



## LAND EVALUATION REPORT

For

### TRACT W201601



Prepared for:  
**Platte River Recovery Implementation Program**  
**Land Advisory Committee**

Site Visit Date:  
April 29, 2024  
Evaluation Report Completion Date:  
5/1/2024



## Table of Contents

I. EVALUATION TEAM AND SCHEDULE .....	1
A. Evaluation Team Members .....	1
B. Date of Evaluation .....	1
II. GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS .....	1
A. Tract Location and Size.....	1
III. LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS .....	1
A. Land Cover/Use.....	1
B. Incompatible Uses and Environmental Concerns.....	2
C. Restoration and Maintenance Impacts on Neighboring Properties .....	2
D. Target Species Use .....	2
E. Certified Irrigated Acres .....	3
IV. TARGET SPECIES HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS.....	3
A. Existing Species Habitat.....	3
1. Non-Riverine Surface Water .....	3
2. River Frontage and Active Channel Widths.....	3
3. Contiguous Sand Substrates .....	3
4. Island and Channel Bank Height .....	3
5. Groundwater .....	4
6. Flooding in Non-Wetland Areas.....	4
7. Power/Transmission Lines .....	4
B. Complex and Non-Complex Habitat .....	4
1. Habitat Complex Acres .....	4
2. Non-Complex Habitat Acres .....	4
3. Excess Acres.....	4
4. Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Needs and Conceptual Costs.....	4
5. Buffer.....	5
V. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS.....	5
A. Encumbrances .....	5
1. Legal Encumbrances.....	5
2. Management Encumbrances.....	5
B. Environmental Audit .....	5
C. Property Interest Acquisition Options and Costs .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
D. Extraneous Costs .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
E. Operations and Maintenance .....	6
F. Other Considerations.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
VI. EVALUATION TEAM RECOMMENDATION.....	6
VII. LAC RECOMMENDATION.....	6
APPENDIX A – MAPS .....	0



## **I. EVALUATION TEAM AND SCHEDULE**

### **A. Evaluation Team Members**

The Tract 0903 Evaluation Team members are:

- Matt Rabbe, Jim Jenniges, Dave Zorn and Tim Tunnell

### **B. Date of Evaluation**

The Evaluation Team performed a site visit on April 29, 2024. A draft of this Evaluation Report was presented to the Land Advisory Committee (LAC) and discussed at the May 15, 2024, LAC meeting. The Report was finalized following that meeting.

## **II. GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS**

This tract lies within the Overton to Elm Creek, NE reach of the Platte River and within 3.5 miles of the main channel or 2 miles of a side channel. As such, it is eligible for inclusion in the Program. This property is east of the Cottonwood Ranch complex and would be considered complex habitat.

### **A. Tract Location and Size**

Tract W201601 is approximately 374 acres in size and is in section 7, T-8N, R-18W. Figure A-1 (located in Appendix A) delineates the property boundary. The tract is in the Overton to Elm Creek bridge segment. Figure A-2 shows the parcel location within the Program land acquisition area, bridge segment and its proximity to existing leased and owned conservation lands and other tracts being evaluated by the Program.

## **III. LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS**

Land cover/use information for this phase of the land evaluation process is compiled by Program Staff utilizing best available Geographic Information System (GIS) datasets developed by the Program and its partners. A more detailed field analysis of target species habitat considerations is conducted during the next phase of the tract evaluation process and is discussed further in the next section of this report.

### **A. Land Cover/Use**

Existing land cover/use on and adjacent to this tract was evaluated utilizing the updated 2005 land cover overlay developed in cooperation with the Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust Inc. (Crane Trust) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW). The land cover classifications from the overlay were compared to the most recent United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Program aerial photography to identify any land use changes that have occurred since the development of that dataset. The 2005 land cover/use for this tract is summarized in Table 1. A detailed soil resource report is in Appendix B. Several additional land cover/use related maps are in Appendix A including:

- Figure A-3 – 2005 Land Cover/Use
- Figure A-4 – National Wetland Inventory



- Figure A-5 – 1938 Aerial Photography
- Figure A-6 – 1998 CIR Aerial Photography
- Figure A-7 – 2008 CIR Aerial Photography
- Figure A-8 – 2018 CIR Aerial Photography
- Figure A-9 – 2023 CIR Aerial Photography
- Figure A-10 – Conceptual Restoration Design

**Table 1 – Tract W201601 2005 Land Cover/Use Summary**

Land Cover Classification	Acres	Percent of Tract
Bare ground/Sparse Veg	10.07	2.69%
Mesic Wet Meadow	11.55	3.09%
Phragmites	28.96	7.74%
Riparian Shrubland	19.27	5.15%
Riparian Woodland	134.20	35.87%
River Channel	9.40	2.51%
River Early Successional	12.46	3.33%
River Shrubland	8.42	2.25%
Rural Developed	43.91	11.74%
Unvegetated Sandbar	7.80	2.08%
Sand Pit	0.61	0.16%
Xeric Wet Meadow	82.10	21.95%
	<b>374.10</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### **B. Incompatible Uses and Environmental Concerns**

Tract W201601 does not currently have land uses that are incompatible with target species habitat. No environmental concerns have been identified.

### **C. Restoration and Maintenance Impacts on Neighboring Properties**

Restoration and maintenance on this tract are not expected to have negative impacts on neighboring properties. Program Staff would coordinate with neighboring landowners to inform them about restoration and maintenance activities and use this contact as a tool to develop positive relationships.

### **D. Target Species Use**

There are no documented occurrences of target species use of this property.



### **E. Certified Irrigated Acres**

Tract W201601 includes no NRD certified irrigated acres.

## **IV. TARGET SPECIES HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **A. Existing Species Habitat**

On April 29, 2024, the Evaluation Team completed the field investigation requirements of the land evaluation process. The information in this section of the report has been compiled from the site visit and follow-up analysis of Program GIS datasets.

