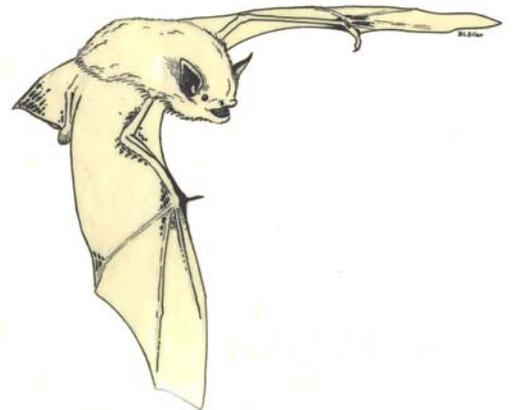


CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

*“The value of biodiversity is more than
the sum of its parts.”*

-Brian G. Morton, speech for National Forum on
Biodiversity in Washington, D.C., 21 September
1986



The Erie planning area includes two major creeks, Boulder Creek and Coal Creek, and their confluence, as well as large expanses of converted grasslands. These drainages and converted grasslands, along with Erie's historic land use (agriculture and mining), have shaped the ecological landscape. The drainages bring valuable water to an otherwise arid area. Reclaimed gravel ponds also serve to make permanent water available to plant communities and wildlife.

A total of 113 natural areas (also called sites and polygons) associated with the Erie planning area were delineated and surveyed (Maps 2 – 7). Nine ditches that traverse the planning area were also surveyed. A summary of the ratings is presented at the end of this chapter.

In addition to the creeks, a number of irrigation ditches traverse the planning area. Although the ditches often lack the terraced benches and native vegetation typical of a creek, they do provide water, cover, and travel corridors for species such as tiger salamanders, Woodhouse's toads, common mallards, warblers, deer, foxes, and coyotes. Ponds and reservoirs, often with fringe wetlands, provide welcome moisture and shade for the landscape.

Agricultural use of the former grasslands for corn, wheat, beets, alfalfa, and many other crops has resulted in a complete alteration of the plant communities in the planning area. In fact, there is little native vegetation still present, with the exception of riparian areas and occasional individual plants and patches in the open pasture areas.

Only a handful of delineated natural areas were not visited due to access issues and/or landowners who requested that their property not be evaluated. The original number assigned to a natural area was maintained throughout. As a consequence, numbering of the sites is not always sequential because some natural areas were dropped (for example, those outside the planning area boundary) or added (after receiving input from staff, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and/or residents).

All survey data forms are compiled in Part 2 of this document, under separate cover. The numerical ratings for different evaluation categories are intended to provide input on the relative ranking of the sites. There was much discussion on how the ratings should be applied when in the field, in

order to attain consistency across sites. The summary rating provides one value for a comparison of sites across all the different categories

Much of the wildlife is concentrated along the creeks, with their well-developed vegetative structure and the added value of water in the creeks and reclaimed gravel ponds along their length. The ratings and summaries reflect this. Because of agricultural land use practices, no intact native grassland was found. However, the converted grasslands have their own value as well: the aesthetic value of the open landscape for beautiful viewsheds, the buffer that these open areas provide, and the very important value to grassland wildlife such as raptors, and the potential for enhancement to recreate more natural communities.

Because of the conversion of native grassland, the animals that have disappeared from the planning area are almost entirely grassland species. One species that is still present, and may serve as a good indicator species for the presence of sufficient grassland to support them, is the ferruginous hawk. Winter raptor monitoring can be conducted by volunteers and provide a measure of the success of maintaining open grassland habitat. A suggested raptor survey route is presented in Figure 6.

An important factor considered in the rating process is the issue of connectivity. Sometimes a patch of good habitat can stand on its own; however, more often its value relates to how it is imbedded in the landscape and the extent to which it provides "stepping stones" with other similar natural areas. This feature is important to keep in mind.

Erie's significant number of natural areas provide great value to an abundance of wildlife. One of the benefits of living in this area is the opportunity to see these animals, including coyotes, deer, hawks, owls, herons, and others, on a daily basis. Management for the qualities that were assessed in this document will provide more diverse and naturalistic plant communities that will also support a component of the native fauna that once populated this area. Careful planning and preservation of Erie's natural areas will ensure that future generations will also enjoy this wonderful resource.

NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY, TOWN OF ERIE, COLORADO

Table 3: Summary of Natural Area Ratings

These ratings do not in any way make implications for future land use, development constraints, property values, or acquisition potential. Rating values range from 1 to 5, except for Wetland Functionality (0-5), Noxious Weed Cover, Ground Disturbance (0.2-1.25) and Grassland Value (0-6). See Chapter 2 for details.

Site No.	Name	Wetland Functionality	Wetland Value to Wildlife	# of Habitat Types	Noxious Weed Cover	Ground Disturbance	Plant Diversity	Grassland Value	Wildlife Rating	Summary Rating
1	Jasper Wetland	5	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	23
2	Panama Reservoir	5	5	6	1.25	1.25	5	2	5	31
3	Leggett Ditch at Panama Reservoir	3	4	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	18
4	Wetland Lateral South of Panama Reservoir	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	2	3	23
5	Little Wetland	3	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	2	4	23
6	Confluence Park	5	5	4	1.25	1.25	5	0	5	27
7	Pond 7	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	5	23
8	Pond 8	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
9	North Boulder Creek North	5	5	4	1.25	1.25	5	2	5	29
10	North Boulder Creek South	4	4	4	1.25	0.75	4	2	5	25
11	Field between County Line/NBC	2	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	2	4	21
12	North Boulder Creek Gravel Ponds	4	4	3	1.25	1	3	2	3	21
13	North Field	0	1	2	1.25	1	2	2	4	13
14	Field at County Line and 52	0	1	3	1.25	1	2	2	5	15
15	Three Ditch Park	4	5	5	1.25	1	4	0	4	24
16	Field Triangle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	Boulder Creek Gravel Ponds	4	3	4	1.25	1	2	6	4	25
18	Vegetated Field	0	1	3	0.5	1	3	2	3	14
19	Boulder/Weld and Lower Boulder Creek Ditches	3	4	3	1	1.25	3	0	3	18
20	Pond 20	3	2	2	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	15
21	Wishbone Ditches	3	3	3	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	18
22	Field East of Waverly Wetlands	2	2	2	1.25	1	2	2	3	15
23	Waverly Wetlands	5	5	4	1.25	1.25	5	0	5	27
24	Large Open Field	0	1	3	1.25	1.25	4	2	4	17
25	Dark Polygon	3	4	3	1.25	1.25	3	0	5	21
26	Horseshoe Shelter Belt	1	2	2	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	13
27	Boomerang	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	4	3	23
28	Field East of Boomerang	0	1	3	-	-	1	2	3	10
30	Pond 30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	Pond 31	5	5	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	24
32	Pond 32	5	5	3	1.25	1.25	4	0	5	25
33	Pond 33	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	22
34	Wetland North of Railroad	3	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	4	4	25

NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY, TOWN OF ERIE, COLORADO

Site No.	Name	Wetland Functionality	Wetland Value to Wildlife	# of Habitat Types	Noxious Weed Cover	Ground Disturbance	Plant Diversity	Grassland Value	Wildlife Rating	Summary Rating
35	Pond 35	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	2	0	2	17
36	Field North of Boulder Creek	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	2	2	4	21
37	Leggett Ditch	3	3	3	1.25	1.25	4	2	3	21
38	Shelter Belt at Highway 287	2	3	3	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	18
39	Boulder Gravel Ponds West	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40	Wise Woods	1	1	2	1.25	1.25	2	0	4	13
41	Boulder Creek Gravel Ponds East	5	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	2	4	25
42	Wetlands near Wise Woods	3	3	4	1	1.25	4	0	3	19
43	Island Pond	3	2	4	0.5	1	3	2	3	19
44	South of Island Pond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45	Shelter Belt at Leyner Ditch	1	1	3	1.25	1.25	3	2	3	16
46	Leyner Cottonwood Ditch at Isabelle	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
47	Leyner Cotton Ditch South	2	2	3	1.25	1	2	0	2	13
48	Leyner Cotton Ditch Northwest	2	2	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	15
49	Leyner Cotton Ditch East	2	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	19
50	Lateral Feeder to Thomas Reservoir	3	4	4	1.25	1.25	4	4	5	27
51	Field East of Boulder Creek	2	3	4	1.25	1	2	0	3	16
52	Meller Street Field South	3	3	4	1	1.25	3	2	4	21
53	Meller Street Field North	3	3	5	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	19
54	Three Triangles	2	2	2	1.25	-	2	0	2	11
55	Boulder Weld Ditch	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	20
56	Boulder Weld Gravel Ponds	3	3	4	1.25	1	2	0	3	17
57	Boulder Weld Field	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
58	Field South of Jasper Road	3	3	2	1.25	1	2	0	3	15
59	Erie Village Field	3	4	3	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
60	Erie Village at Coal Creek	3	3	3	1.25	1	2	2	3	18
61	Coal Creek from County Line to Lower Boulder Ditch	3	3	4	1.25	1	2	0	4	18
62	Bell Tower Field North	0	1	2	1.25	0.25	1	2	3	11
63	Field at Lower Boulder Ditch	1	1	2	1.25	0.75	2	2	3	13
64	Wastewater Treatment Plant	0	1	2	1.25	0.75	2	0	3	10
65	Bell Tower Field South	1	1	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	13
66	Lahando	3	2	2	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	17
67	B1-B2 Field	3	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	21

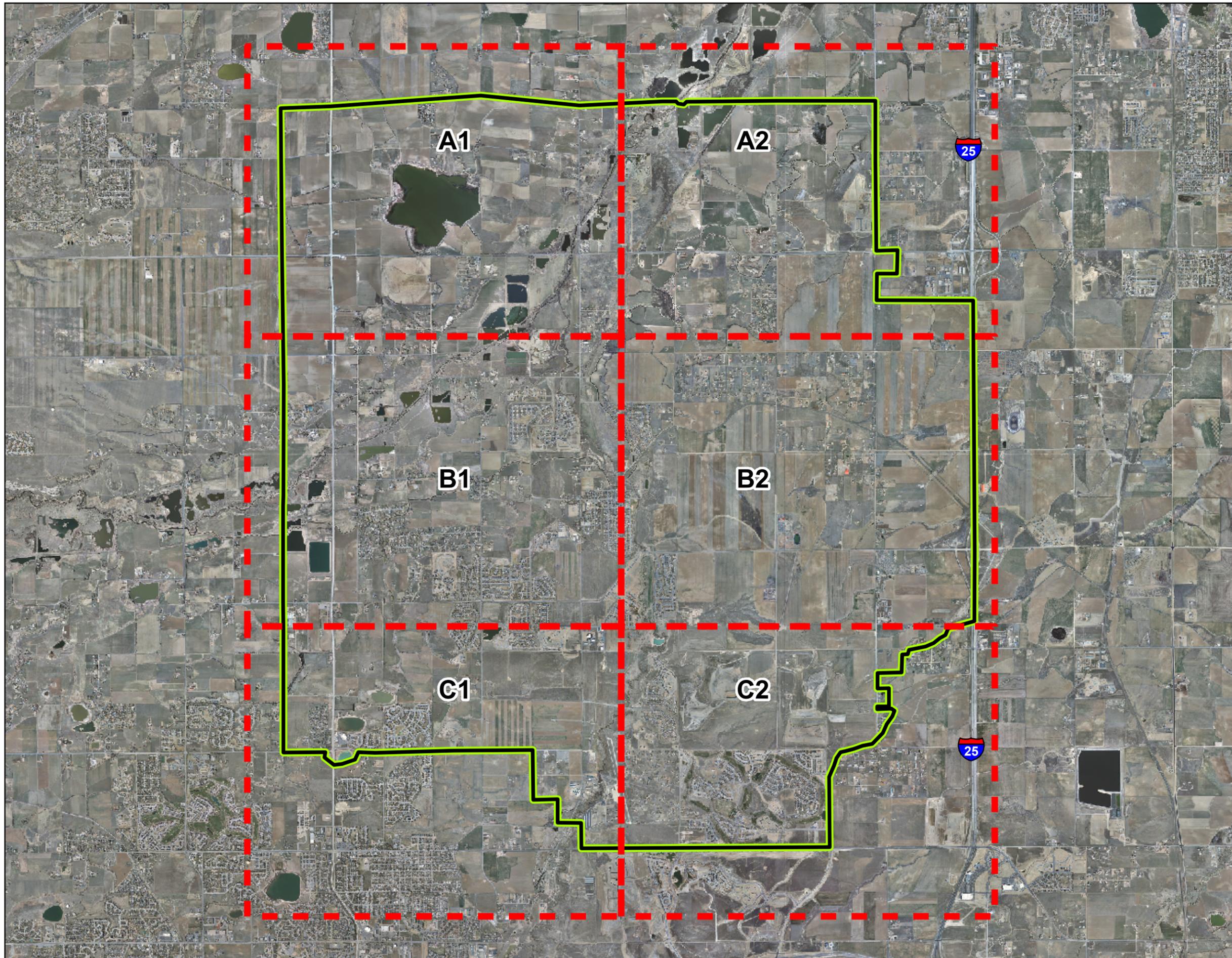
NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY, TOWN OF ERIE, COLORADO

