

The Five Units

Malad Gorge Unit

This 692-acre park unit is located just off Interstate 84 at the Tuttle exit. Weary travelers can easily stop to stretch while taking in the spectacular canyon views and use the restrooms. Visitors can take in a self guided interpretive tour that includes the canyon views, a man made wildlife viewing pond, rare plants and native plant restoration. Malad Gorge is open for hiking, picnicking and day outings.

Kelton Trail – The Kelton Trail can be accessed on the east side of Interstate 84. Here on the Kelton Road you can see the abutments for the bridge that carried wagons traveling the Oregon Trail. From about 1864 to 1883 this was on the regular route that carried mail, freight and passengers between Boise and the railhead at Kelton Utah. The trail had so much traffic that grooves were cut into the rocks, but by July 1884, a traveler on the old route noticed that “grass grows over the defunct overland Kelton stage road where a weary traveler once traveled in clouds of dust...”

Billingsley Creek Unit

You can enjoy Billingsley Creek from sunrise to sunset. The park offers spectacular wildlife viewing opportunities, an indoor horse riding arena, excellent fishing and featured events.

Vardis Fisher Day Use Area – The Vardis Fisher Day Use Area is located along Billingsley Creek and includes access to Fisher Lake and the ruins of Vardis Fisher’s home. Vardis Fisher was a nationally renowned writer of regional fiction. From the ruins of the home site there is the beautiful vista which surely inspired Fisher in the writing of 22 novels, including *Mountain Man* (1965), which was the basis for the movie *Jeremiah Johnson*.

Ritter Island Unit

The island allows visitors to step back in time to an era when Minnie Miller ran her then state of

the art dairy with her prize-winning Guernsey cows. The island became known as Ritter Island after Mrs. Miller sold the Thousand Springs Farm to Judge Willis W. Ritter in 1954. Today Ritter Island hosts the annual Thousand Springs Arts and Craft Festival. There is an abundance of wildlife to view including deer, waterfowl, upland birds, many small mammals, song birds and birds of prey. Hiking trails provide wonderful vistas of the Hagerman Valley. The southern end of the old Thousand Springs Farm is a historic area that was the favorite spot of Minnie Miller’s daughter Bonnie. It was named Bonnieview in her honor. It is also the home of a ferry crossing known as the Payne Lewis Ferry Crossing. Among the sites to view here is an adobe structure from the days of the ferry. This crossing was important to freighters before railroads, as it linked both sides of the Kelton Road from Utah to Boise. The springs in this area are important to the rare Shoshone sculpin (*Cottus greenei*).

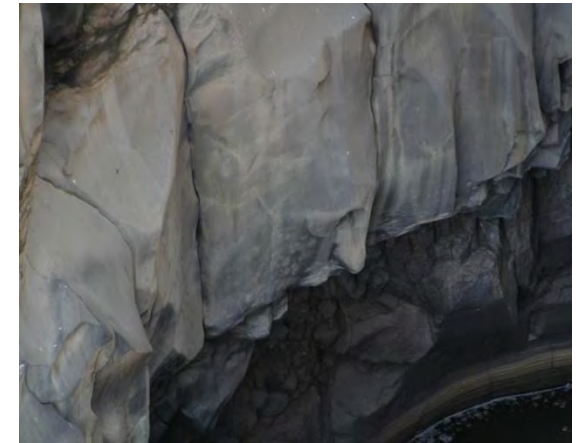
Earl M. Hardy Box Canyon Springs Preserve Box Canyon Springs flows at a rate of 180,000 gallons per minute. The natural area offers views of the springs, a hiking trail and viewing platform that overlooks a 20-foot waterfall. The area is also a great place to see bald and Golden eagles from December thru February and white pelicans from March thru July.

Niagara Springs Unit

Tumbling down the canyon side at 250 cubic feet per second, Niagara Springs is a sight you won’t soon forget. The churning water is the icy blue of glaciers and the springs are a National Natural Landmark. This park unit provides a great opportunity to drive into the 350-foot-deep Snake River canyon. Once inside the canyon, you’ll find year-round fishing in **Crystal Lake**, including handicap-accessible fishing and restrooms. Wildlife—especially waterfowl—is abundant. Niagara Springs also features restrooms, grills, picnic tables and a group picnic shelter.

