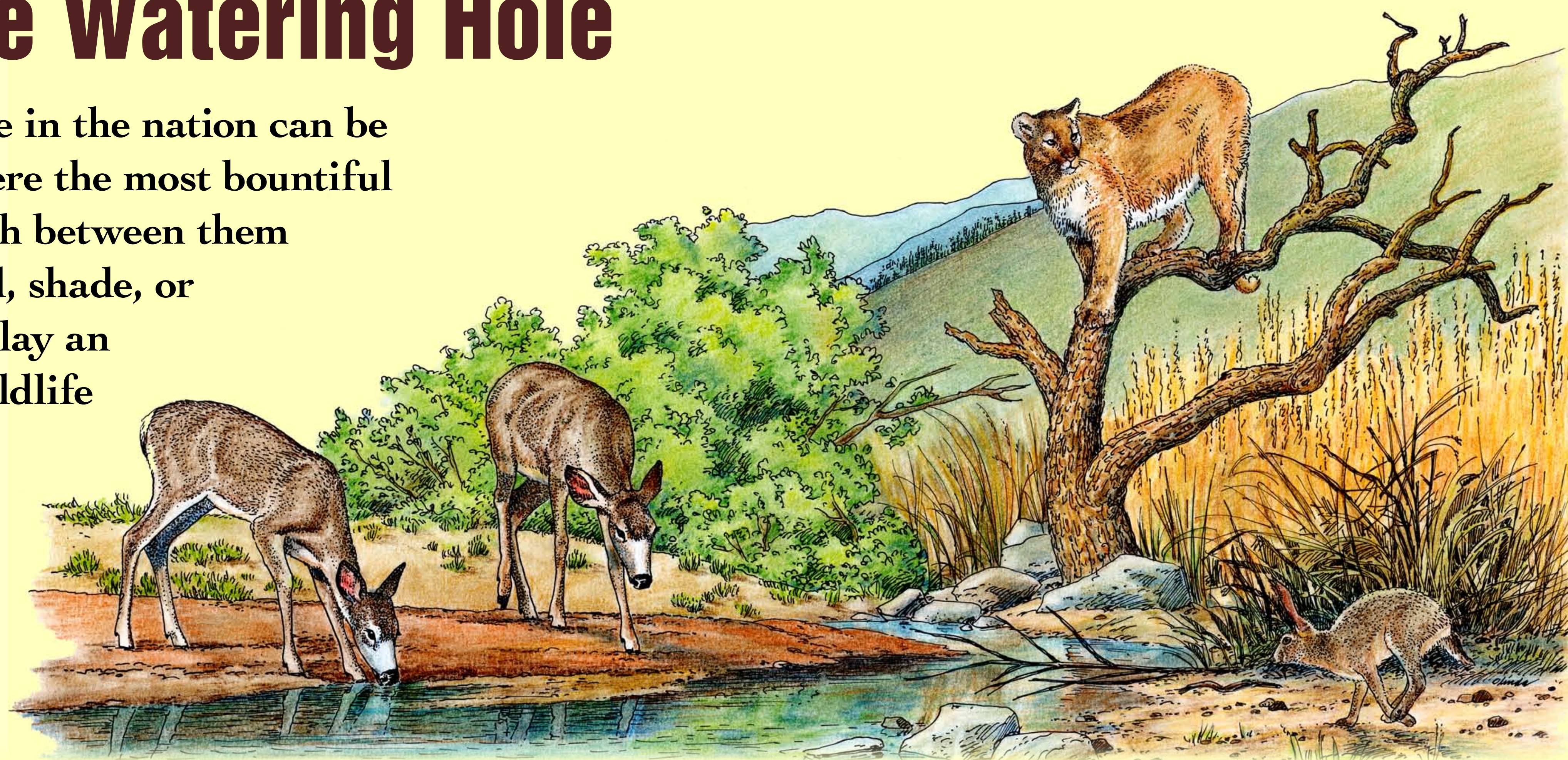


SILVER STATE TRAIL

Who's Who at the Watering Hole

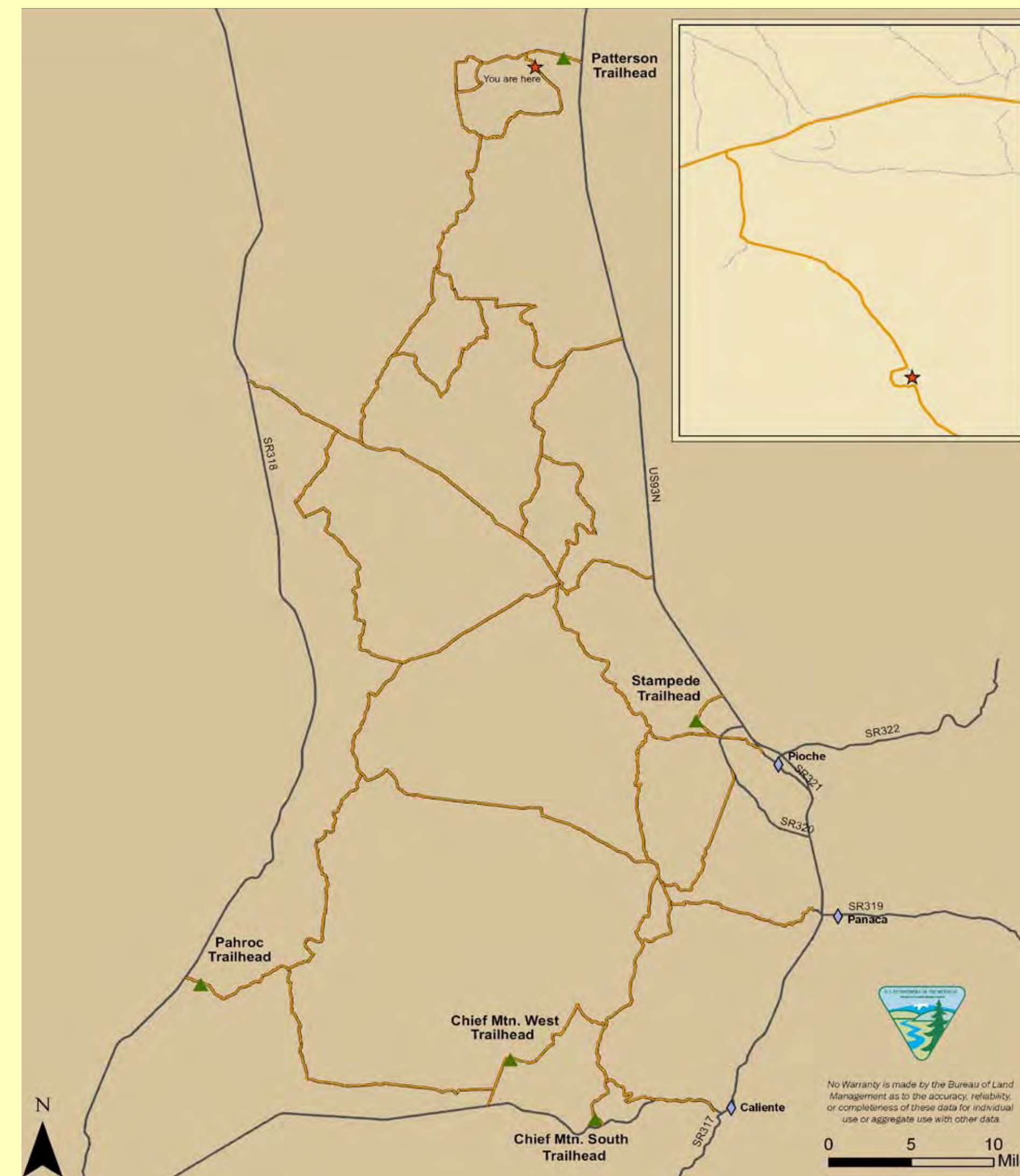
Finding water in the most arid state in the nation can be a tough job. Animals memorize where the most bountiful springs are and move back and forth between them in search of not only water but food, shade, or just to go for a quick dip. Springs play an important role in the survival of wildlife in eastern Nevada.



Springs Attract a Variety of Wildlife



This spring attracts many different types of wildlife and is a hunting ground for predators, including mountain lions, hawks, and badgers. The predators prey on wildlife like rabbits, mice, lizards, or even mule deer. Some of the smaller creatures include insects that live in the water like caddis flies. Caddis flies and mayflies make themselves a home made of small rocks and sand and attach them under logs and rocks.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

