



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

Chihuahuan Desert Network (CHDN)

Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/ARD/NRR—2011/305



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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Chihuahuan Desert Network (CHDN)

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.

There are three parks in the Chihuahuan Desert Network that are larger than 100 square miles: Big Bend (BIBE), Guadalupe Mountains (GUMO), and White Sands (WWSA). There are also three smaller parks: Amistad (AMIS), Carlsbad Caverns (CAVE), and Fort Davis (FODA). Vegetation is dominated by arid and semi-arid plant communities, which are thought to be sensitive to nutrient N enrichment.

Total N emissions, by county, are shown in Map C for lands in and surrounding the Chihuahuan Desert Network. County-level emissions within the network ranged from less than 1 ton per square mile to between 5 and 20 tons per square mile. In general, emissions were less than 5 tons per square mile through most of the network. Point source emissions of oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH_3) N are shown in Map D. There are many point sources of N emissions within the network, with most smaller than about 800 tons per year. The larger point sources are all sources of oxidized N, although there are also many smaller scattered sources of reduced N. The largest point sources within the general vicinity of this network tend to be located outside the network in Texas, Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico. Urban centers within the network and within a 300-mile buffer around the network are shown in Map E. The only large population center within the network is El Paso, although there are several large urban centers with the 300-mile buffer outside the network, including Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, and Phoenix.

Total N deposition in and around the network is shown in Map F. Included in this analysis are both wet and dry forms of N deposition and both the oxidized and reduced N species. Total N deposition within the network ranged from less than 2 kg N/ha/yr to as high as 5 to 10 kg N/ha/yr. Most of the land area within the network receives total N deposition in the range of 2 to 5 kg N/ha/yr.

Land cover in and around the network is shown in Map G. The predominant cover types within this network are generally shrubland, grassland/herbaceous, and forest. There are also scattered areas of row crops and barren lands.

Map H shows the distribution within the larger (larger than 100 square miles) parks that occur in this network of the five vegetation types thought to be most responsive to nutrient N enrichment effects (arctic, alpine, meadow, wetland, and arid and semi-arid). In general, the predominant sensitive vegetation type within these parks is arid and semi-arid land, which occupies the majority of parkland within this network.

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. Both Class I areas and

designated wilderness occur in this network. BIBE and portions of GUMO and CAVE are Class I areas. Wilderness areas occur inside and outside the 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 Chihuahuan Desert Network ranks in the lowest quintile, among networks, in N Pollutant Exposure (Figure A). Nitrogen emissions and N deposition within the network are both very low. However, the network Ecosystem Sensitivity ranking is High, in the second highest quintile among networks (Figure B). This is because the vegetation in this network is mainly arid and semi-arid vegetation, which are among the vegetation types expected to be especially sensitive to nutrient enrichment effects from N deposition. This network ranks in the third quintile in Park Protection (Figure C), having moderate 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 Low, in 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, slightly below the median among all networks.

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 ² in Network	Relative Ranking of Individual Parks ¹			
	Pollutant Exposure	Ecosystem Sensitivity	Park Protection	Summary Risk
Amistad	Low	High	Moderate	Low
<i>Big Bend</i>	Very Low	Very High	Very High	Very High
Carlsbad Caverns	Low	Very High	Very High	Very High
Fort Davis	Very Low	Very High	Moderate	Very Low
<i>Guadalupe Mountains</i>	Low	Very High	Very High	Very High
<i>White Sands</i>	Very Low	High	Moderate	Very Low

¹ 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).

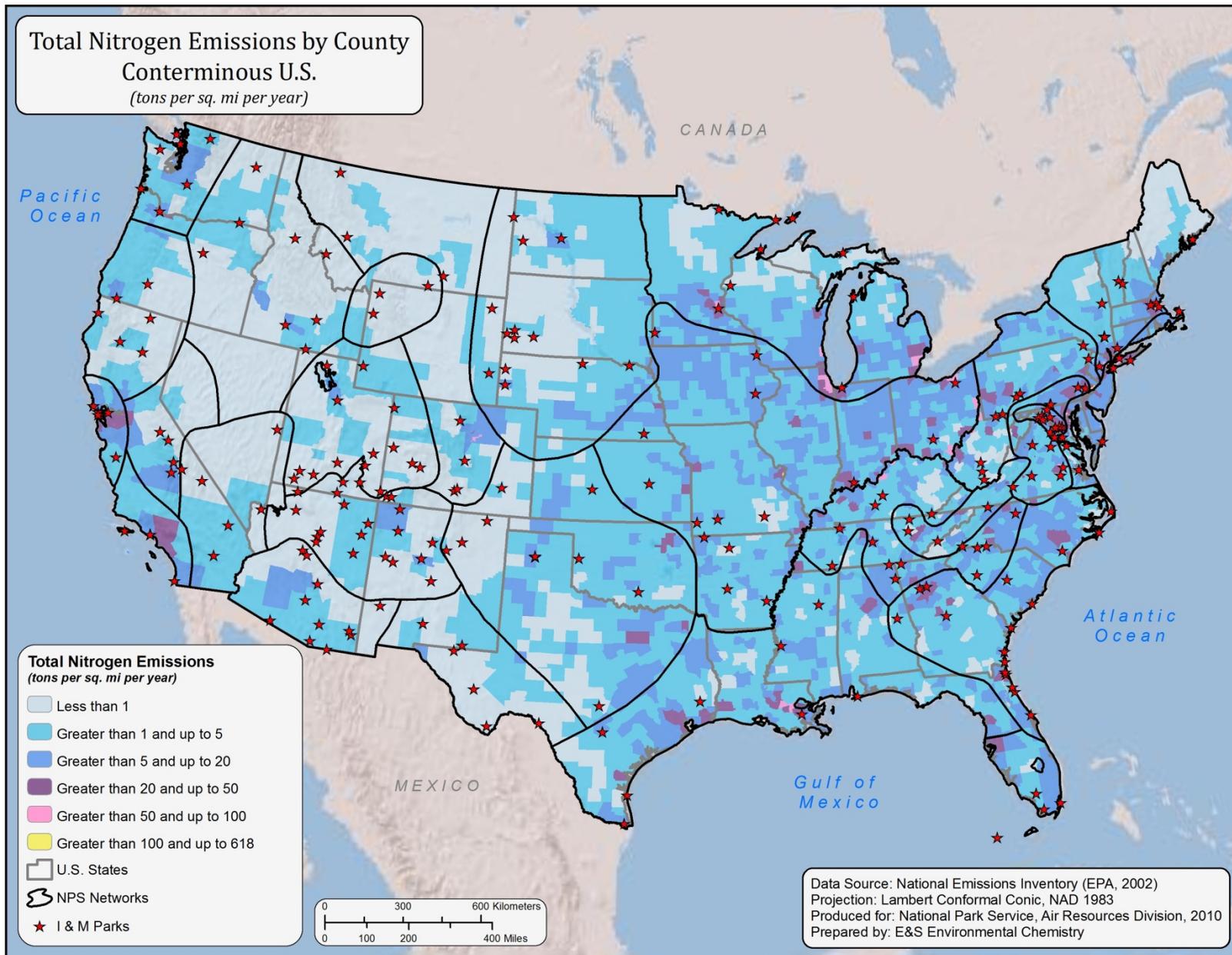
² Park name is printed in bold italic for parks larger than 100 square miles.

The six parks in this network are all ranked Low to Very Low in Pollutant Exposure (Table A, Figure E). In contrast, park-specific Ecosystem Sensitivity rankings are much higher (Figure F, Table A). Individual parks are ranked in the highest (BIBE, CAVE, FODA, GUMO) or second highest (AMIS, WHSA) quintile in Ecosystem Sensitivity due to the presence of vegetation types expected to be highly sensitive to N enrichment. Park Protection is variable, with BIBE, CAVE, and GUMO ranked Very High, and other parks ranked Moderate (Figure G, Table A). The Summary Park Risk ranking is also variable, with AMIS, FODA and WHSA at the low end of the spectrum and BIBE, CAVE, and GUMO all ranked Very High (Figure H, Table A).