#### ***1. Non-Riverine Surface Water***

There is non-riverine surface water on the property in the form of sand pits at the southwestern and southeastern corners of the property.

#### ***2. River Frontage and Active Channel Widths***

The tract contains approximately 5,725 feet of Platte River frontage on the main channel. The property also contains a small southern channel that crosses through the center of the tract for approximately 5,197 feet.

Channel width measurement protocols define active channel width as the width of the channel that is unvegetated. Channel widths were measured at ¼ mile intervals utilizing color infrared aerial photography flown in June of 2023. Channel width information is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Tract W201601 Channel Widths**

<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Width (ft)</b>
<b>Minimum Channel Width</b>	264
<b>Maximum Channel Width</b>	512
<b>Median Channel Width</b>	339
<b>Mean Channel Width</b>	356

#### ***3. Contiguous Sand Substrates***

At the time of the review, there were approximately 0.5 acres of contiguous sand substrate, mostly confined to one large island in the main channel that appeared to have been cleared mechanically.

#### ***4. Island and Channel Bank Height***

Channel bank height is on the order of zero to five feet above water surface under typical summer flow conditions. Islands in the channel are mostly vegetated and range from zero to three feet above water surface.



### 5. Groundwater

NDNR well logs for wells just south of Tract W201601 indicate a ground water level of five to eight feet below the surface.

### 6. Flooding in Non-Wetland Areas

There was no evidence of temporary inundation of non-wetland areas at the time of the site evaluation.

### 7. Power/Transmission Lines

There are above ground power lines on this property.

## B. Complex and Non-Complex Habitat

The Evaluation Team recommends that the entire tract be considered as habitat complex acres due to tract's compliance with parts of *Table 1. Target Habitat Complex Guidelines* of the Program Land Plan and its location near the Program's Cottonwood Ranch complex. The tract complex acres are classified by type in the following sections. The classifications are delineated in Figure A-8.

### 1. Habitat Complex Acres

Table 3 provides the total acres of land contributing to a habitat complex. The classifications are based on *Table 1. Target Habitat Complex Guidelines*, of the Program's Land Plan. The classification acres in Table 3 are based on existing tract land cover/use.

**Table 3 – Tract W201601 Habitat Complex Acres**

Land Classification*	Acres
<b>Riverine</b>	
Channel	161
<b>Buffer</b>	
Woodland	216
Dryland Crop	72

\* Habitat complex land classification categories are more general than the 2005 land cover/use classification and areas may vary due to changes in land use and vegetation since 2005.

### 2. Non-Complex Habitat Acres

No portion of this tract is being considered as non-complex habitat.

### 3. Excess Acres

This tract does not contain any excess acres.

### 4. Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Needs and Conceptual Costs

The primary restoration activity that could be completed on Tract W201601 would be to clear and grub approximately 10 acres of woodland and clean up downfall and other small trees on



approximately 6 acres to achieve greater sighting distances to obstruction for the river channel. This activity would cost on the order of \$50,000. Maintenance activities would include controlling in-channel vegetation through the means of targeted vegetation spraying and periodic mechanical disking.

**Table 5 – Tract W201601 Habitat Restoration Cost Estimate**

Item/Activity	Cost/ Unit	Total Cost
Clear & Grub (10 ac)	\$2,500	\$25,000
Downfall Clean Up (6 ac)	\$1,500	\$9,000
Burn & Bury Tree Piles (~16)	\$1,000	\$16,000
<b>Total Estimated Cost</b>		<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>In-channel Disking (66 ac)</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$19,800</b>

### **5. Buffer**

This tract is bounded on the north by the main channel of the Platte River. The main channel is buffered from I-80 to the north by at least 0.5 miles of woodland and riverine landscape. To the south, east, and west this tract is buffered from disturbances by more than 1.5 miles of woodland, riverine, and agricultural land.

## **V. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **A. Encumbrances**

#### **1. Legal Encumbrances**

- 2. Tract W201601 was purchased in 2016 for the purpose of developing a water project on the property. The property is owned and held in trust by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Foundation (PRRIF). The acres have not been counted towards the habitat acreage goals of the Program but rather tracked as water property.*

No management encumbrances have been identified for Tract W201601.

### **B. Environmental Audit**

An environmental audit has not been completed for Tract W201601. After the tract was purchased in 2016, several mobile homes/ RV, and cabins were removed from the tract.



### C. Operations and Maintenance

Operations and maintenance costs have been estimated based on O&M activities on existing conservation properties in the critical habitat area. Actual costs are highly variable and expected to change over the course of the first increment as the result of adaptive management activities.

**Table 6 – Tract W201601 Extension Operations & Maintenance Cost Estimate**

Item/Activity	Annual Cost	Extension Cost
Fence Repair/Property Maintenance	\$1,000	\$8,000
Miscellaneous Expenditures	\$1,000	\$8,000
Oversight	\$2,000	\$16,000
Property Tax Equivalent (374 acres)	\$5,000	\$40,000
<b>Total Estimated Cost</b>	<b>\$9,000</b>	<b>\$72,000</b>

### VI. EVALUATION TEAM RECOMMENDATION

The Evaluation Team supports the transfer of this property as complex habitat. The property was purchased as a water tract in 2016, however the water project identified was deemed cost prohibitive upon further evaluation. The tract adds an additional 1- mile river channel habitat to the Cottonwood Ranch Complex.