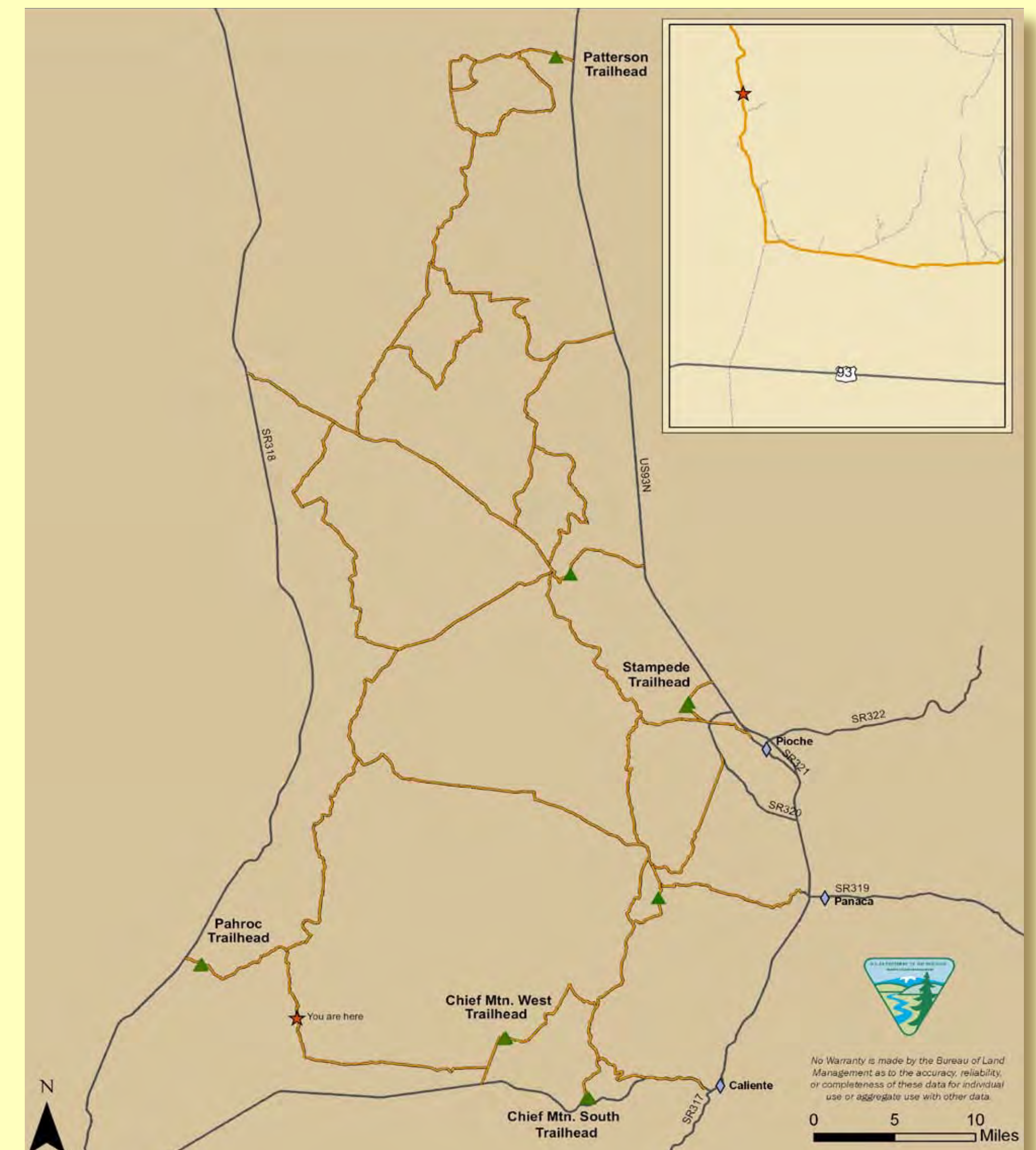
Wilderness Rocks

Known for its distinctive geologic features, this region has been designated by Congress as the Big Rocks Wilderness Area. A Wilderness Area is a tract of land that is preserved to allow nature to take its course and serves as a refuge for both animals and people seeking solitude. Big Rocks Wilderness provides a unique experience for those who visit.



Big Rocks Wilderness Contains Messages From Our Past

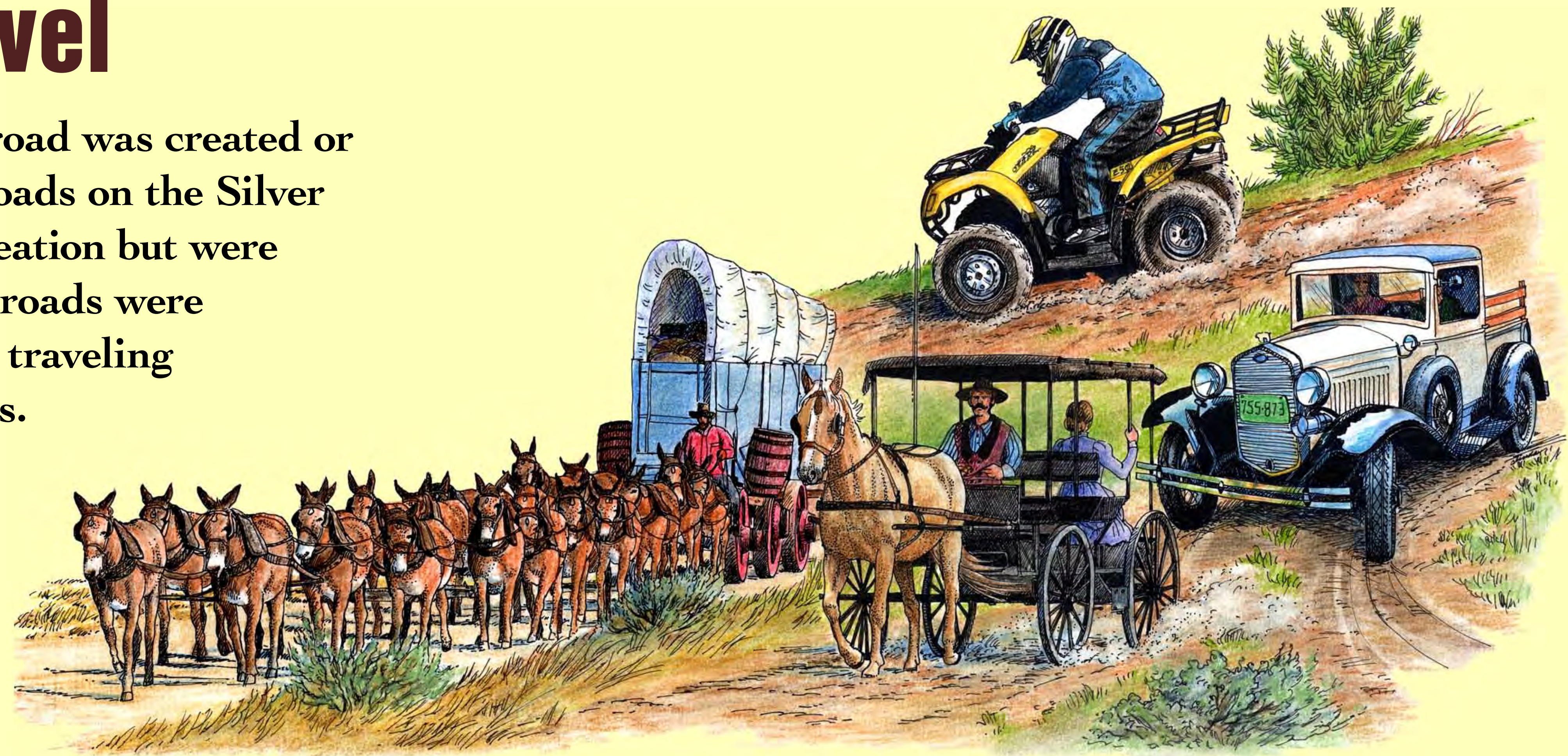
We aren't the only ones who think these rock formations are neat! Ancient peoples liked this place so much that they drew pictures, called pictographs, throughout the area; these pictures are still visible today. Some think that they were leaving messages for other travelers, letting them know the location of food and water. Others say that the pictures depict the traveler's own life, sort of like writing a diary. What do you think these mean?



SILVER STATE TRAIL

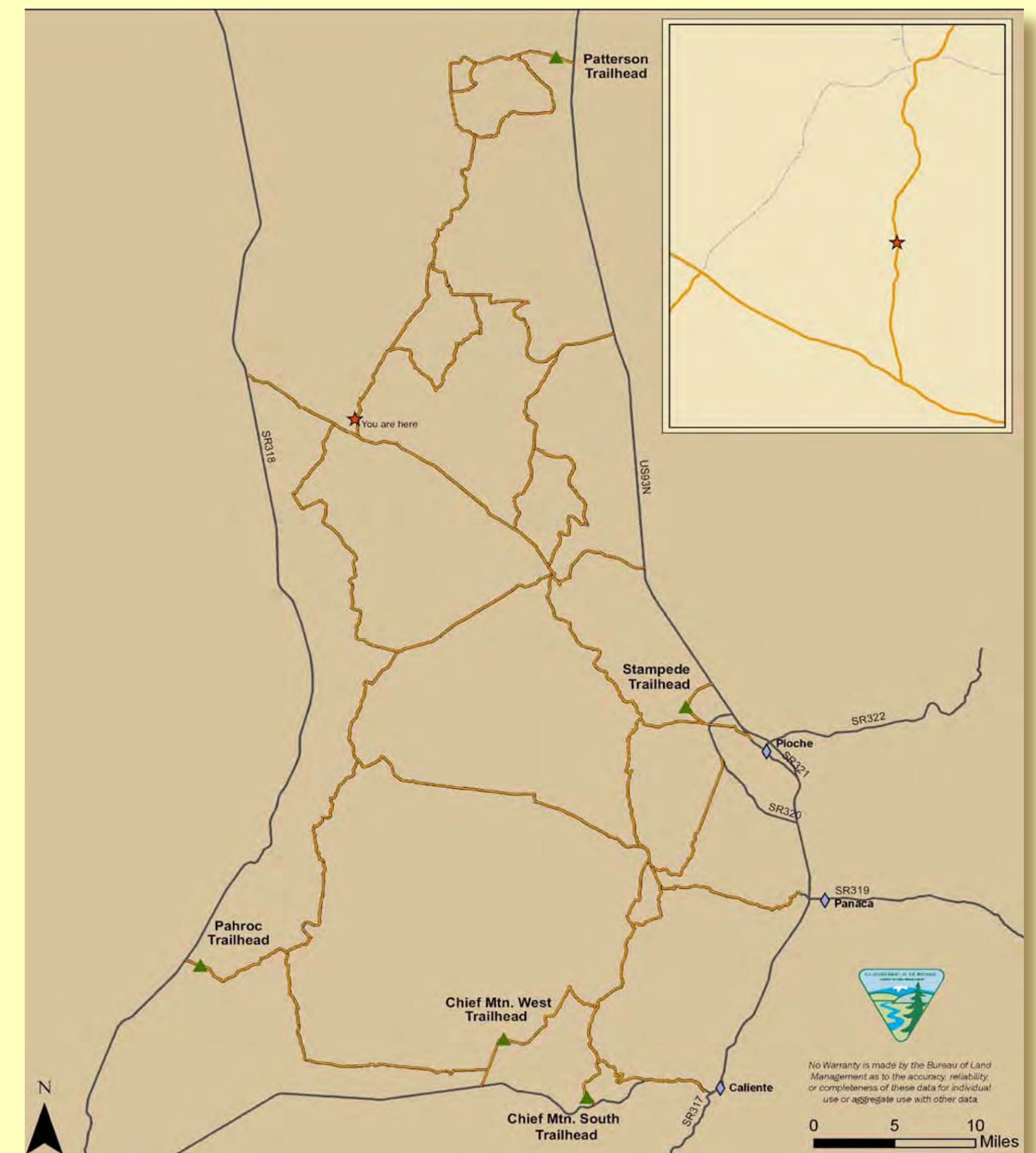
Evolutionary Travel

Do you ever think about why this road was created or who traveled it before you? Some roads on the Silver State Trail weren't created for recreation but were built by settlers of the West. These roads were used for mail routes, ranching, and traveling to nearby mining towns for supplies. In fact, horse-drawn buggies may have ridden past the exact spot where you are now.