- Map A. National map of total N emissions by county for the year 2002. Both oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) 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. Total N deposition for the conterminous United States 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, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) 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_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) 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_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) 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 F. Total N deposition in and around the network. Included in the total are wet plus dry forms of both oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) N. Values are expressed as kilograms of N deposited per hectare per year. (Source of data: CMAQ Model wet and dry deposition data for 2002; see information for Map B above for details)

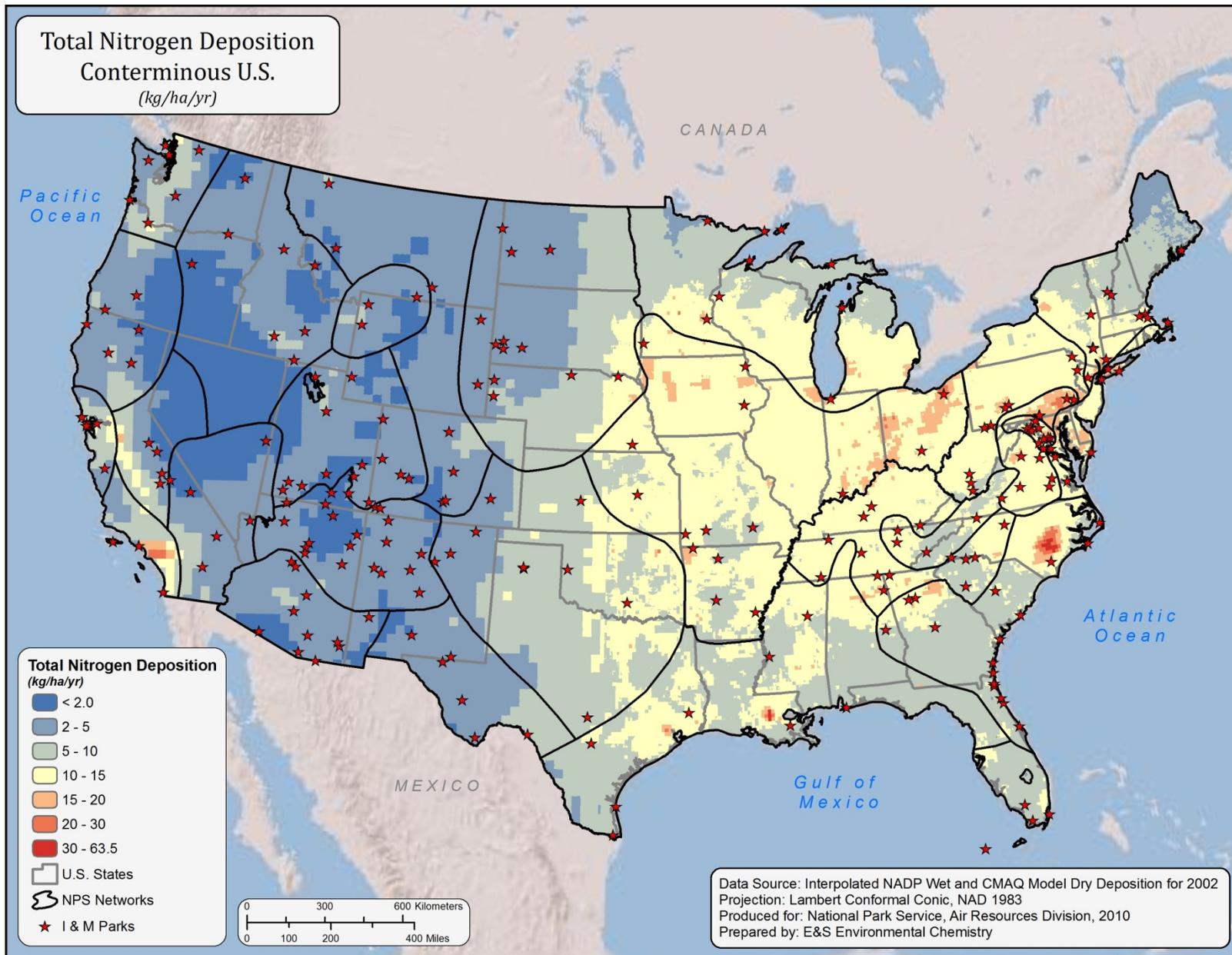
- Map G. Land cover types in and around the network, based on the National Land Cover dataset. (Source of data: National Land Cover Dataset, http://www.mrlc.gov/nlcd_multizone_map.php)
- Map H. Distribution within the larger parks that occur in this network of the five terrestrial vegetation types thought to be most sensitive to N-nutrient enrichment effects: arctic, alpine, 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.

