



Evaluation of the Sensitivity of Inventory and Monitoring National Parks to Acidification Effects from Atmospheric Sulfur and Nitrogen Deposition

Chihuahuan Desert Network (CHDN)

Natural Resource Report NPS/NRPC/ARD/NRR—2011/353



ON THE COVER

Some ecosystems and vegetation types, such as remote high-elevation lakes, sugar maple trees, headwater streams, and red spruce trees, are sensitive to the effects of acidification from atmospheric nitrogen and sulfur deposition.

Photograph by: National Park Service

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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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Chihuahuan Desert Network (CHDN)

National maps of atmospheric S and N emissions and deposition are provided in Maps A through D as context for subsequent network data presentations. Maps A and B show county level emissions of total S and total N for the year 2002. Maps C and D show total S and 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 (WHSA). There are also three smaller parks: Amistad (AMIS), Carlsbad Caverns (CAVE), and Fort Davis (FODA).

Total annual S and N emissions, by county, are shown in Maps E and F, respectively, for lands in and surrounding the Chihuahuan Desert Network. Annual county-level S emissions within the network were mostly less than 1 ton per square mile, although some counties within the network showed emission levels in the 1 to 5 tons per square mile range. Annual county-level N emissions within the networks ranged from less than 1 ton per square mile to between 5 and 20 tons per square mile. In general, annual N emissions were less than 5 tons per square mile per year throughout most of the network, with only two counties in or partially in the network emitting N in the range of 5 to 20 tons per square mile. Individual point source emissions of S are shown in Map G. There were many point sources of S within the network, but none of any magnitude. All point sources emitted less than 5,000 tons of S per year. Point source emissions of oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH_3) N are shown in Map H. There were many point sources of N emissions within the network, with most emitting less than about 800 tons per year. The larger point sources were all sources of oxidized N, although there were 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 I. The only large population center within the network is El Paso, although there are several large urban centers within the 300-mile buffer outside the network, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Phoenix.

Total S and N deposition estimates in and around the network are shown in Maps J and K, respectively. Included in this analysis are both wet and dry forms of deposition and both the oxidized and reduced N species. Total S deposition within the network ranged from less than 2 to 5 kg S/ha/yr, with most of the network receiving less than 2 kg S/ha/yr. Deposition values just east of the network boundary were estimated to be in the 5 to 10 kg S/ha/yr range. 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 received 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 L. 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.

Land slope is displayed in Map M for park lands in and around the network. The average HUC slope for parks in the network was variable. All HUCs in WHSA and AMIS had less than 10° slope, on average. More than half of the HUCs in GUMO were in the 10° to 20° range, with other watersheds exhibiting average slope in the 20° to 40° range. Other park units in the network generally had average slope less than 20° (Map M).

Park lands requiring special protection against potential adverse impacts associated with acidic deposition are shown on Map N. Also shown on Map N are all federal lands designated as wilderness, both lands managed by NPS and lands managed by other federal agencies. The land designations used to identify this heightened protection included Class I designation under the Clean Air Act Amendments 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.

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 ranked in the second lowest quintile among networks in Pollutant Exposure (Figure A). Sulfur and N emissions and deposition within the network were generally low. The network Ecosystem Sensitivity ranking was also in the second lowest quintile among networks (Figure B). This is because there are no red spruce or sugar maple in this network and relatively little length of high-elevation stream. This network ranked in the middle 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 yielded an overall network Summary Risk ranking that was Low, at the lower end of the distribution among networks (Figure D).

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 A. 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.

The six parks in this network were all ranked Low to Very Low in Pollutant Exposure (Table A, Figure E). Ecosystem Sensitivity rankings were generally higher and more variable (Figure F, Table A). Individual parks were ranked in the highest (CAVE), second highest (BIBE and GUMO), or second lowest (AMIS, FODA, and WHSA) quintiles in Ecosystem Sensitivity. Park Protection was ranked in the highest quintile for three of the parks (BIBE, CAVE, and GUMO). The other parks were ranked in the middle quintile (Figure G, Table A). The Summary Risk ranking was also variable among parks, with AMIS, FODA and WHSA all ranked Low, BIBE ranked Moderate, and CAVE and GUMO ranked High (Figure H, Table A).

Table A. Relative rankings of individual I&M parks within the network for Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, Park Protection, and overall Summary Risk from acidic deposition.

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

Map A. National map of total S emissions by county for the year 2002, in units of tons of S per square mile per year. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)

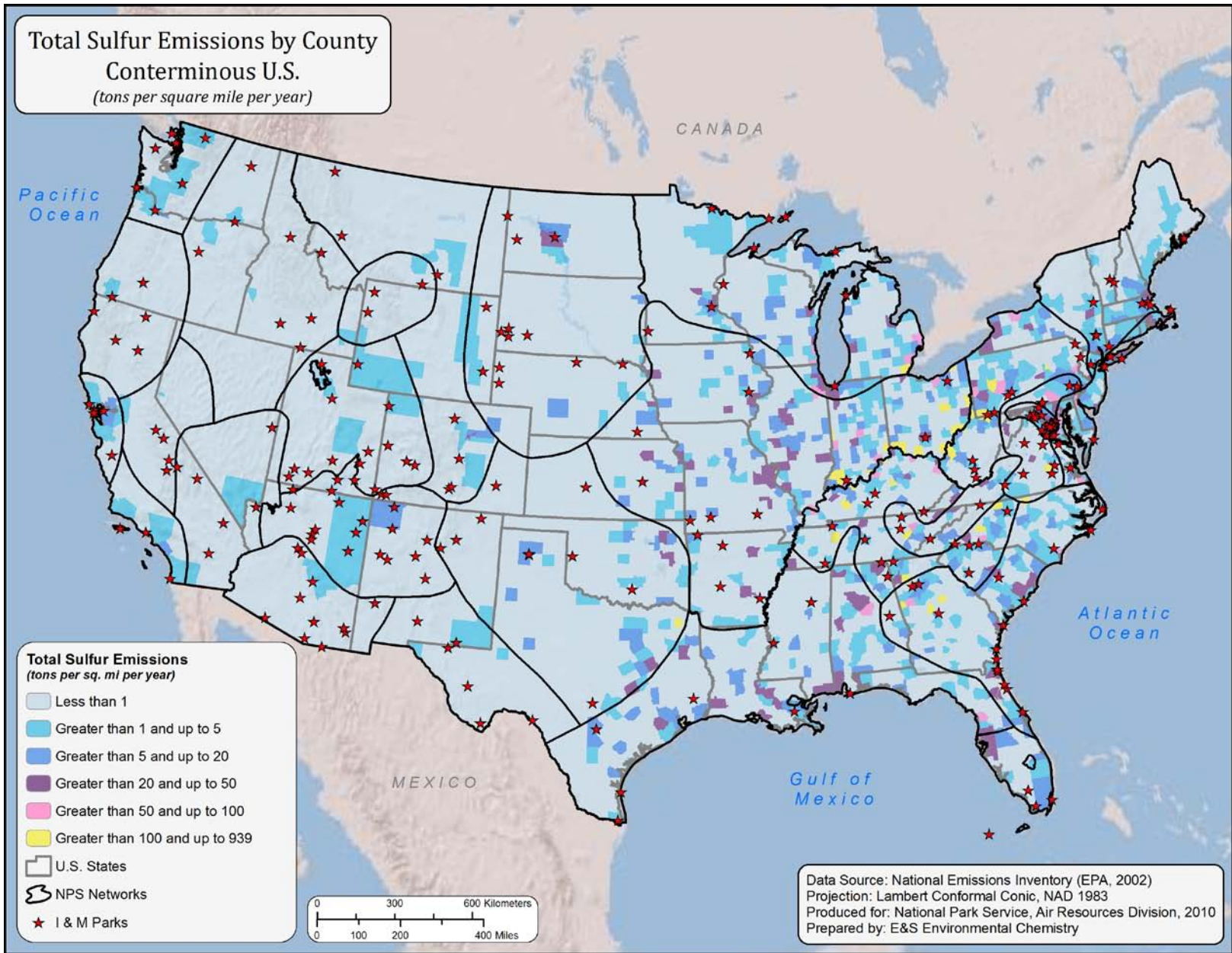
Map B. National map of total N emissions by county for the year 2002. Both oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) forms of N are included. The total is expressed in tons per square mile per year. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)

Map C. Total S deposition for the conterminous United States for the year 2002, expressed in units of kilograms of S deposited from the atmosphere to the Earth surface per hectare per year. 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.

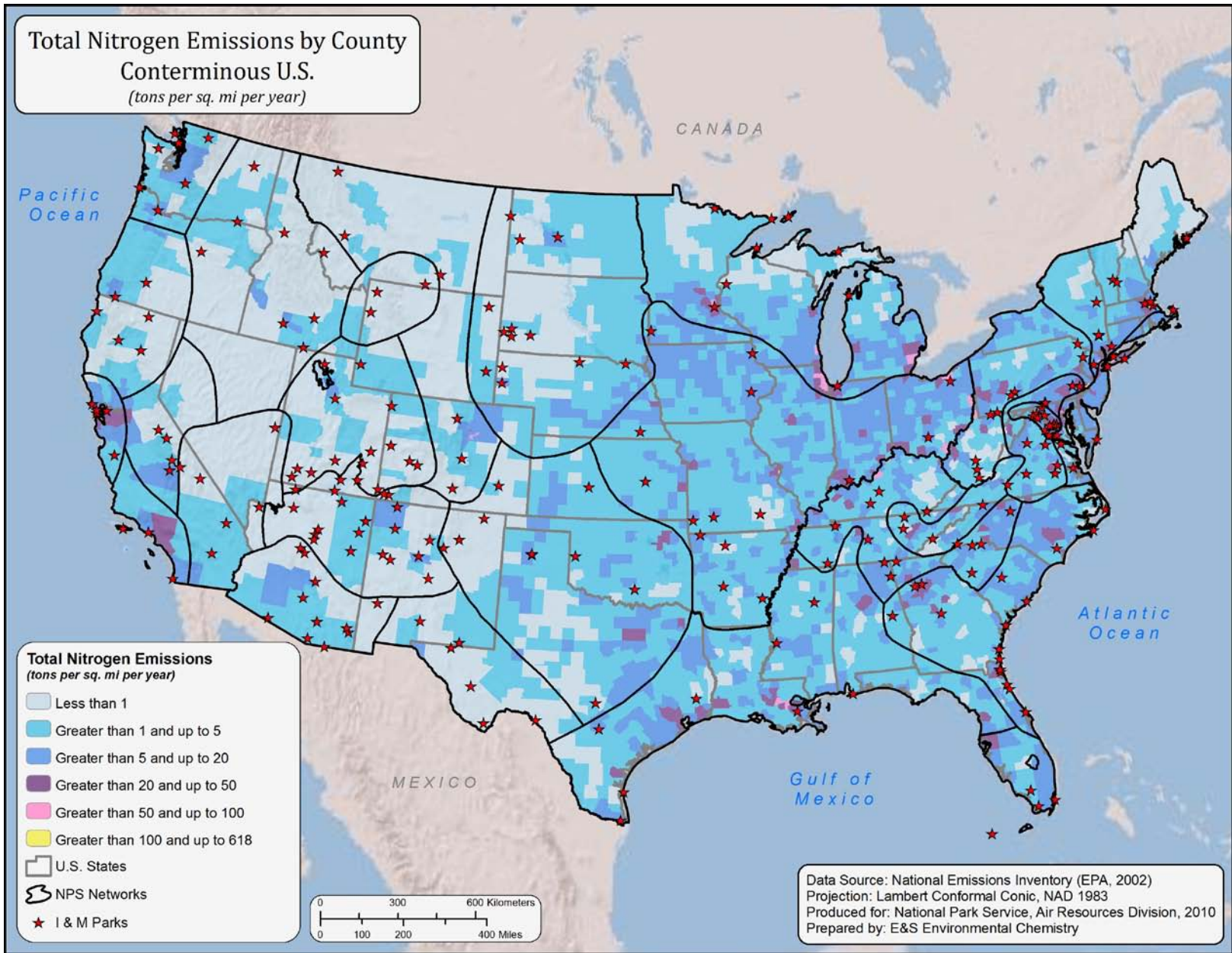
Map D. Total N deposition for the conterminous United States for the year 2002, expressed in units of kilograms of N deposited from the atmosphere to the Earth surface per hectare per year. Wet and dry forms of both oxidized (nitrogen oxides, NO_x) and reduced (ammonia, NH₃) N are included. For the eastern 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 E. Total S emissions by county for lands surrounding the network, expressed as tons of S emitted into the atmosphere per square mile per year. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)
- Map F. 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 G. Major point source emissions of SO₂ for lands surrounding the network. (Source of data: EPA National Emissions Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/chief/net/2002inventory.html>)
- Map H. 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 I. 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 J. Total S deposition in and around the network. Values are expressed as kilograms of S deposited per hectare per year. (Source of data: Interpolated NADP wet and CMAQ Model dry deposition data for 2002; see information for Map C above for details)
- Map K. 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: Interpolated NADP wet and CMAQ Model dry deposition data for 2002; see information for Map D above for details)
- Map L. 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 M. Average land slope within park units that occur within the network, by 10-digit HUC. (Source of data: U.S. EPA National Elevation Dataset [<http://ned.usgs.gov/>])
- Map N. 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 rankings, calculated as the average of the quintile ranks for the Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, and Park Protection themes.
- 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 the quintile ranks for the Pollutant Exposure, Ecosystem Sensitivity, and Park Protection themes.

