- Rachel Swanteson-Franz and the folks of The Wilderness Society Urban to Wild Coalition
- Mountain View Community

Resources

Including, but not limited to:

- <https://www.americantrails.org/resource-library>
- Next Stop: Equitable Access—A Transit to Parks Analysis: <https://www.wilderness.org/sites/default/files/media/file/abq-transit-report-updated.pdf>
- Refuge Access Plan story map tour: <https://arcg.is/1HuHiG>
- Toxic Tour: <https://arcg.is/1H0POT0>
- United States Access Board: Outdoor Developed Areas. <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities/outdoor-developed-areas>
- Valle de Oro NWR Environmental Assessment: [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Valle de Oro/Environmental Assessment.html](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Valle%20de%20Oro/Environmental%20Assessment.html)

Questions?



Contact Information

*If you have any questions related to this presentation,
please contact:*

Refuge manager at Jennifer_owenwhite@fws.gov

or

Fellow at nathanrbegay@gmail.com

Or contact the PLTF Program Manager at:

(774)571-3505 or jaime.sullivan2@montana.edu

<https://westerntransportationinstitute.org/professional-development/public-lands-transportation-fellows/>