



# Evaluation of the Sensitivity of Inventory and Monitoring National Parks to Nutrient Enrichment Effects from Atmospheric Nitrogen Deposition

## *Arctic Network (ARCN)*

Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/ARD/NRR—2011/303



**ON THE COVER**

Some ecosystems, such as arid shrublands, subalpine meadows, remote high elevation lakes, and wetlands, are sensitive to the effects of nutrient enrichment from atmospheric nitrogen deposition.

Photograph by: National Park Service

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# **Evaluation of the Sensitivity of Inventory and Monitoring National Parks to Nutrient Enrichment Effects from Atmospheric Nitrogen Deposition**

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This report received peer review by subject-matter experts who were not directly involved in the collection, analysis, or reporting of the data. Data in this report were collected and analyzed using methods based on established, peer-reviewed protocols and were analyzed and interpreted within the guidelines of the protocols.

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## Arctic Network (ARCN)

National maps of atmospheric N emissions and deposition are provided in Maps A and B as context for subsequent network data presentations. Map A shows county level emissions of total N for the year 2002. Map B shows total N deposition, again for the year 2002. Regional deposition data are not available for Alaska, but N deposition would be expected to be very low throughout most, but not necessarily all, of Alaska. There are five active NADP/NTN wet deposition monitoring sites in Alaska: Poker Creek, Juneau, Denali National Park, Gates of the Arctic National Park (GAAR), and Katmai National Park, with data collected since 1980 at Denali and since 1993 at Poker Creek. The other three monitoring sites have been added within the last decade. There are also CASTNET dry deposition measurements at Denali and Poker Flats. At all monitored sites in Alaska, wet N deposition has consistently been less than 1 kg N/ha/yr, and it has been less than 0.5 kg N/ha/yr at all monitored sites except Juneau. The dry N deposition measurements by CASTNET have also been low, below about 0.25 kg N/ha/yr for each site and year measured. Thus, the sparse available atmospheric N deposition data for Alaska are consistent with the general understanding that atmospheric deposition tends to be very low at national park lands within Alaska. It can be assumed that N deposition in each of the Alaskan networks would be lower than 1 to 2 kg/ha/yr, on average, across each of those networks.

There are five park units in the Arctic Network: Bering Land Bridge (BELA), Cape Krusenstern (CAKR), GAAR, Kobuk Valley (KOVA), and Noatak (NOAT). All are larger than 100 square miles.

Total N emissions, by county, are shown in Map C for lands in and surrounding the Arctic Network. County-level emissions within the network were less than 1 ton per square mile throughout nearly the entire network. Point source emissions of oxidized N (nitrogen oxides,  $\text{NO}_x$ ) N are shown in Map D. There are very few  $\text{NO}_x$  point sources of any magnitude, and most of those are on the coast of the Beaufort Sea, in the easternmost portion of the network (Map D). There are no human population centers of any magnitude within the network, and only two (to the south) within a 300-mile radius of the network boundary (Map E). There are no substantial point sources of reduced (ammonia,  $\text{NH}_3$ ) N. Map F is not shown for this network because regional total N deposition data are not available. However, the N deposition in this network is expected to be very low, below 1 kg N/ha/yr in most locations, and is assumed to be in the first quintile of deposition values among the various networks for the purpose of ranking networks according to N Pollutant Exposure.

Land cover in and around the network is shown in Map G. The predominant cover types within this network include arctic shrubland, grassland and herbaceous vegetation, and wetland, with some forest in the southern portions of the network.

Some of the vegetation in these parks is of types expected to be highly sensitive to nutrient N enrichment effects from atmospheric N input. These include arctic herbaceous plant communities, grassland and meadow, alpine, and wetland vegetation (Map H).

Park lands requiring special protection against potential adverse impacts associated with nutrient N enrichment from atmospheric N deposition are shown in Map I. Also shown on Map I are all federal lands designated as wilderness, both lands managed by NPS and also lands managed by

other federal agencies. The land designations used to identify this heightened protection included Class I designation under the CAAA and wilderness designation. There are expansive areas of designated wilderness in this network, both within and outside of the I&M parks.

Network rankings are given in Figures A through C as the average ranking of the Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, and Park Protection metrics, respectively. Figure D shows the overall network Summary Risk ranking. In each figure, the rank for this particular network is highlighted to show its relative position compared with the ranks of the other 31 networks.

The Arctic Network ranks in the lowest quintile of all networks, in N Pollutant Exposure (Figure A). Nitrogen emissions within the network and expected N deposition within the network are both very low. The network Ecosystem Sensitivity ranking is Moderate, within the third quintile among networks (Figure B). This is mainly because there are some vegetation types in this network that are among those expected to be especially sensitive to nutrient enrichment effects from N deposition, but no high elevation lakes. This network ranks at the bottom of the highest quintile in Park Protection (Figure C), having substantial amounts of protected lands.

In combination, the network rankings for Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, and Park Protection yield an overall Network Risk ranking that is near the bottom of the second lowest quintile among all networks (Figure D). The overall level of concern for nutrient N enrichment effects on I&M parks within this network is considered Low.

Similarly, park rankings are given in Figures E through H for the same metrics. In the case of the park rankings, we only show in the figures the parks that are larger than 100 square miles. Relative ranks for all parks, including the smaller parks, are given in Table A and Appendix B. As for the network ranking figures, the park ranking figures highlight those parks that occur in this network to show their relative position compared with parks in the other 31 networks. Note that the rankings shown in Figures E through H reflect the rank of a given park compared with all other parks, irrespective of size.

**Table A.** Relative rankings of individual I&M parks within the network for Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, Park Protection, and Summary Risk from atmospheric nutrient N enrichment.

I&M Parks <sup>2</sup> in Network	Relative Ranking of Individual Parks <sup>1</sup>			
	Pollutant Exposure	Ecosystem Sensitivity	Park Protection	Summary Risk
<i>Bering Land Bridge</i>	Very Low	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low
<i>Cape Krusenstern</i>	Very Low	Very High	Moderate	Very Low
<i>Gates of the Arctic</i>	Very Low	Moderate	Very High	Moderate
<i>Kobuk Valley</i>	Very Low	Moderate	Very High	Low
<i>Noatak</i>	Very Low	Moderate	Very High	Moderate

<sup>1</sup> Relative park rankings are designated according to quintile ranking, among all I&M Parks, from the lowest quintile (very low risk) to the highest quintile (very high risk).

<sup>2</sup> Park name is printed in bold italic for parks larger than 100 square miles.

The five parks in this network all rank in the lowest quintile in Pollutant Exposure (Figure E). Most of the parks in this network are ranked in the middle quintile with respect to Ecosystem Sensitivity (Figure F). The exception is CAKR, which is ranked in the highest quintile due to the presence of larger amounts of presumed nutrient N sensitive vegetation. Three of the parks (GAAR, KOVA, and NOAT) rank Very High in Park Protection; the other two are ranked Moderate for this theme (Figure G). Parks in the Arctic Network are variable in their rankings for Summary Park Risk; of the five parks, GAAR and NOAT show the highest risk, with risk rankings in the middle quintile among parks (Figure H). KOVA is ranked in the second lowest quintile, and BELA and CAKR are ranked in the lowest quintile among parks. Based on this classification and ranking scheme, the overall level of concern for nutrient N enrichment for parks in this network is considered Very Low to Moderate (Table A). It is possible, however, that the ecosystem sensitivity of parks in this network is underestimated by the methodology and data used for this analysis. Shrub and forest vegetation communities in high-latitude locations may indeed be highly sensitive to relatively low levels of N addition. Unfortunately, experimental data are generally lacking. We assume that both arctic and alpine plant communities dominated by graminoids and herbaceous plants are likely to be especially sensitive, but we do not have adequate basis for evaluating the relative sensitivity of woody plants at high-latitude locations. In addition, much of the land coverage in some of these parks is snow and ice or barren land, generally lacking vascular plants. Lichens and mosses in barren areas may be highly sensitive to N addition, but cannot be used for inter-park and inter-network comparisons because data on distribution and abundance of these species are not available for enough locations.