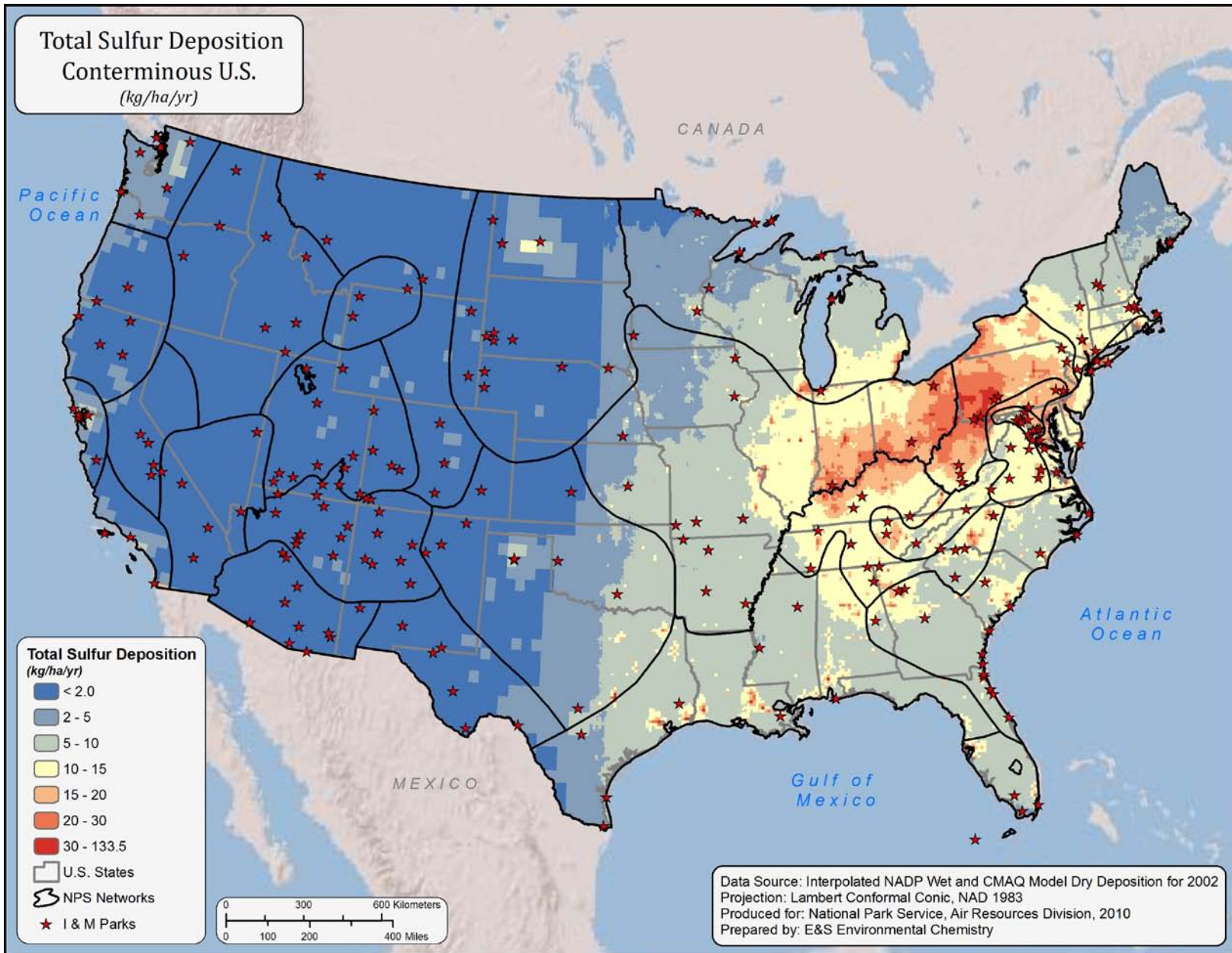


Map A

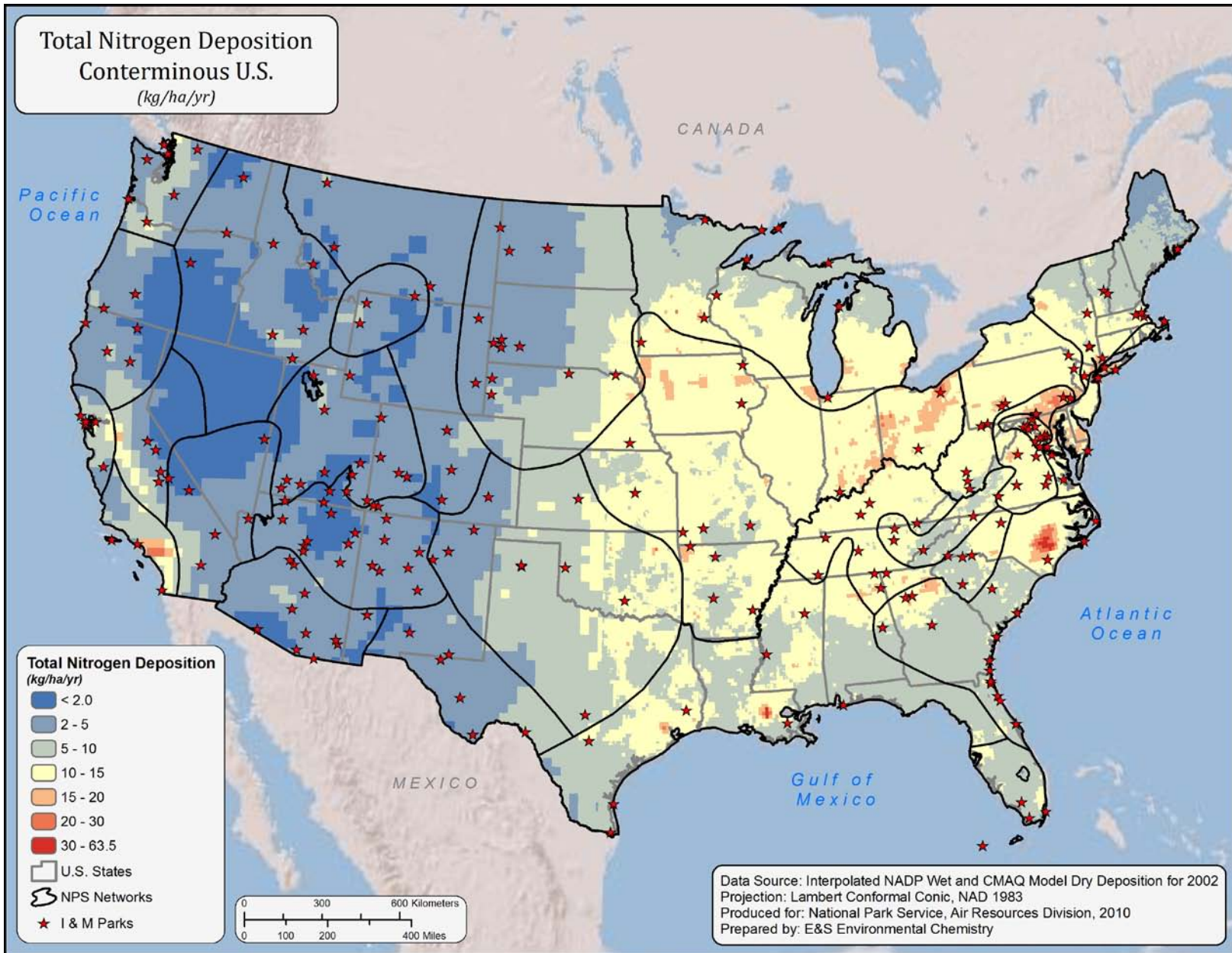


Map B

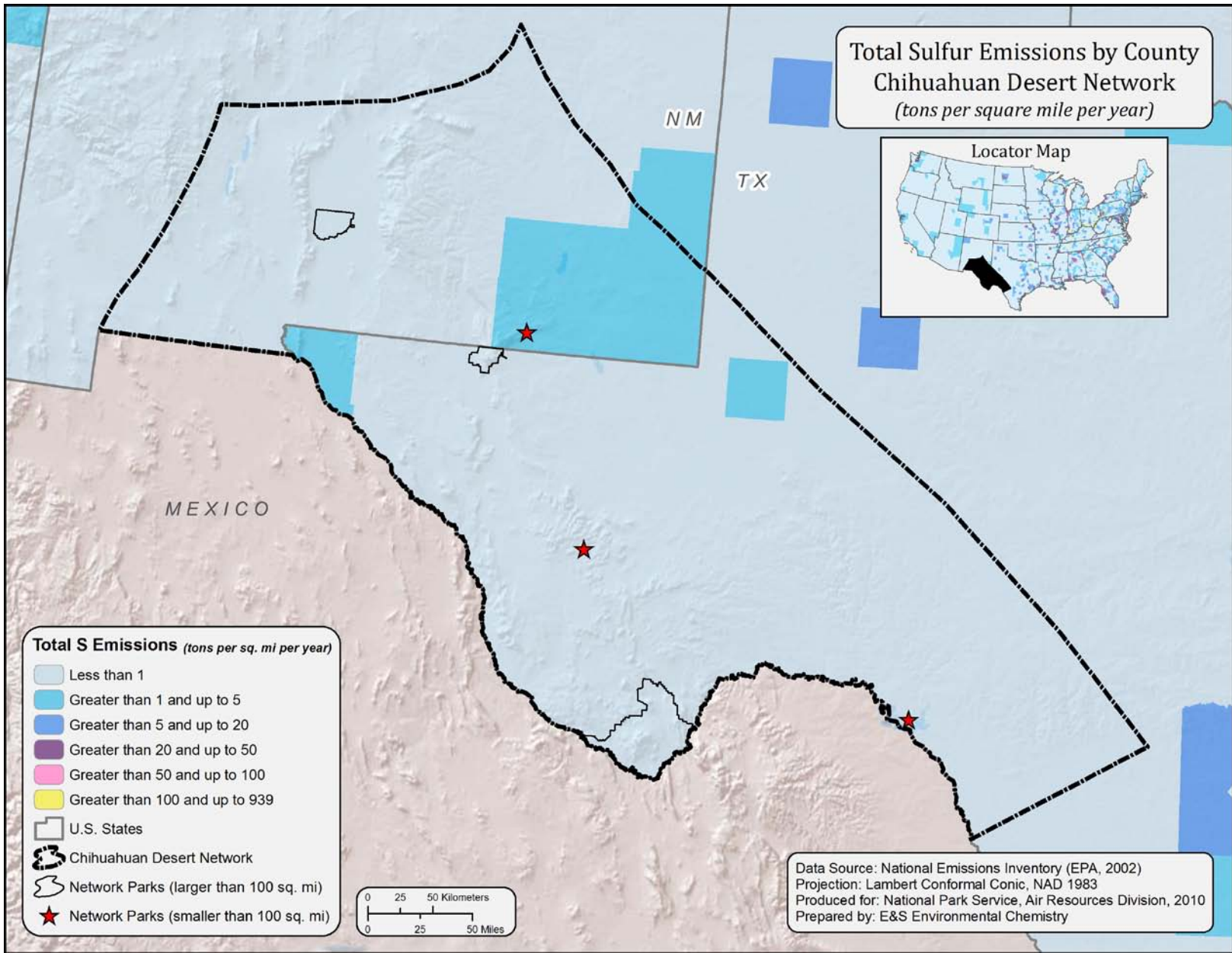
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