Site No.	Name	Wetland Functionality	Wetland Value to Wildlife	# of Habitat Types	Noxious Weed Cover	Ground Disturbance	Plant Diversity	Grassland Value	Wildlife Rating	Summary Rating
68	Ditch and Field Segment	2	2	2	1.25	0.5	2	0	2	12
69	Bison Ranch	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	18
70	Coal Creek at Old Town	4	4	4	1	1.25	3	0	4	21
71	Tracked Field	3	3	3	1.25	1.25	3	4	3	22
72	Cemetery	0	1	2	1.25	0.75	2	4	2	13
73	Anteater Polygon	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
74	Coal Creek at Erie Commons	4	5	4	1.25	1	4	0	5	24
75	Big Draw	3	1	2	1.25	0.75	2	0	3	13
76	Grandview Rectangular Field	0	1	1	1.25	0.75	1	2	5	12
77	Amoeba	2	2	3	1	1	2	0	2	13
78	Dark Field	1	1	2	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	13
79	Creek West of I-25	2	2	4	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	18
80	Long Draw	2	2	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	17
81	Beasley Slew	4	5	4	0.75	1.25	4	0	5	24
83	Little Dry Creek Tributary	2	2	4	1.25	1	3	0	3	16
84	Leyner Cottonwood Ditch	3	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	2	4	23
85	Bullhead Gulch	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	22
86	South Boulder Canyon Ditch	1	2	4	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	17
87	Prince 2 Lake	4	3	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	18
88	Erie Lake	4	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	20
89	Wetland North of Prince 1 Lake	0	1	3	1	1.25	3	2	3	14
90	Lateral	3	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	20
91	Horizontal Lateral	0	1	4	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	15
92	Elmwood Reservoir	1	1	2	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	13
93	Southeast of Elmwood Reservoir	2	2	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	17
94	Boulder/Weld Ditch Tributary	1	1	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	2	12
95	South Boulder Canyon Ditch	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
96	Suburban Draw	3	4	5	1.25	1.25	4	4	4	27
97	South Field East of County Line Road	3	3	4	1.25	0.75	3	0	3	18
99	Field at South End East County Line Road	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	4	2	5	26
100	Coal Creek at Airport	5	5	3	1	1.25	4	2	5	26
101	Airport North	0	1	2	1.25	1.25	2	2	3	13
102	Coal Creek North of airport	5	5	3	1.25	1.25	4	0	5	25
103	Strip West of Coal Creek	2	2	3	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	16
104	Pond 104	3	3	4	1.25	0.75	3	0	4	19
105	Thomas Reservoir	4	4	2	1.25	0.75	2	0	3	17
106	Nesting Site	0	1	3	1.25	1.25	2	2	4	15
107	Coal Creek at Commons	3	4	4	1	0.75	4	4	5	26

NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY, TOWN OF ERIE, COLORADO

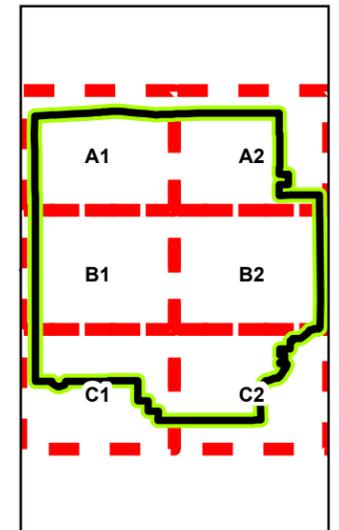
Site No.	Name	Wetland Functionality	Wetland Value to Wildlife	# of Habitat Types	Noxious Weed Cover	Ground Disturbance	Plant Diversity	Grassland Value	Wildlife Rating	Summary Rating
108	Field West of Landfills	3	3	2	1.25	1.25	3	6	4	24
109	Unnamed Tributary of Coal	4	5	5	1.25	1.25	4	4	5	30
110	Coal Creek Tributary South of Airport	4	5	4	1.25	1.25	4	0	5	25
118	Pond 118	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	20
119	Pond 119	2	2	3	1.25	1.25	1	0	3	14
120	Pond 120	2	2	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	15
121	Pond 121	5	5	4	1.25	1.25	4	0	4	25
122	Pond 122	4	4	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	21
123	Pond 123	3	3	3	1.25	1.25	4	0	3	19
124	Pond 124	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
125	Pond 125	4	3	4	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	19
126	Pond 126	4	4	3	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	19
127	Landfill South	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
128	Pond 128	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	3	19
129	Landfill North	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
131	Little Dry Creek Rectangle Ditches	5	5	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	5	25
Ditches										
132	Gooding A and D Plumb Ditch	2	2	4	1.25	0.75	2	0	3	15
133	Community Ditch	3	3	2	1.25	1.25	2	0	3	16
134	Boulder/Whiterock Ditch	3	3	4	1.25	1.25	3	0	4	20
135	Leyner Cottonwood Ditch	3	4	6	1.25	1.25	3	0	5	24
136	South Boulder Canyon Ditch	4	3	5	1.25	1.25	3	0	5	23
137	Lower Boulder Ditch	5	5	5	1.25	1.25	5	0	5	28
138	Boulder and Weld County Ditch	5	3	6	1.25	1.25	5	0	5	27
139	Leggett Ditch	3	4	5	1.25	1.25	4	0	5	24
140	Erie Coal Creek/ Cottonwood Extension	4	5	5	1.25	1.25	5	0	5	27

Map 1
Town of Erie
Natural Areas
Planning Area

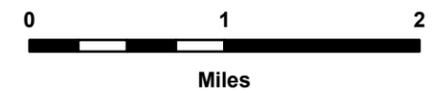


Legend

-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Grid Boundary for Individual Sheets