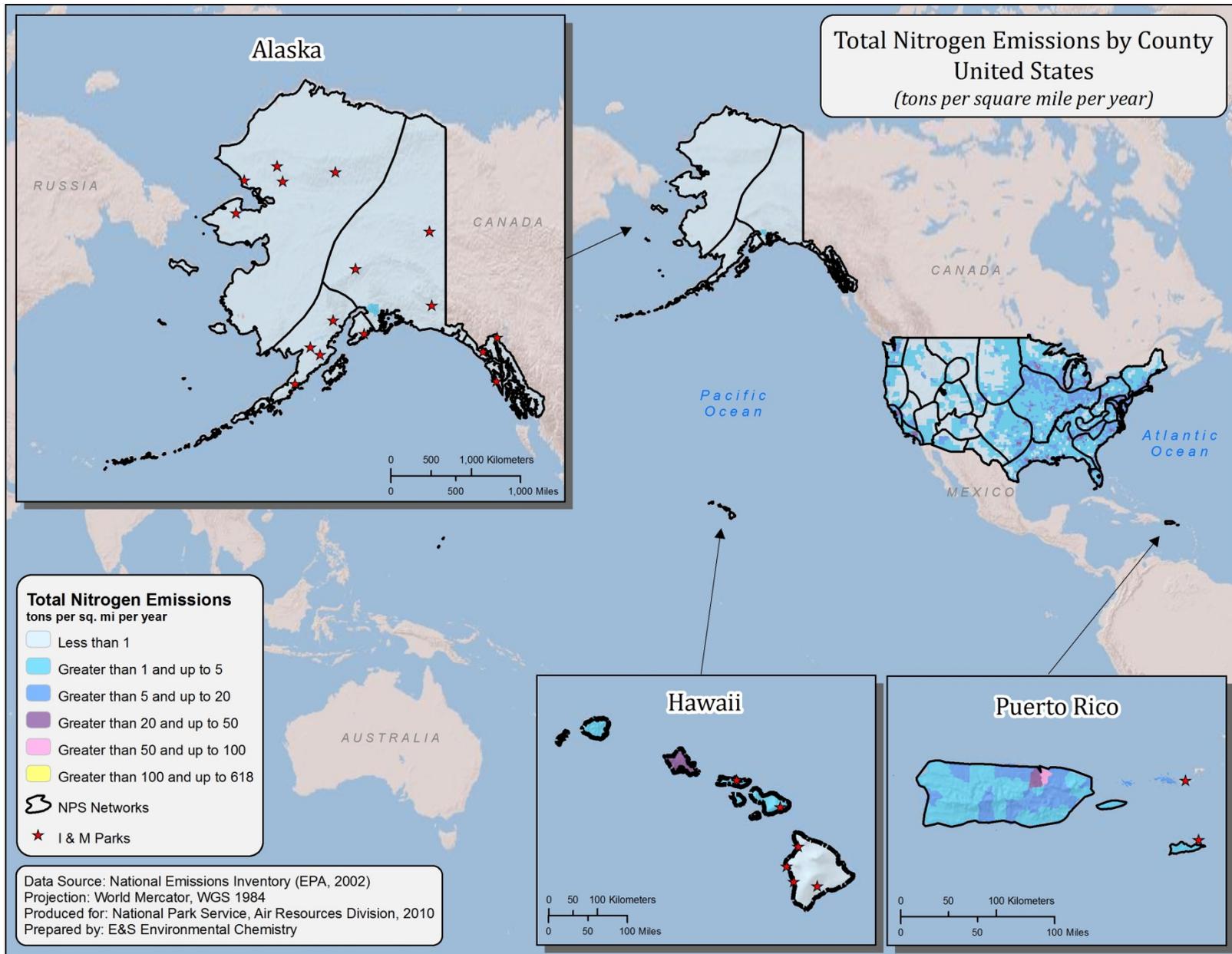
If the arctic climate continues to warm, widespread melting of permafrost may contribute N to surface waters. This conversion of stored N to a more highly available form may augment atmospherically deposited N, leading to greater eutrophication effects in the future under a warming climate.

- Map A. National map of total N emissions by county for the year 2002. Both oxidized (nitrogen oxides,  $\text{NO}_x$ ) and reduced (ammonia,  $\text{NH}_3$ ) forms of N are included. The total is expressed in tons per square mile per year. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)
- Map B. Regional deposition data are not available for Alaska. Total N deposition throughout most areas in Alaska is expected to be low, below about 2 kilograms of N per hectare per year. Total N deposition for the continental United States is presented for context here for the year 2002, expressed in units of kilograms of N deposited from the atmosphere to the earth surface per hectare per year. Wet and dry forms of both oxidized (nitrogen oxides,  $\text{NO}_x$ ) and reduced (ammonia,  $\text{NH}_3$ ) N are included. For the eastern half of the country, wet deposition values were derived from interpolated measured values from NADP (three-year average centered on 2002) and dry deposition values were derived from 12-km CMAQ model projections for 2002. For the western half of the country, both wet and dry deposition values were derived from 36-km CMAQ model projections for 2002. NADP interpolations were performed using the approach of Grimm and Lynch (1997). CMAQ model projections were provided by Robin Dennis, U.S. EPA.

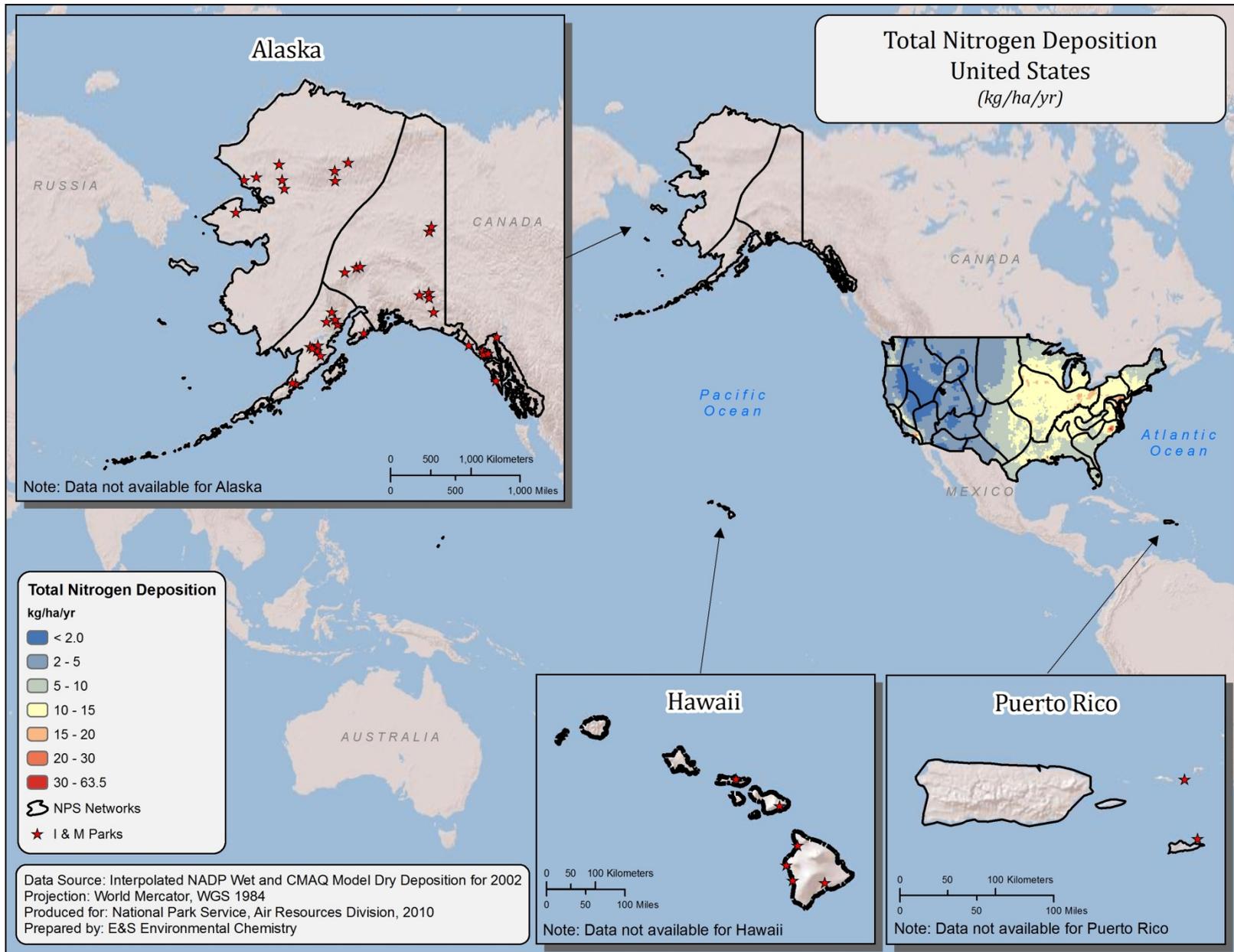
- Map C. Total N emissions by county for lands surrounding the network, expressed as tons of N emitted into the atmosphere per square mile per year. The total includes both oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO<sub>x</sub>) and reduced (ammonia, NH<sub>3</sub>) N. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)
- Map D. Major point source emissions of oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO<sub>x</sub>) and reduced (ammonia, NH<sub>3</sub>) N in and around the network. The base of each vertical bar is positioned in the map at the approximate location of the source. The height of the bar is proportional to the magnitude of the source. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)
- Map E. Urban centers having more than 10,000 people within the network and within a 300-mile buffer around the perimeter of the network. (Source of data: U.S. Census 2000)
- Map G. Land cover types in and around the network, based on the National Land Cover dataset. (Source of data: National Land Cover Dataset, [http://www.mrlc.gov/nlcd\\_multizone\\_map.php](http://www.mrlc.gov/nlcd_multizone_map.php))
- Map H. Distribution within the larger (larger than 100 square miles) parks that occur in this network of the five terrestrial vegetation types thought to be most sensitive to N-nutrient enrichment effects: arctic, alpine, grassland and meadow, wetland, and arid and semi-arid. (Source of data: See Appendix A)
- Map I. Lands within the network that are classified as Class I or wilderness area. (Source of data: USGS 2005 [National Atlas; <http://nationalatlas.gov>] and NPS)
- Figure A. Network rankings for Pollutant Exposure, calculated as the average of scores for all Pollutant Exposure variables.
- Figure B. Network rankings for Ecosystem Sensitivity, calculated as the average of scores for all Ecosystem Sensitivity variables.
- Figure C. Network rankings for Park Protection, calculated as the average of scores for all Park Protection variables.
- Figure D. Network Summary Risk ranking, calculated as the sum of the averages of the scores for Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, and Park Protection.
- Figure E. Park rankings for Pollutant Exposure for all parks larger than 100 square miles. Ranks for each park were calculated relative to all parks, regardless of size, as the average of scores for all Pollutant Exposure variables.
- Figure F. Park rankings for Ecosystem Sensitivity for all parks larger than 100 square miles. Ranks for each park were calculated relative to all parks, regardless of size, as the average of scores for all Ecosystem Sensitivity variables.