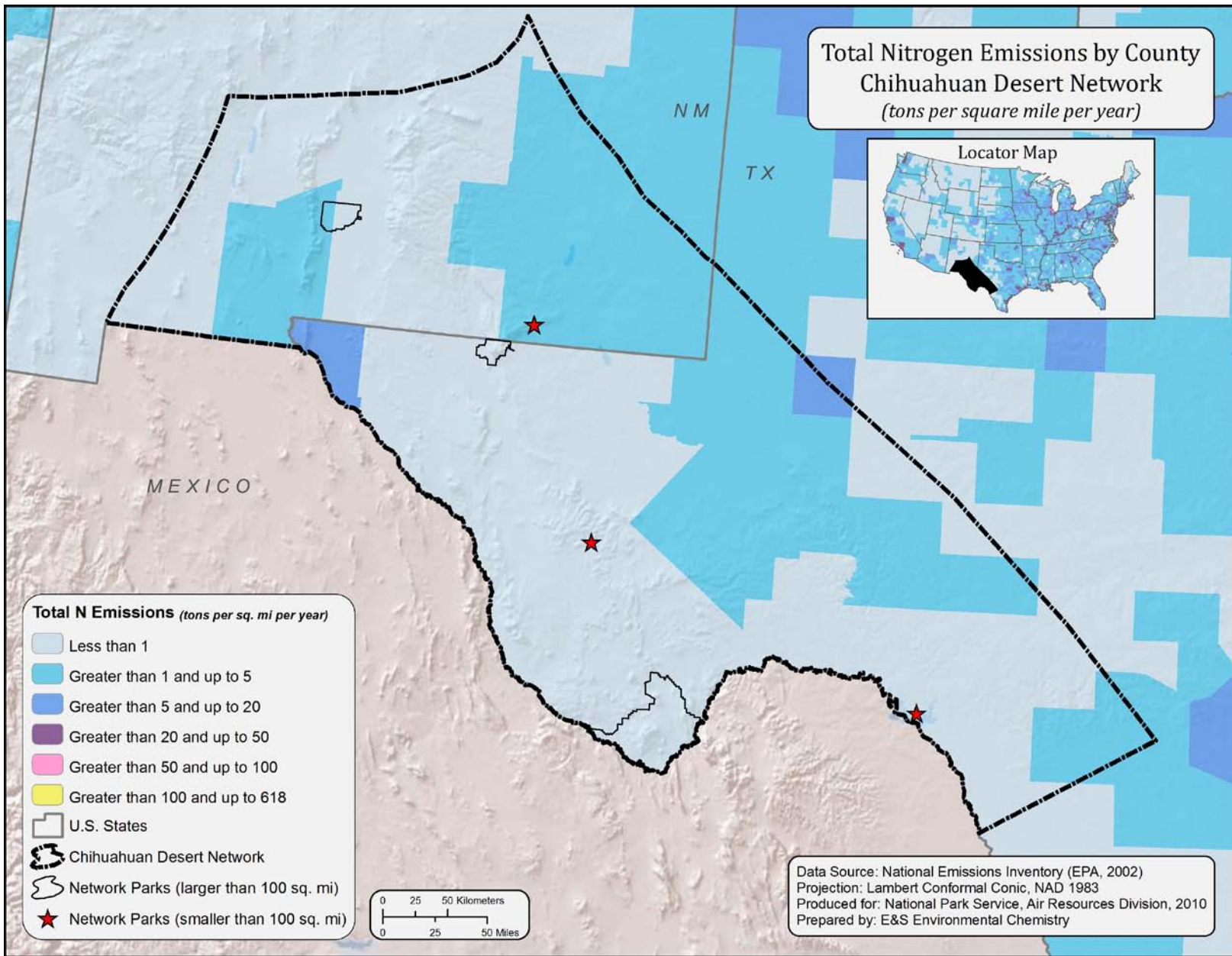
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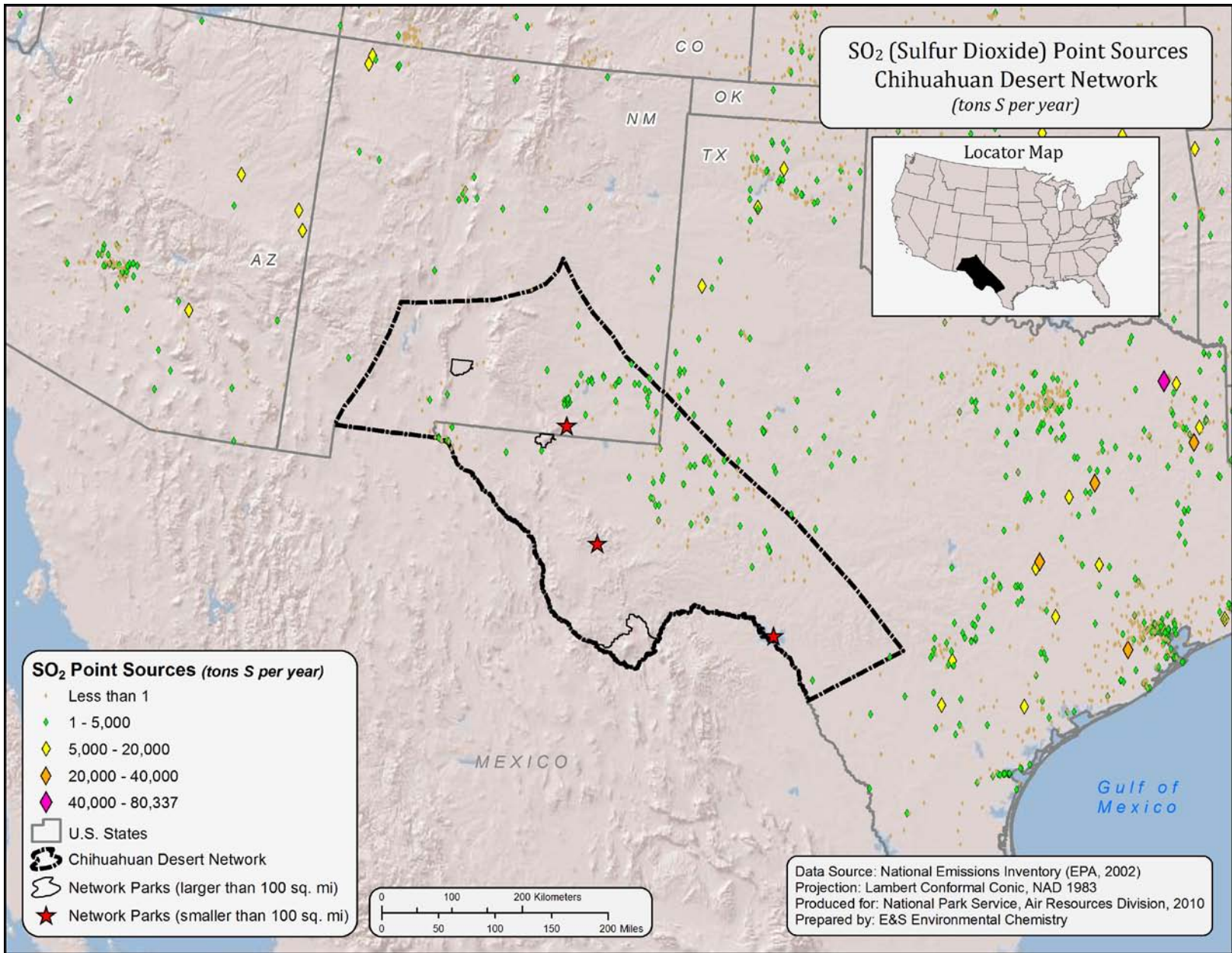
Map D