CHDN-5



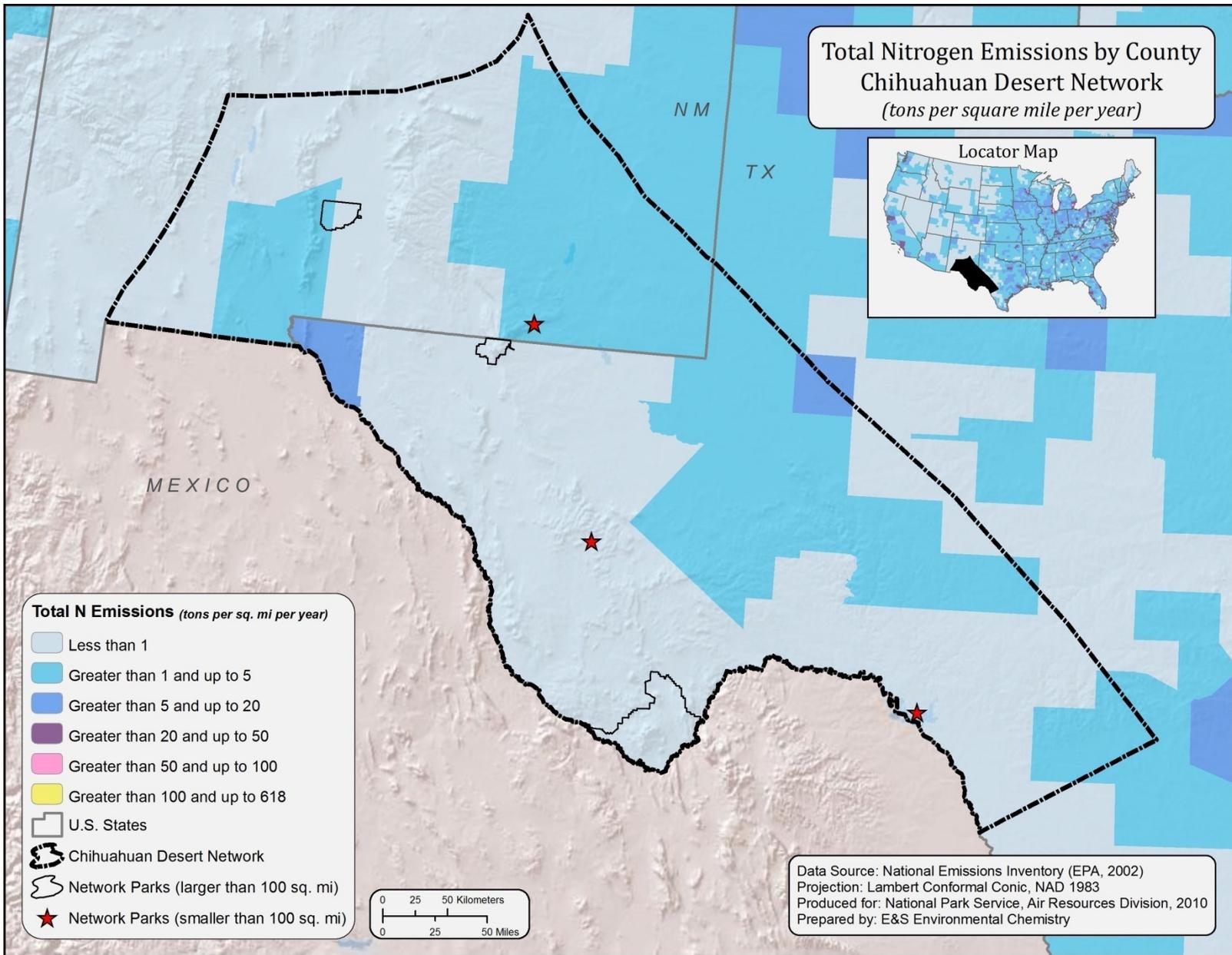
Map A

CHDN-6

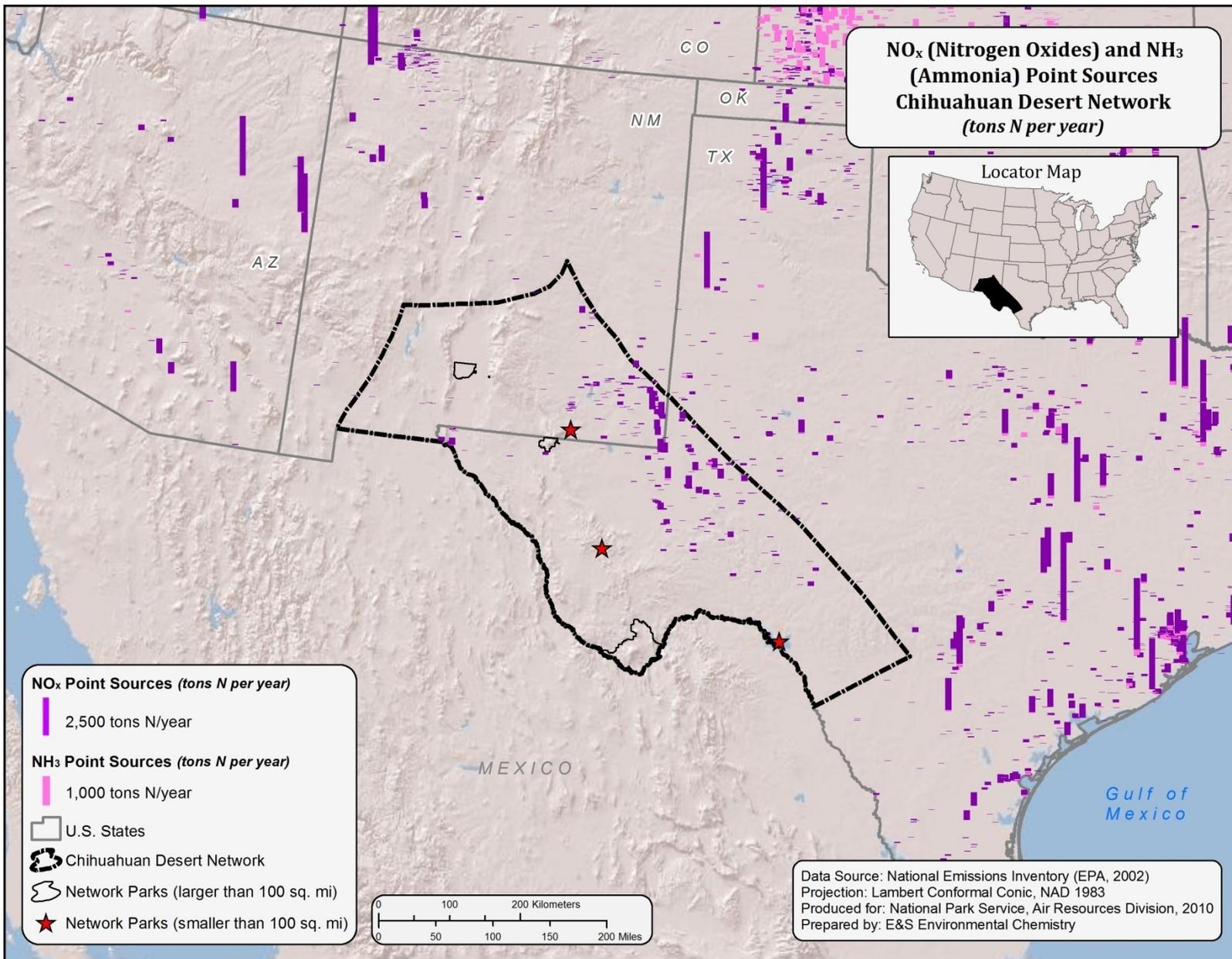


Map B

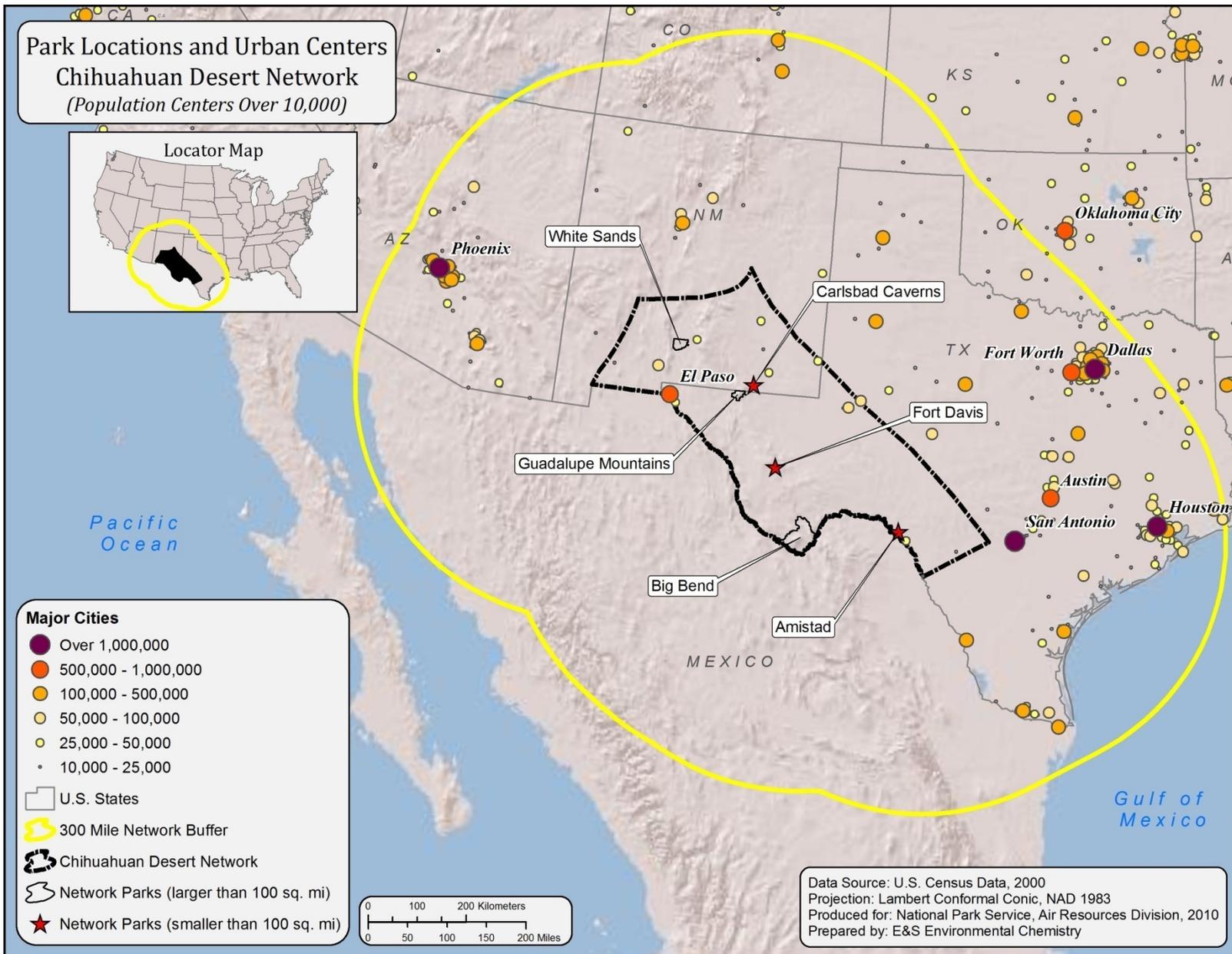