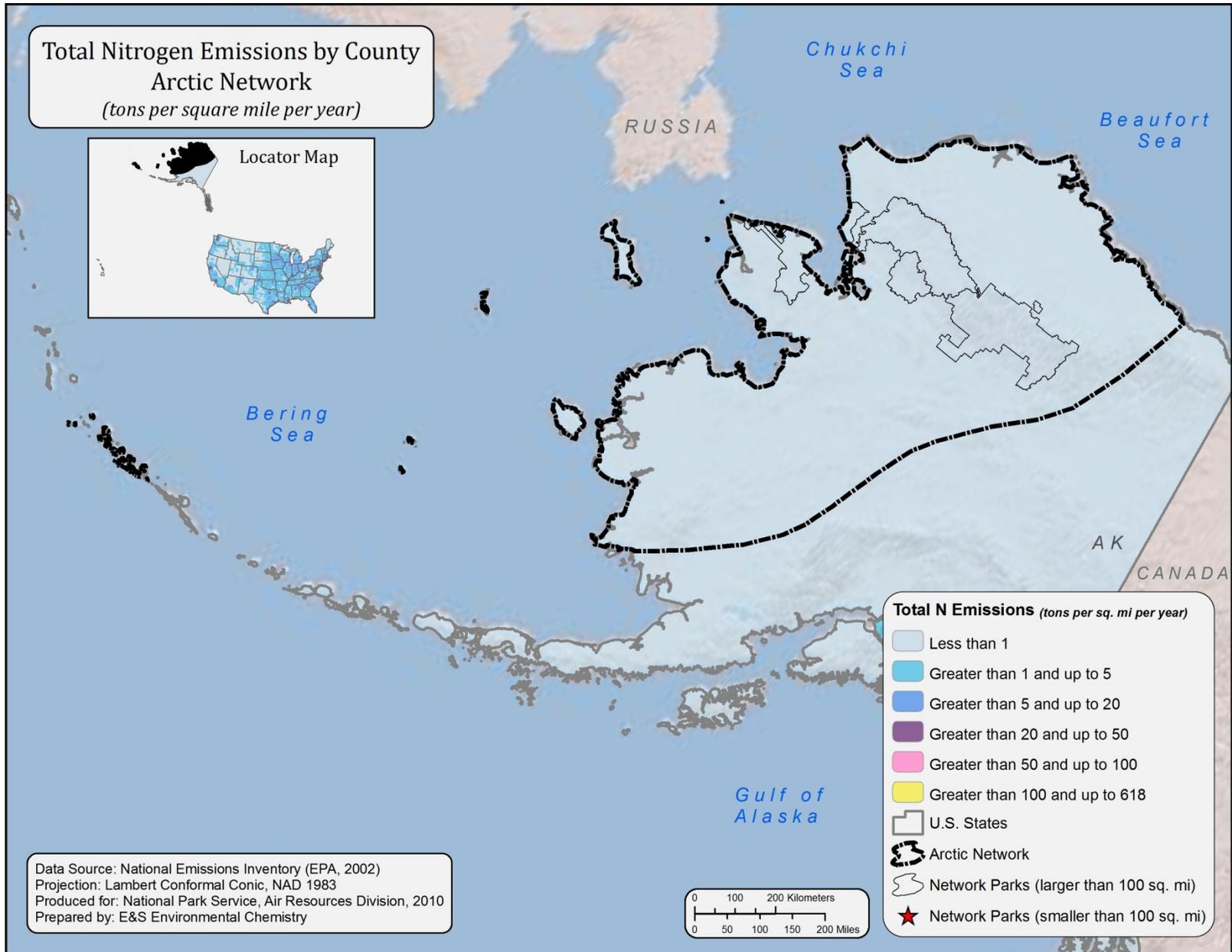
Figure G. Park rankings for Park Protection for all parks larger than 100 square miles. Ranks for each park were calculated relative to all parks, regardless of size, as the average of scores for all Park Protection variables.

Figure H. Park rankings for Summary Risk for all parks larger than 100 square miles. Ranks for each park were calculated relative to all parks, regardless of size, as the average of scores for all Summary Risk variables.