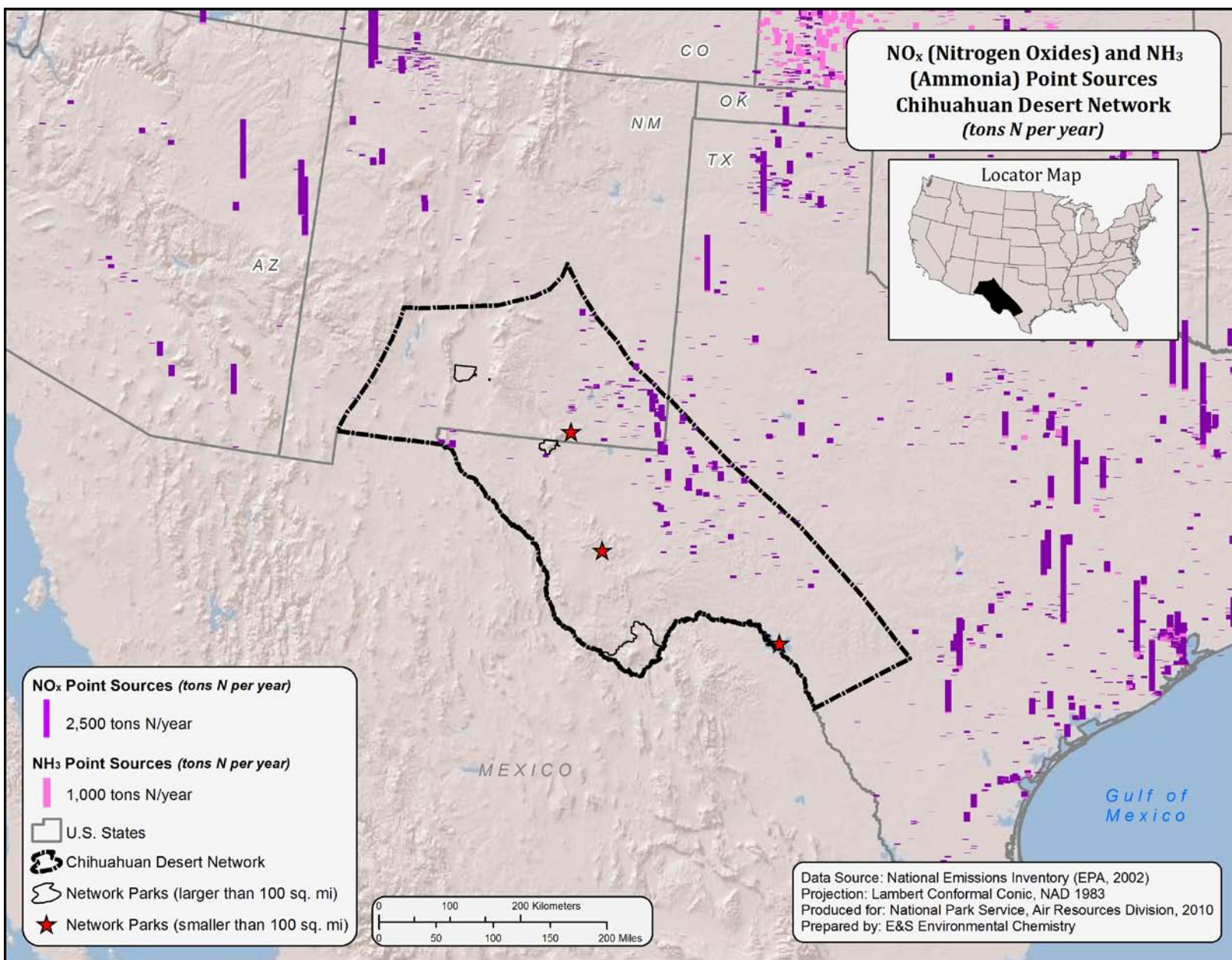
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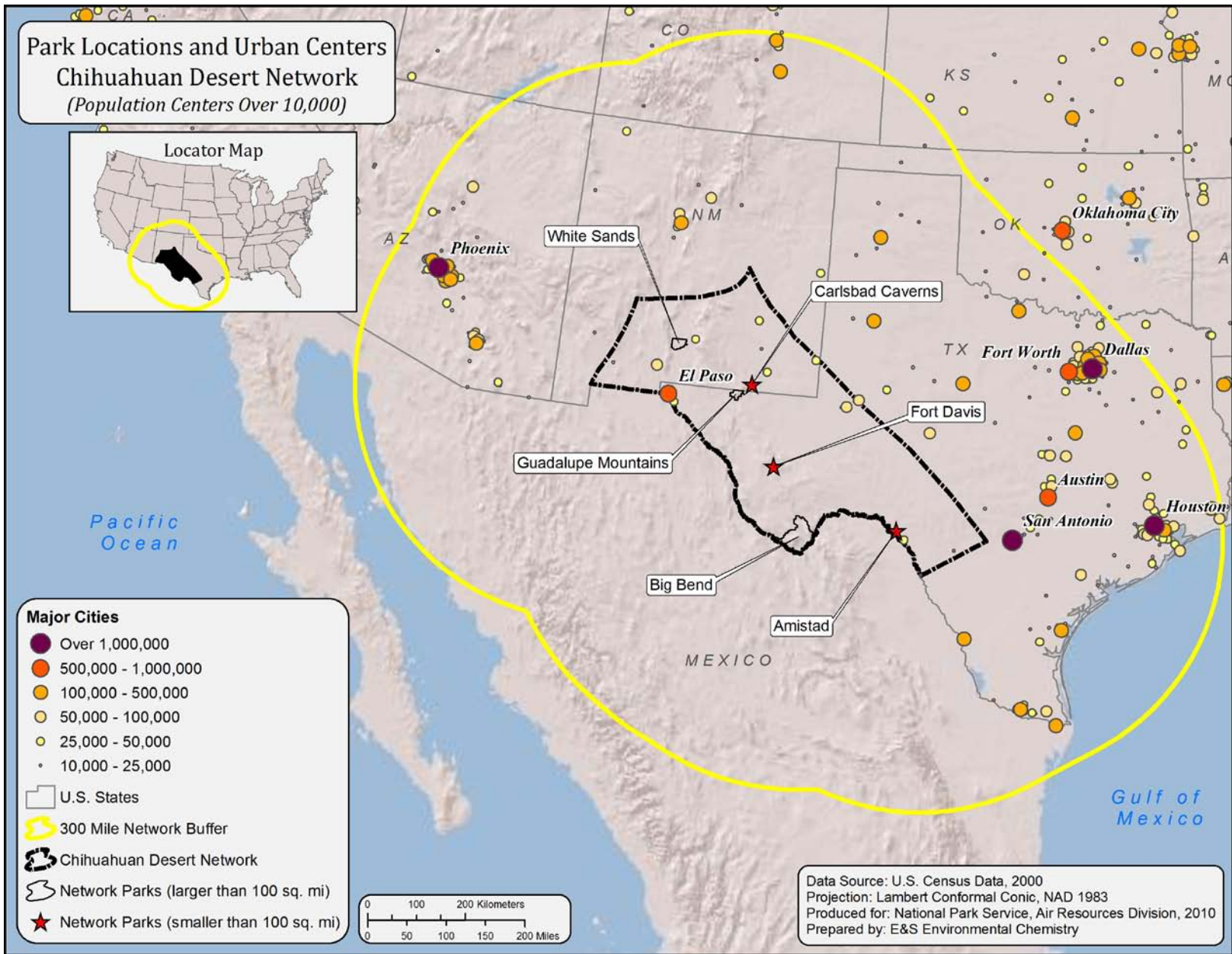
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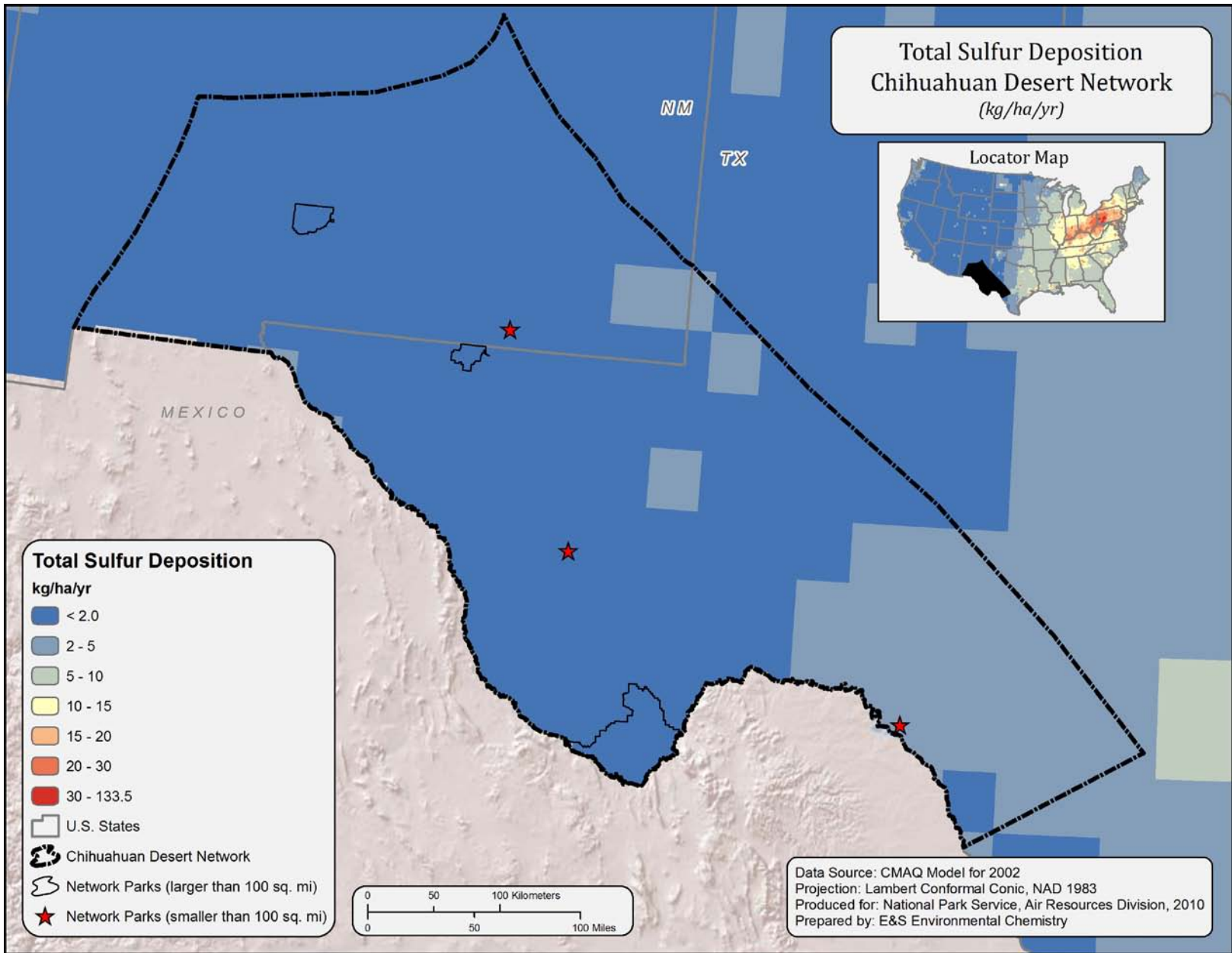
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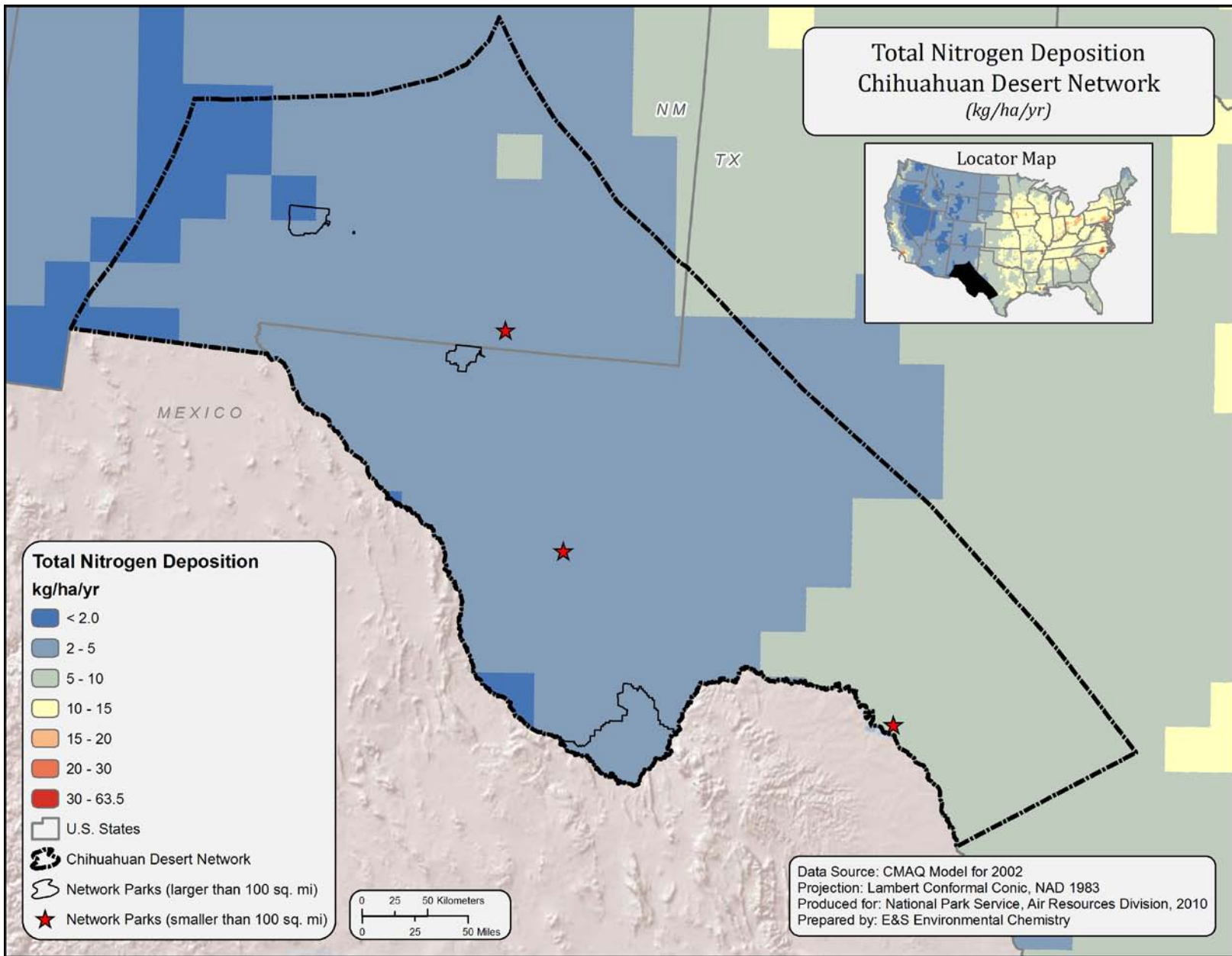
Map H