### VII. LAC RECOMMENDATION

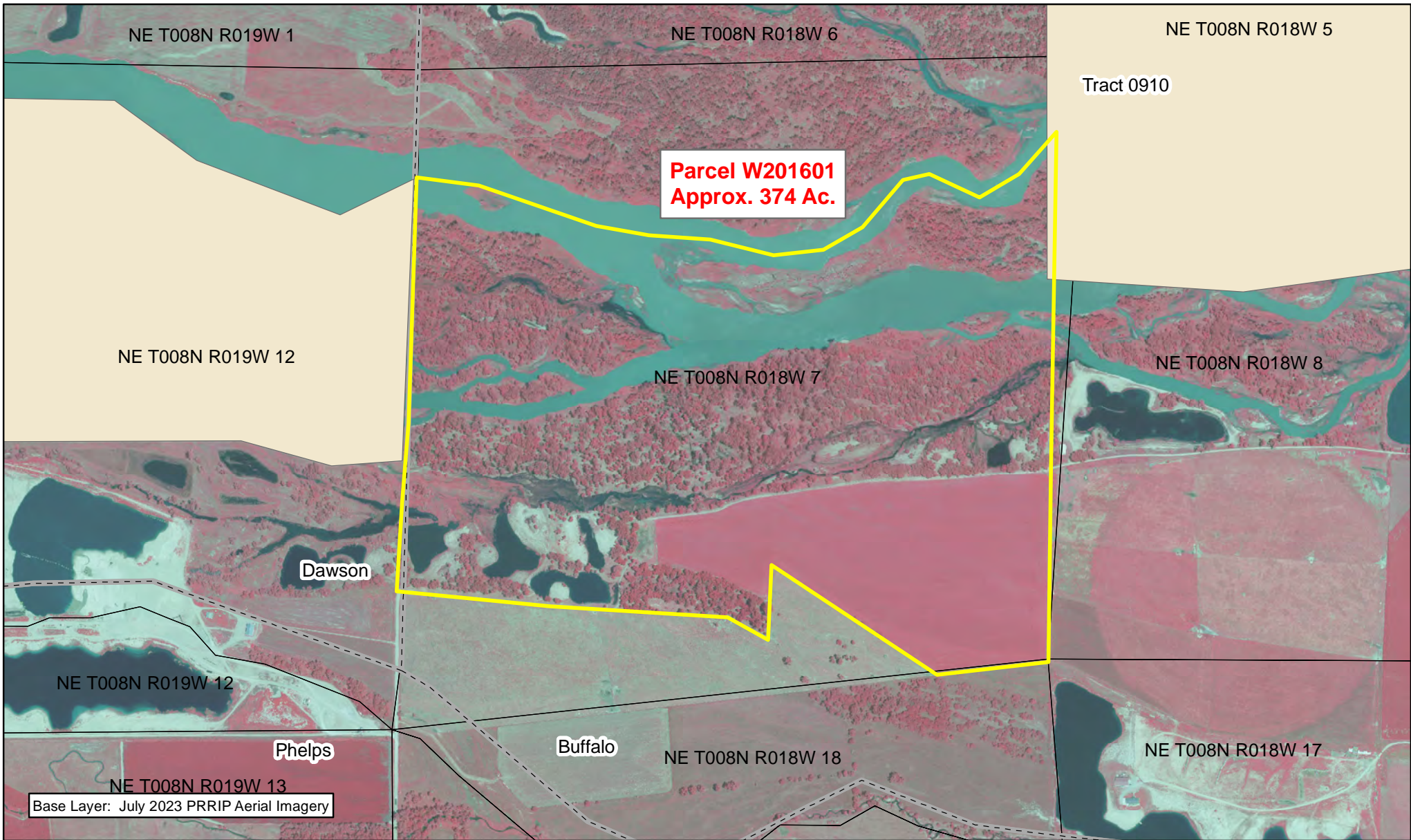
At the May 15, 2024, LAC meeting, the LAC voted unanimously to recommend to the GC to transfer (*or not transfer*) Tract W201601 from water acquisition to habitat lands.