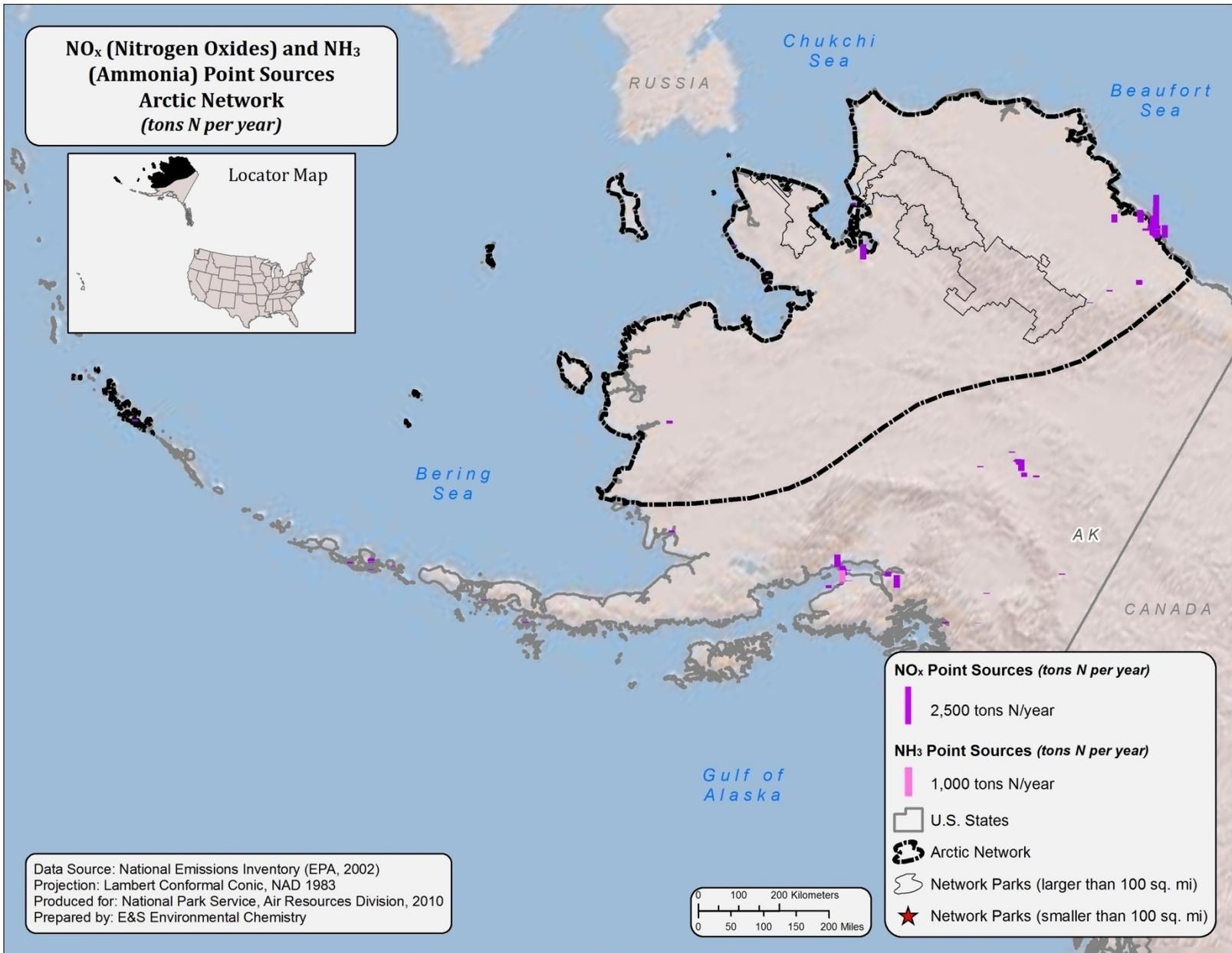


Map A

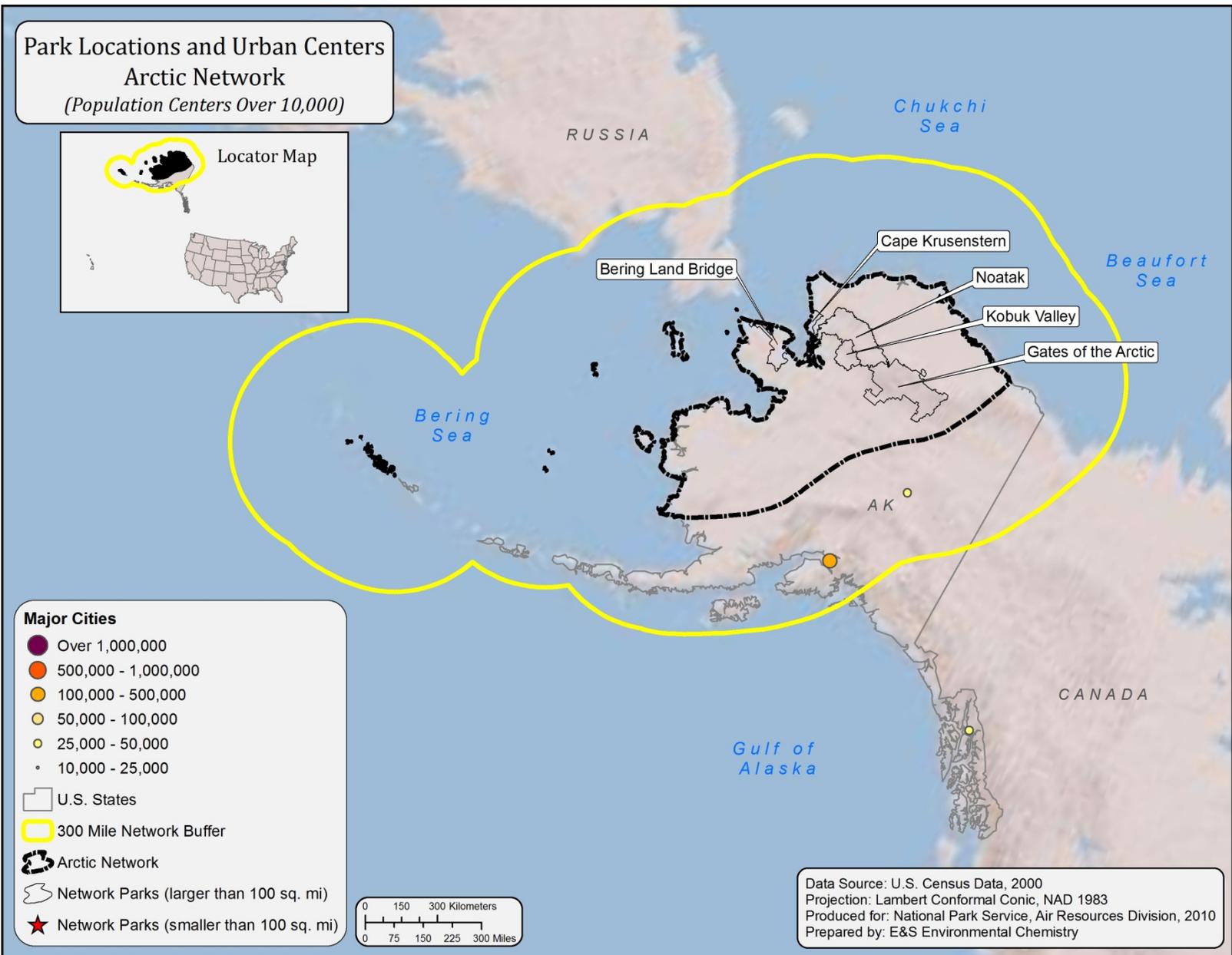




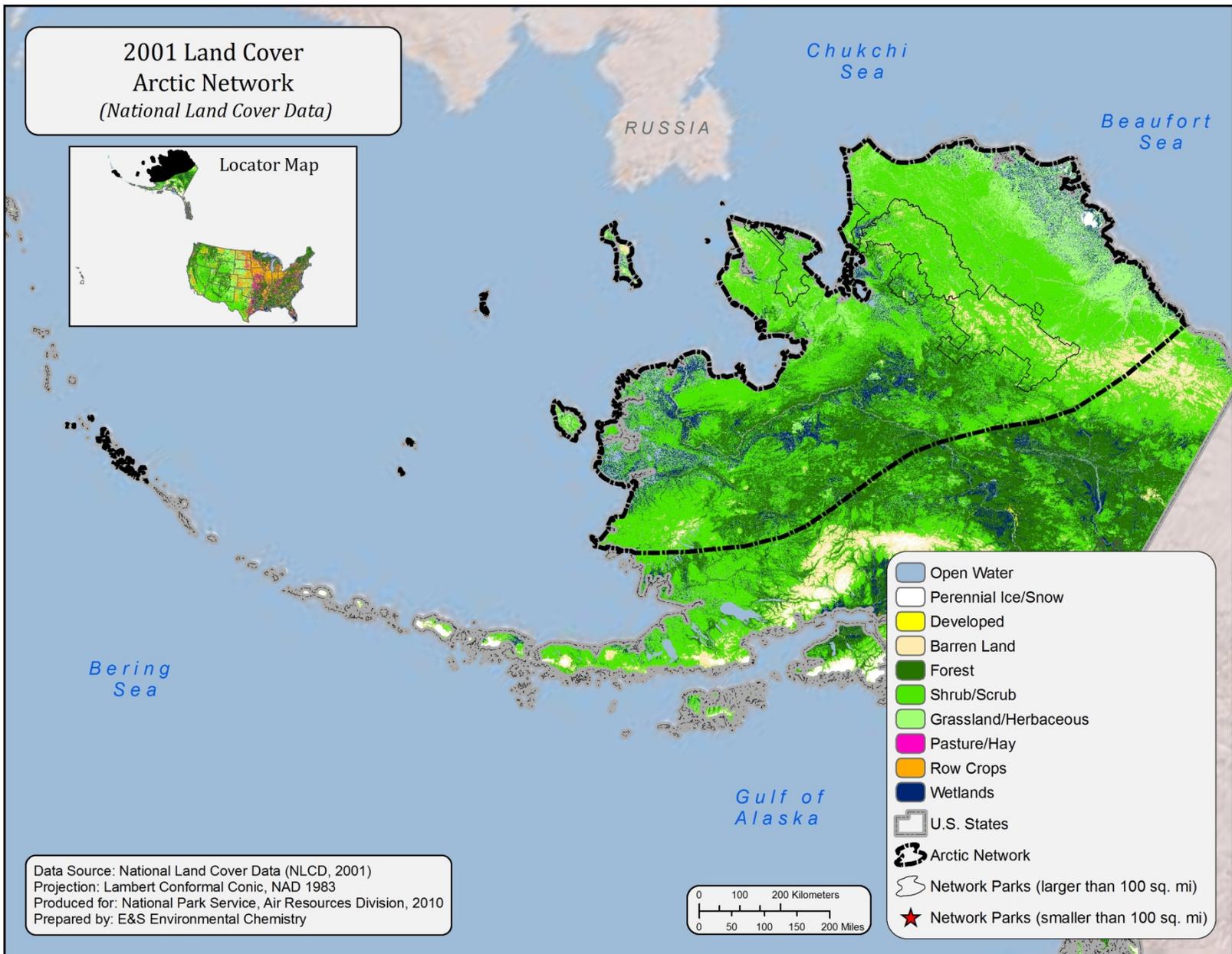
Map C



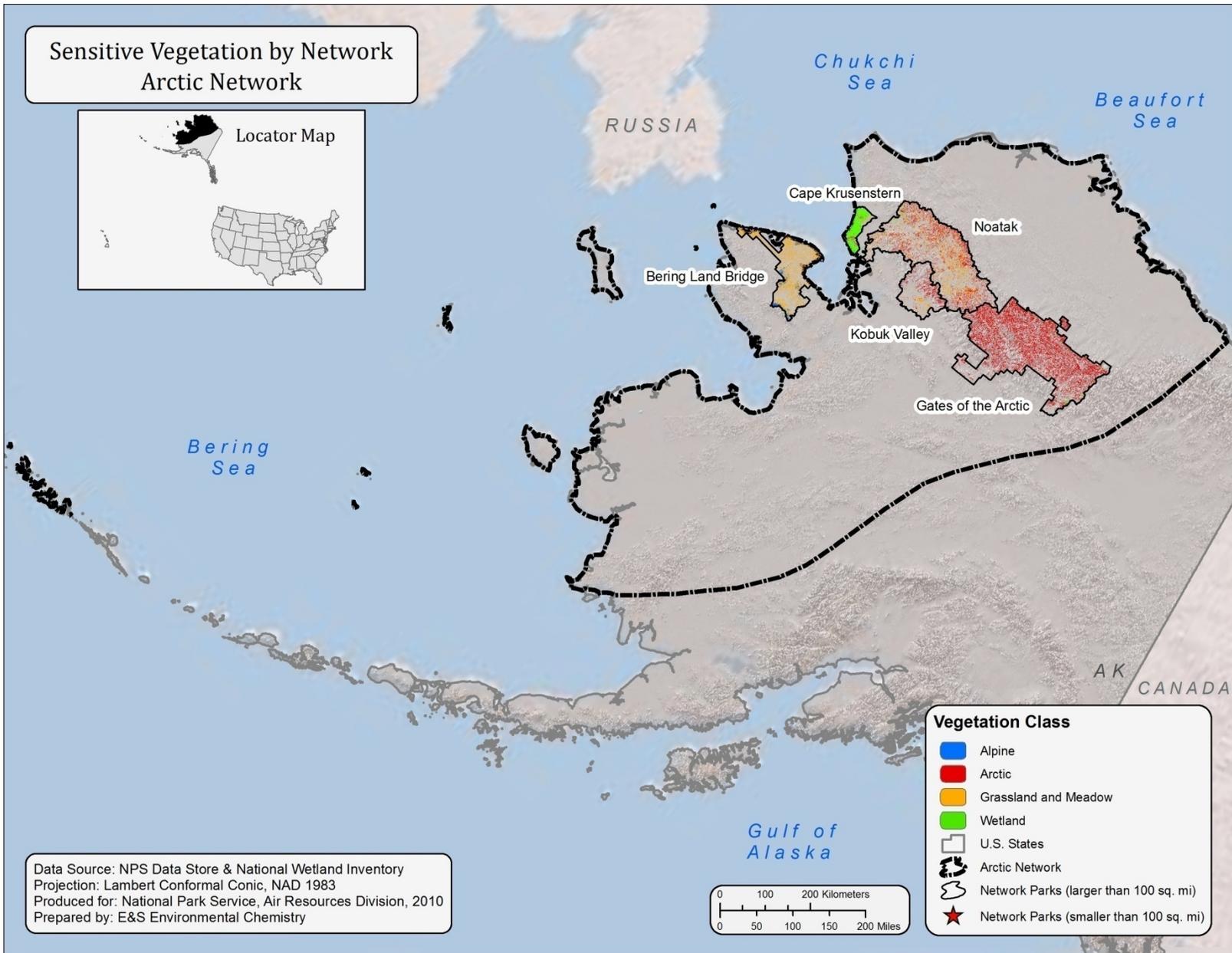