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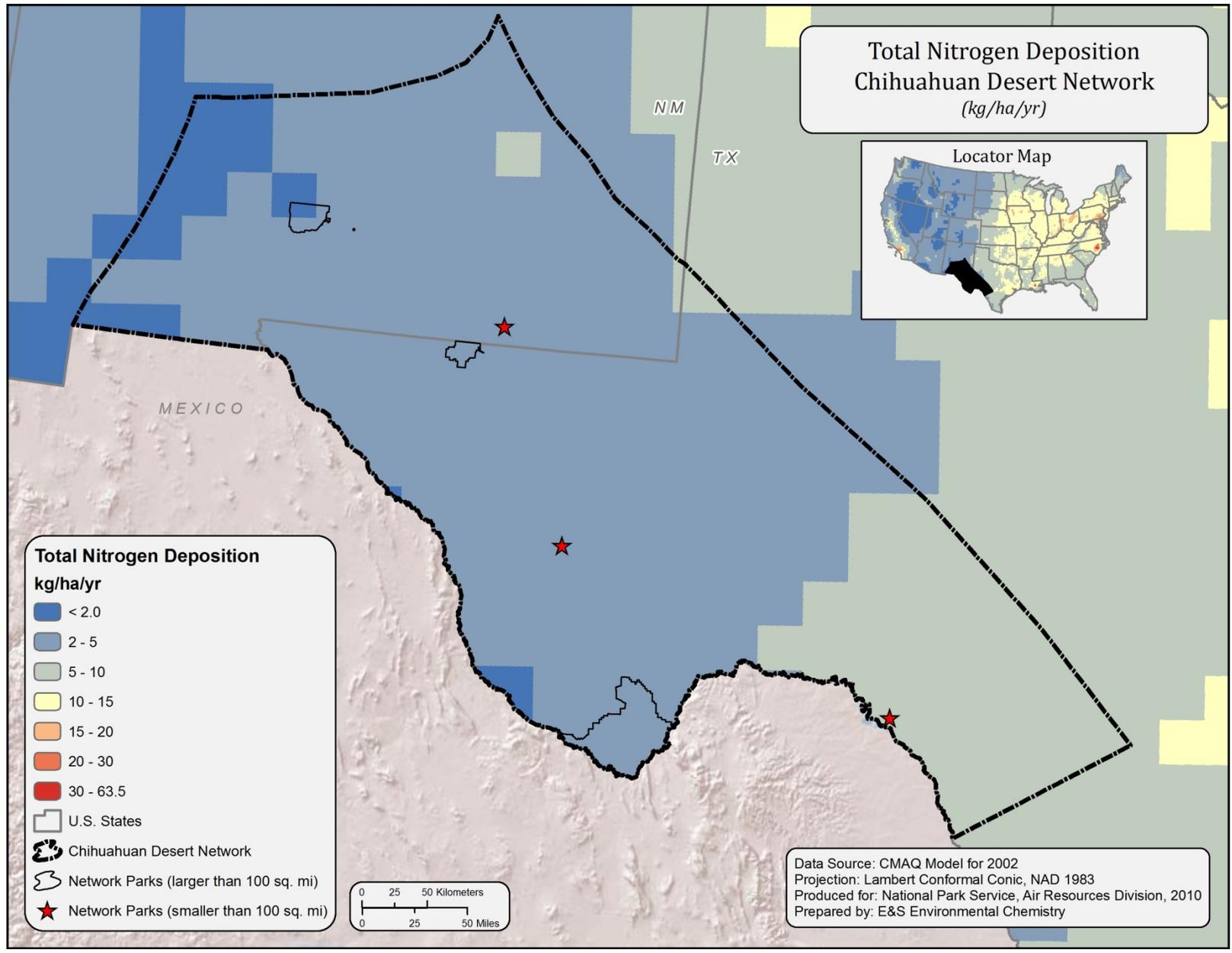
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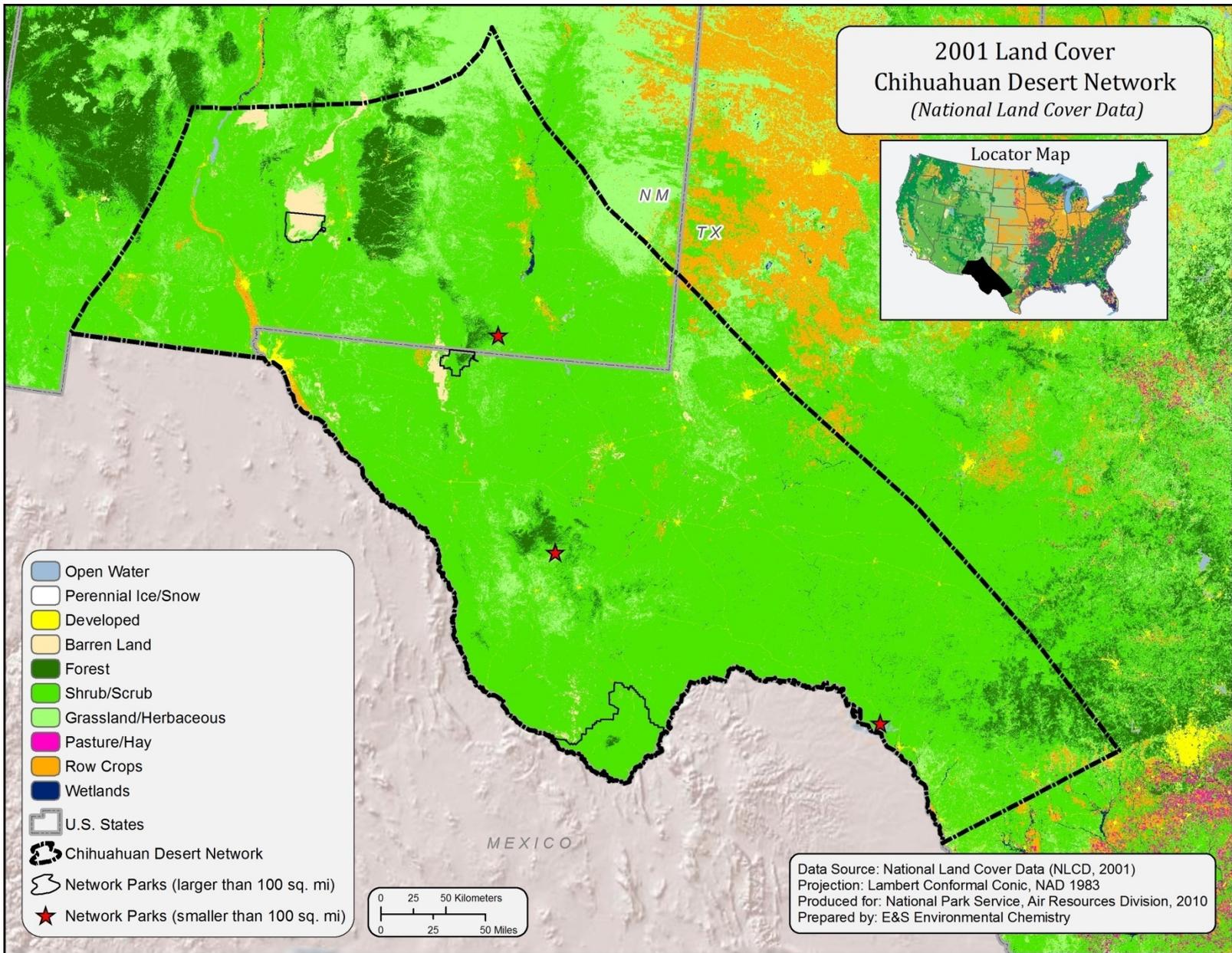