**APPENDIX A – MAPS**


CONFIDENTIAL



### Legend

-  Water\_Plan\_Tracts
-  Conservation\_Lands
-  County
-  Section



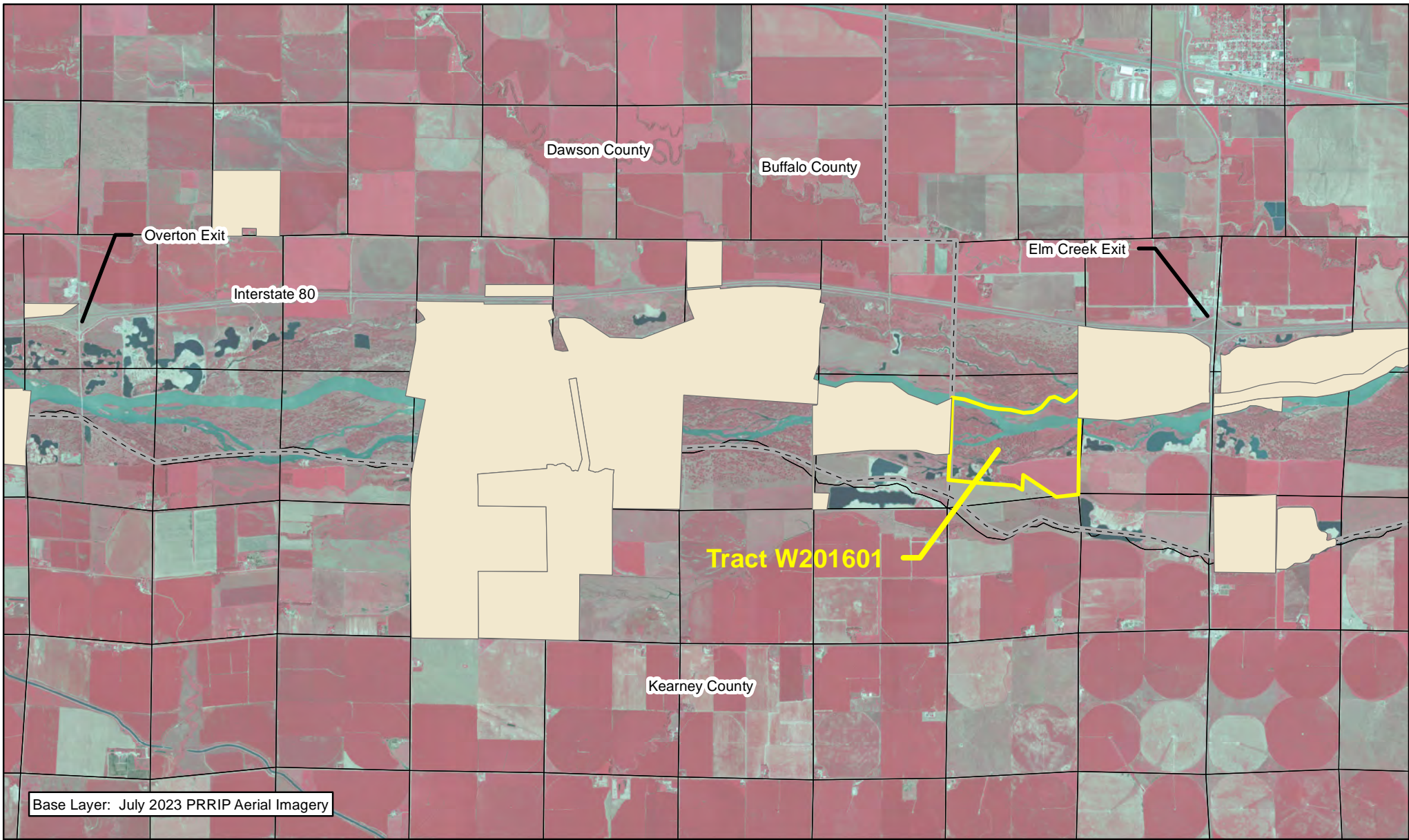
 Miles  
0.25

### TRACT W201601 LOCATION MAP

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 01/22/24  
By: TRT

Figure A-1





### Legend

- Conservation\_Lands
- Water\_Plan\_Tracts
- County
- Section

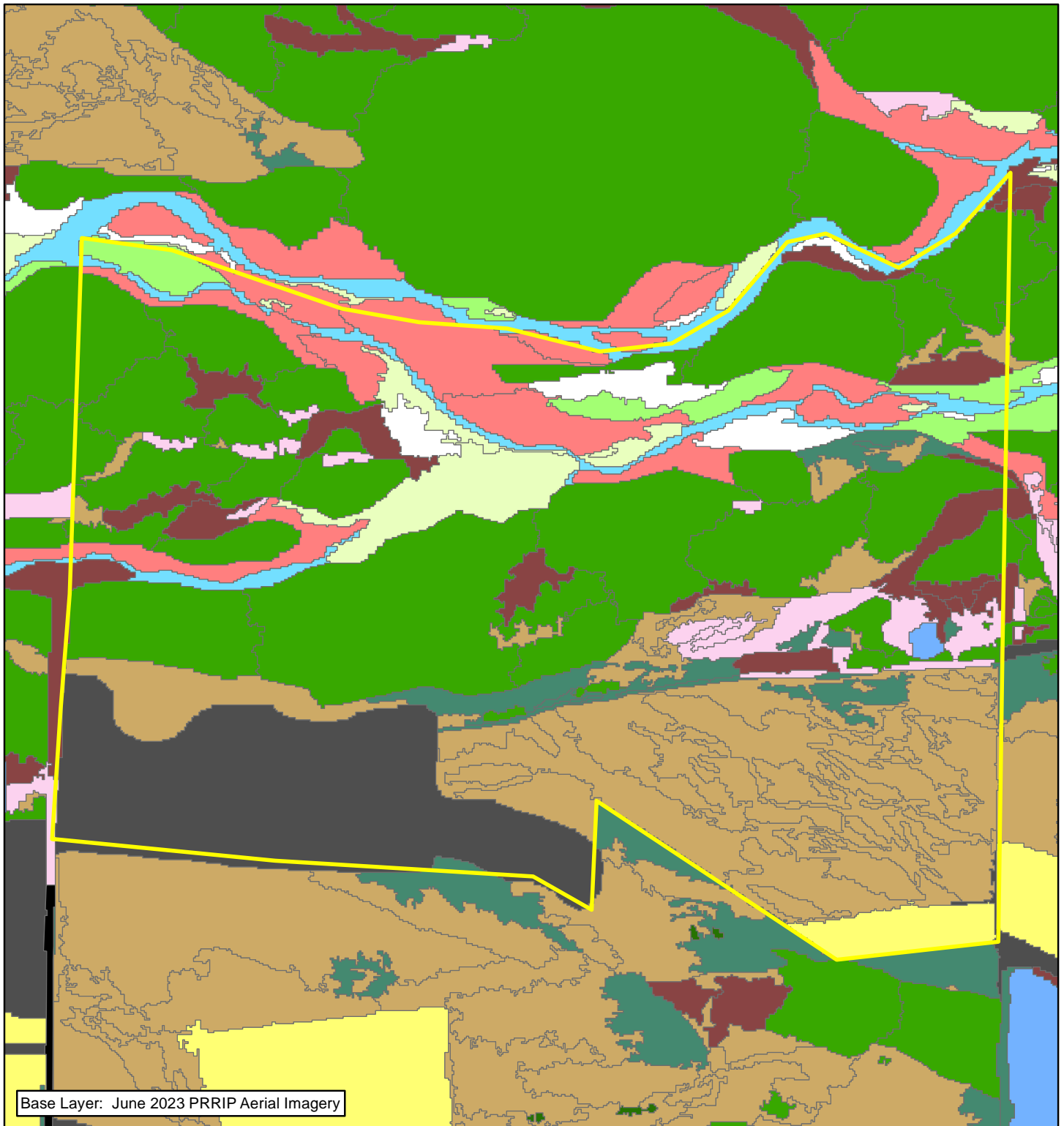


Miles

### TRACT W201601 LOCATION MAP

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 01/22/24  
By: TRT

Figure A-2



#### Legend

PlatteRiver_2005LC_Lindstrom	River Early Successional
Water_Plan_Tracts	River Shrubland
Ag	Roads
Bareground/Sparse Veg	Rural Developed
Canal/Drainage	Sand Pit
Mesic Wet Meadow	Unvegetated Sandbar
Phragmites	Upland Woodland
Riparian Shrubland	Warmwater Slough
Riparian Woodland	Xeric Wet Meadow
River Channel	



