



Absaroka Front Fence Inventory

2024 Summary Report



Project Overview

This report summarizes the inaugural year of the Absaroka Front fence inventory project, a collaborative effort to map and assess fences in key wildlife migration corridors of the eastern Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE).

The project was launched in 2024 to help natural resource managers and conservation groups plan fence removal and modification efforts that improve habitat connectivity and reduce risks for wildlife while supporting rangeland management.

Led by the Beyond Yellowstone Living Lab, this work was co-developed alongside the Absaroka Fence Initiative, Shoshone National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and other partners.

Why inventory?

Mapping fences helps conservation efforts by identifying areas where fences have the greatest impact on wildlife movement and migration. It also helps researchers determine how fences affect wildlife populations and behaviors.



Project Context



Focal Area

The Absaroka Front in the eastern Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is a critical migration area for wildlife like elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn antelope.



Priority Zones

We identified two priority zones to map in 2024:

1. Basin grazing allotment (Shoshone National Forest)
2. Oregon Basin and Y U Bench (BLM Cody Region)



Fence data

Field crews mapped fence lines, assessed fence conditions, measured wire heights, marked locations of braces and gates, and noted area accessibility to inform future work.

Field Preparations

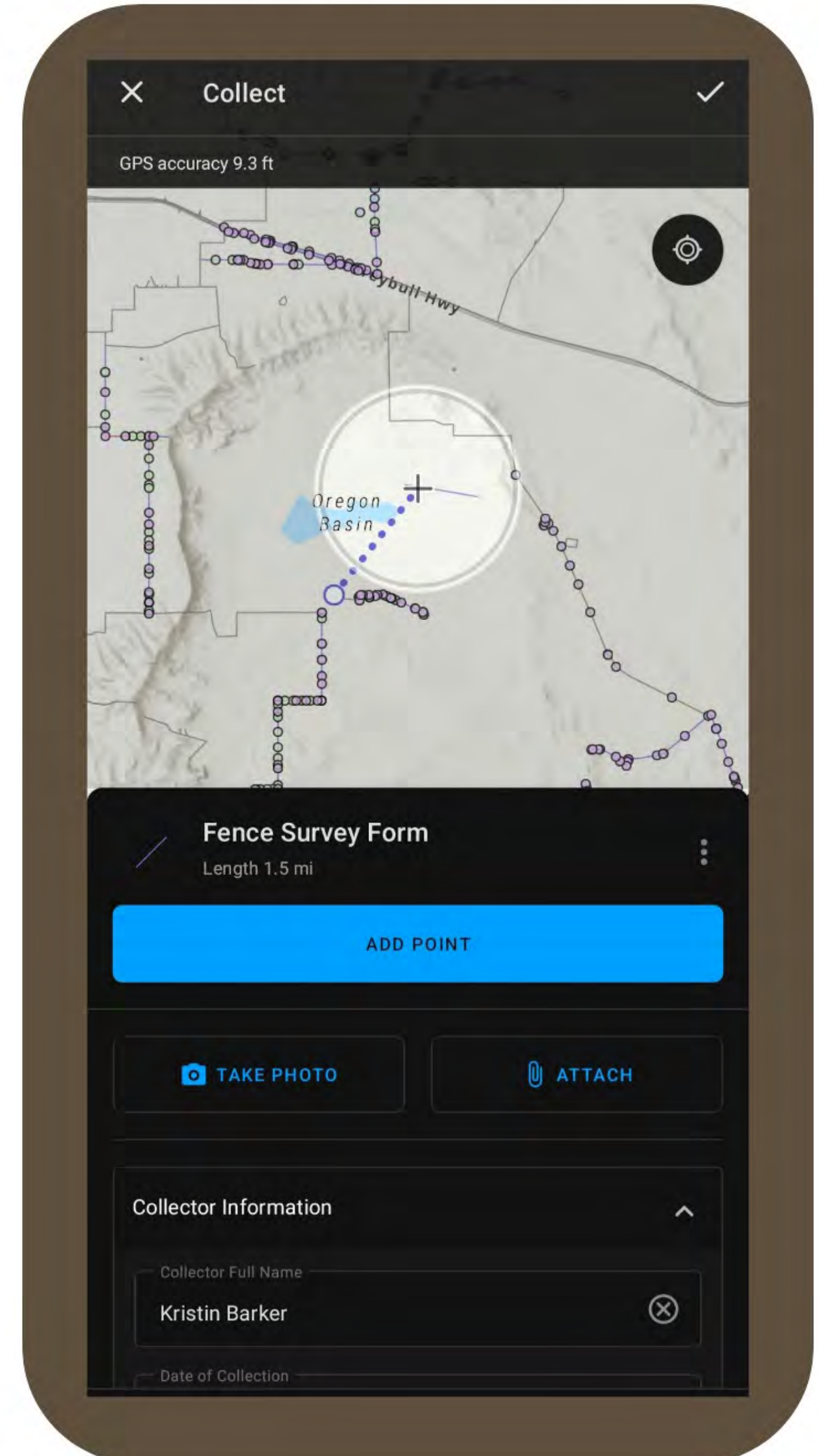
Before Mapping

Gathering, combining, and cleaning all existing fence location data was a critical first step to provide a starting point for the mapping process.

Creating a master database and shared map allowed all partners to access fence information and contribute to the project.

In-person field training and a detailed user guide ensured that everyone felt comfortable using the data collection app and accessing the shared fence map.

A fence data collection app was developed for use by field crews, agency partners, conservation groups, and volunteers.



Outcomes

Over 10 weeks, the field crew of four censused about 500 square miles across both priority zones, added or updated more than 450 miles of fence information, and marked the locations of more than 1,200 braces and gates. They also documented 5 fence-caused wildlife deaths.

Fence Mapping Results



Fences Mapped

More than **155 miles** of fences were mapped and measured.



Fences Removed

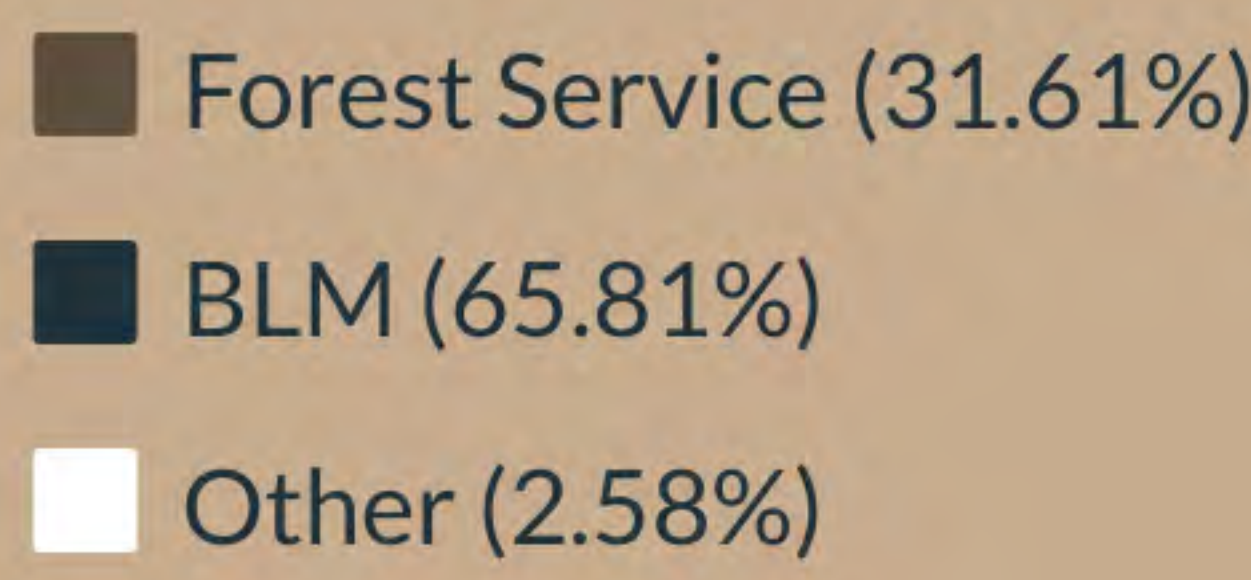
More than **300 miles** of incorrect fence data were removed from the map and database.