Datum: North American 1983 Harn
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



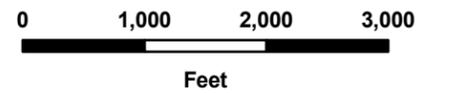
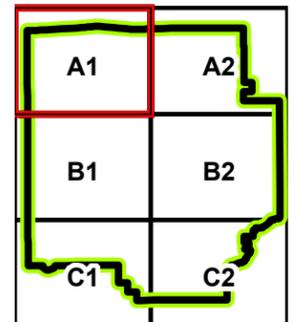
Map 2

Town of Erie Natural Areas

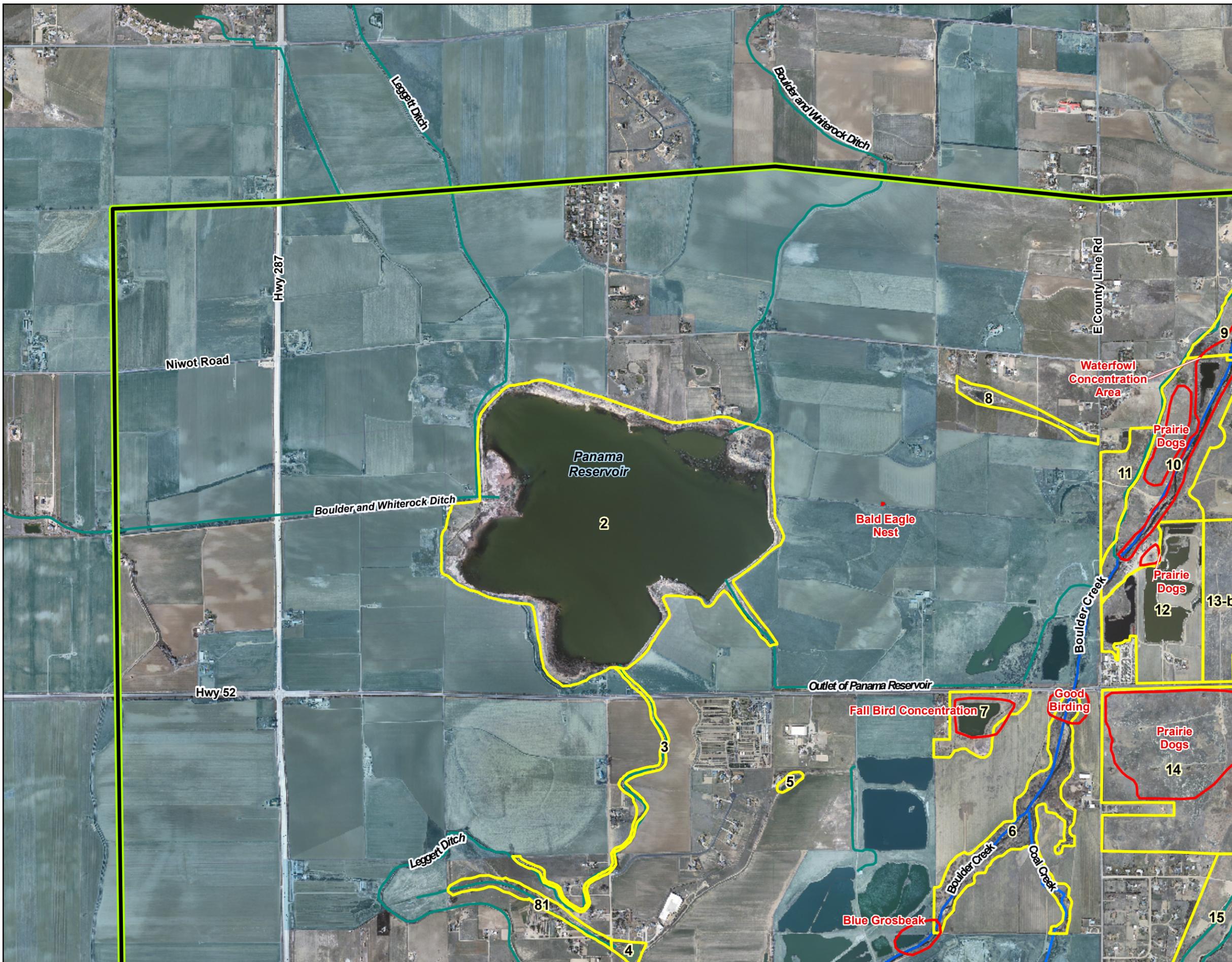
Sheet A1

Legend

-  Natural Areas
-  Wildlife Sites
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Creek - River - Drainage
-  Ditch - Canal
-  Boulder County Open Space "Closed Areas"