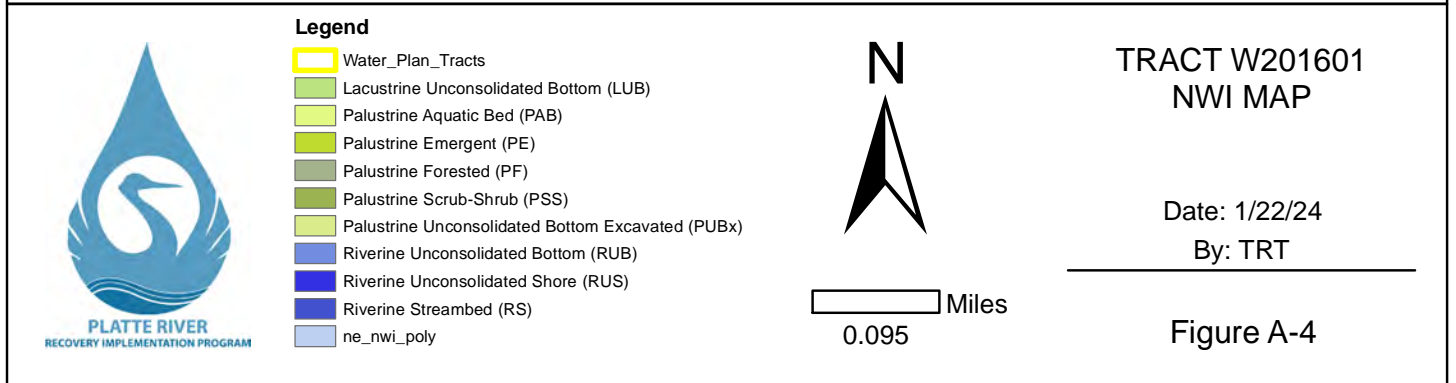
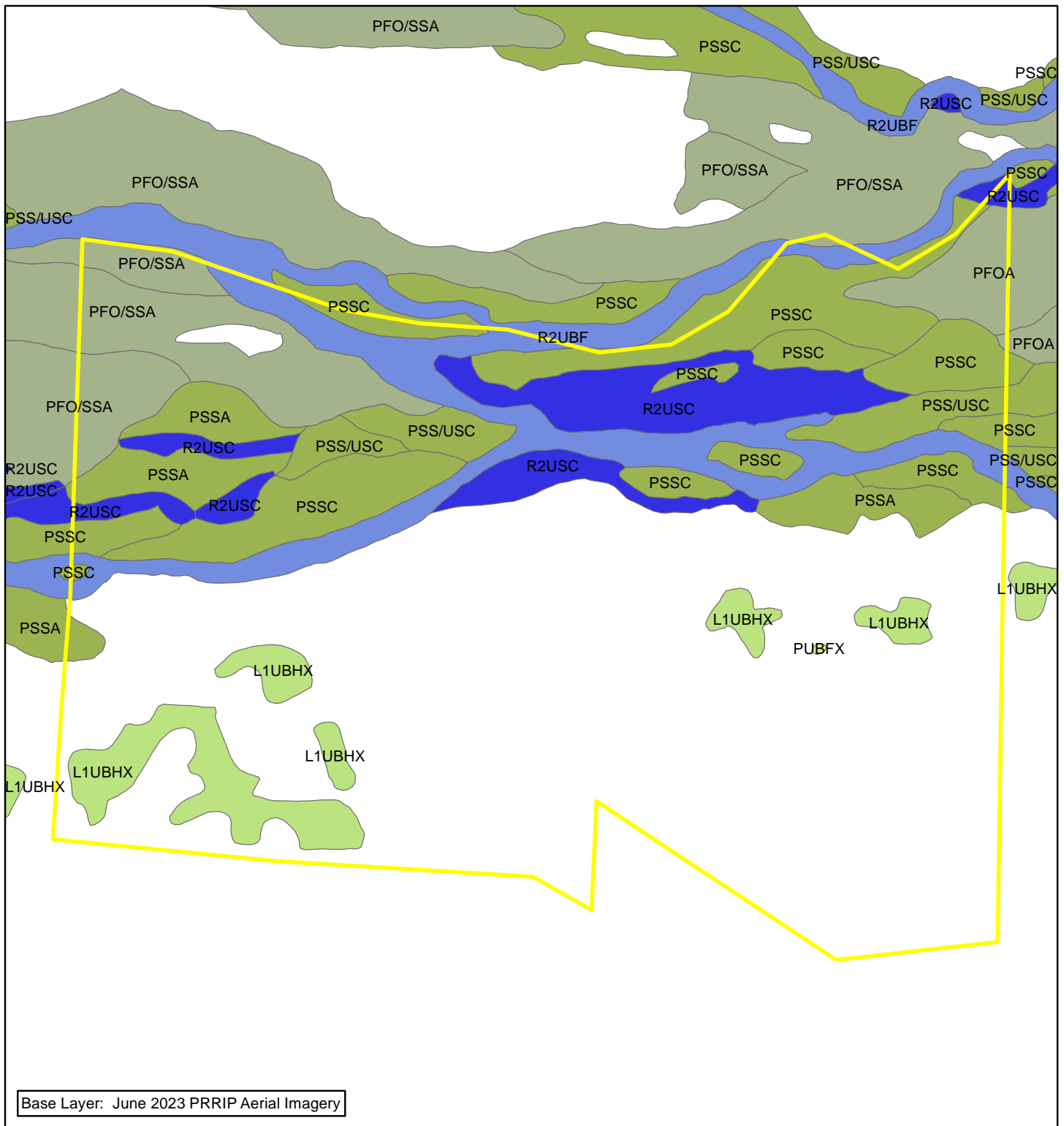
0.1 Miles