People who used these travel ways played important parts in our cultural history.

Travel on these routes was long and uncomfortable, treacherous at times, and slow moving in a horse-drawn buggy. Imagine how you would feel if the seat you rode on all day was made of wood, if a flat tire meant you had to walk into town to buy a new one, or if a washed-out section of road meant having to turn around or spend hours searching for an alternate route. The hardships the pioneers endured played a significant role in the progress of transportation. These advances have paved the way for you to be able to enjoy these roads today!



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Why is there Sea Life Here?

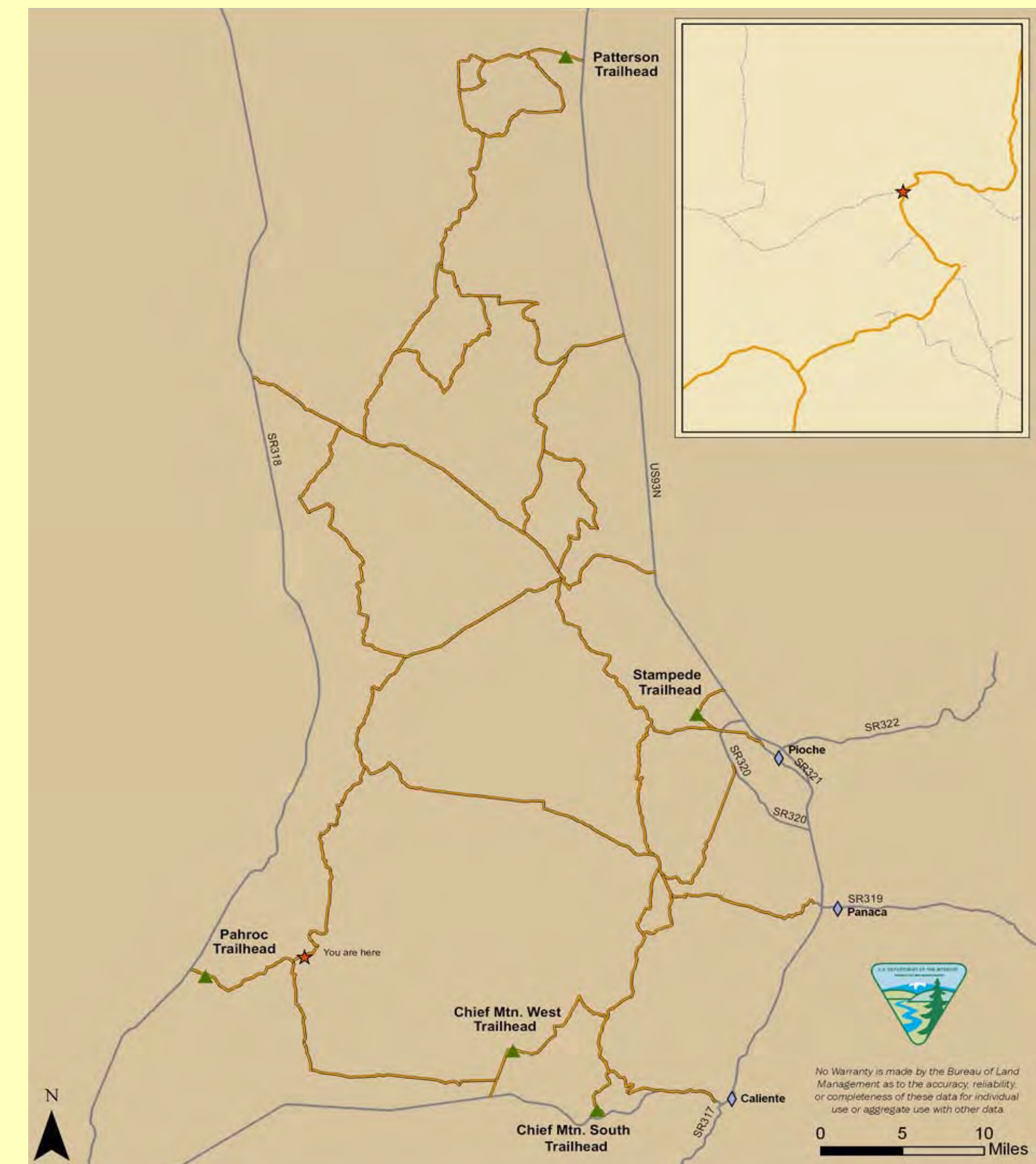
Welcome to the Oak Springs Trilobite site! It's hard to picture now, but this area was once an ocean. Underwater critters of all shapes and sizes may have swam past this exact spot, and some of these creatures are still visible today.

Trilobites were hard-shelled, sea-dwelling creatures that existed in ancient seas hundreds of millions of years ago. The species specific to this site are believed to be the oldest known species, around 500 million years old. These ancient creatures roamed the sea floor, and when the seas dried up and relocated, the trilobites became fossilized in the mud. With the help of heat and pressure, the mud is now shale, which is where you can find these fossilized creatures.



How Can We Look for Trilobites?

Fossil remains of six types of trilobites are found in the shale deposits exposed at this site. They belong to the Olenellidae family that has a shell like a horseshoe crab, jointed legs, compound eyes, and the ability to curl into a ball like today's sow bug. You can find trilobites by searching the ground for pieces of shale, picking them up, and examining them for fossils. Or you can split open larger pieces of shale with a rock pick and try your luck that way. As you walk along the trail, keep your eyes peeled; you just may find a keeper!



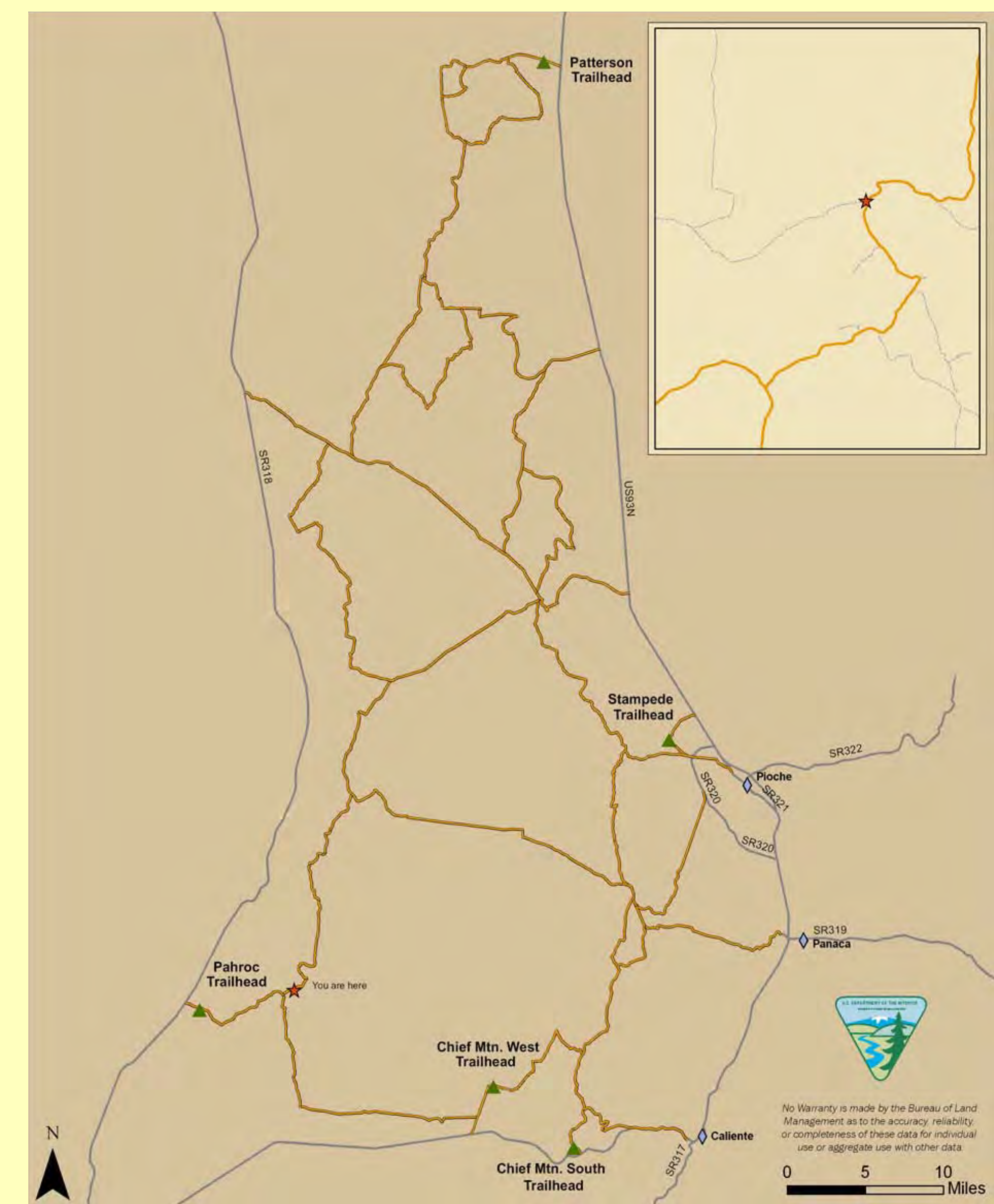
SILVER STATE TRAIL

Benefits of Fire

Fire plays a crucial role in keeping forests healthy. It opens up habitat for wildlife, restores nutrients to the soil, and creates space for native understory plants and shrubs to grow.