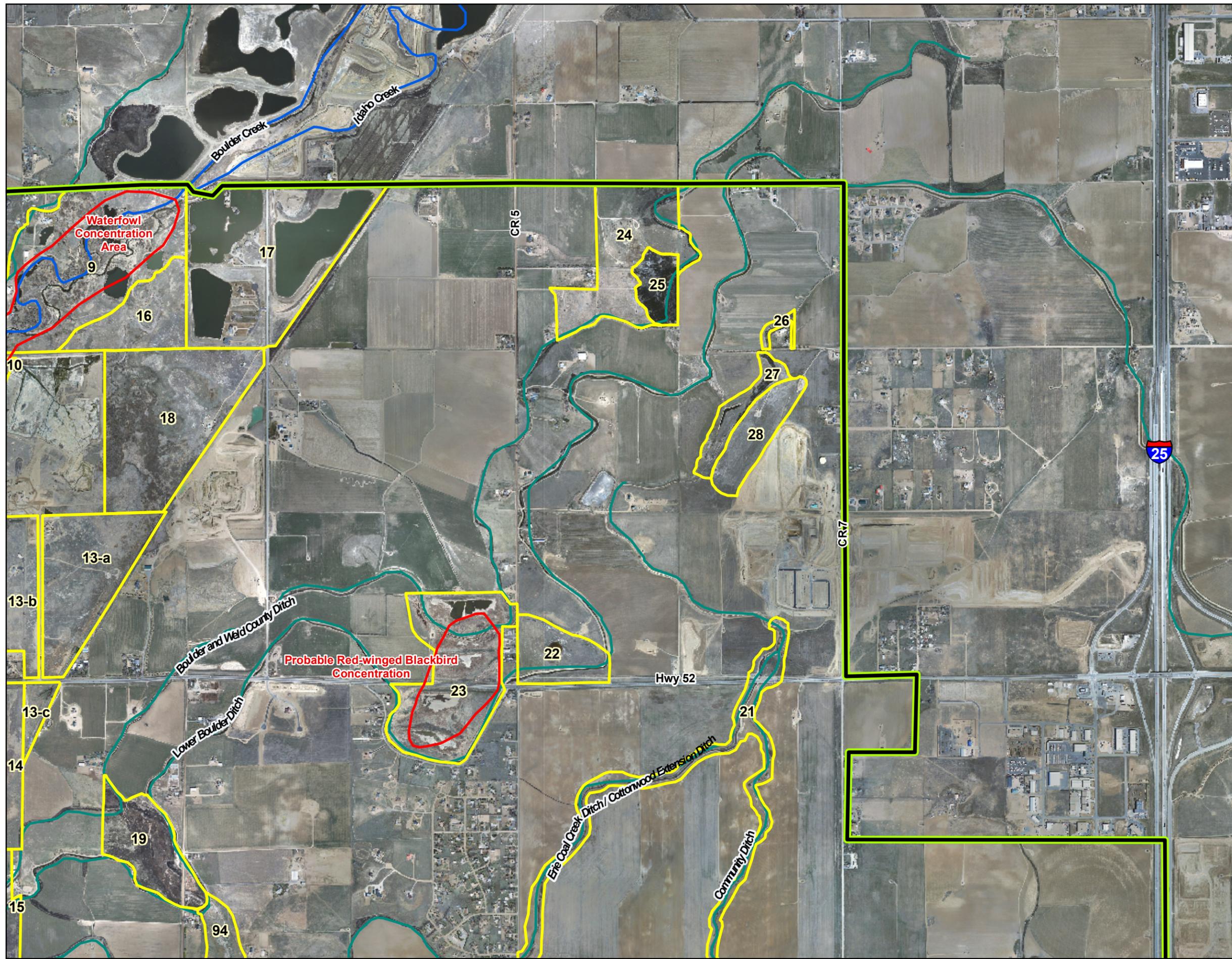
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Map 3

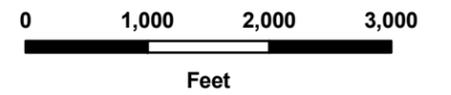
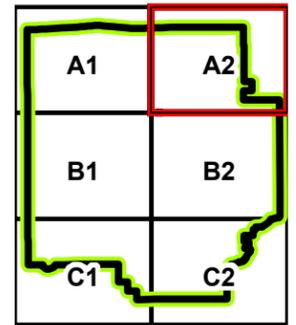
Town of Erie Natural Areas

Sheet A2



Legend

- Natural Areas
- Wildlife Sites
- Planning Area Boundary
- Creek - River - Drainage
- Ditch - Canal



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Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



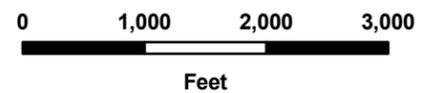
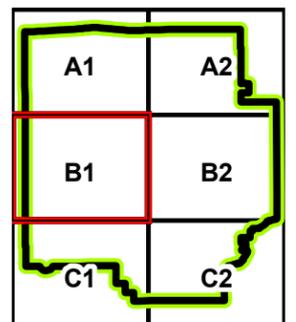
Map 4