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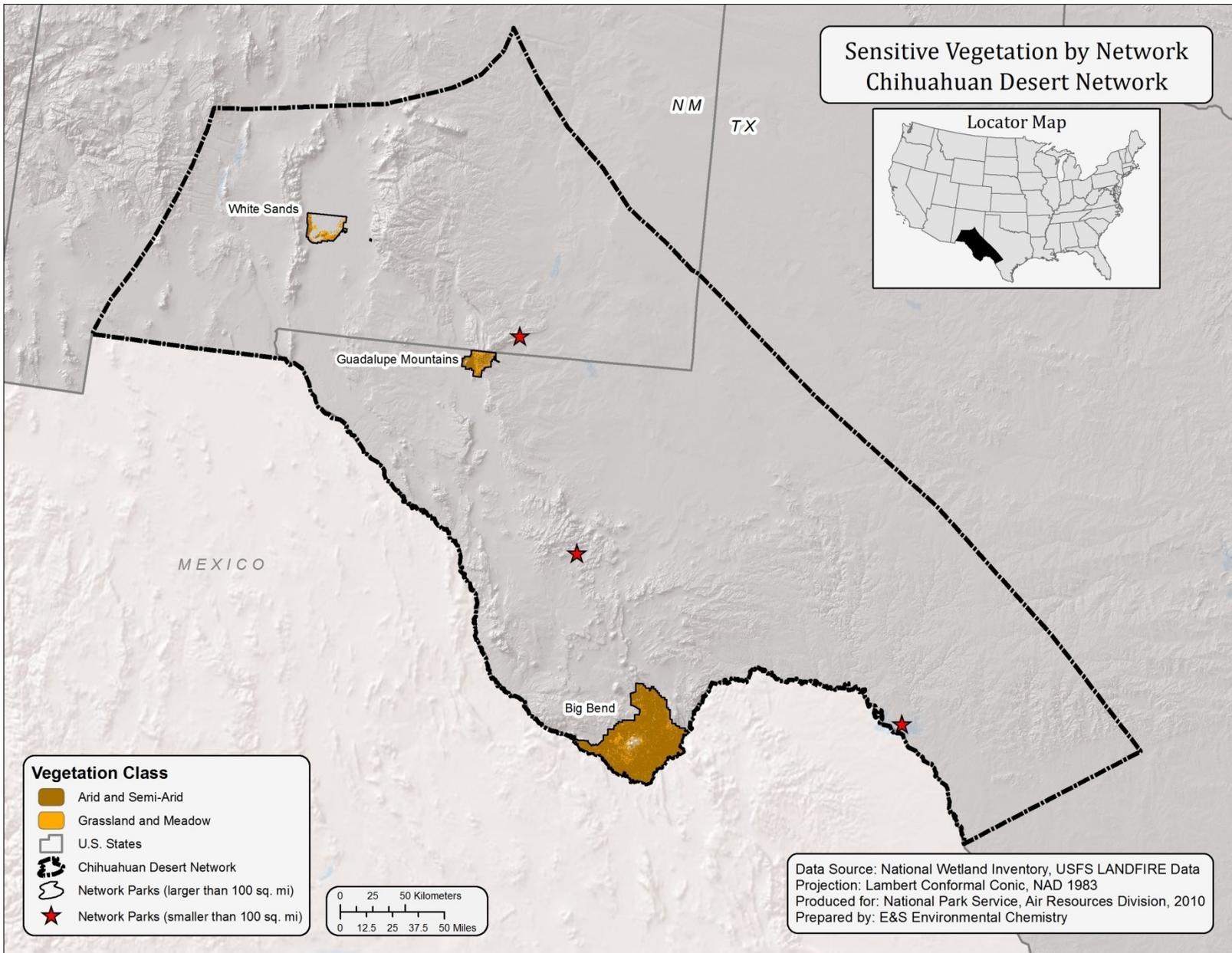
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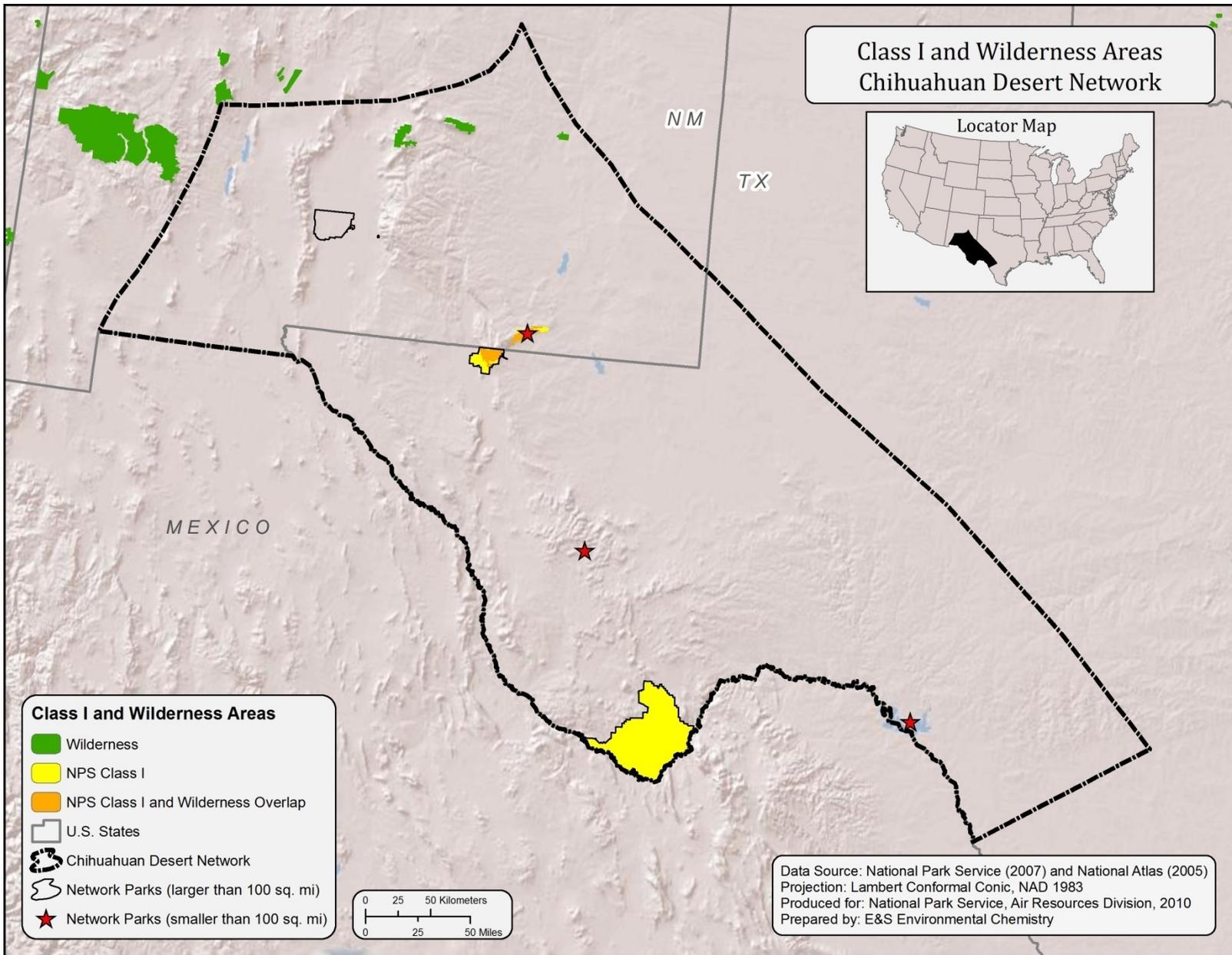
Map F