Thousand Springs State Park

Thousand Springs State Park, with its five beautiful units, is a testament to why the area is called the Magic Valley. Visitors can explore the magnificent Malad Gorge, view wagon ruts and bridge abutments at Kelton Trail, access the riding arena at Billingsley Creek, get writing inspiration at the Vardis Fisher home site, step back in time and tour historic structures at

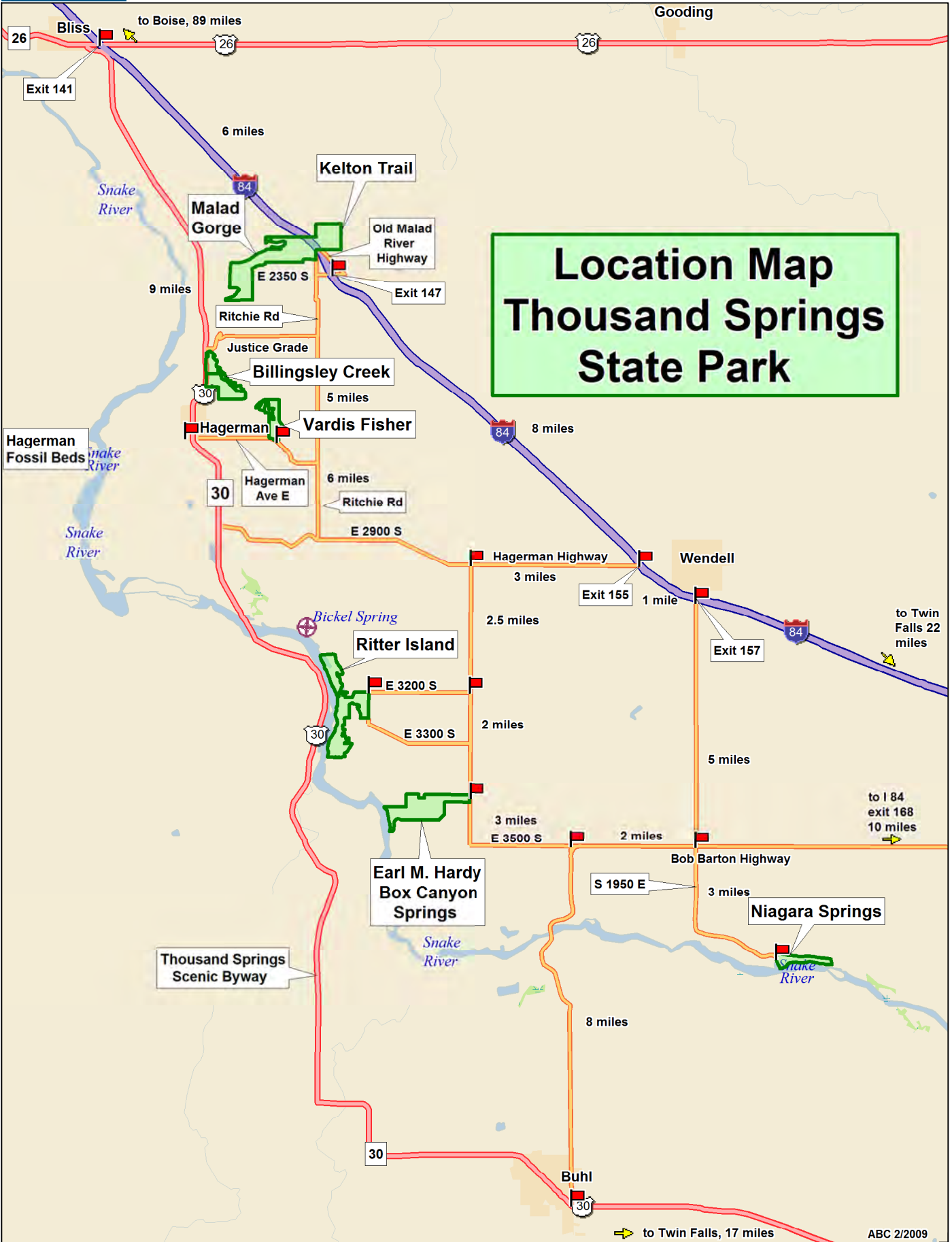


Ritter Island, take in the scenery at Earl M. Hardy Box Canyon Springs Preserve, view Niagara Springs, and fish at Crystal Lake. Day use opportunities abound within the units of Thousand Springs State Park.