TRACT W201601  
2005 LAND COVER/USE

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 01/22/24  
By: TRT


Figure A-3










**Legend**  
 Water\_Plan\_Tracts



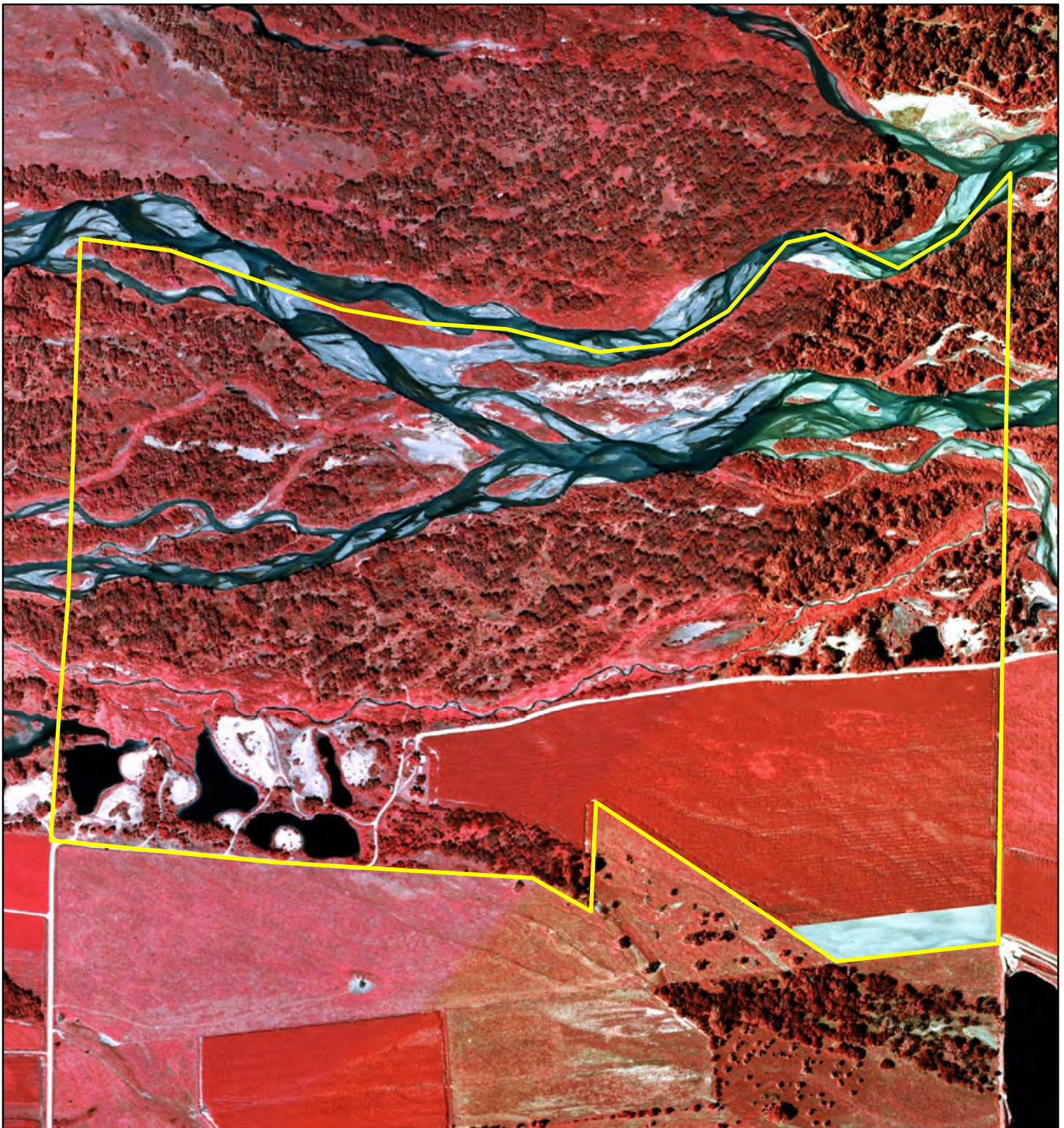
 Miles  
0.1


TRACT W201601  
1938 IMAGERY

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: Date: 1/22/24  
By: TRT


Figure A-5





**Legend**  
 Water\_Plan\_Tracts



 Miles  
0.1

TRACT W201601  
1998 CIR IMAGERY