Map D



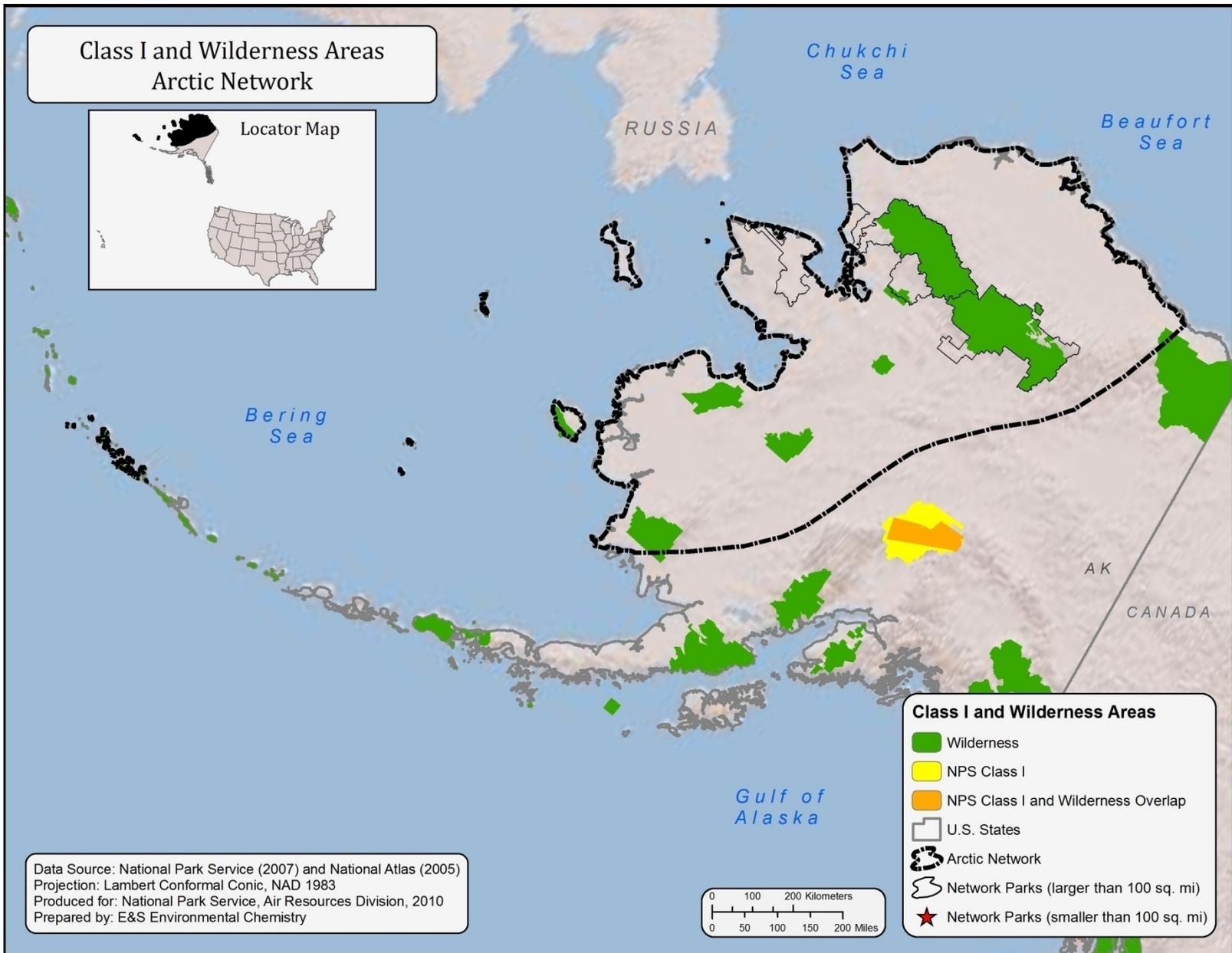
Map E



Map G



Map H



Map I

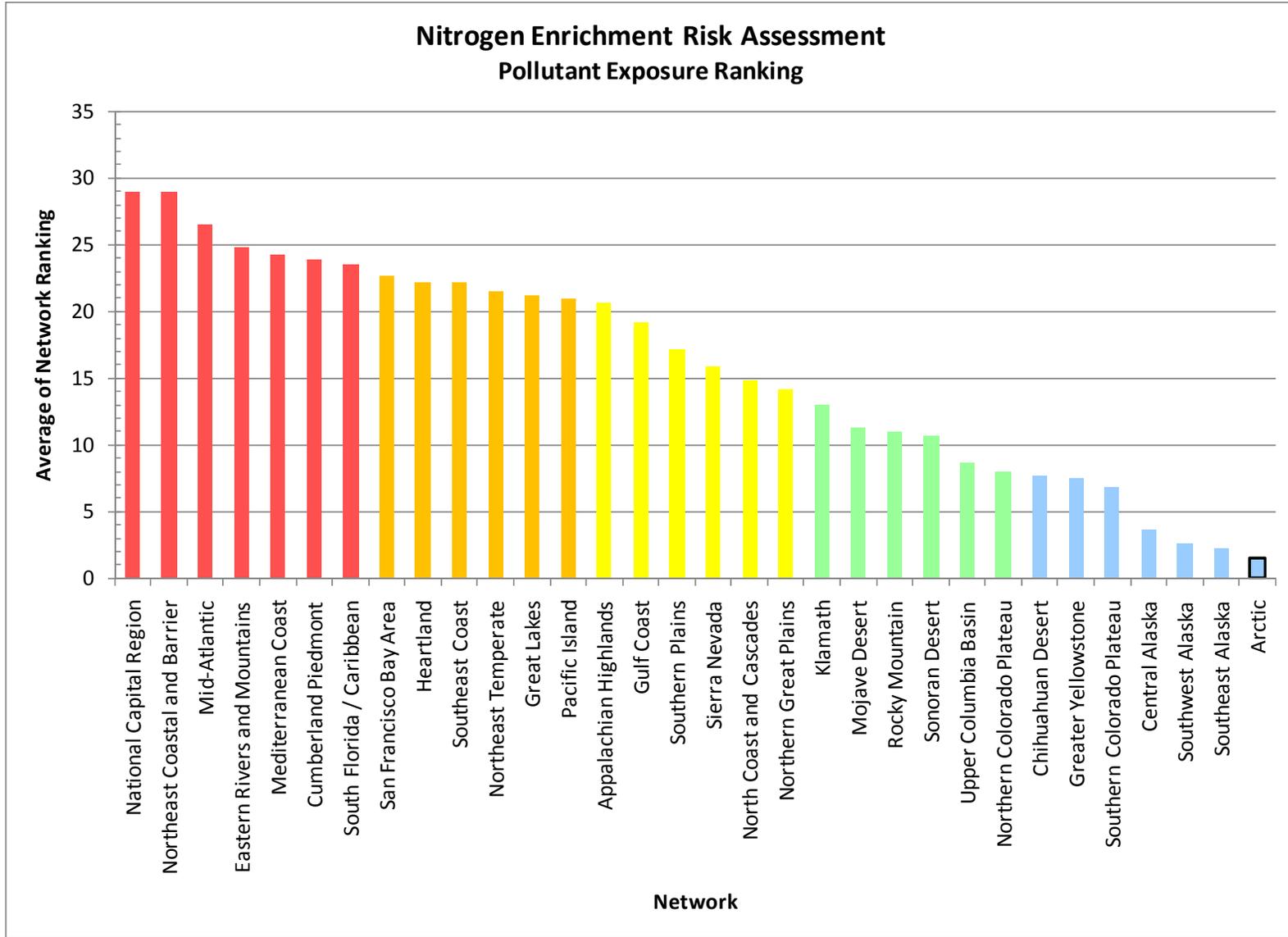


Figure A

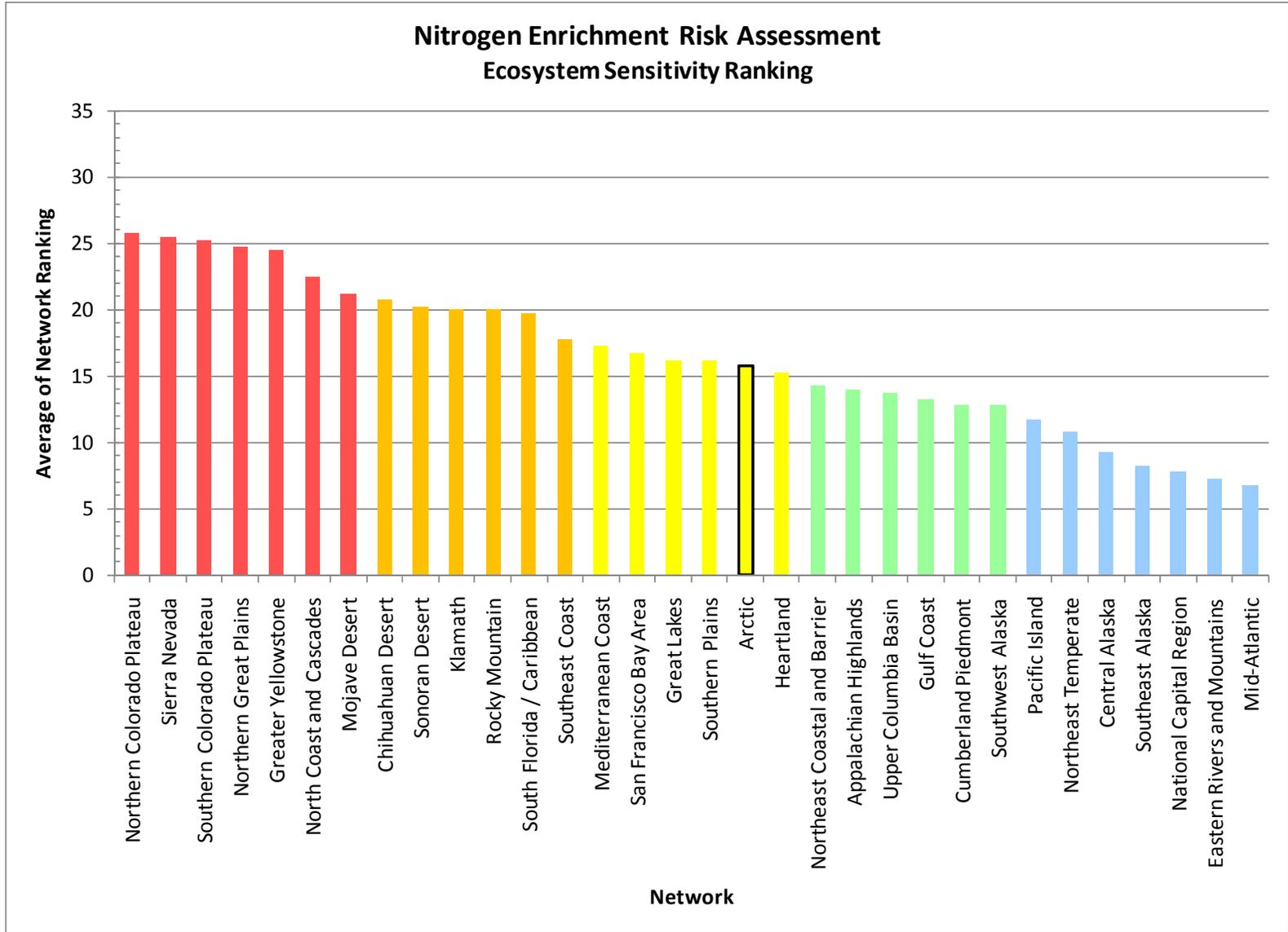


Figure B