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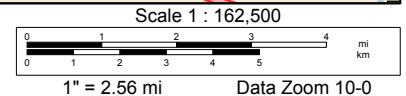
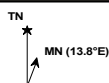


**Location Map
Thousand Springs
State Park**

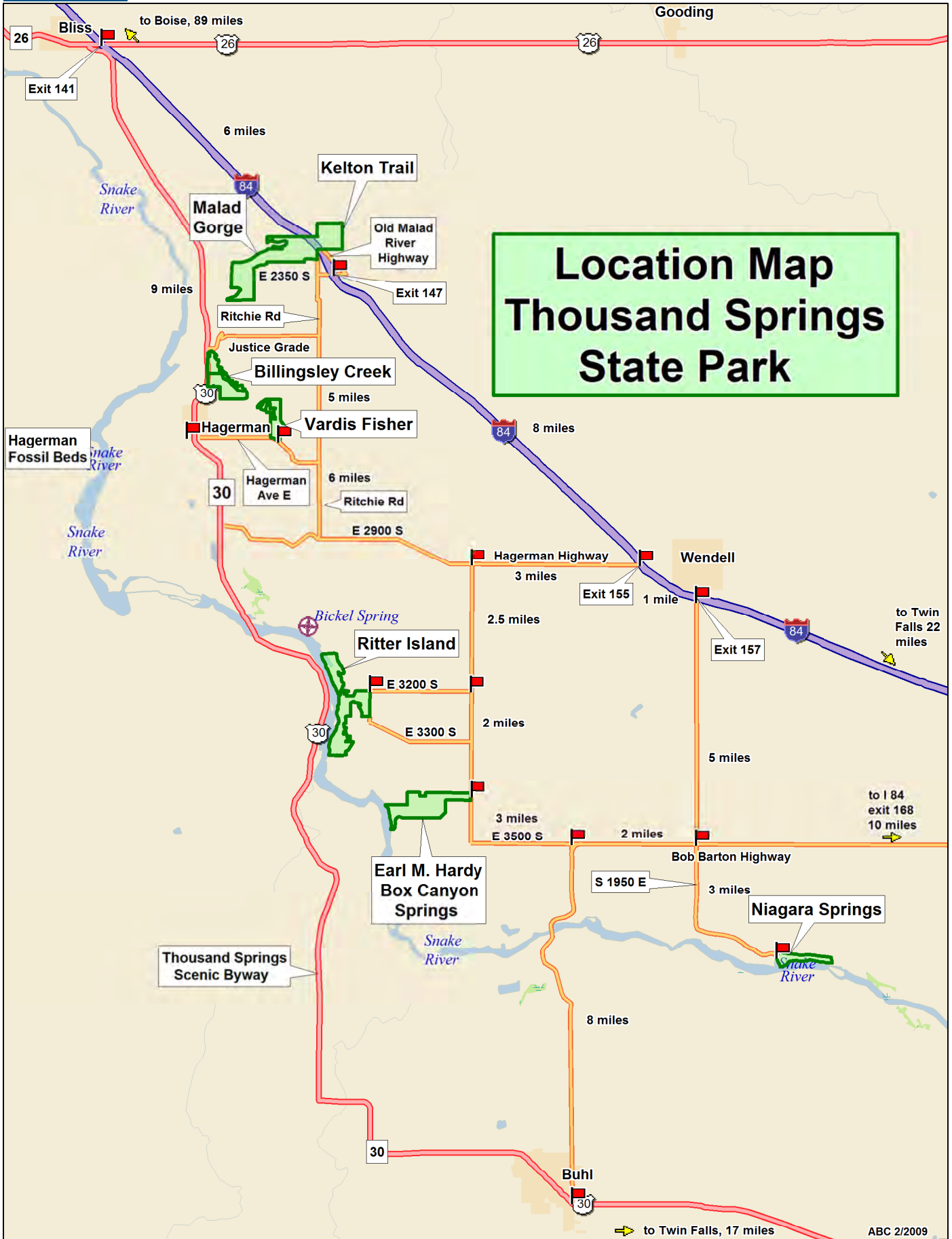
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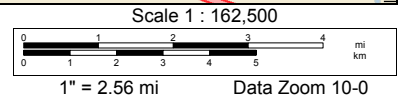
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Location Map Thousand Springs State Park





BLOCK FAULTING & RARE PLANT

This stop highlights two features; the step-like block faulting of the canyon, and a rare species of native plant.

Prior to the canyon filling with deposits of basalt lava from Gooding Butte, this area was inundated by the ancient lake bed that left soft sedimentary rock under the canyon walls. As the Malad Gorge was being cut, the waters were also undercutting the soft sediment layers under the basalt rock walls of the canyon. As these softer sediments erode, large sections of the heavier basalt canyon wall slowly "slump" towards the canyon floor over time.

Just beyond where you now stand is the beginning of a block slump. Some of the crevasses formed by this geological process are over 100 feet deep.



The moss-like plant growing along the canyon rim at this site is called Cow-Pie Buckwheat. It is a listed rare plant in the state of Idaho. This plant is found in only four sites in our state, and flourishes in the poor soils found here along the canyon edge.