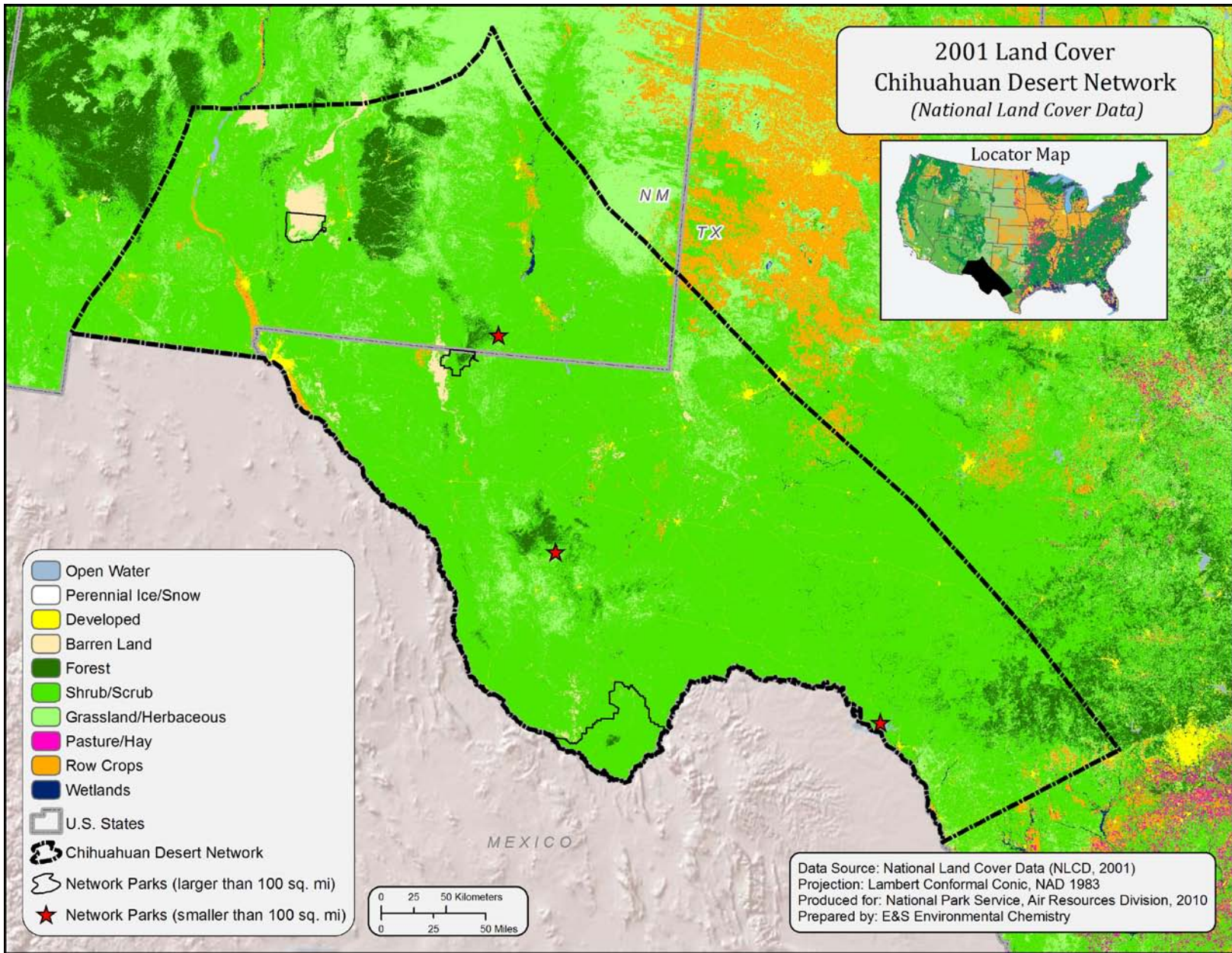
Map I



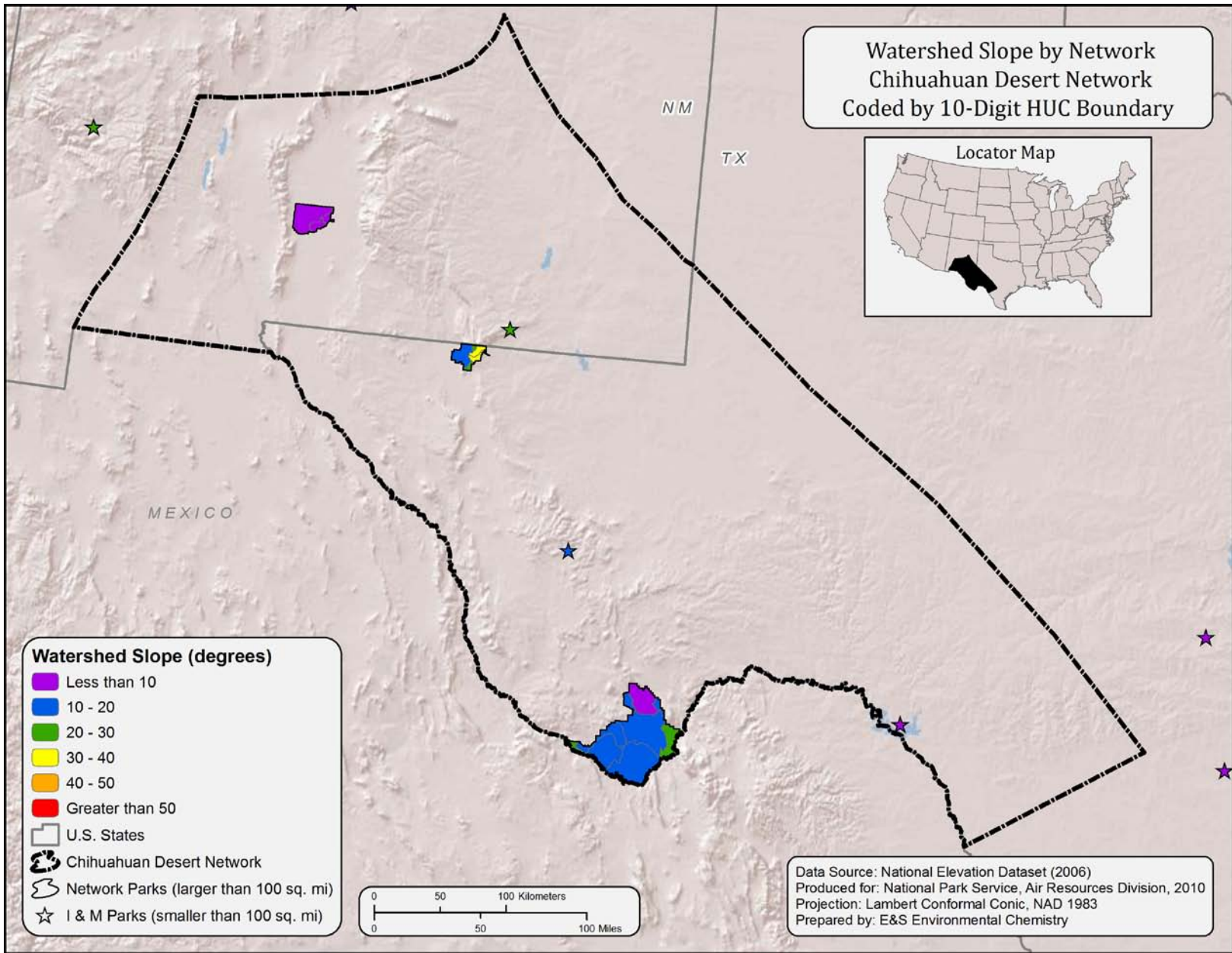
Map J



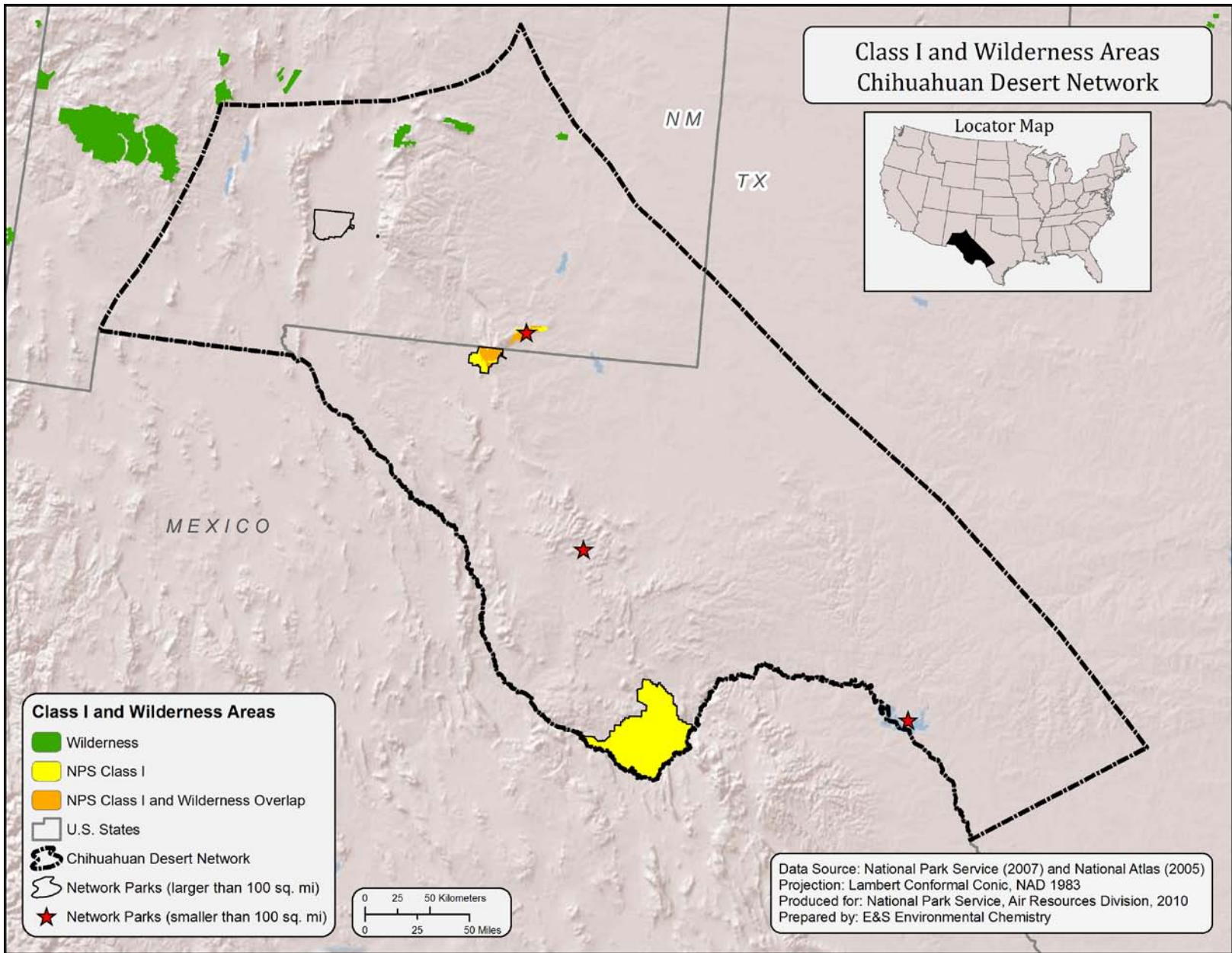
Map K



Map L



Map M



Map N