In 1996, the Muleshoe fire blazed through here, scorching 16,000 acres in its wake. Since then, many smaller fires started by lightning, have popped up, reburning a few acres at a time.

The Muleshoe fire broke up the thick pinyon juniper forest that once dominated this land. Now wildlife can often be seen here taking advantage of the open space and new growth.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Lights in the Sky

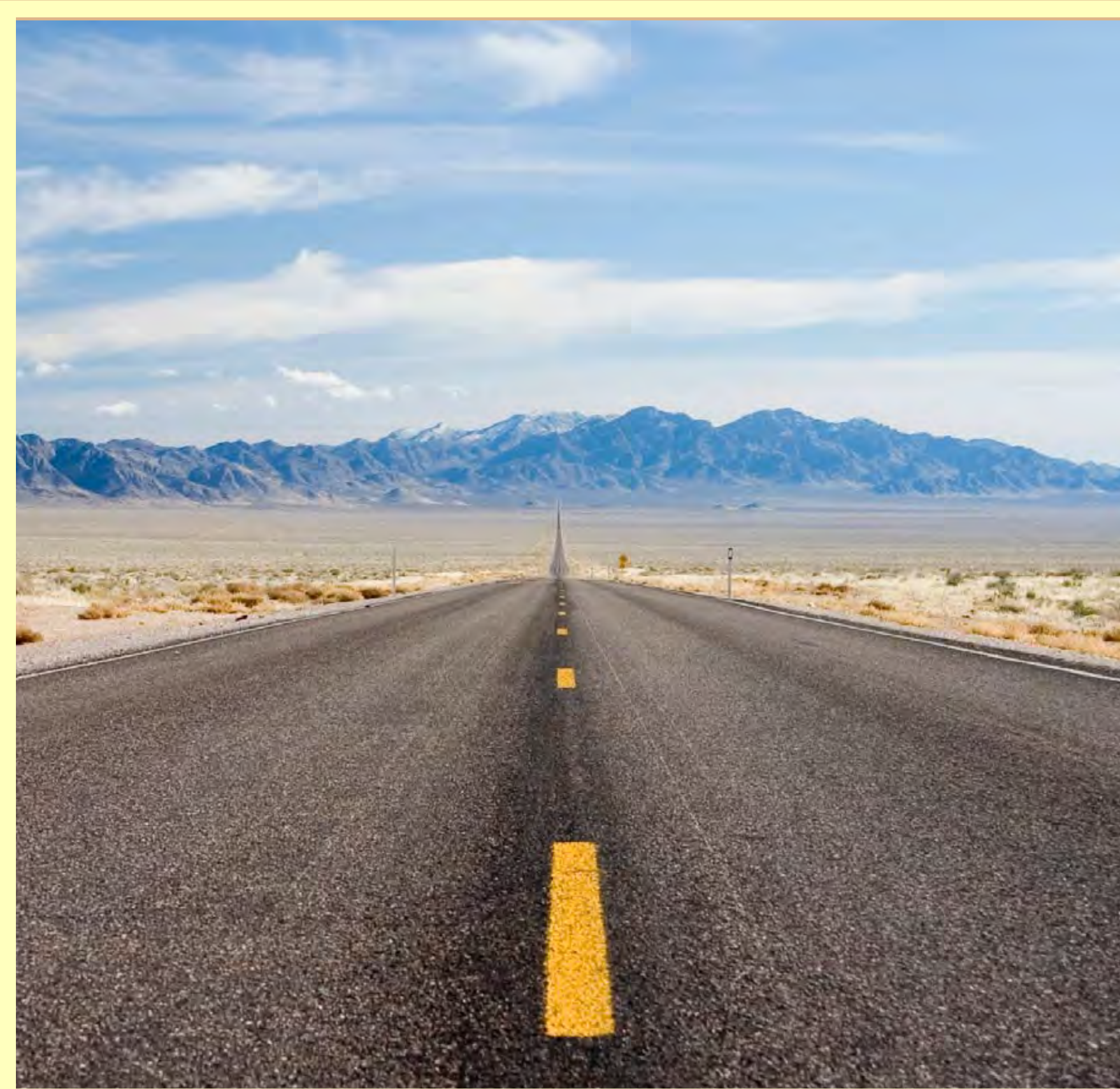
Have you ever thought you saw a flying saucer? How about an alien life form? Many residents and tourists alike, in and around the town of Rachel, Nevada, swear they have. Since 1989, people from around the world have come to Rachel and surrounding areas to look for extraterrestrial lights in the sky. Nevada State Highway 375, due west of here, has officially been named the Extraterrestrial Highway in honor of the numerous alleged sightings along this lonely 98-mile stretch of road.



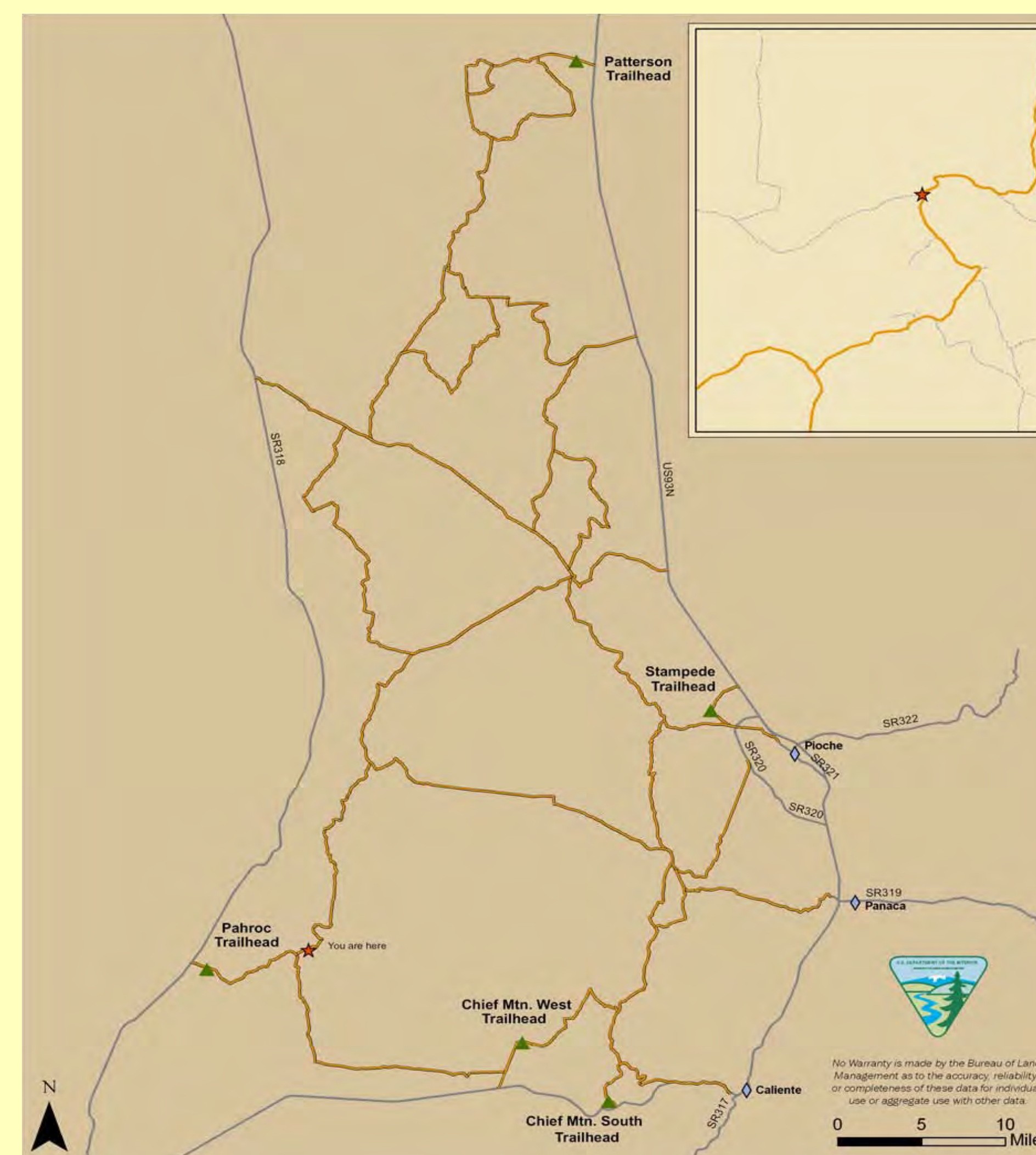
Alien Sightings May Be Related to Area 51

Of course, there is also Area 51, a top-secret government testing ground, a mere 25 miles from Rachel. Many believe any sightings that may have occurred are merely unrevealed government aircraft running test flights.