Map G



Map H



Map I

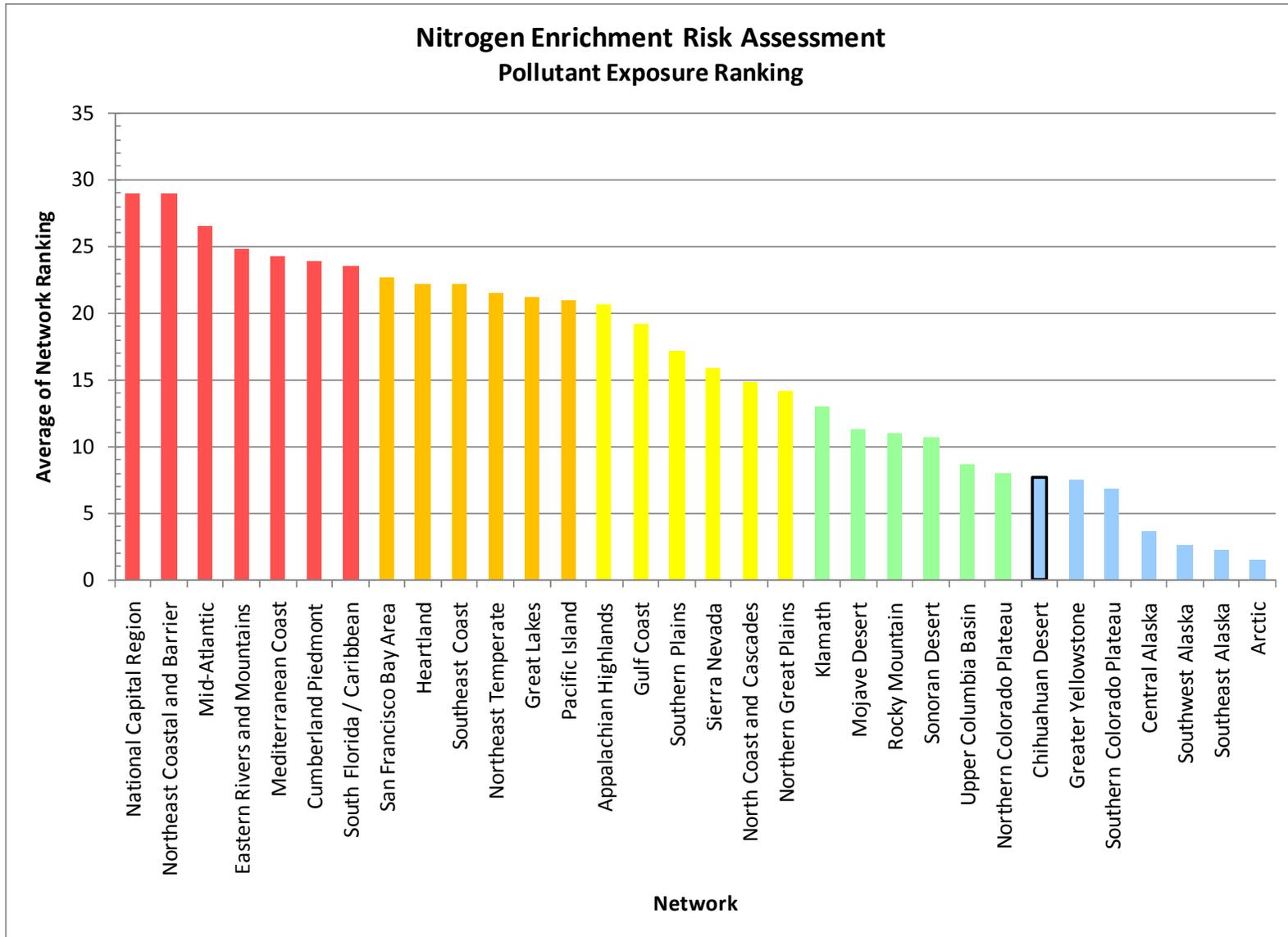


Figure A

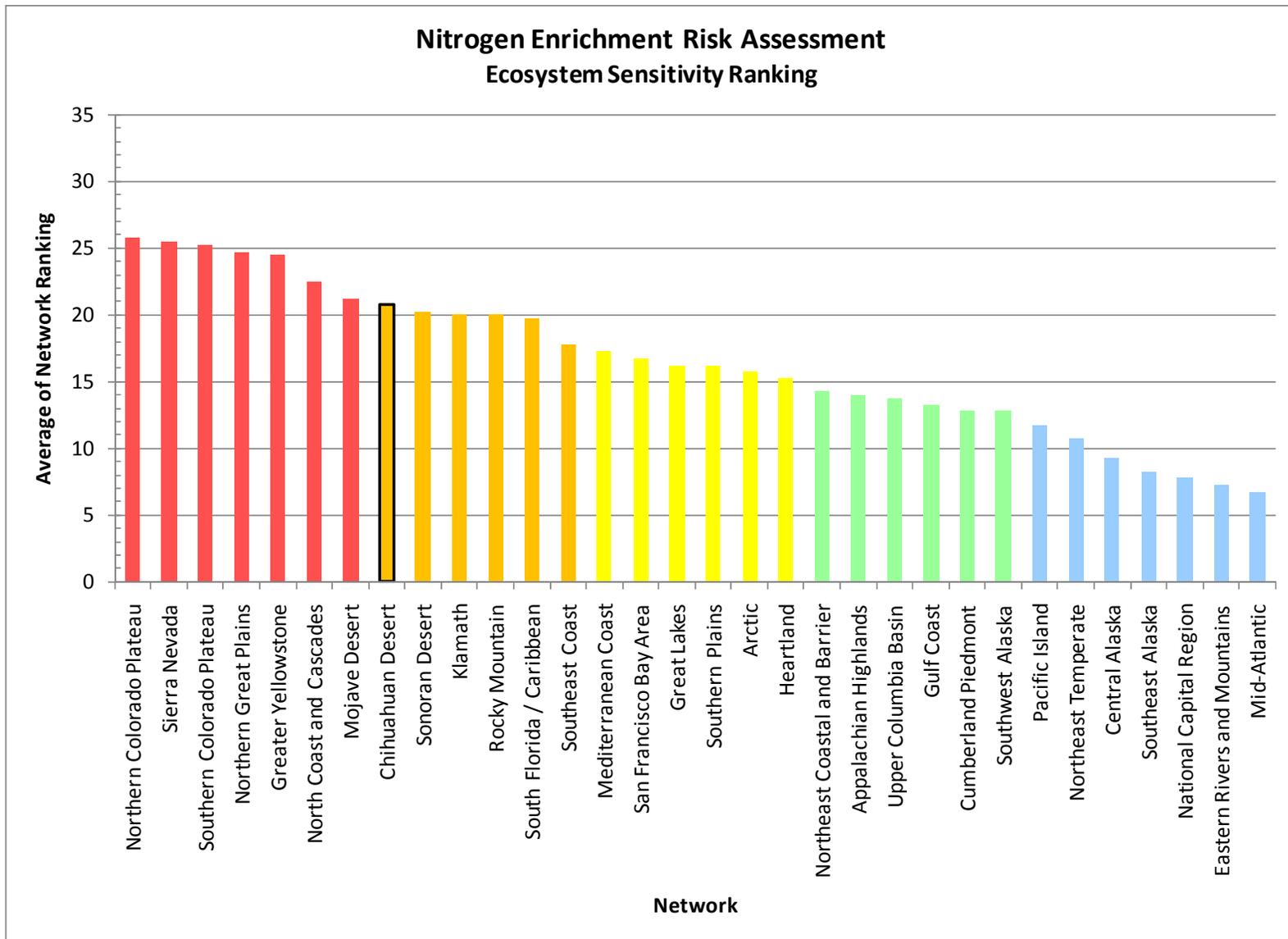


Figure B

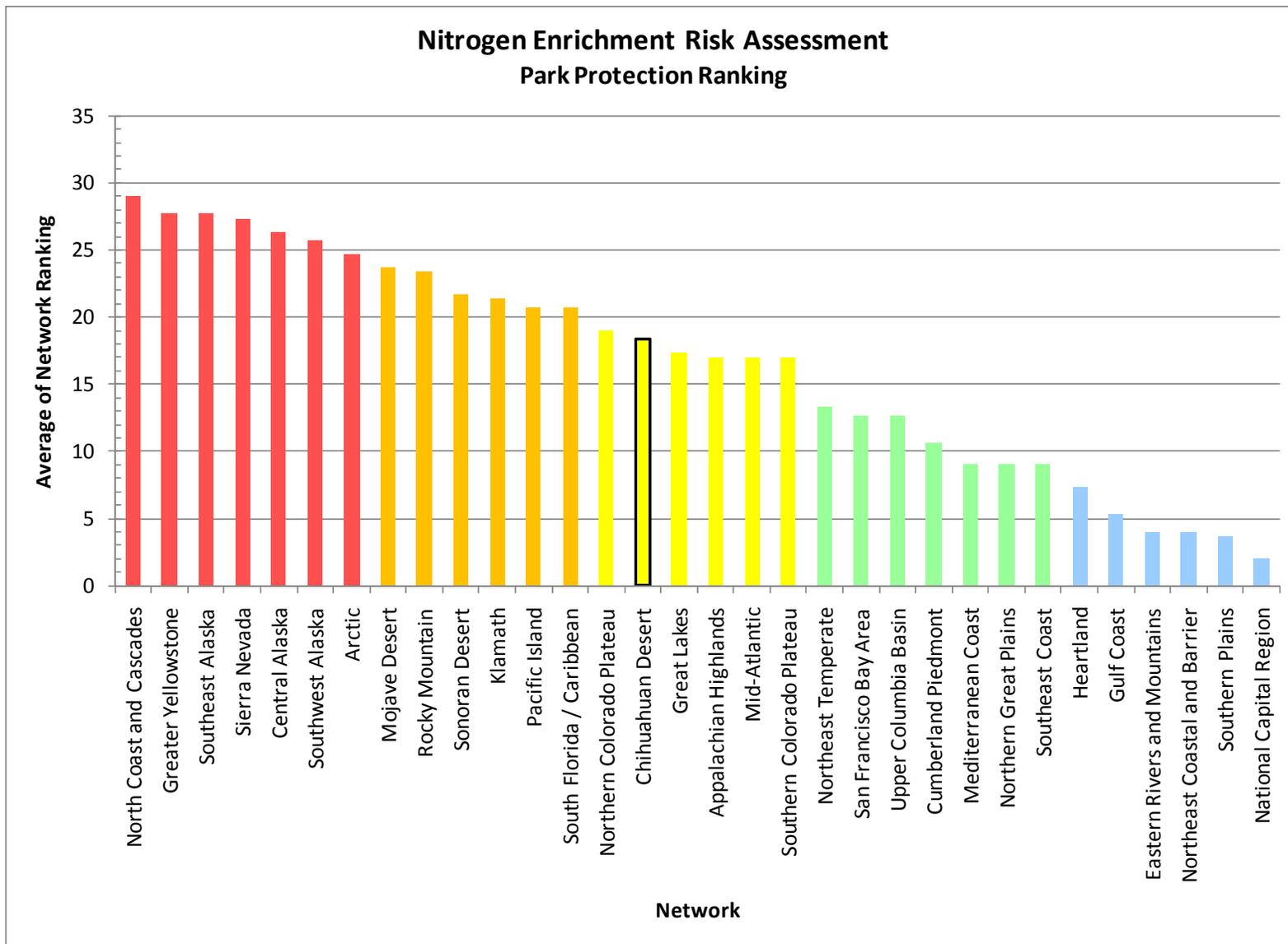


Figure C