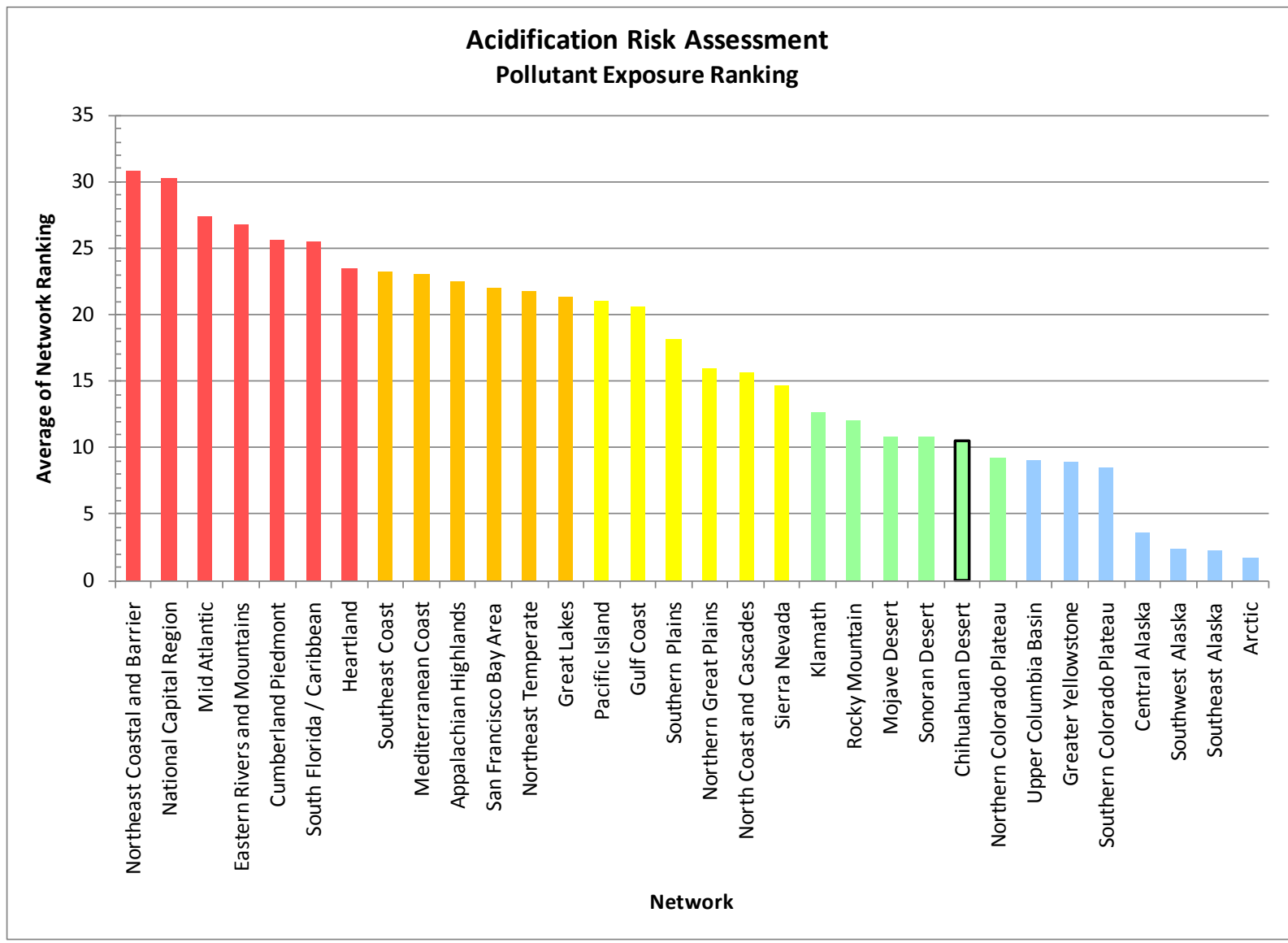


Figure A

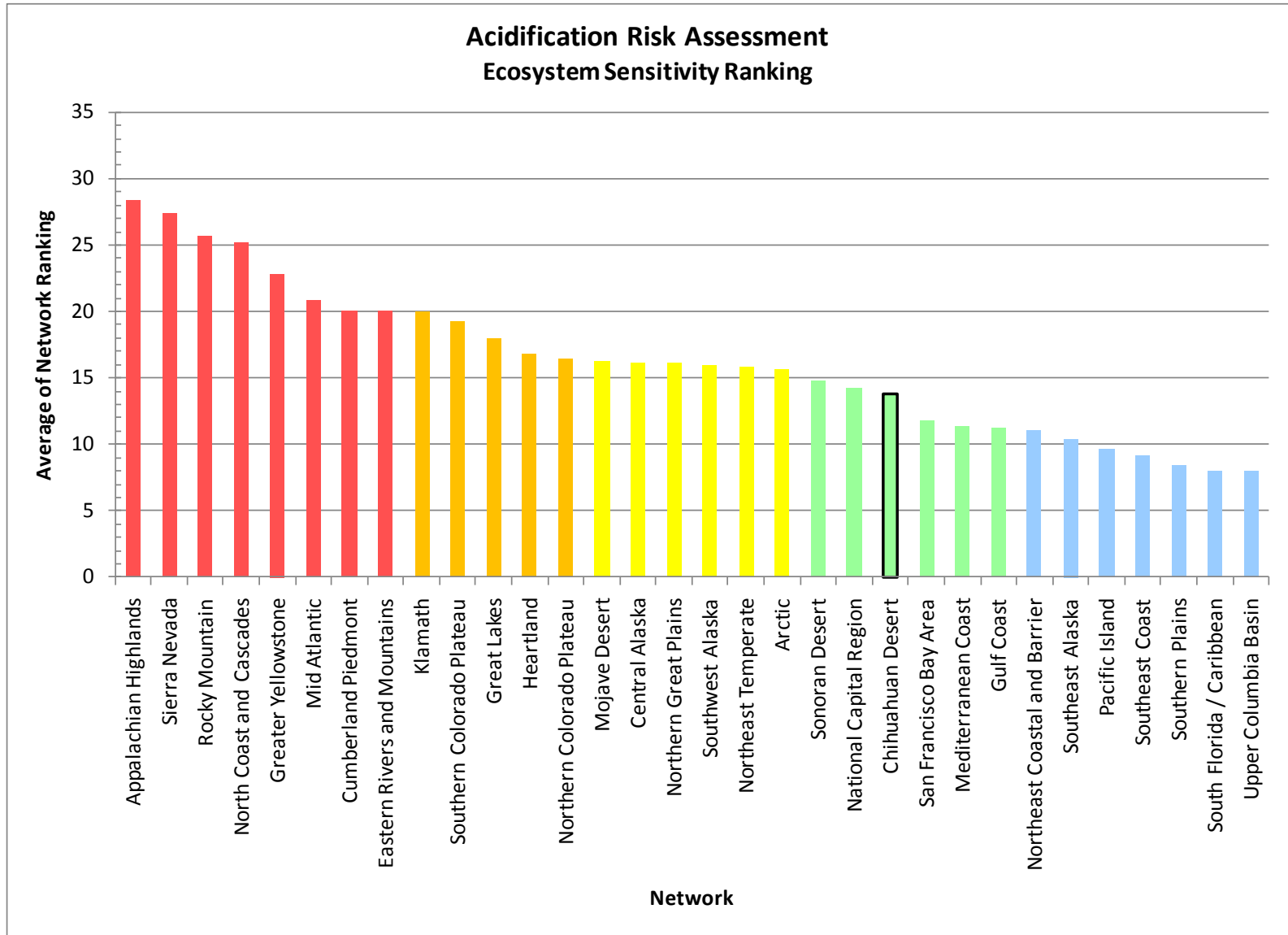


Figure B

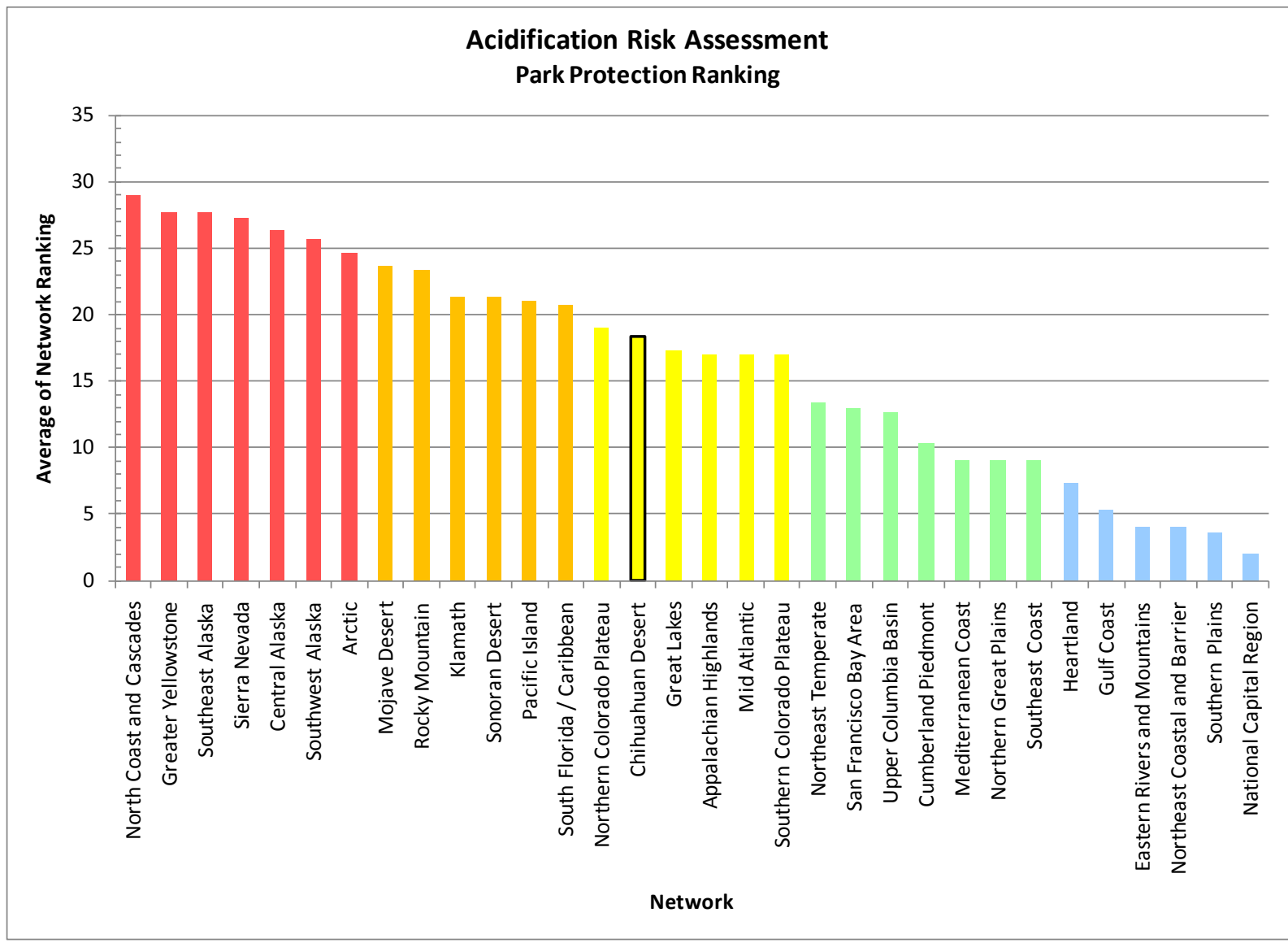


Figure C