Thousands of people from around the world come to this area in search of unidentified flying objects. Keep your eyes peeled in the wide-open night skies and you may be one of the lucky ones.



Nevada State Highway 375, also known as the "Extraterrestrial Highway," is the last paved road before entering the Area 51 government complex.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Life on the Wild Side

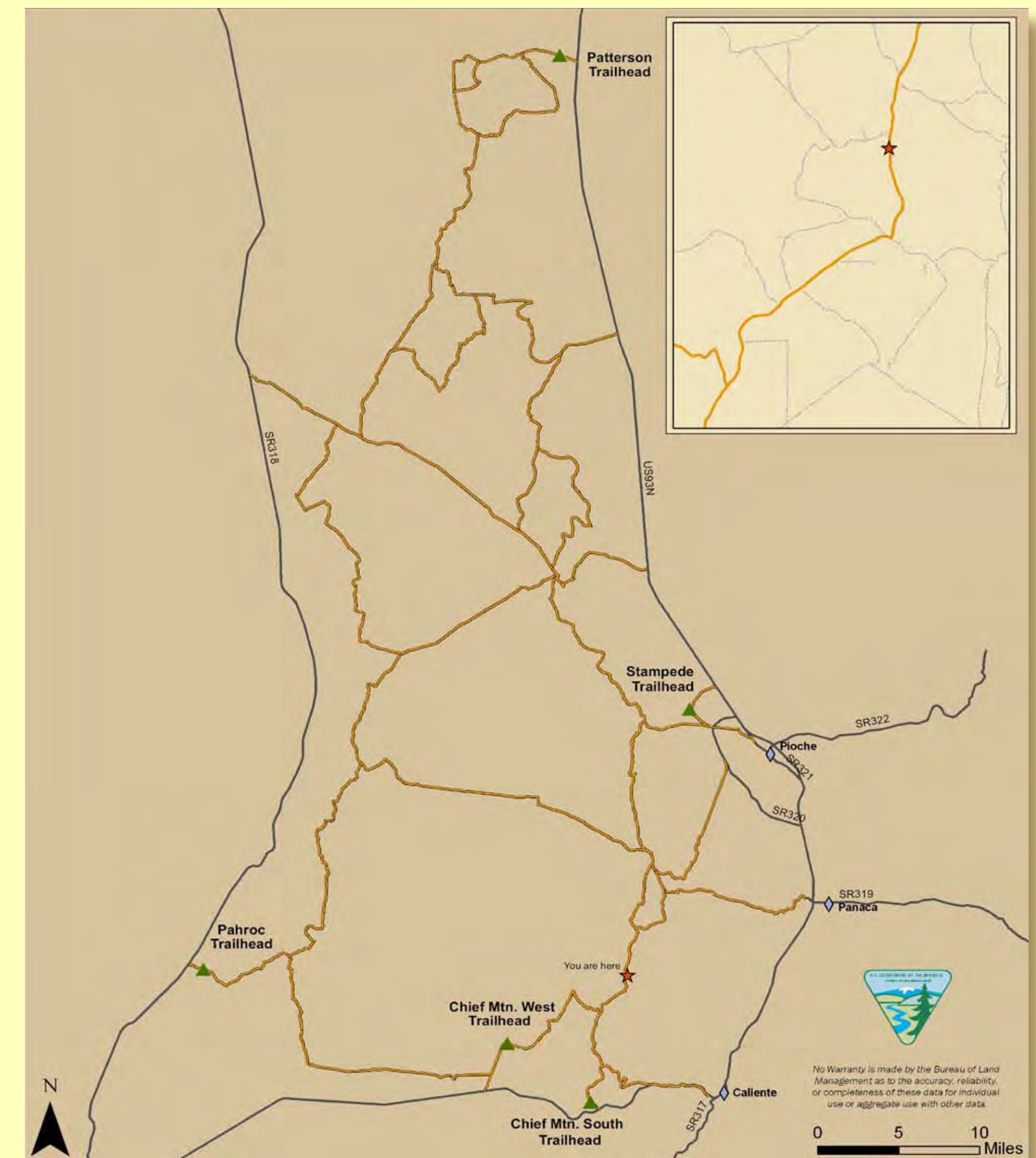
Nevada's wild horses, commonly called mustangs, are descendants of domestic horses that escaped from farms, ranches, or mines. Finding the open range a great place to make their home with no natural predators, their population quickly increased.

During the early 1900s, mustangers rounded up herds by the hundreds to make a quick buck by selling the wild horses for both human and pet consumption. This angered many people because they considered these majestic animals to represent the spirit of the West.



Wild Horses Are Now a Protected Species

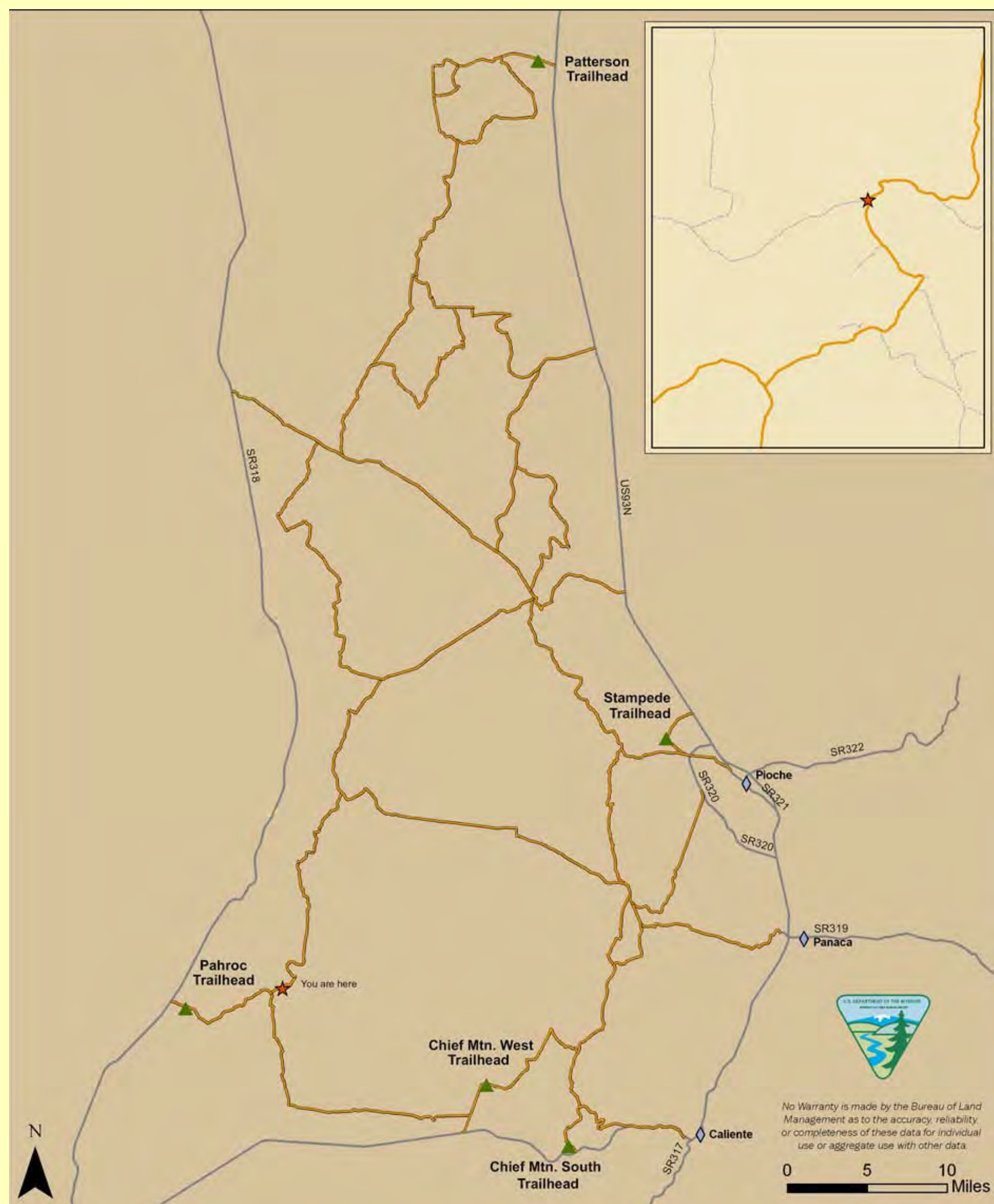
Through the efforts of Velma Johnston, otherwise known as Wild Horse Annie, and thousands of school children, the Wild Horse and Bureau Act of 1971 was passed. This law designates it unlawful to harm, chase, injure, and or capture wild horses and burros. If you hear of or witness an illegal act against wild horses, please call 1-800-521-6501.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Desert Survival

The Great Basin Desert is a 200,000 square-mile basin in the most arid region of the western United States and is characterized by numerous mountains that are separated by long, wide valleys. The plants and animals that call these steep slopes and low, dry valleys home are unique because they have adapted certain traits to be able to live in such a harsh environment.



MORMON TEA

Ephedra viridis

Commonly known as Mormon tea, this waist-high shrub looks as if all of its leaves have fallen off. The leaves have become so small that you can hardly even see them! This helps the plant retain water by reducing the amount of surface area, where most water loss occurs.

GREAT HORNED OWL

Bubo virginianus

Have you ever wondered why dogs pant? Great Horned Owls pant too, and just like dogs, they pant to cool themselves off. Panting helps to cool the mouth and tongue, but it also provides a draft of cool air to the major blood vessels of the head.