The plant has adapted quite well to living in such a barren place. It is called a succulent because the small leaves are able to retain moisture year-round. The leaves contain a gel-like flesh much like cacti do. The outer part of the leaves are covered with fine silvery hairs which protect the plant from the ultraviolet radiation of the sun. The Cow-Pie Buckwheat produces small yellowish-white flowers in mid to late June.

It is still unknown if Cow-Pie Buckwheat is wind-pollinated or if a species of insect accomplishes the task of pollination.



WOODY'S COVE & HAGERMAN VALLEY

Woody's Cove was created by the same forces that created the Malad Gorge. In the past, waters from alpine glacial melt flowed violently over this area and began to wash out this cove. There was once a waterfall here similar to the Devil's Washbowl. The waters were diverted over time and left the cove as it appears today.

The whitish coloring on the walls is caused by calcium and phosphate deposits leaching out from water and whitening the porous volcanic rock. This cove is also more susceptible to erosion due to its aspect and positioning relative to the sun.



The canyon walls of Woody's Cove provide nesting cavities for many bird species. The wooded canyon floor provides necessary habitat for coyote, mule deer and red fox. Natural springs flowing from the base of the canyon provide enough water to maintain the trout hatchery at the mouth of the cove.

To the west lies the Snake River and the Hagerman Valley. The course of the River itself has changed direction over time as a result of the many volcanic episodes. The Snake River in this area was once much farther to the north.

We hope you enjoyed your visit!



Thousand Springs State Park
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THOUSAND SPRINGS STATE PARK



MALAD GORGE UNIT

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

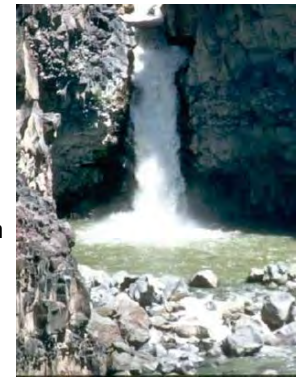
Welcome to Thousand Springs State Park—Malad Gorge Unit! With this self-guided tour you can conveniently enjoy the park at your own pace while discovering the natural wonders within. Please take time to explore and appreciate the beauty that took many years to create. Points of interest are designated with numbered roadside markers. You may begin your tour at any point along the way. We hope that our self-guided tour will greatly enhance your understanding and enjoyment of Thousand Springs State Park.



DEVIL'S WASHBOWL

The washbowl and the Malad canyon that you see before you were created by a combination of volcanic activity and erosion. Over a period of time, periodic lava flows changed the landscape repeatedly. Gooding Butte, 9.5 miles to the northeast, near the town of Gooding, Idaho contributed the basalt lava that make up the walls of the Malad Canyon.

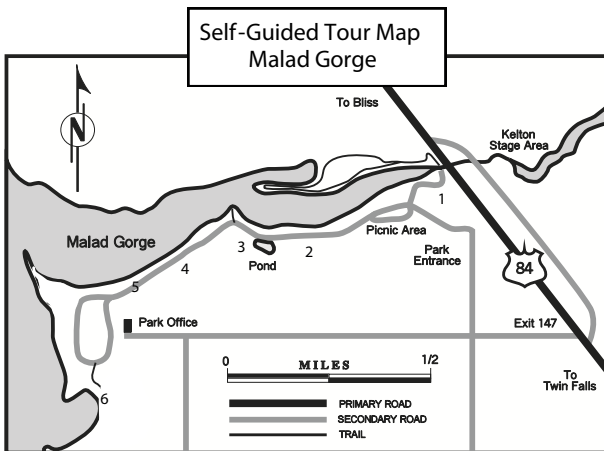
Following the volcanic episodes, alpine glacial snow melt from the north began flowing toward the Snake River. As the water reached this area, it began to widen weak joints in the basalt, eroding them to greater widths and depths. This widening began at the edge of the Snake River canyon as a raging waterfall. Over time, the waters retreated 2.5 miles to the present waterfall at Devil's Washbowl. The 60-foot waterfall at



the Devil's Washbowl is an active example of a retreating cataract. To the west and southeast of the Malad Canyon, similar examples of this canyon-forming erosion can be seen by walking Woody's Cove Overlook.



Today the Malad River originates near Gooding, Idaho where the Big and Little Wood Rivers combine. The Malad River is 12.5 miles long and the gorge is 2.5 miles in length. From the footbridge, as you look toward the interstate highway bridge, you can see that the waters of the Malad River are still active in creating a much narrower and shallower gorge above the Devil's Washbowl.