Town of Erie Natural Areas

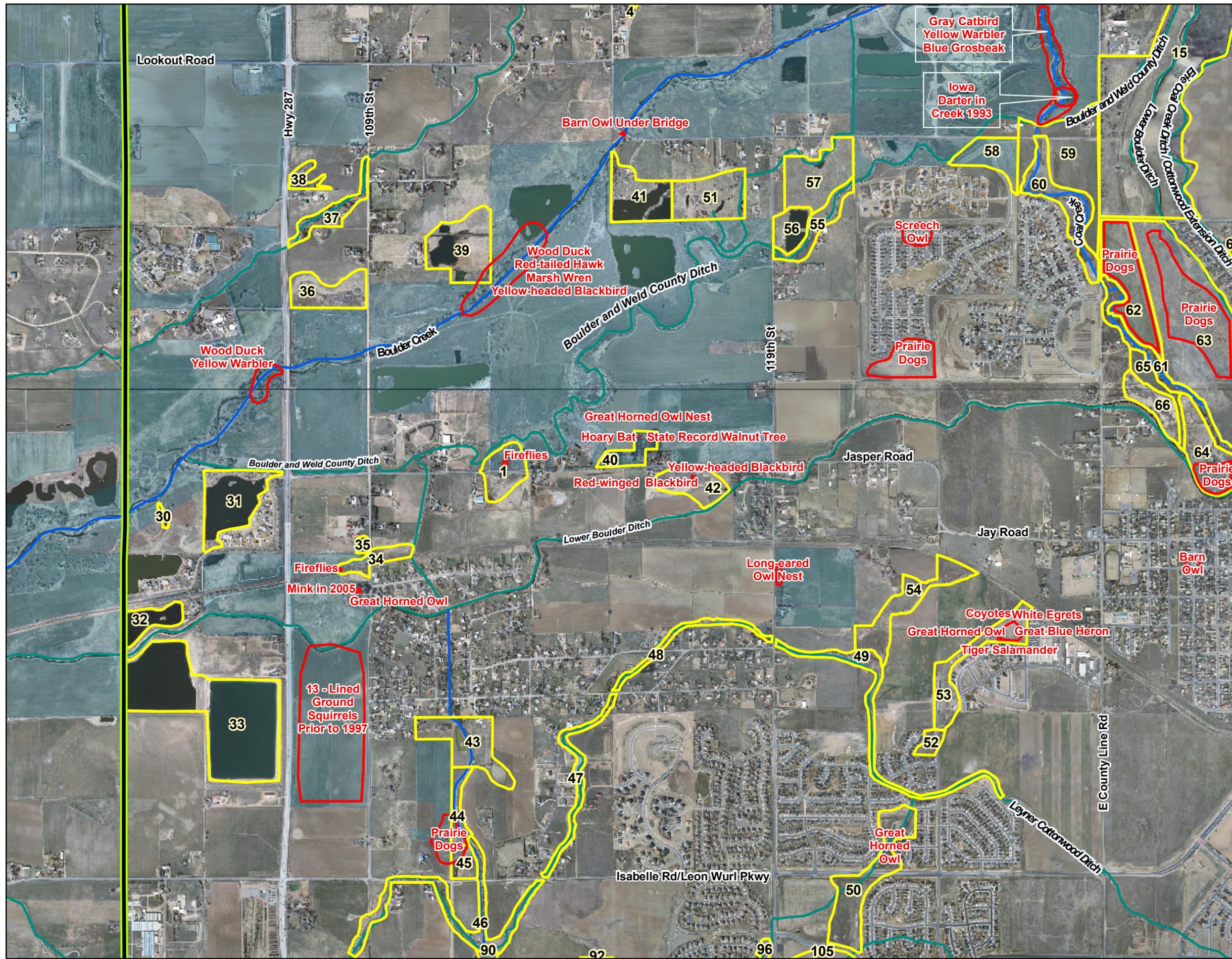
Sheet B1

Legend

-  Natural Areas
-  Wildlife Sites
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Creek - River - Drainage
-  Ditch - Canal
-  Boulder County Open Space
"Closed Areas"



Datum: North American 1983 HARN
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



Map 5

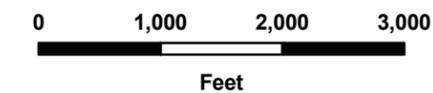
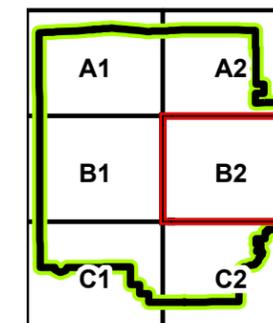
Town of Erie

Natural Areas

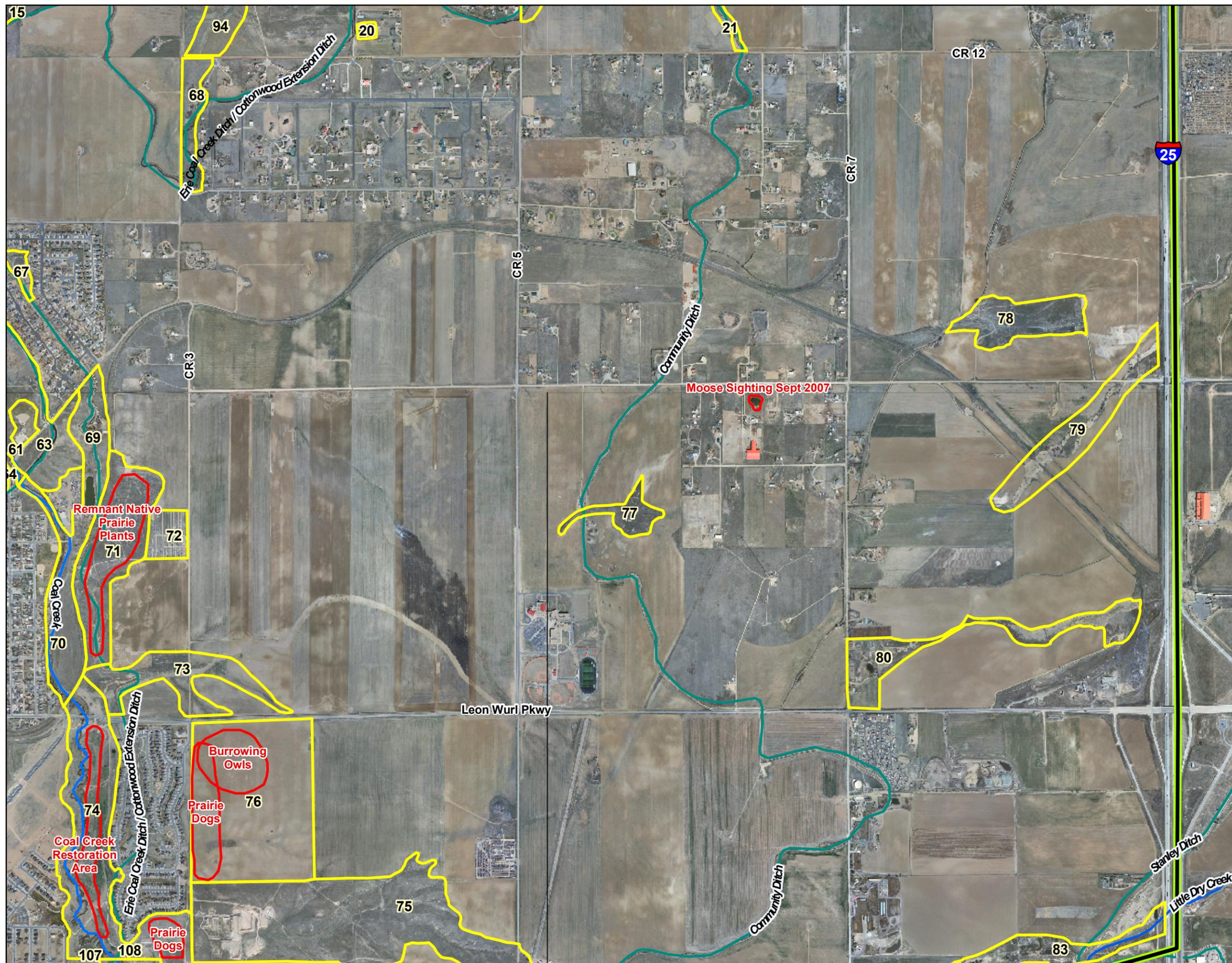
Sheet B2

Legend

-  Natural Areas
-  Wildlife Sites
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Creek - River - Drainage
-  Ditch - Canal



Datum: North American 1983 HARN
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



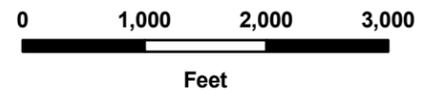
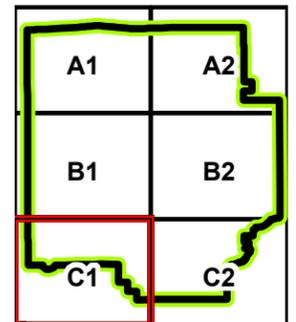
Map 6