ANTELOPE

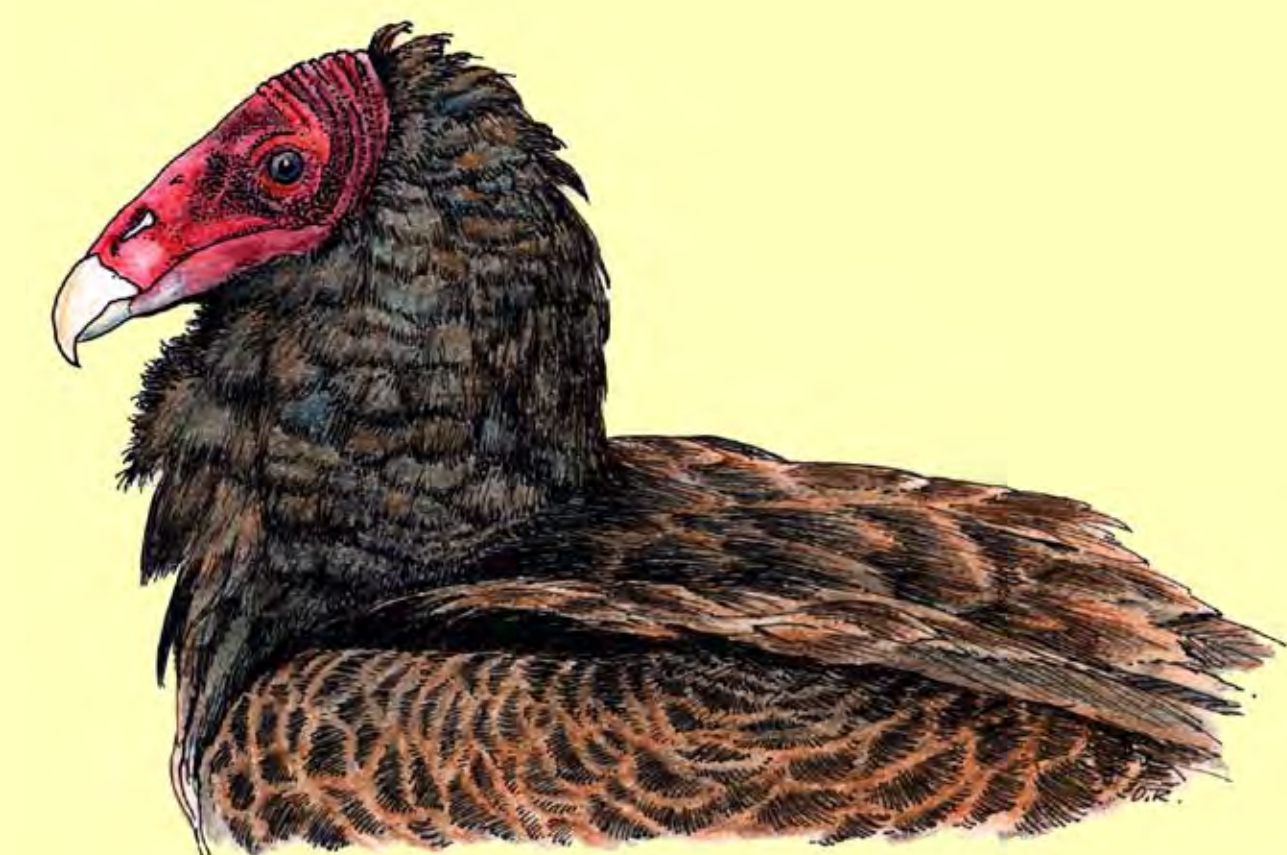
Antilocapra Americana

Pronghorn antelope have hollow hair that acts as an insulator during the cold winters. During the long cold winters, it keeps them warm, while during summer months, it helps cool them down.

TURKEY VULTURE

Cathartes aura

Vultures avoid heat by spending time soaring high on air currents called thermals, which provide cooler air to avoid hot, midday temperatures.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Growing Pains

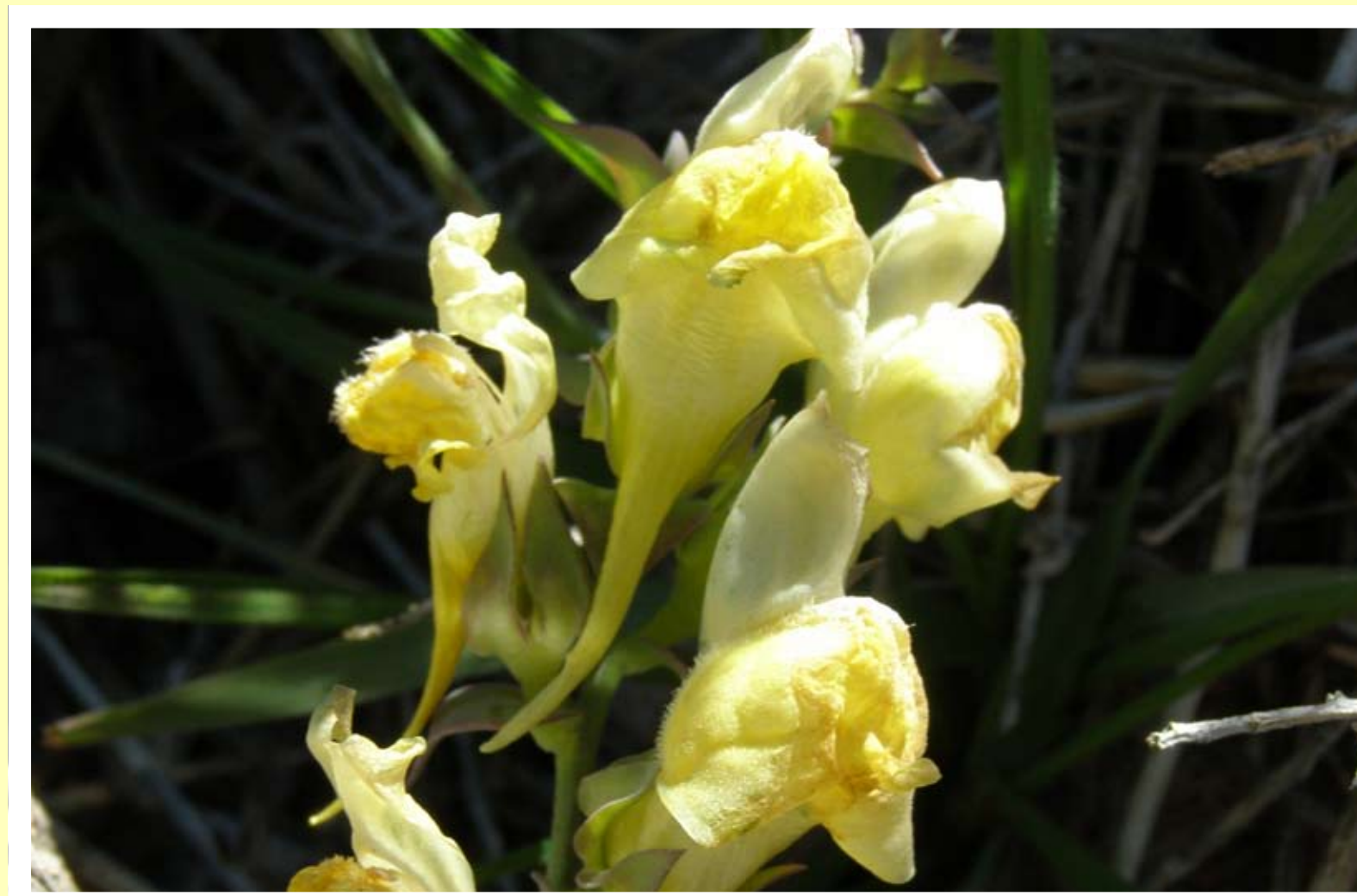
Invasive weeds are nonnative plants that harm the habitat they invade and are a real growing pain. These tricky weeds have established creative survival techniques like producing thousands of seeds at a time, having rapid growth spurts, and constructing huge root systems. These tactics help the weeds outgrow native plants until they eventually take over. Not only do invasive weeds create a real problem for the health of an ecosystem, but they also cause billions of dollars annually in damage to public and private land.