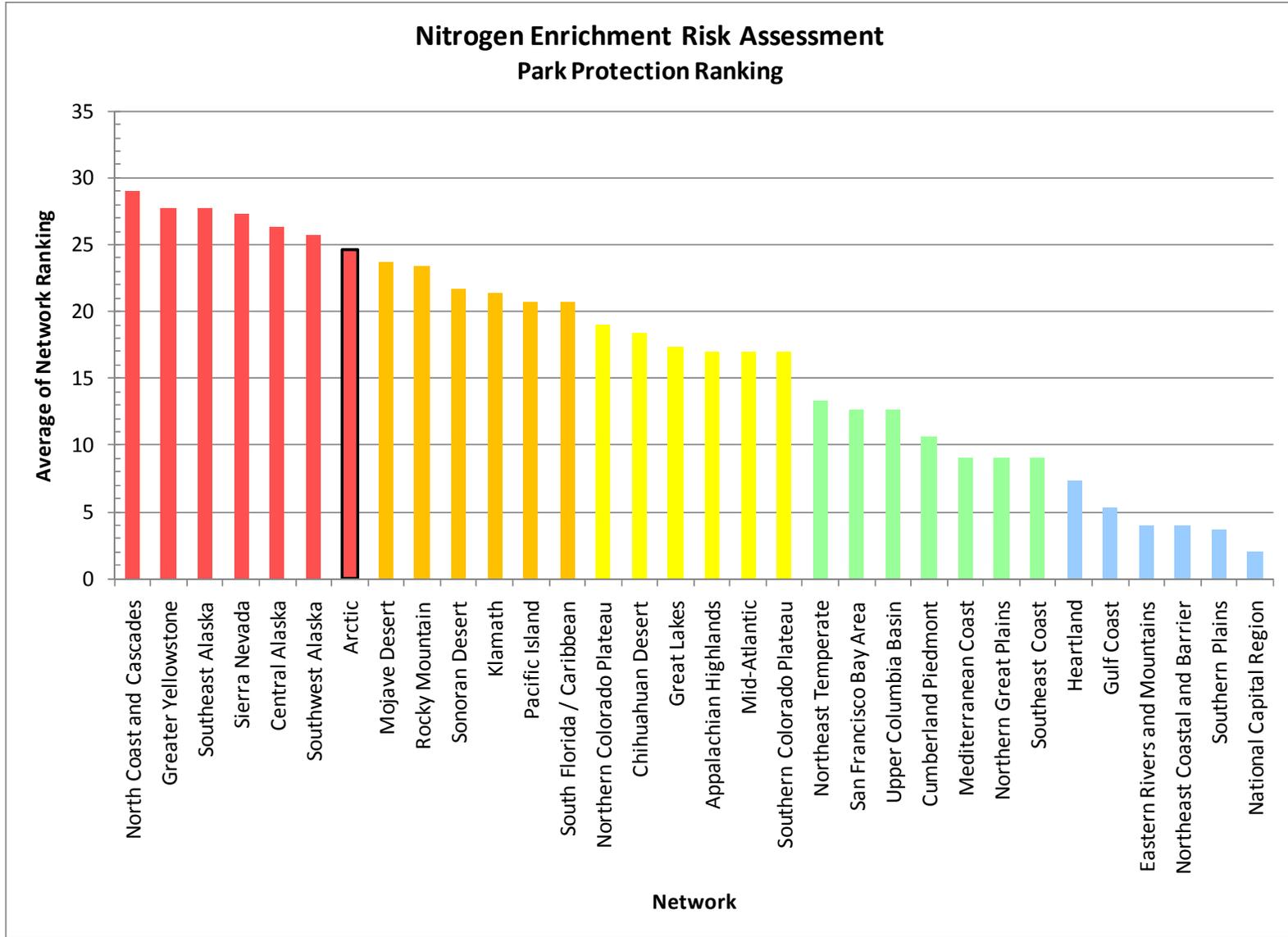


Figure C

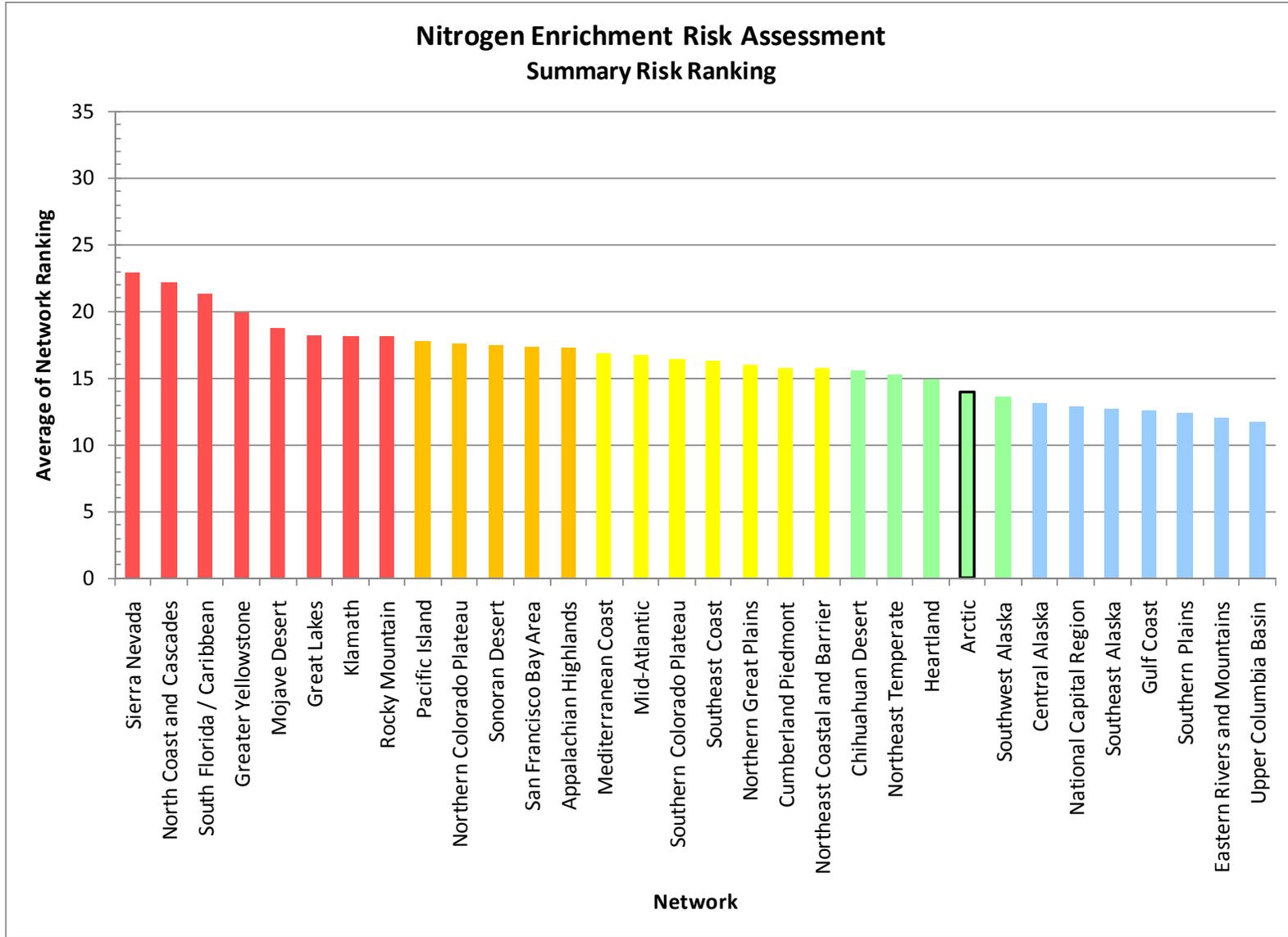


Figure D

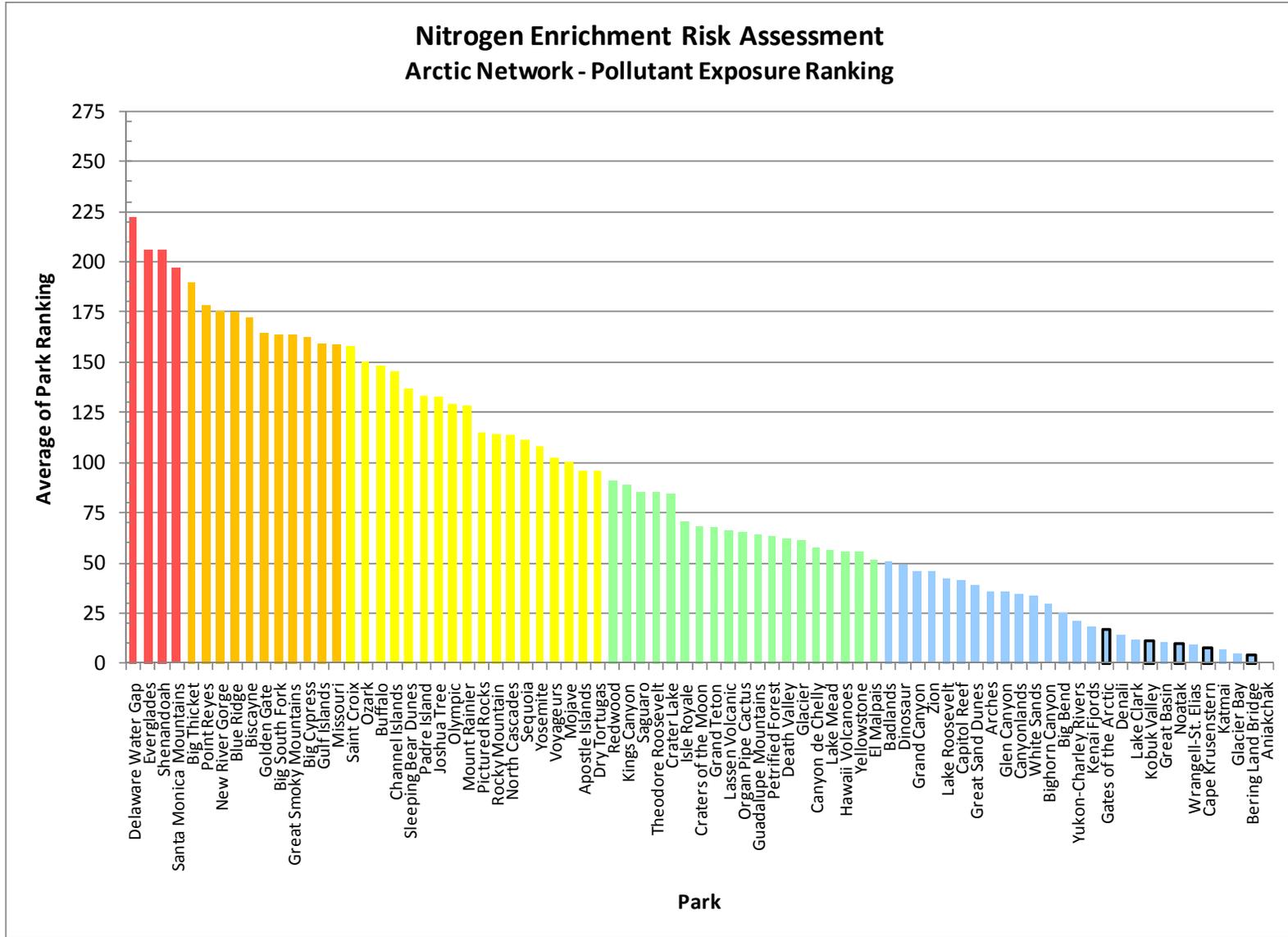


Figure E

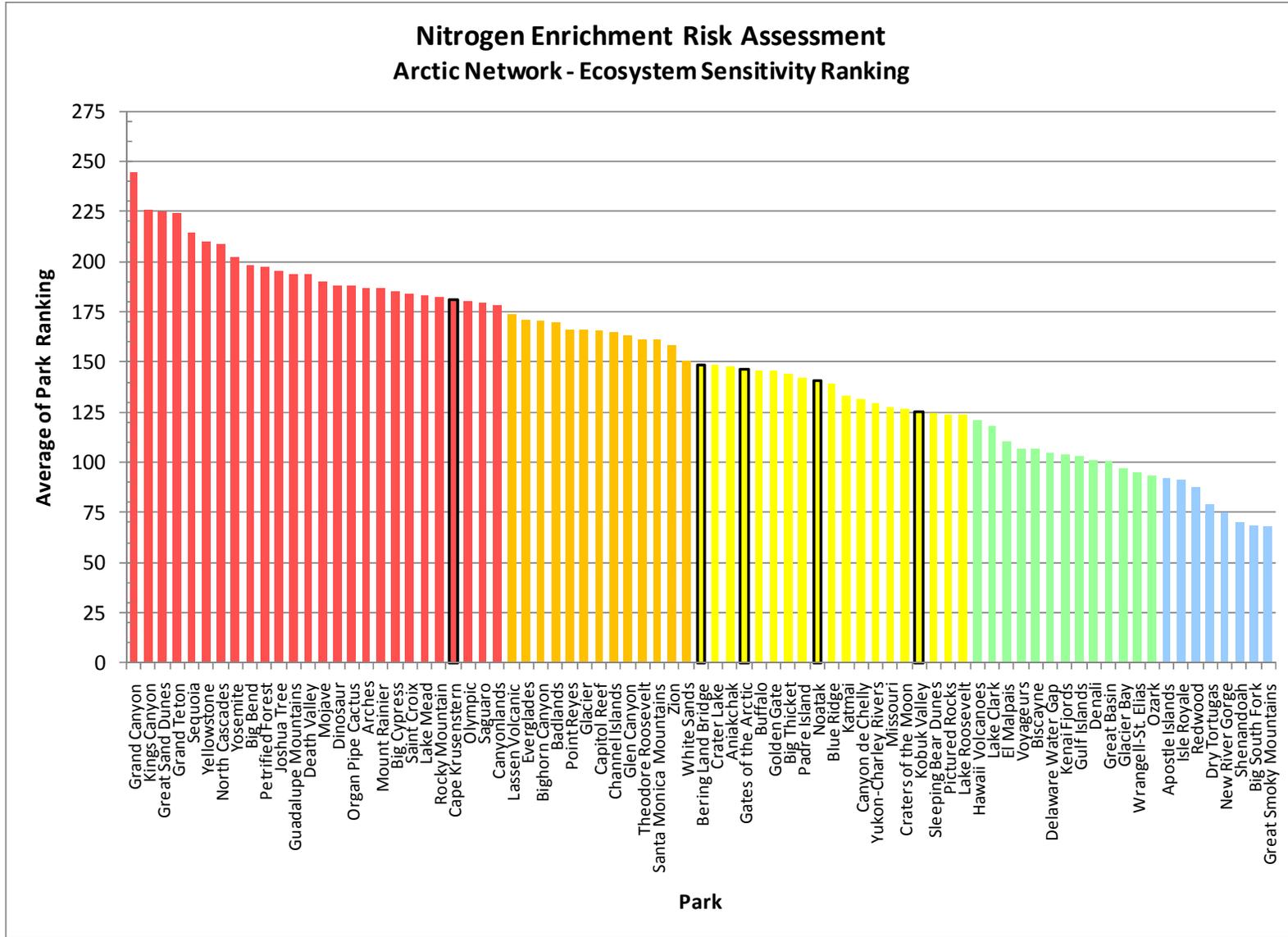