MALAD GORGE OVERLOOK

Here you can look back at the Malad River waterfall and the Devil's Washbowl to get another perspective of the forces that created the gorge. The Malad River traverses the 250 foot deep canyon for another 2.5 miles before it empties into the Snake River. During spring snowmelt, the canyon roars with large amounts of water from the swollen river. Wildlife finds abundant food and shelter within the Malad Canyon. Rock pigeons and numerous migratory birds, such as swallows, nest safely inside the canyon walls. Redtail hawks and golden eagles return annually to nest on the rocky outcrops and soar on warm air thermals rising up out of the canyon. Yellow-bellied marmots scurry about with ease in the canyon, eating grasses and tender vegetation. These large rodents live in rock piles and burrows, nesting and raising their young during the spring and early summer, and then hibernating the remainder of the year.



USES OF WATER OVERLOOK

Two interesting features which focus on water usage can be viewed here. Follow the gravel trail leading to our wildlife pond. Once a settling pond for irrigation water, this man-made pond is now used by many species of wildlife. Migratory waterfowl take advantage



of the protected water during their long journey to wintering areas. During the fall, if you are very quiet, you will often see hundreds of ducks on the water in the mornings and evenings. Docks allow for easier access for many purposes from picnicking to paddling canoes.



NATIVE PLANT RESTORATION

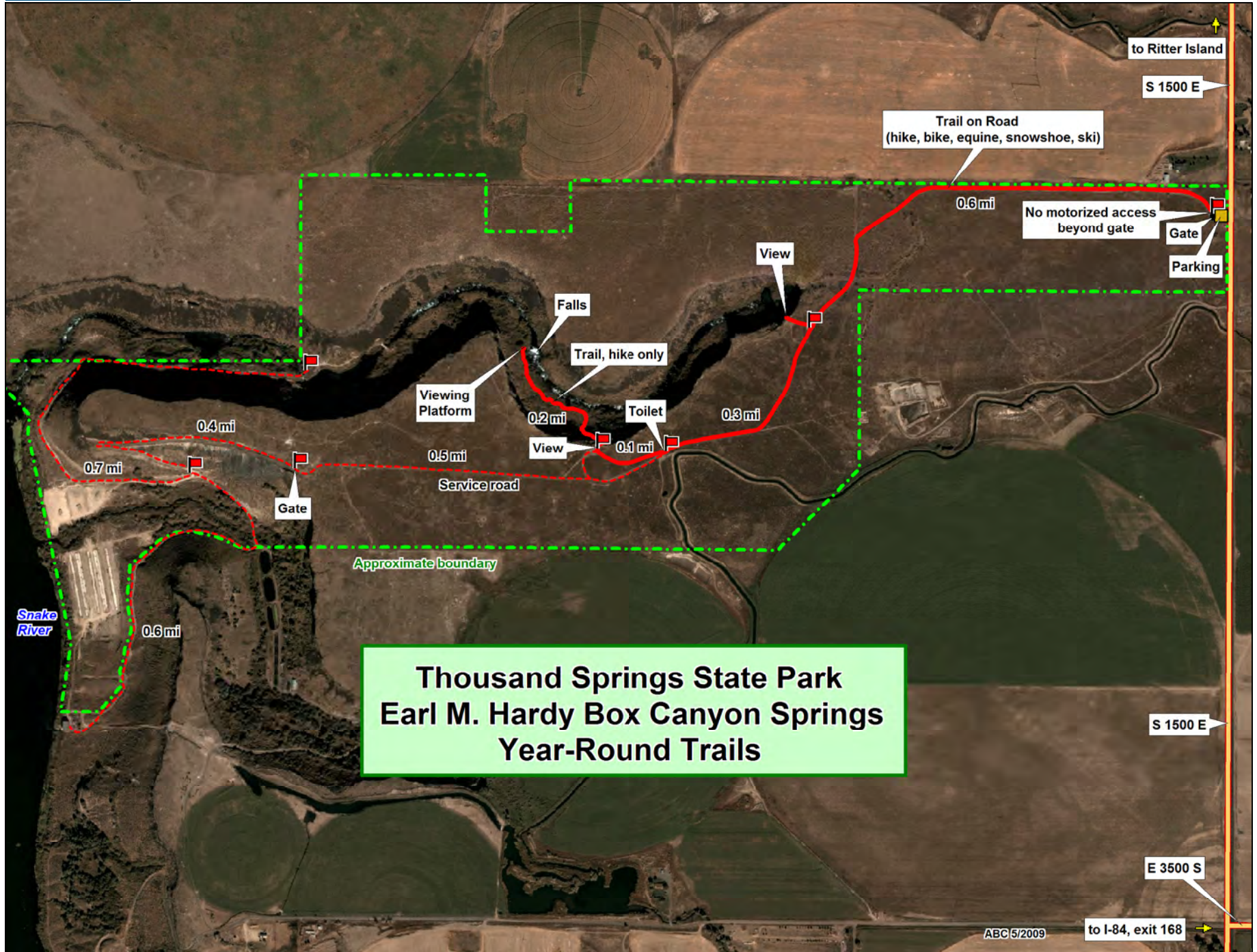
Across the road from the parking area is an overlook that will enable you to view the Malad Canyon. The structure that you see to the left diverts water from the upper Malad River to the first of two Idaho Power Co. generators on the river. Electricity has been generated by the Malad River since 1911. The concrete canal system on the canyon floor was completed in 1948. Except during spring high flow periods, most of the waters of the upper Malad River are diverted into the power canal.