Fences in Need of Assessment

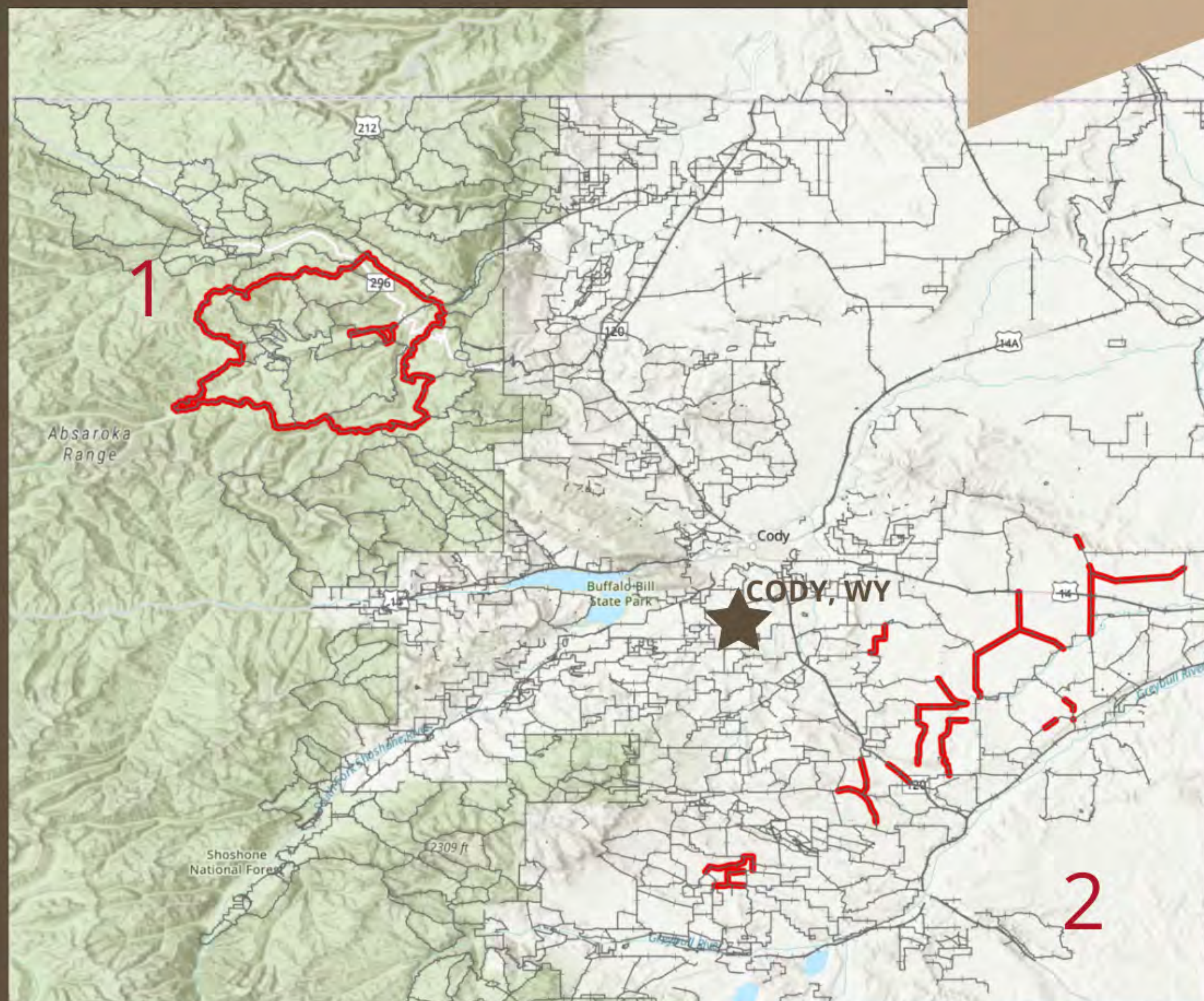
About **27 miles** of fences were noted as particularly good candidates for repair or modification.