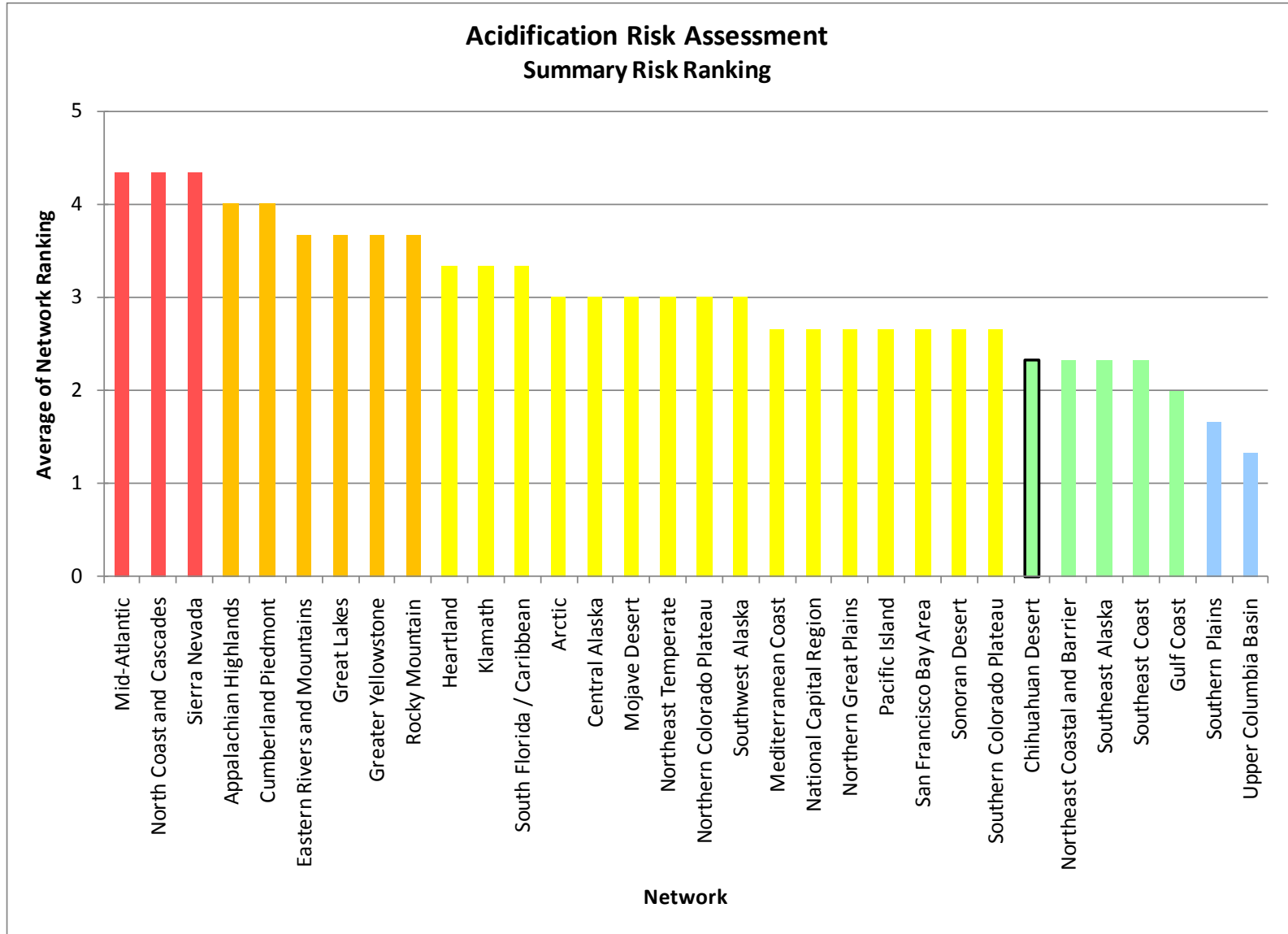


Figure D

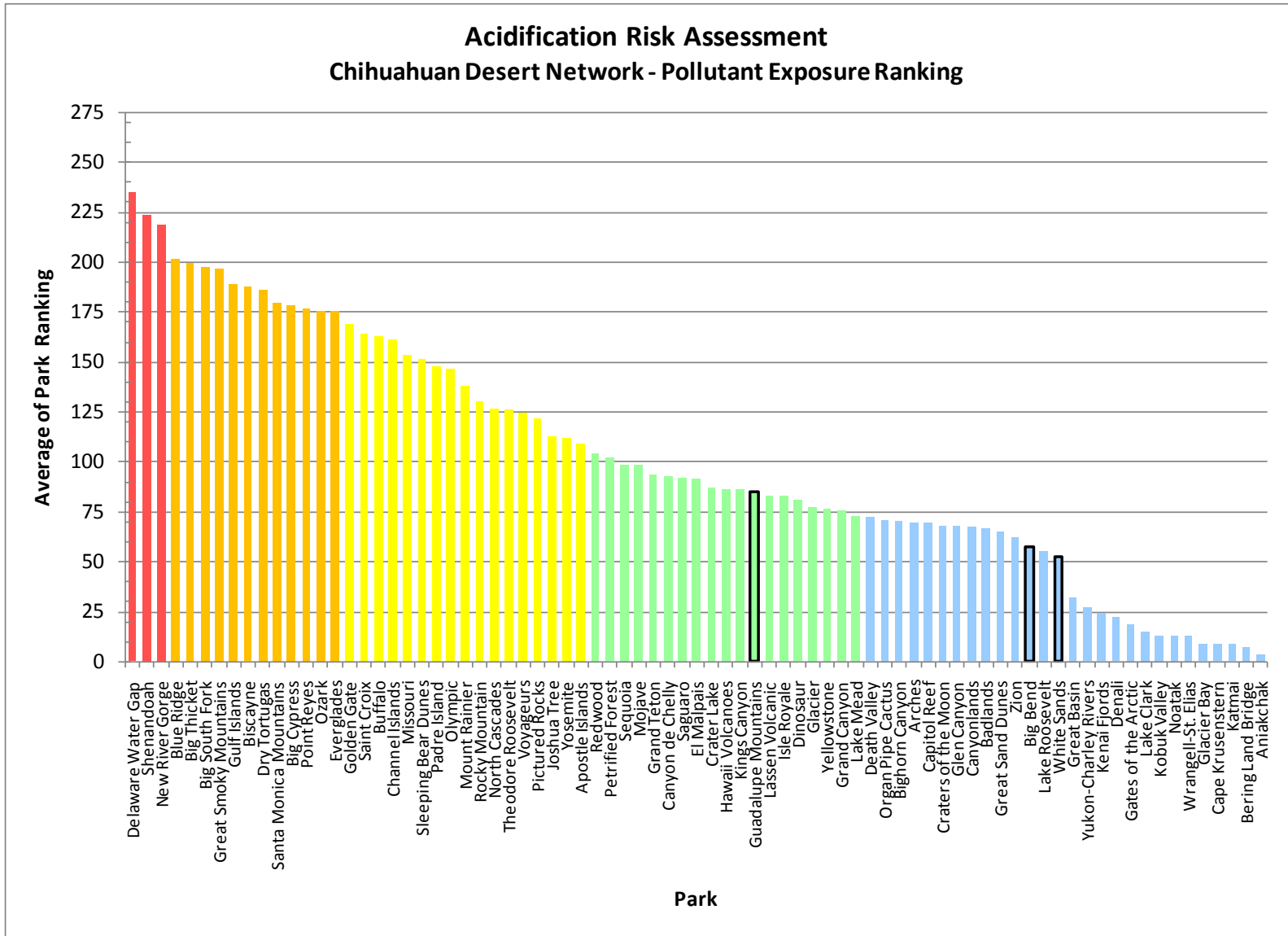


Figure E

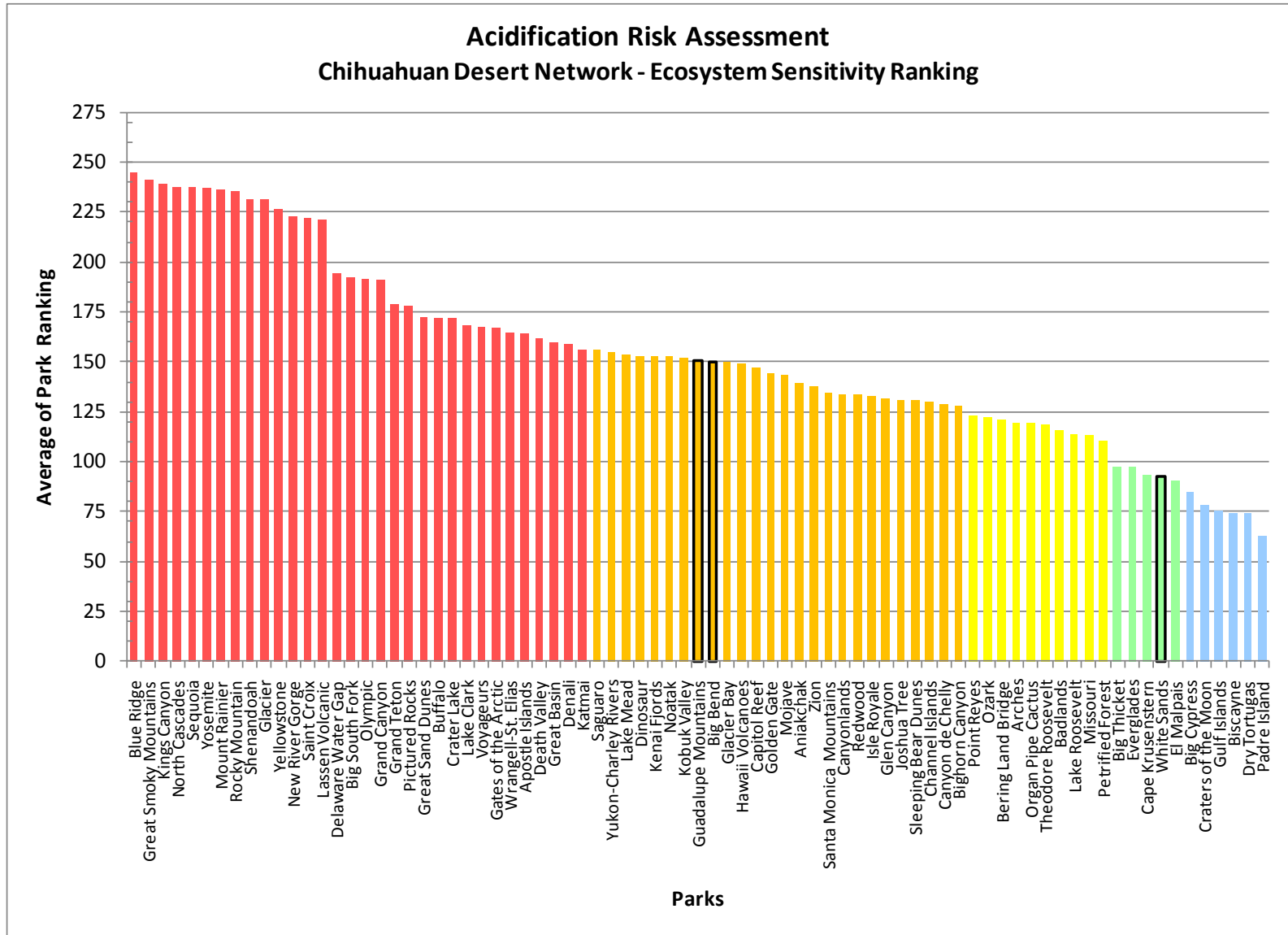


Figure F

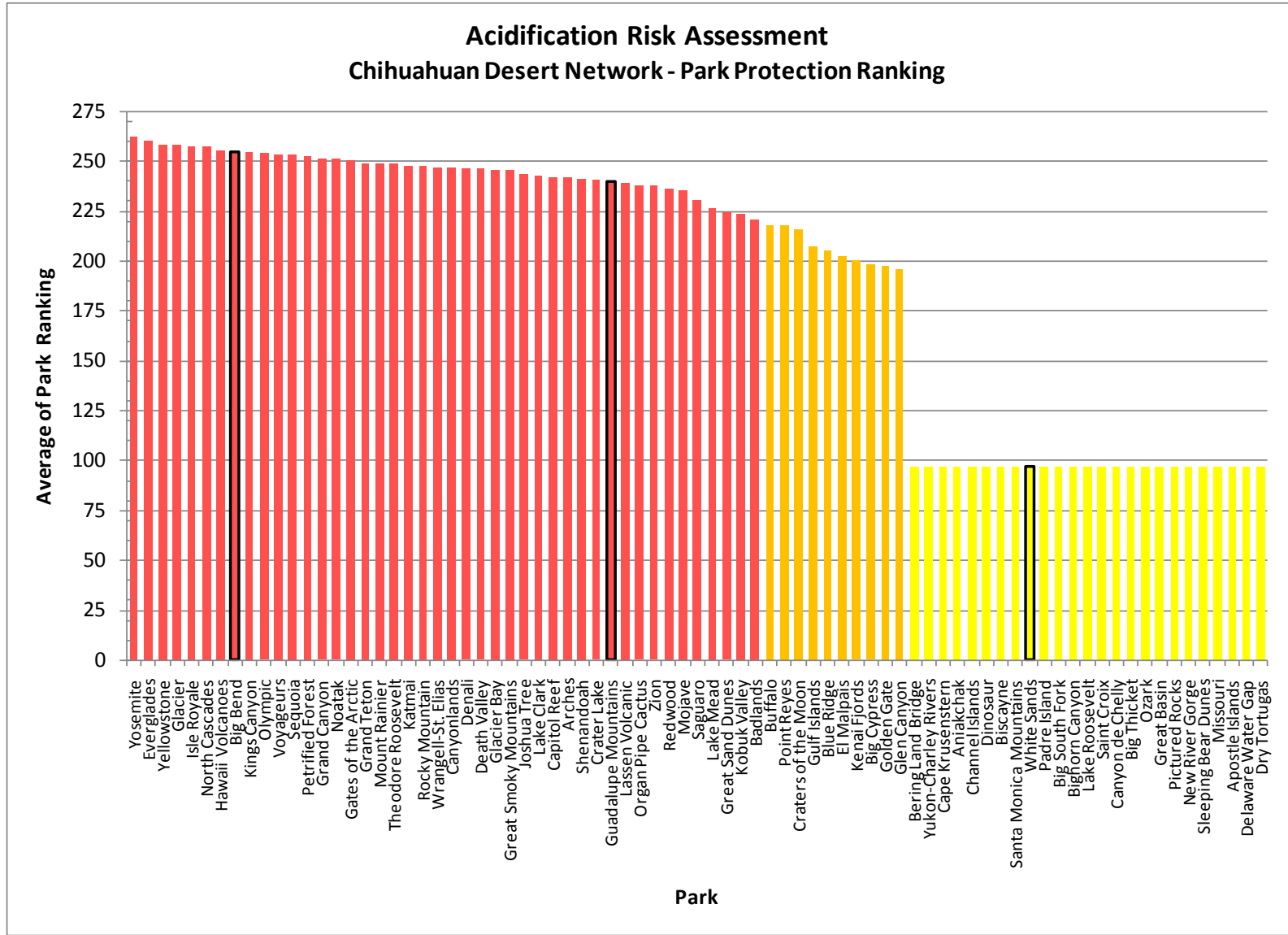