Even with this diversion, the network of springs in Malad Gorge produce 600,000 gallons of water each minute and keep the river flowing throughout the year. These spring waters help maintain a native trout fishery as well as help support a diverse population of wildlife. You can see evidence of these springs as the Malad River recharges itself beyond the Idaho Power Co. diversion structure.

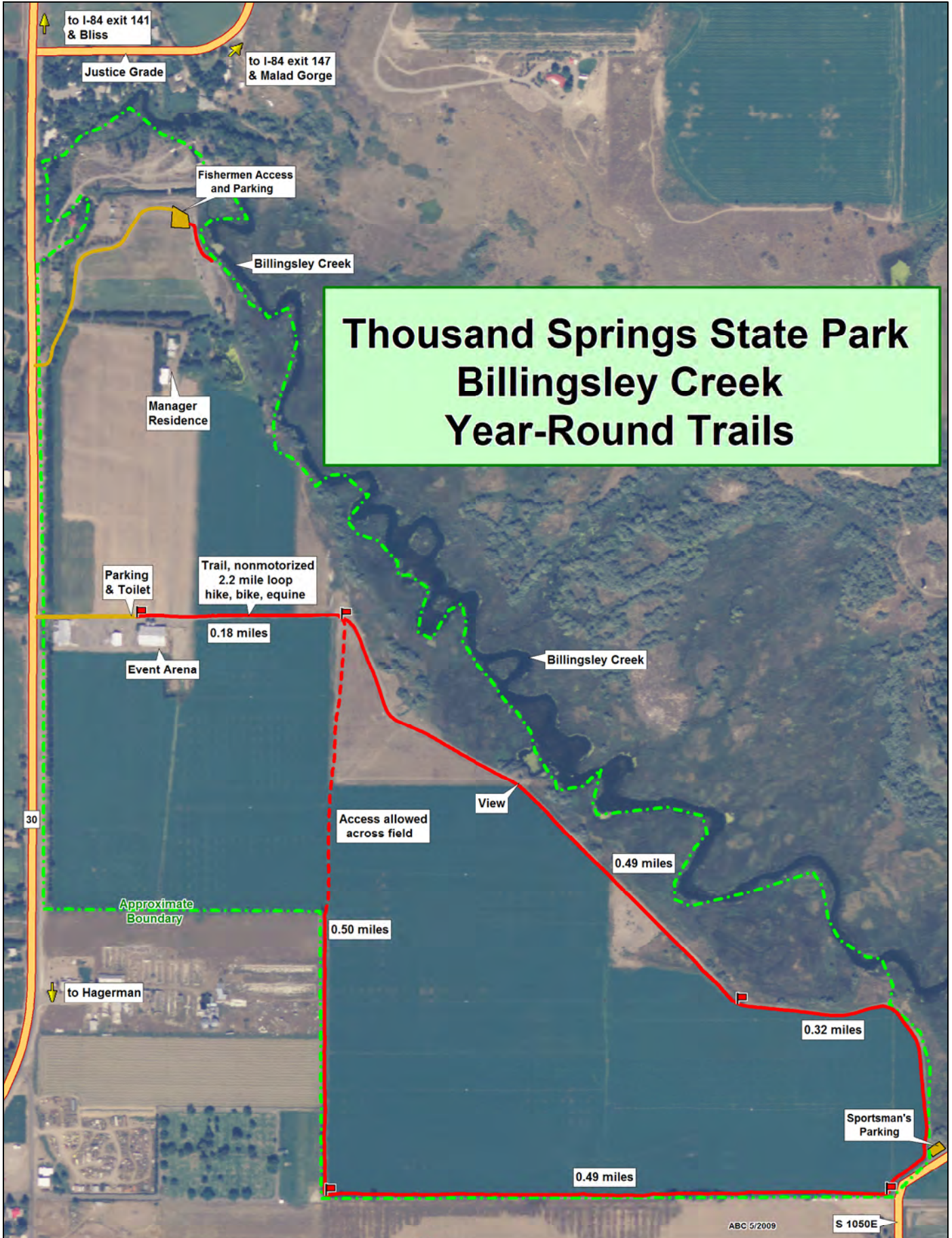
Across the canyon is another example of the canyon cutting powers of water. The pool of spring water just past the diversion structure is at the mouth of a canyon sometimes called Farmers' Cove.