Land ownership of mapped fences



Outcomes

BEFORE & AFTER



Priority zones

1. Basin grazing allotment

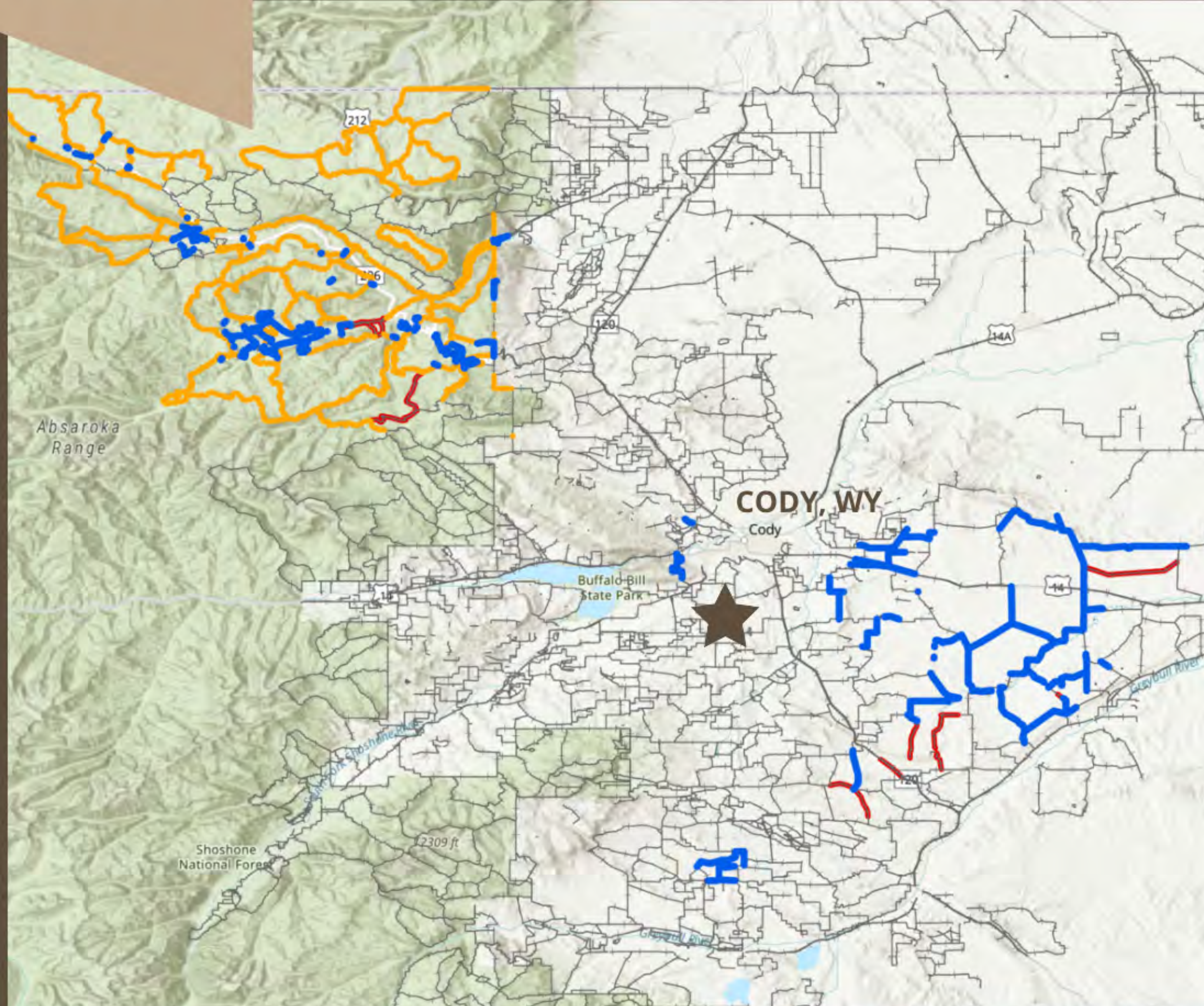
Shoshone National Forest
Elk and mule deer habitat
~100 square miles

2. Oregon Basin / YU Bench

Bureau of Land Management
Pronghorn antelope habitat
~60 square miles

Gray lines: Potential fences

Information collated from land management agencies and conservation groups (un-inventoried)



Inventory results

Blue: Updated fences

Fences mapped, measured, and evaluated. Locations of all gates and braces recorded along fencelines.

Orange: Nonexistent fences

Incorrect fences previously included on map as potential fences. Deleted from database and map after investigation.

Red: Remaining priorities

To be mapped during phase 2



Looking Forward

The data and maps generated in Phase 1 of the Absaroka Front Fence Inventory Project are already being used to plan fence removal and modification efforts. Meanwhile, we have begun planning Phase 2 to begin summer 2025.

Our next goal is to completely inventory the seasonal ranges and migratory corridors of the Carter Mountain Pronghorn herd.

Conservation partners and wildlife managers are actively working to improve habitat connectivity for this herd, which has particular ecological, cultural, and economic value but is increasingly threatened by land use changes and other stressors.