Figure F

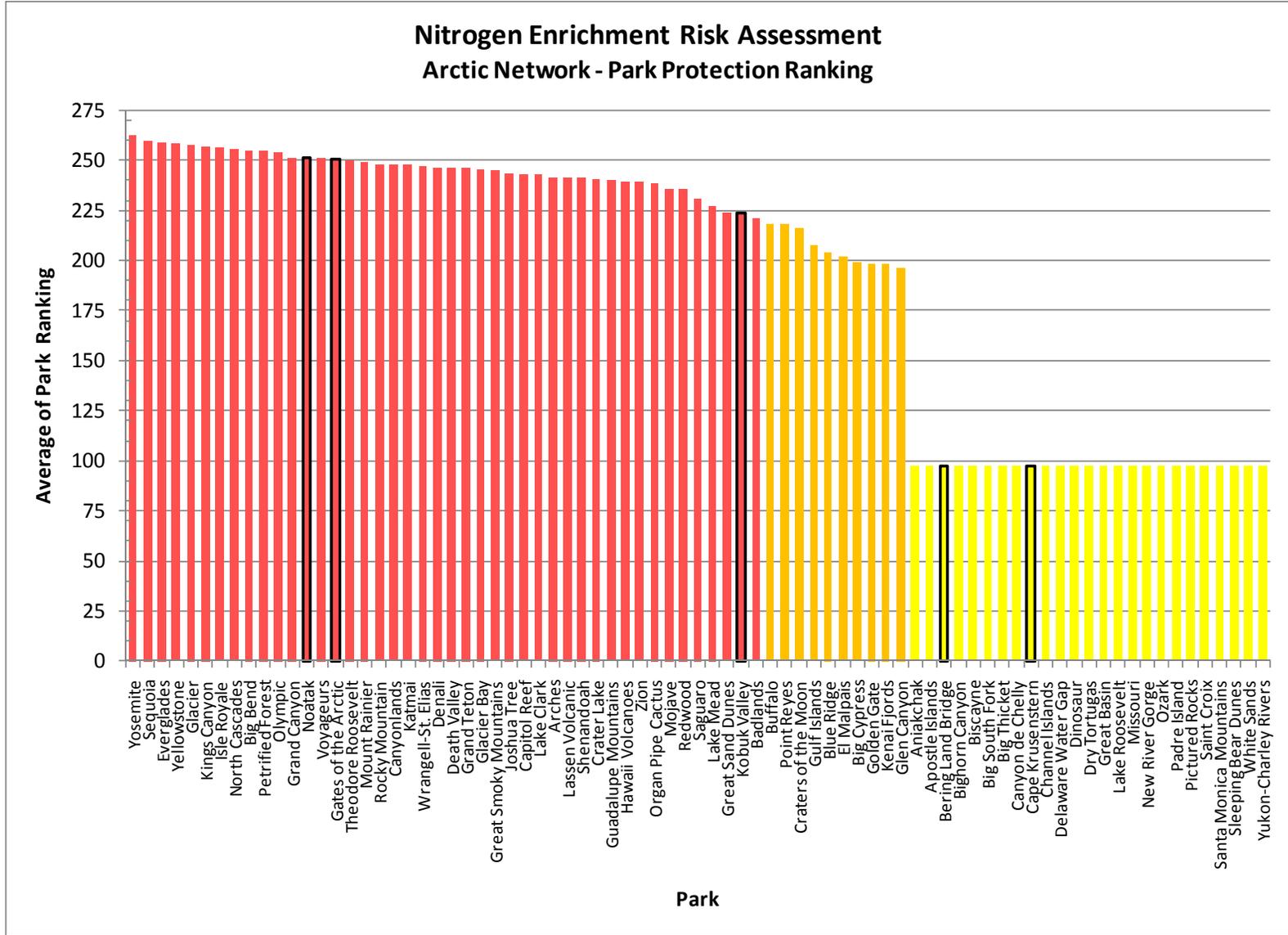


Figure G

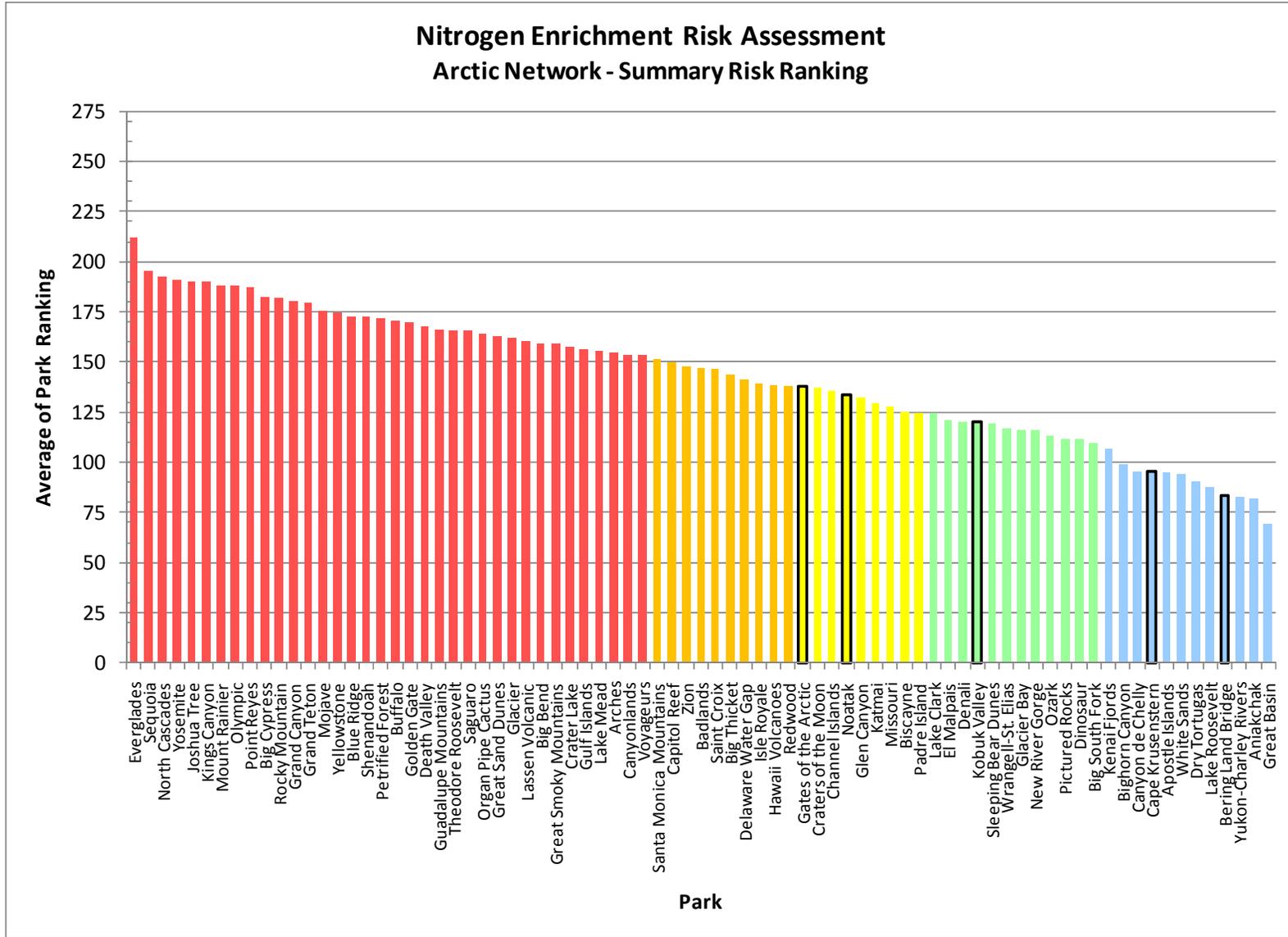


Figure H

The Department of the Interior protects and manages the nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its special responsibilities to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities.

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