This is one of several sites in Thousand Springs State Park undergoing native plant community restoration. Due to overgrazing in the past, the native grasses were destroyed. More aggressive non-native species such as cheat grass and mustard took over the range land.

After preparations in the latter part of 1996, this 5-acre site was seeded in April 1997 with four grass species once native throughout this area: Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Thickspike Wheatgrass, Great Basin Wildrye and Indian Ricegrass. As you can see, the native grasses have re-established themselves and will continue to seed and maintain a healthy grassland community. This grass planting is the first of four phases of habitat rehabilitation here in the park. The second phase will be to establish forbs and flowering plants, the third phase will be to establish shrubs such as sagebrush and antelope bitterbrush; and the final phase will be to establish berry producers and native trees in the wetland areas.



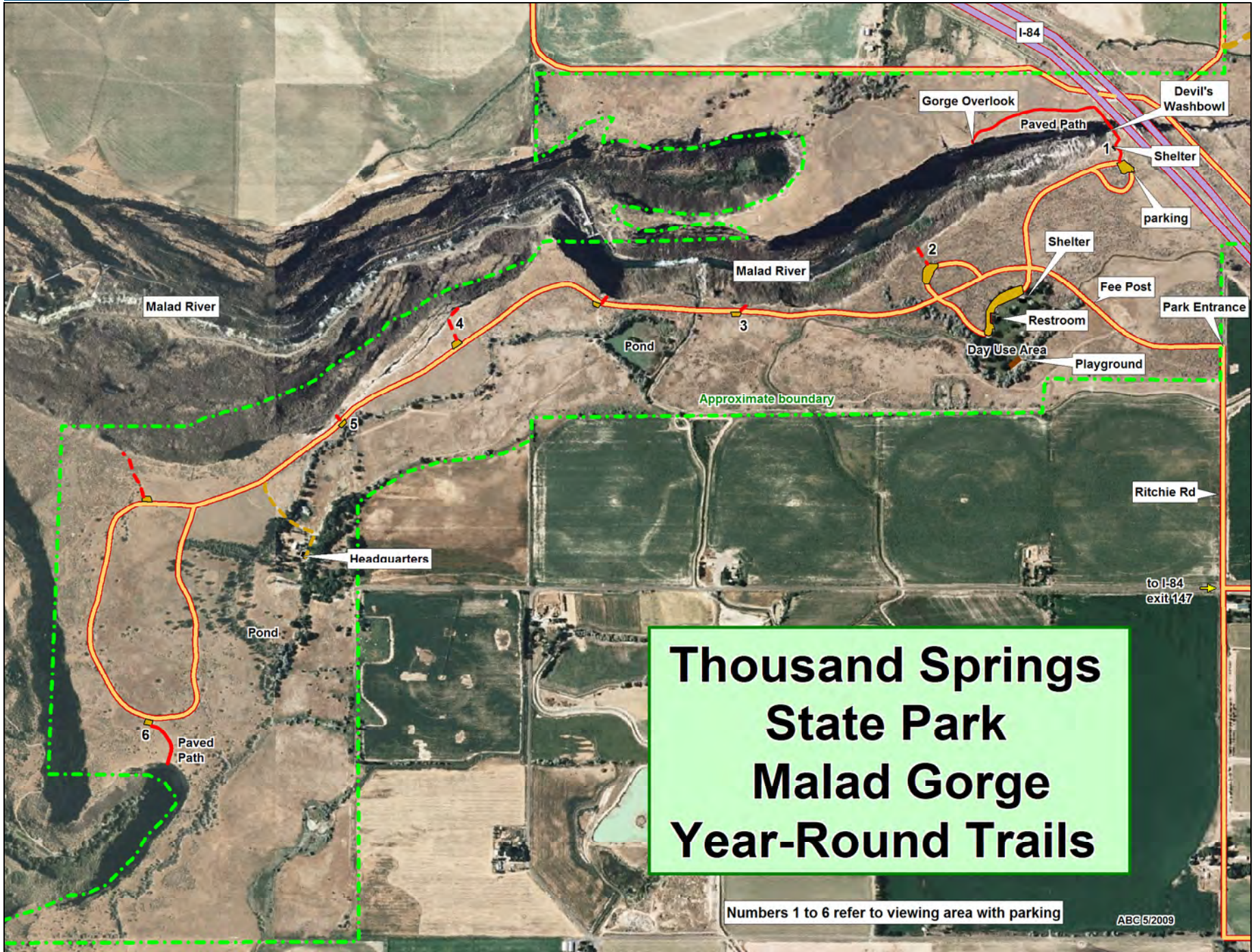
**Thousand Springs State Park
Earl M. Hardy Box Canyon Springs
Year-Round Trails**