Figure G

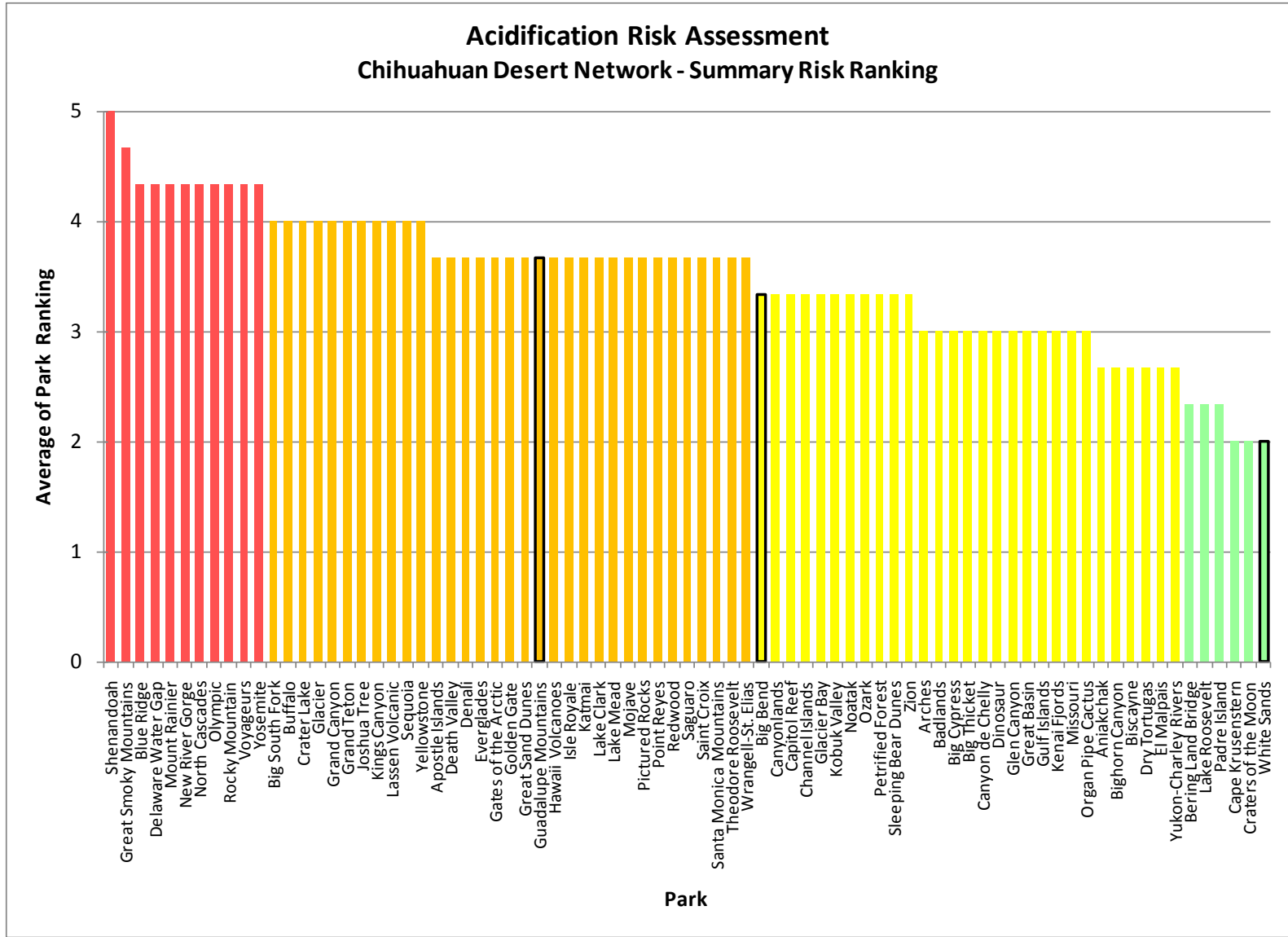


Figure H

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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