Spotted Knapweed



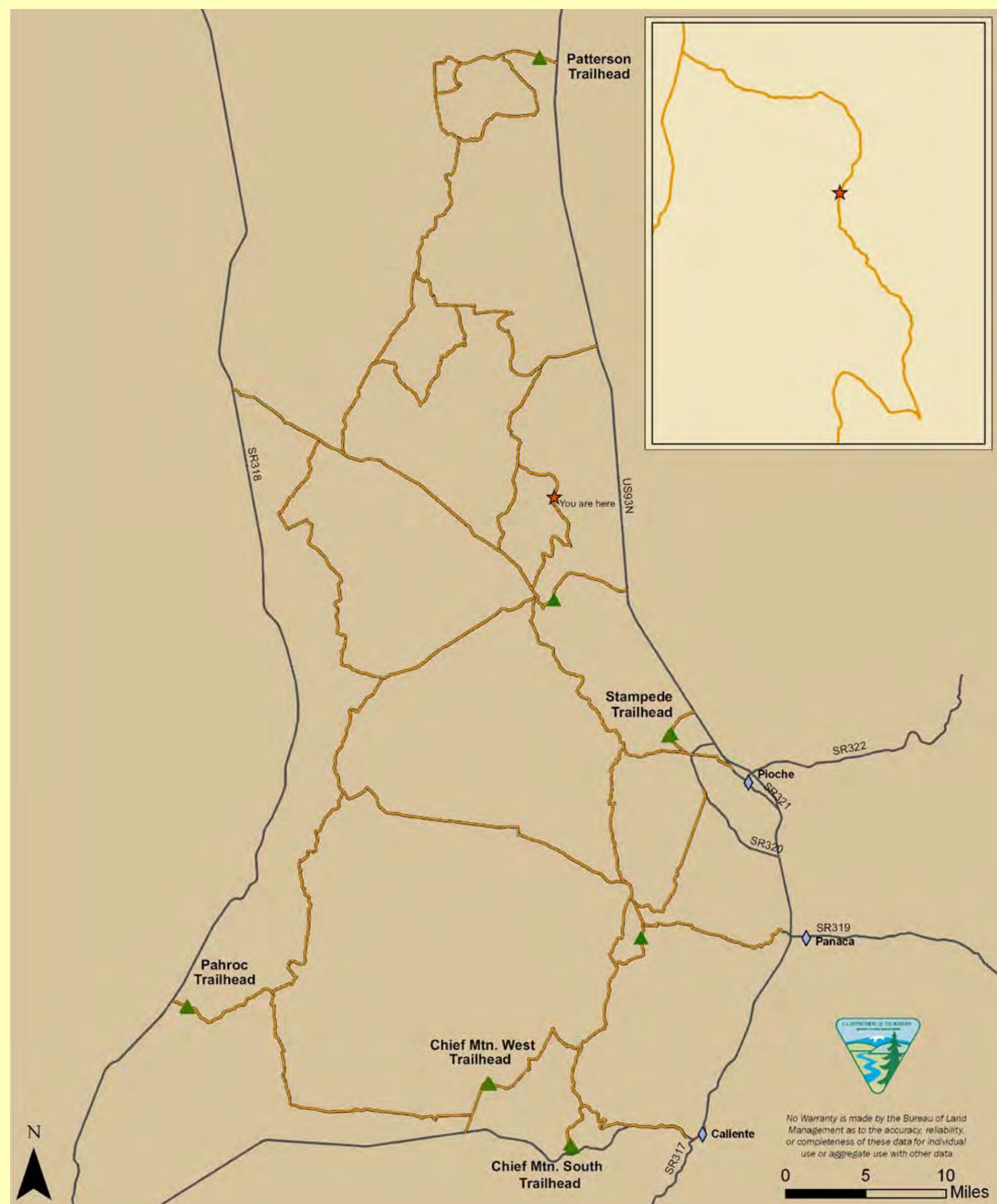
Sabara Mustard



Dalmation Toadflax



Musk Thistle



Invasive Weeds Have Many Transportation Methods

Weeds have many transportation methods. Some seeds are sticky or spiny and hitch rides on animals and humans. Others are light and are carried easily by the wind, and some have a special coating that allows them to travel in water. On the Silver State Trail, invasive weed seeds getting stuck on tire treads and spreading across the trail is a real concern.

What You Can Do:

So what can you do to help prevent the spread of invasive weeds?

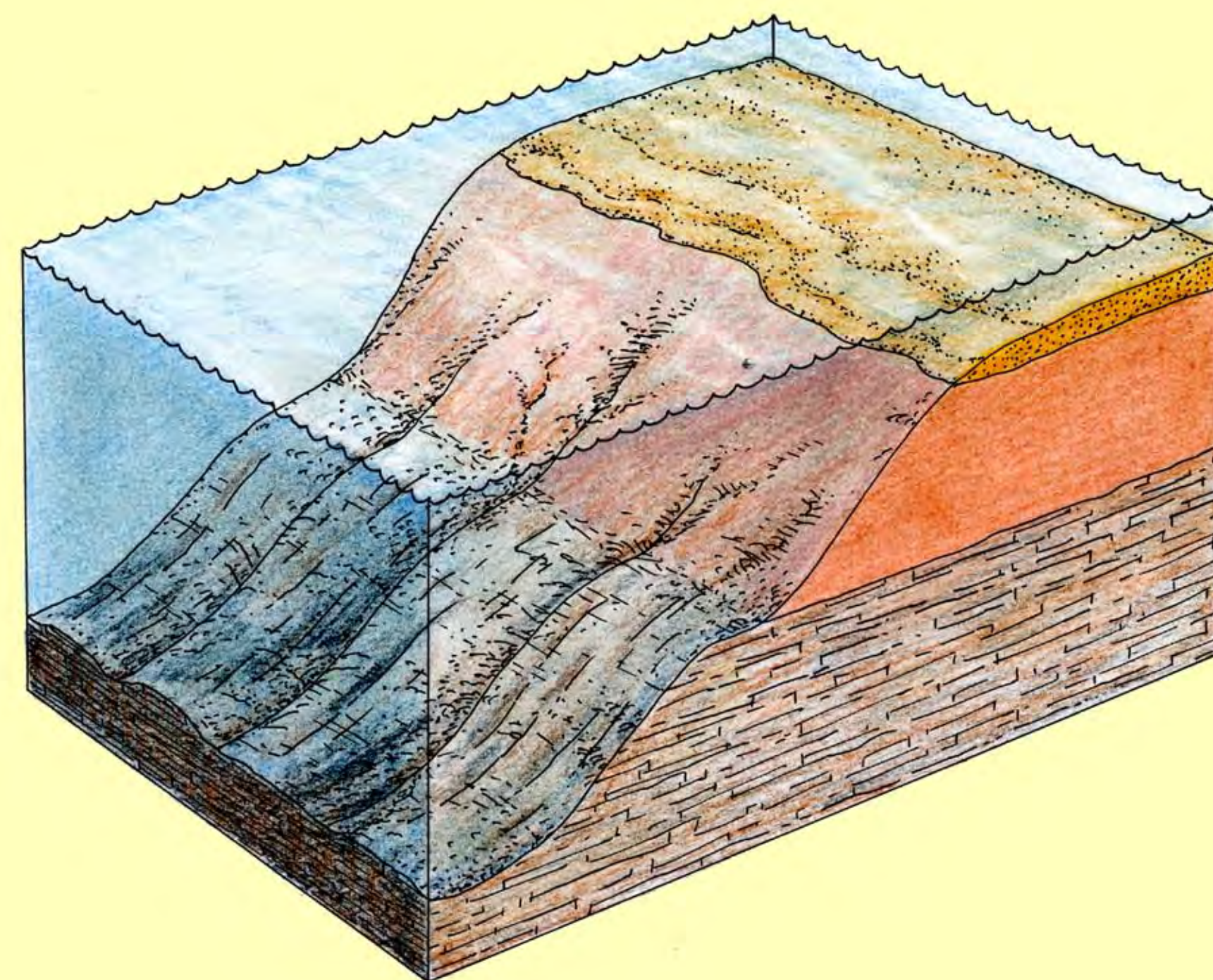
- Wash your tires off after you ride.
- Check your clothing and shoes for clingers.
- Know how to identify weeds in your area.
- Report any infestations to the Caliente BLM office at 775-726-8100.

SILVER STATE TRAIL

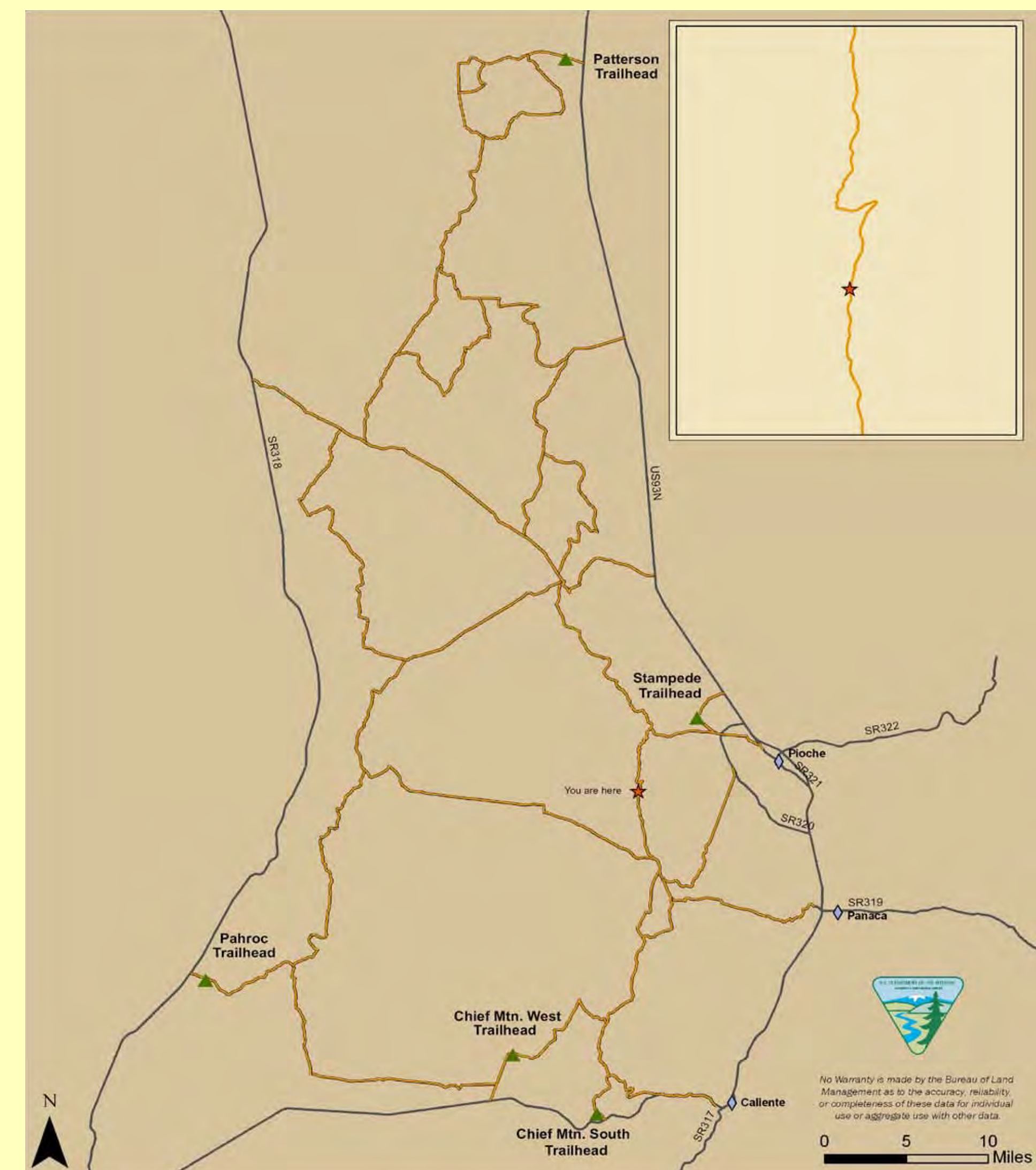
From Sea to Stone

Up until around 430 million years ago, this area was covered with water! It was a shallow ocean that deposited layers of organic material like algae, shells, or mud. Over time, those layers formed the dolomite and limestone mountain that lies ahead of where you are standing.