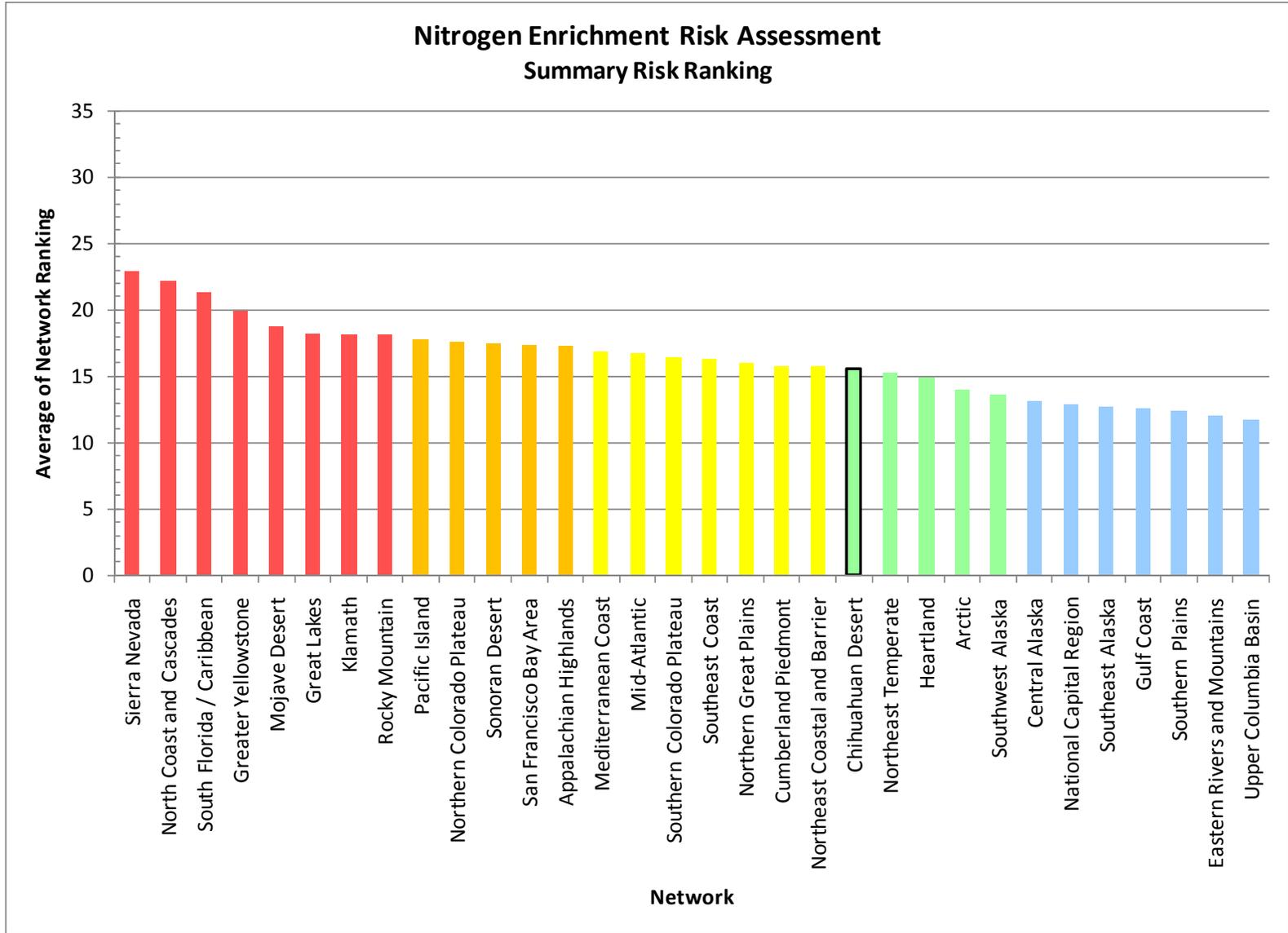


Figure D

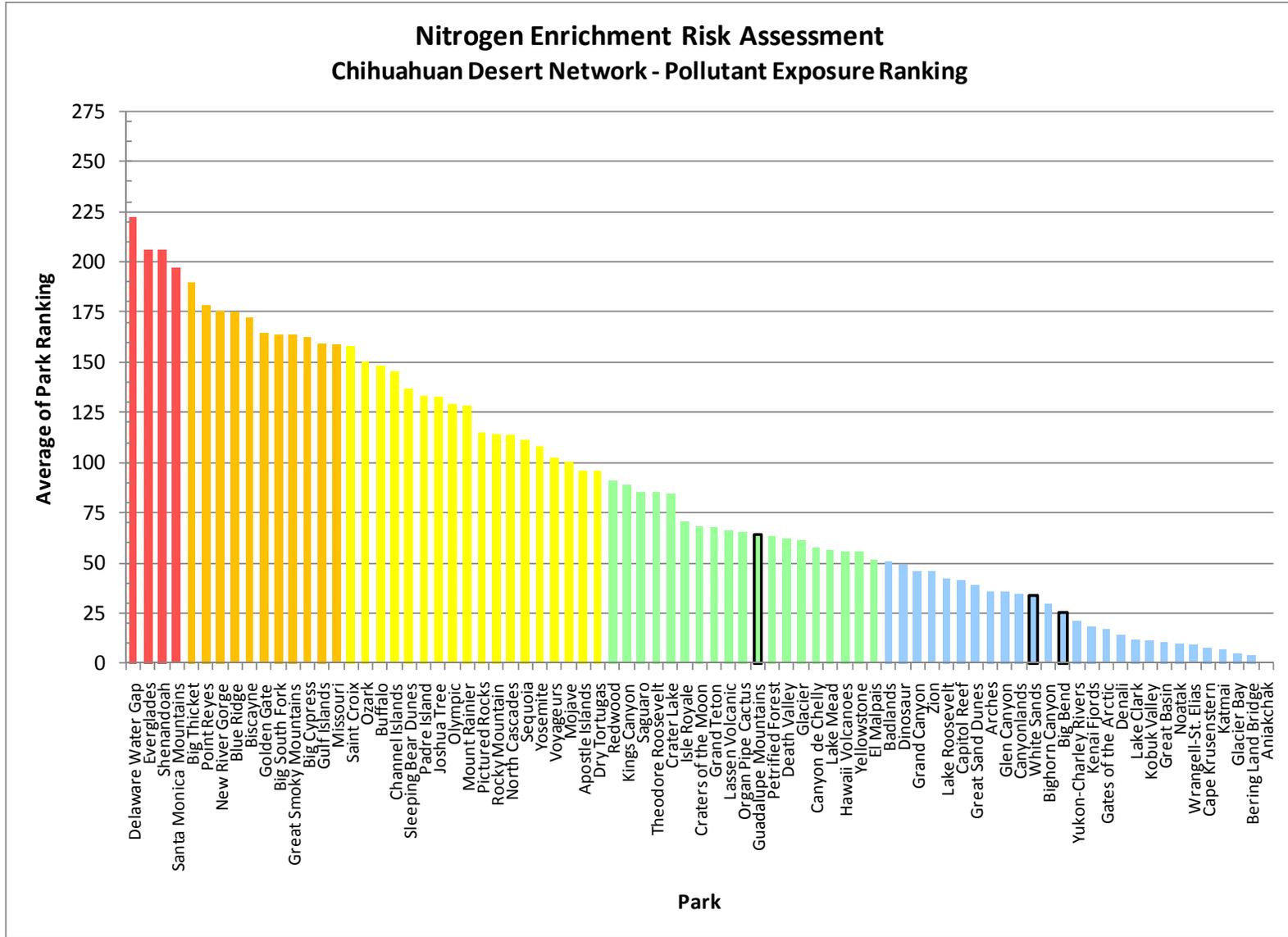


Figure E

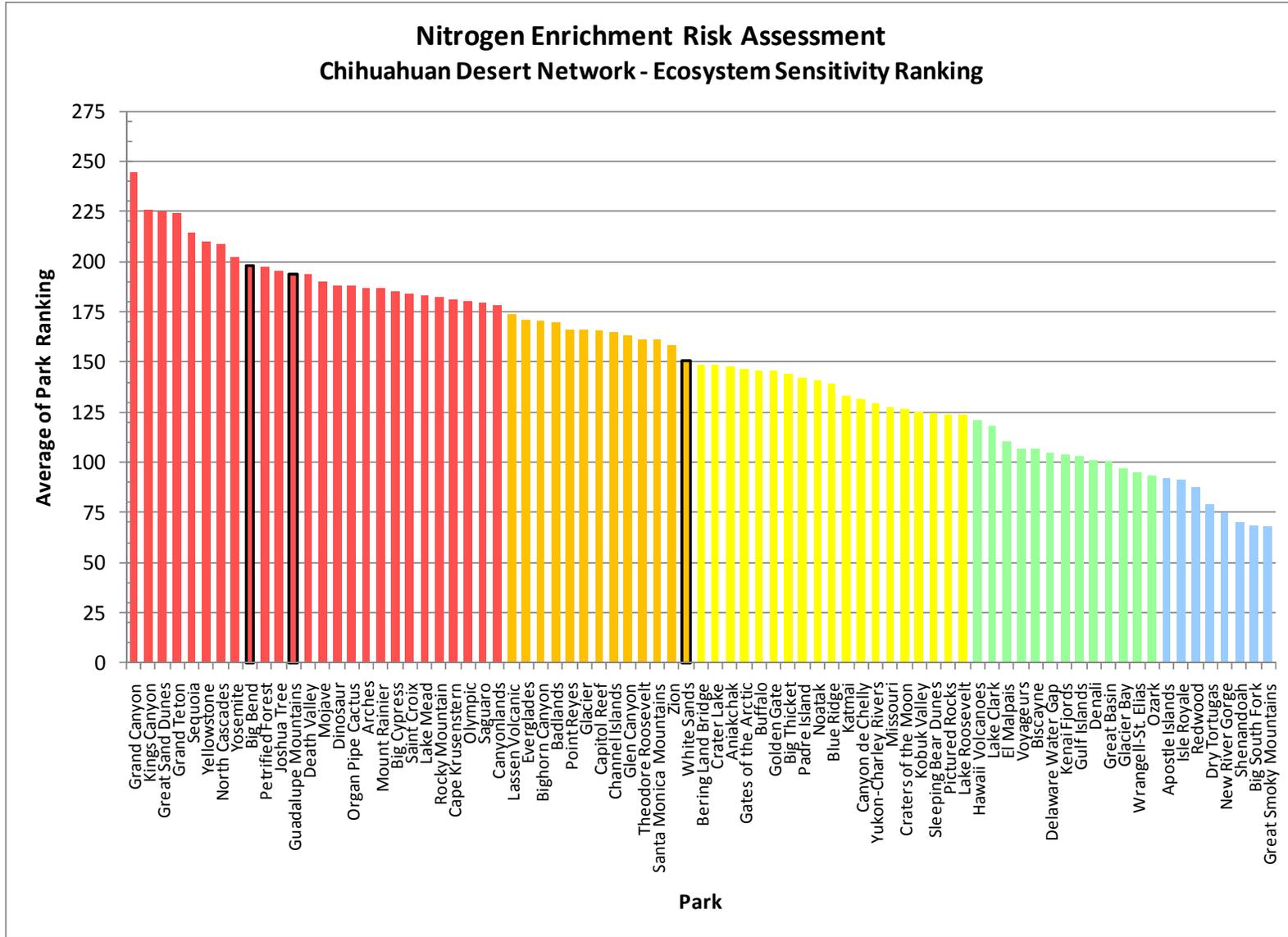


Figure F

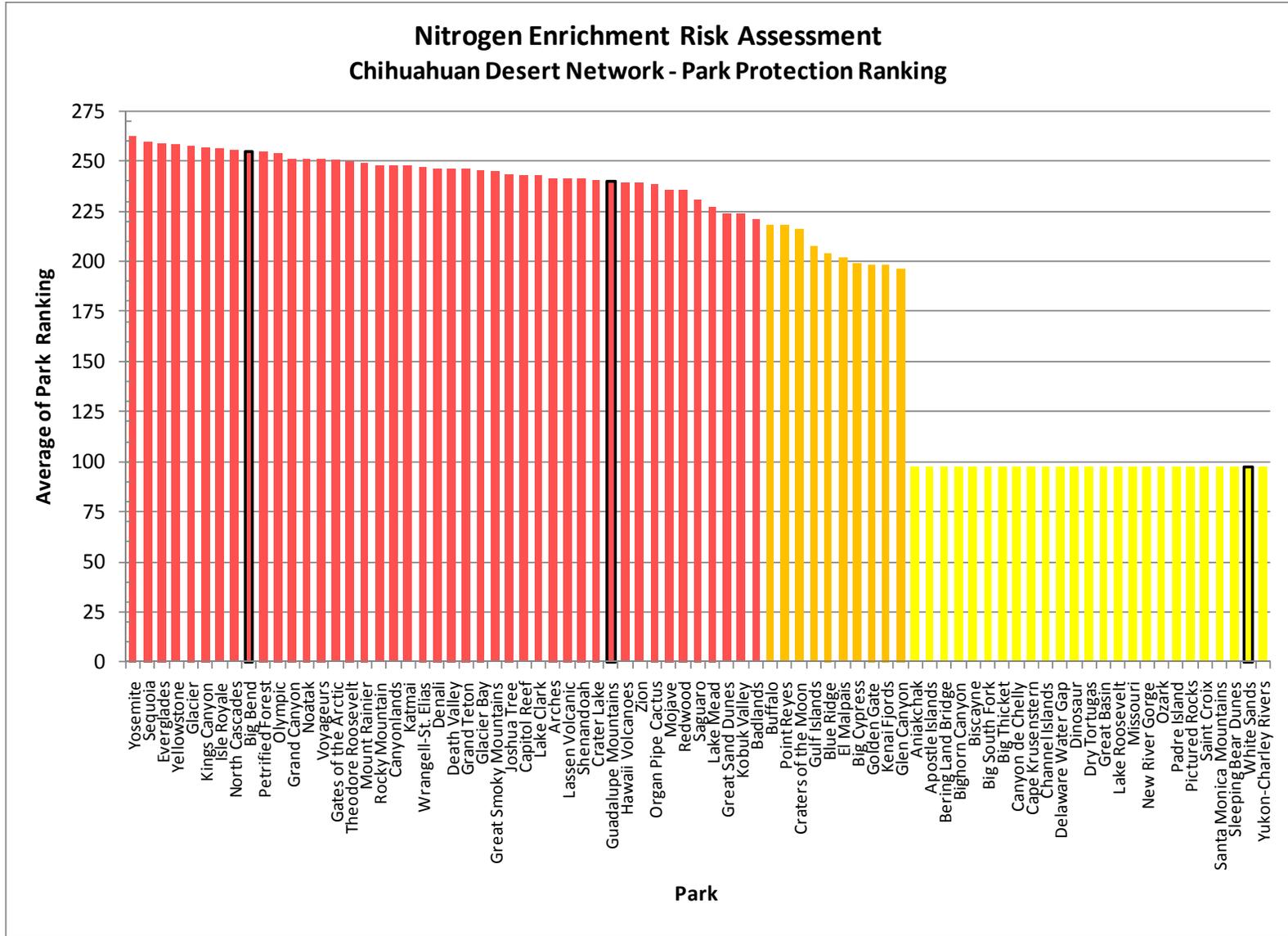