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: Date: 1/22/24  
By: TRT

Figure A-6





Legend  
Water\_Plan\_Tracts



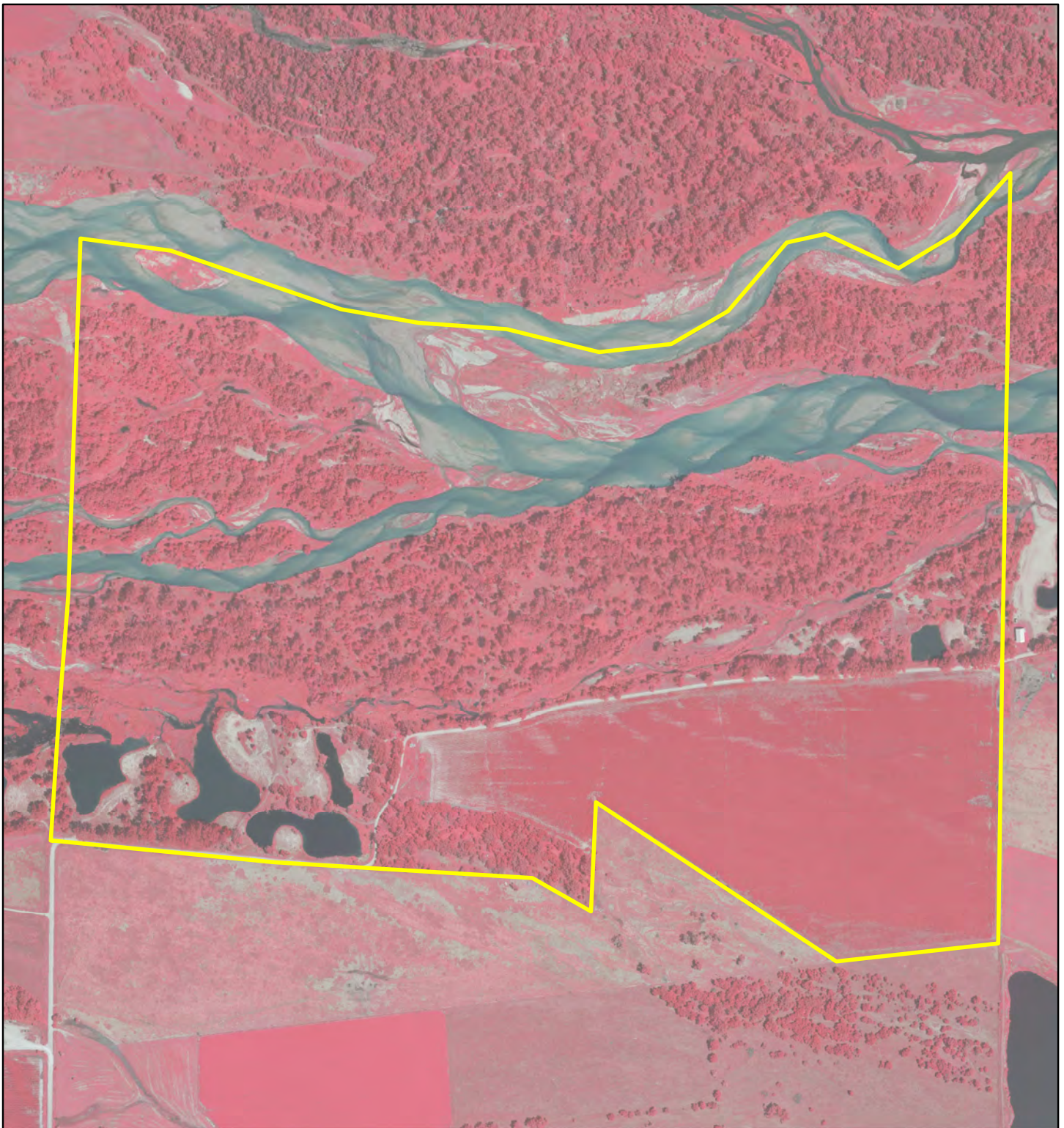
0.1 Miles

TRACT W201601  
2008 CIR IMAGERY

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 1/22/24  
By: TRT


Figure A-7





**Legend**  
 Water\_Plan\_Tracts



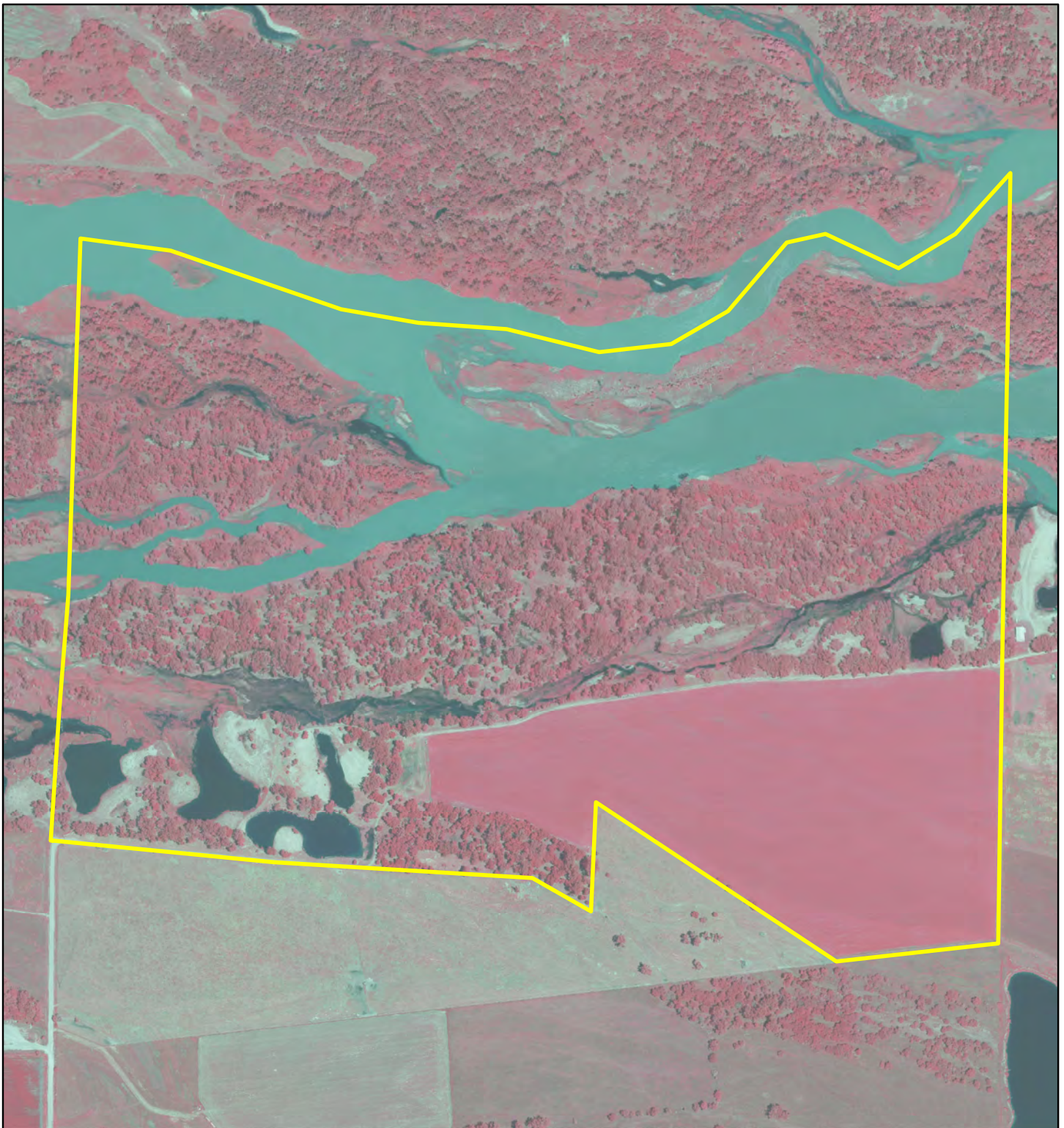
 Miles  
0.1

TRACT W201601  
2018 CIR IMAGERY

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 1/22/24  