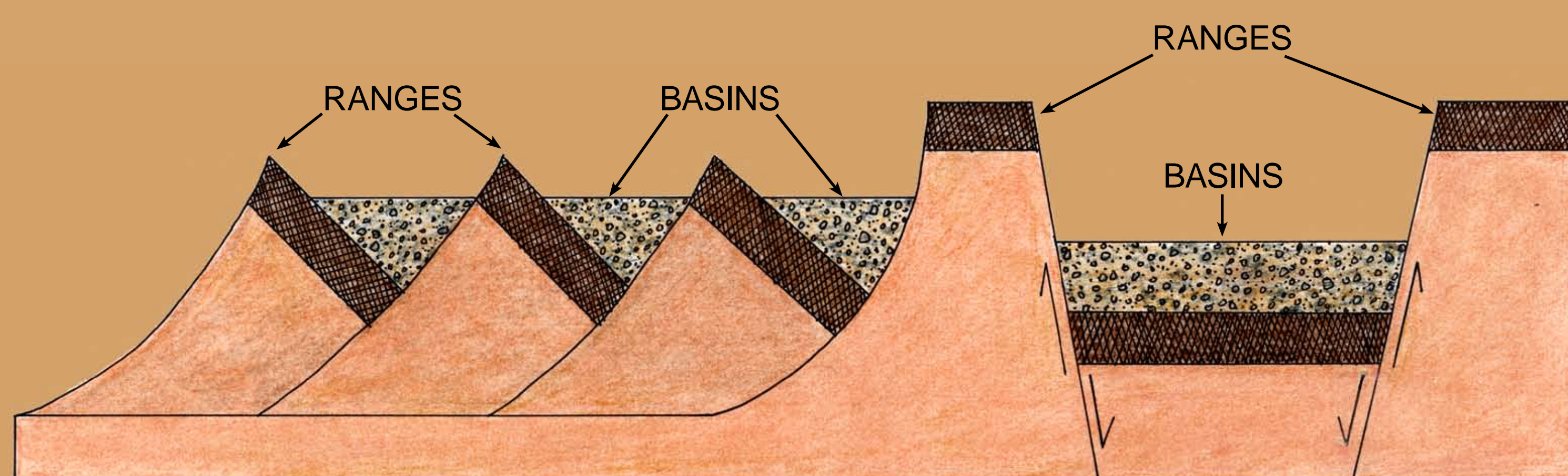
These past geologic events created the rocks that host Nevada's gold and other mineral deposits



SANDSTONE
LIMESTONE
SHALE



The Earth's Constant Movement



The earth's crust is broken into many pieces called plates. These plates are in constant movement. Some collide while others pull apart. Around 30 million years ago, long after the dinosaurs roamed around, the earth's crust began stretching and left Nevada with a series of north to south trending basins and ranges.

These basins and ranges define the Great Basin, and clues to past geologic events can be found in the layers that form them. In many places, the geology of an area is not apparent to the naked eye. Lucky for us, Nevada's geology is easily visible and has played an important role in our human history and economy.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Who's Been Here?

Do you ever wonder who's been here before you? Most animals leave us clues that help us figure out who's been here. One clue is the tracks they leave. Each animal has a unique track, like a finger print, that helps us tell them apart.



ELK

Cervus canadensis

Elk tracks are generally 4 inches or longer and rounded at the edges. Smaller tracks likely belong to deer. It is possible to find hundreds of tracks at a time because of the elk's nature to travel in large groups.

JACK RABBIT

Lepus californicus

Jack rabbits have four toe pads on their front feet which are covered with fur, so they do not leave clear toe imprints. Jackrabbits can leap 20 feet or more, leaving huge gaps between tracks.



OWL

Bubo virginianus

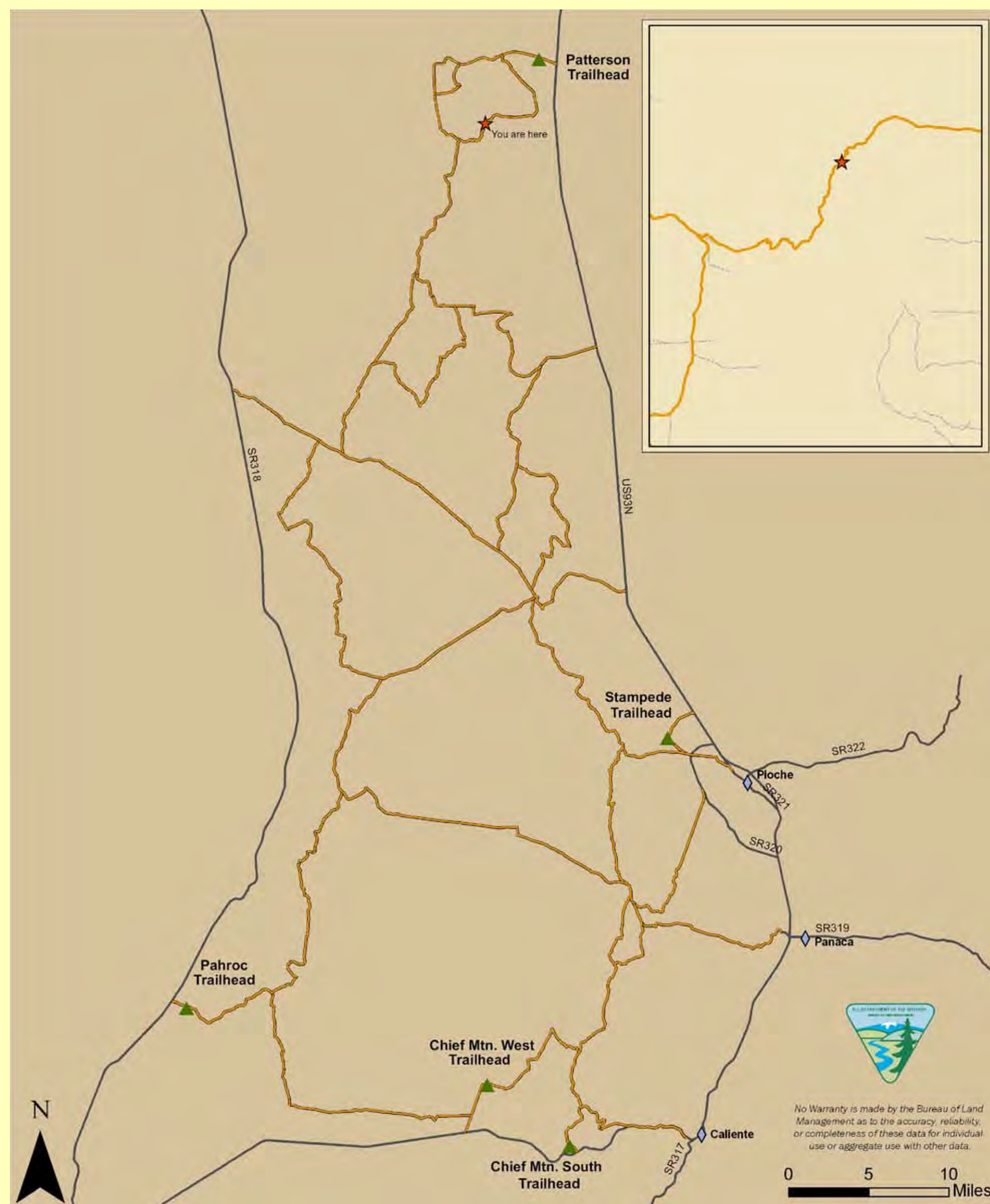
Tracks of the great horned owl can be difficult to find. If there is snow on the ground, you may be lucky enough to see the tracks from its feet or a sweep from its wing. More often than not, all you will find is remnants of fur from its last meal.



GREAT BASIN RATTLESNAKE

Crotalus oreganus lutosus

Snake tracks can be wavy or straight lines and are usually furrows in the ground that can be 1/2-inch or more wide.



SILVER STATE TRAIL

Tread Lightly!

Tread Lightly!, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization with a mission to proactively protect recreation access and opportunities in the outdoors through education and stewardship initiatives. The BLM supports their mission and encourages public land users to follow these outdoor ethics.

While you are out riding on the Silver State Trail, here are a few tips to help you do your part as a responsible rider.



RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS, including private property owners, all recreational trail users, campers, and others; allowing them to enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed.

EDUCATE YOURSELF by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies, planning for your trip, taking recreation skills classes, and knowing how to use and operate your equipment safely.

AVOID SENSITIVE AREAS such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands, and streams, unless on designated routes.

DO YOUR PART by leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, restoring degraded areas, and joining a local enthusiast organization.