Figure G

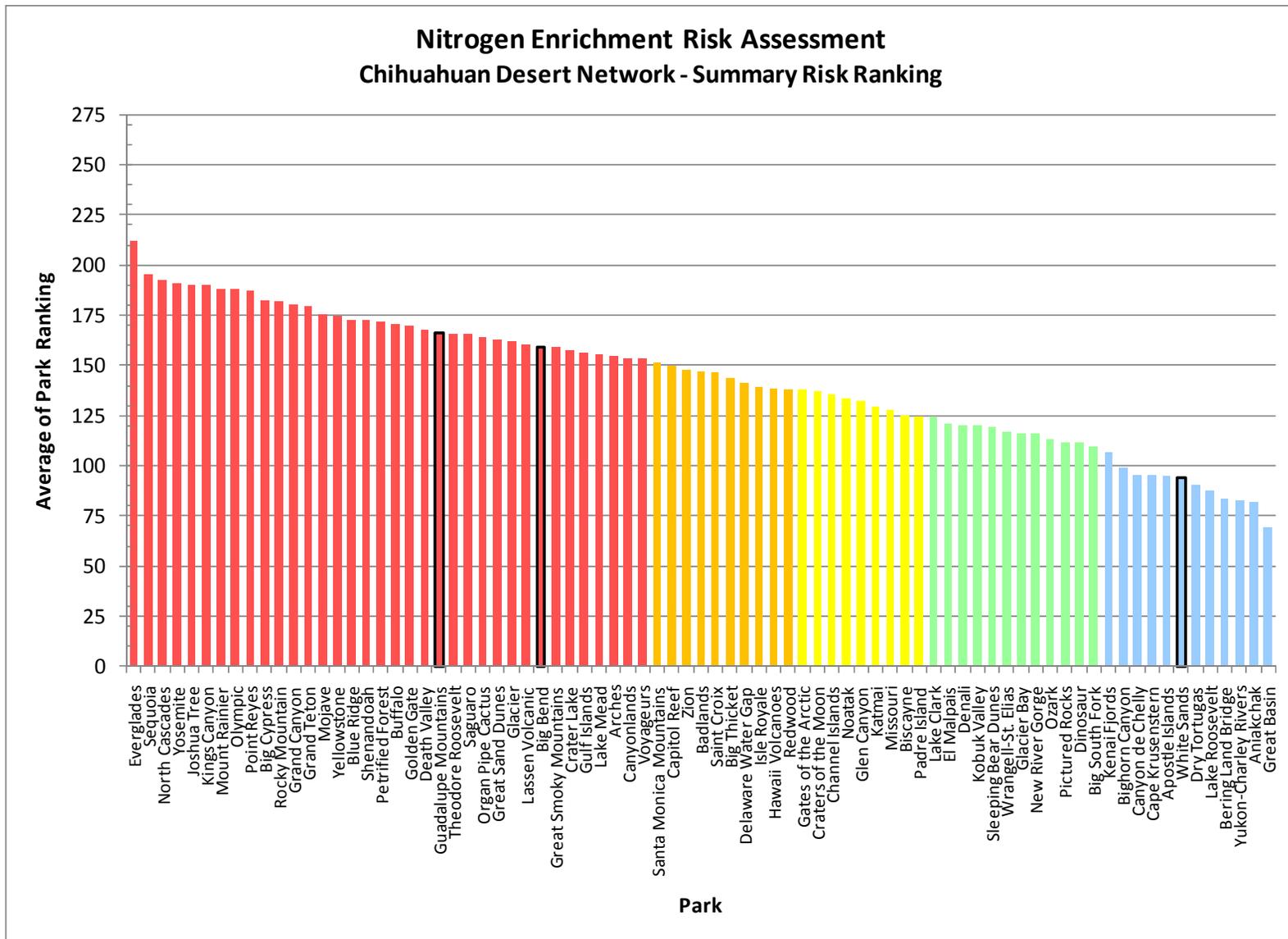


Figure H

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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