By: TRT

Figure A-8






**Legend**

 Water\_Plan\_Tracts



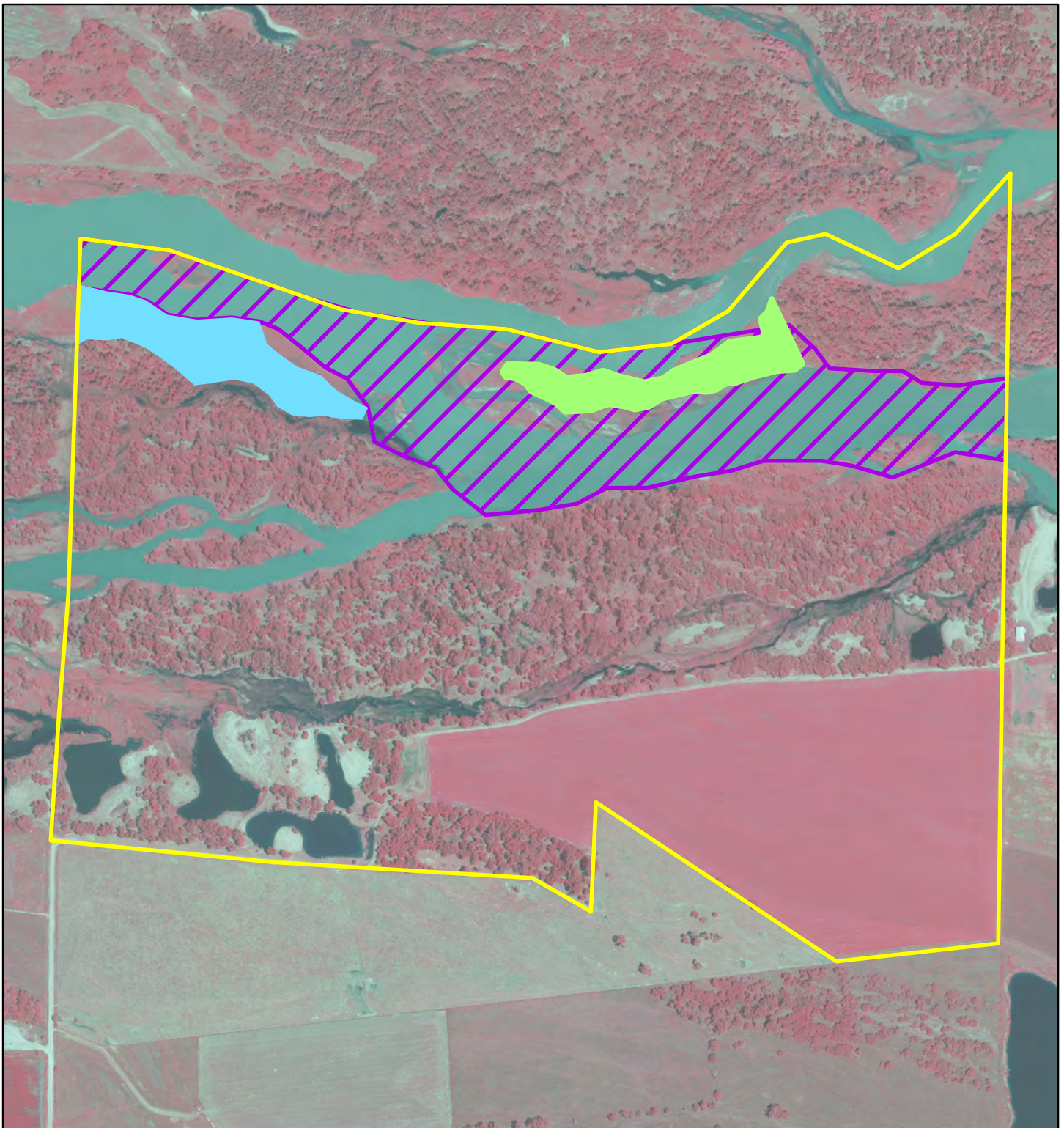
 Miles  
0.1

TRACT W201601  
2023 CIR IMAGERY

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 1/22/24  
By: TRT

Figure A-9





- Legend**
- PROPERTY BOUNDARY
  - DOWNFALL CLEANUP
  - CLEAR & GRUB
  - INCHANNEL DISKING



Miles  
0.1

## CONCEPTUAL RESTORATION DESIGN

Parcel Evaluation  
Date: 5/7/24  
By: TRT

Figure A-10