Town of Erie Natural Areas

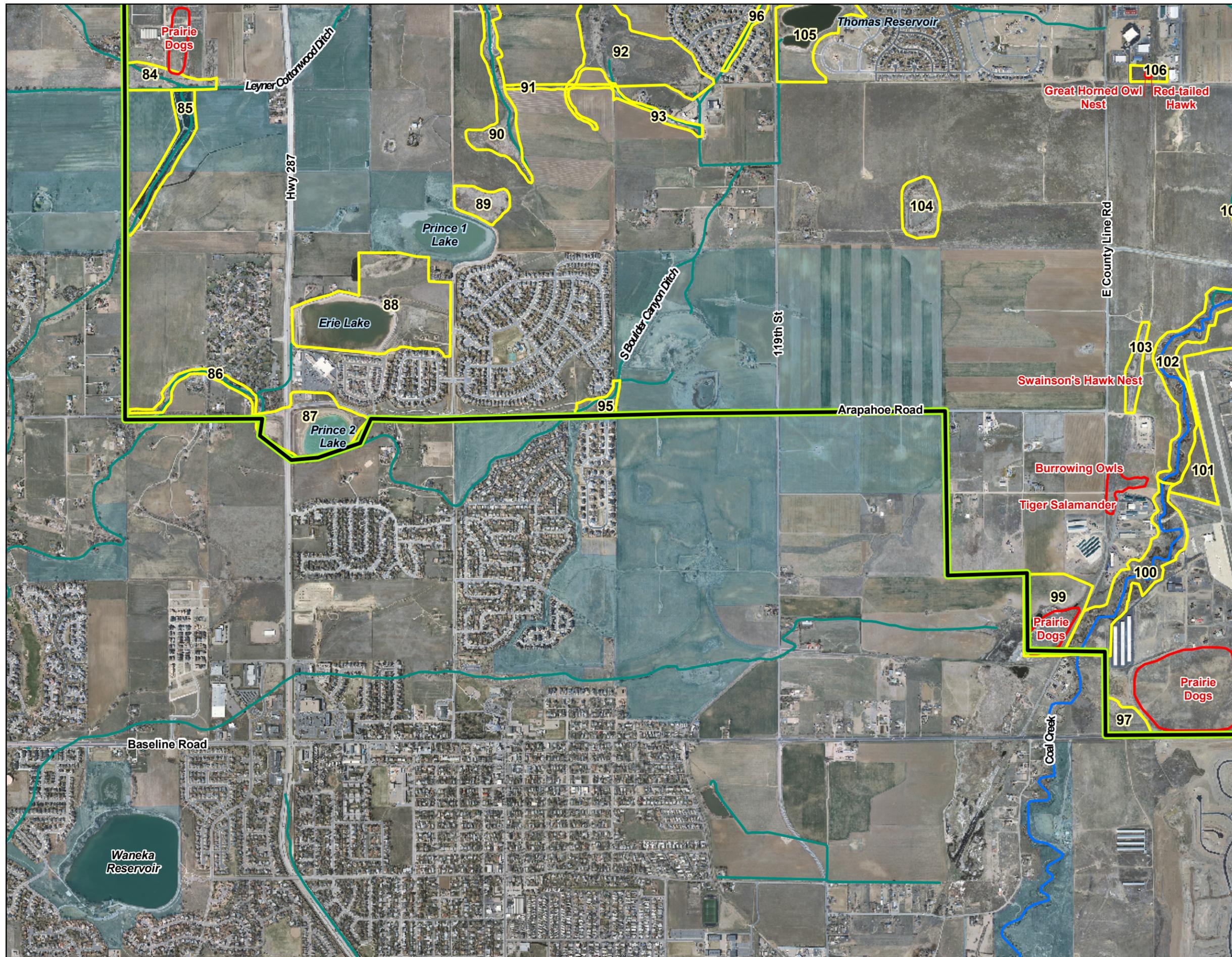
Sheet C1

Legend

-  Natural Areas
-  Wildlife Sites
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Creek - River - Drainage
-  Ditch - Canal
-  Boulder County Open Space "Closed Areas"



Datum: North American 1983 HARN
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



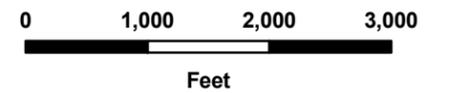
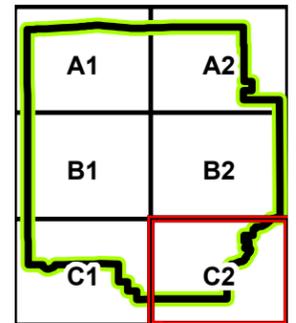
Map 7

Town of Erie Natural Areas

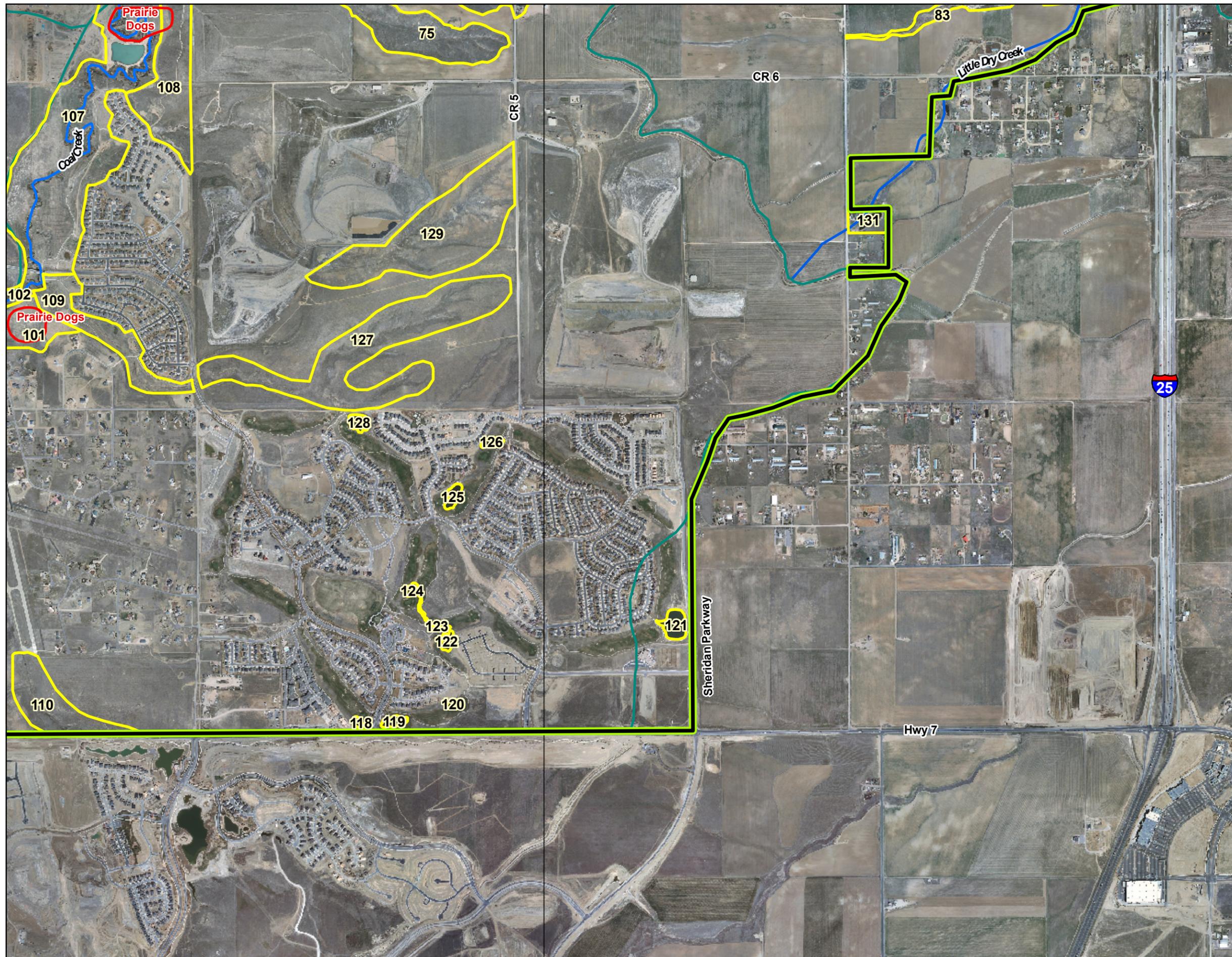
Sheet C2

Legend

-  Natural Areas
-  Wildlife Sites
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Creek - River - Drainage
-  Ditch - Canal



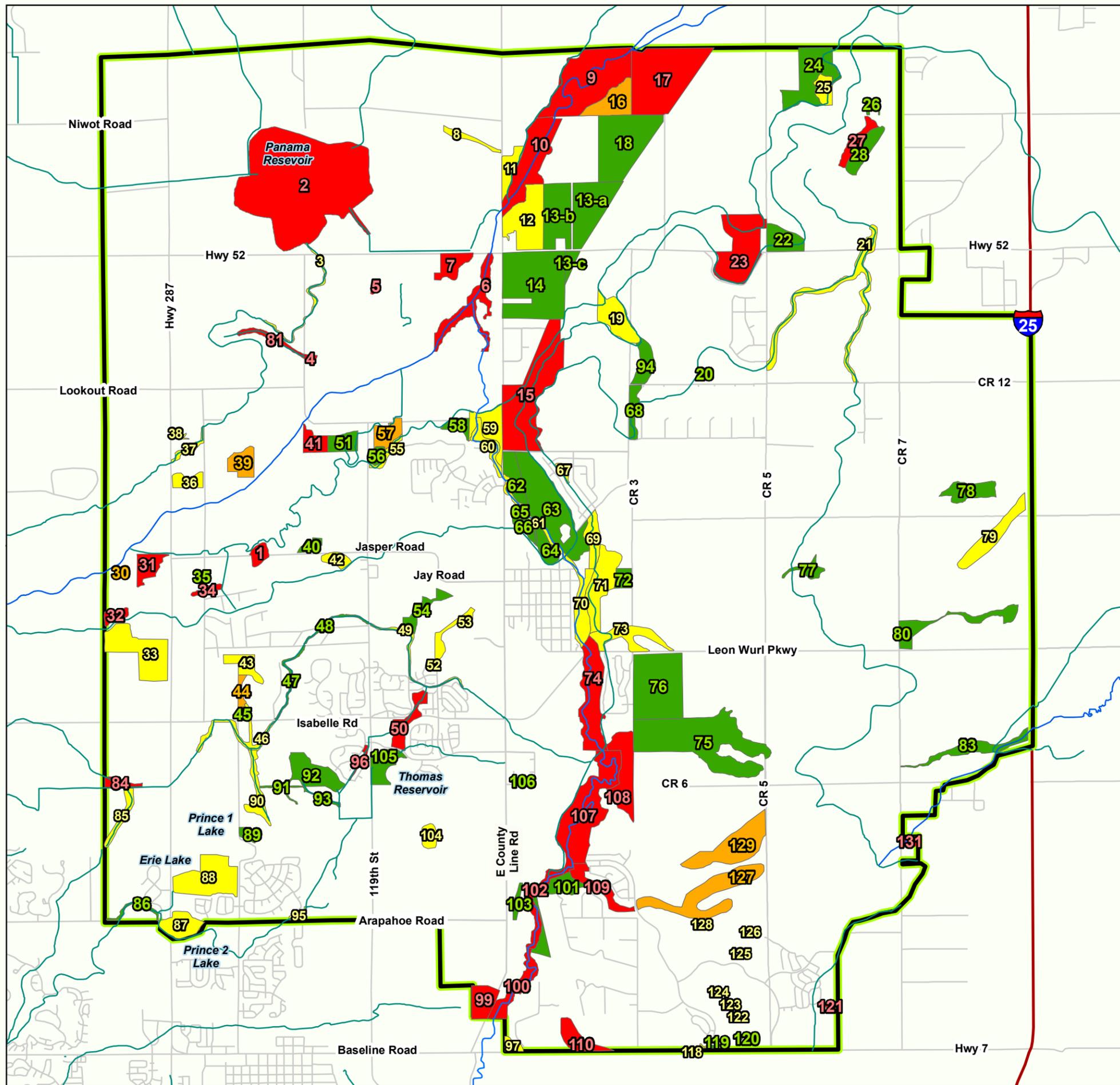
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Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



Map 8

Town of Erie Natural Areas

Overall Habitat Quality



Legend

- Low Quality
- Medium Quality
- High Quality
- Inaccessible
- Planning Area Boundary
- Creek - River - Drainage
- Ditch - Canal

Datum: North American 1983 Harn
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic