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**Thousand Springs
State Park
Malad Gorge
Year-Round Trails**

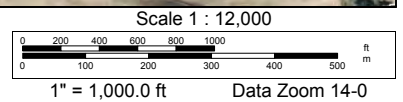
Numbers 1 to 6 refer to viewing area with parking

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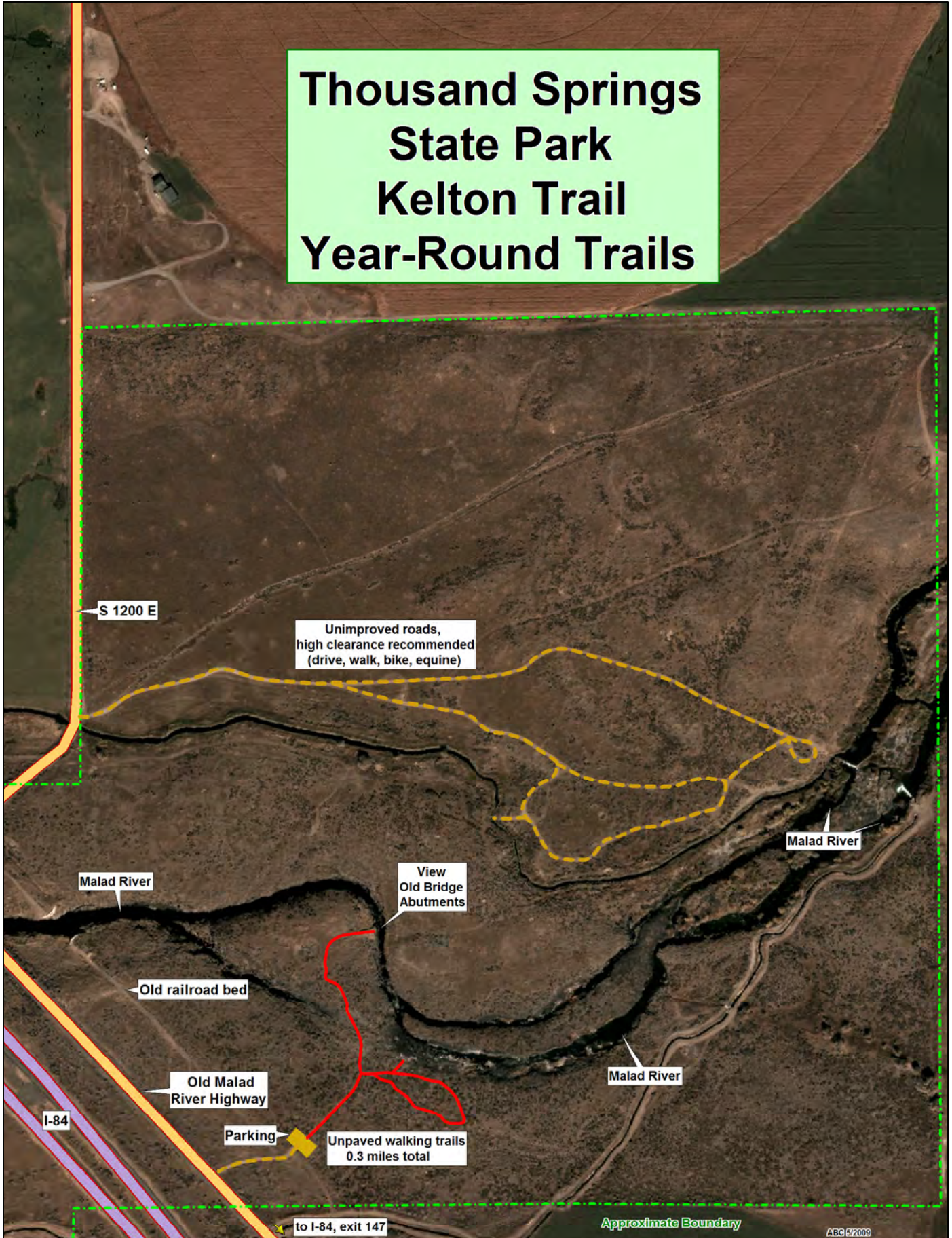
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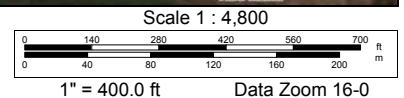
Thousand Springs State Park Kelton Trail Year-Round Trails

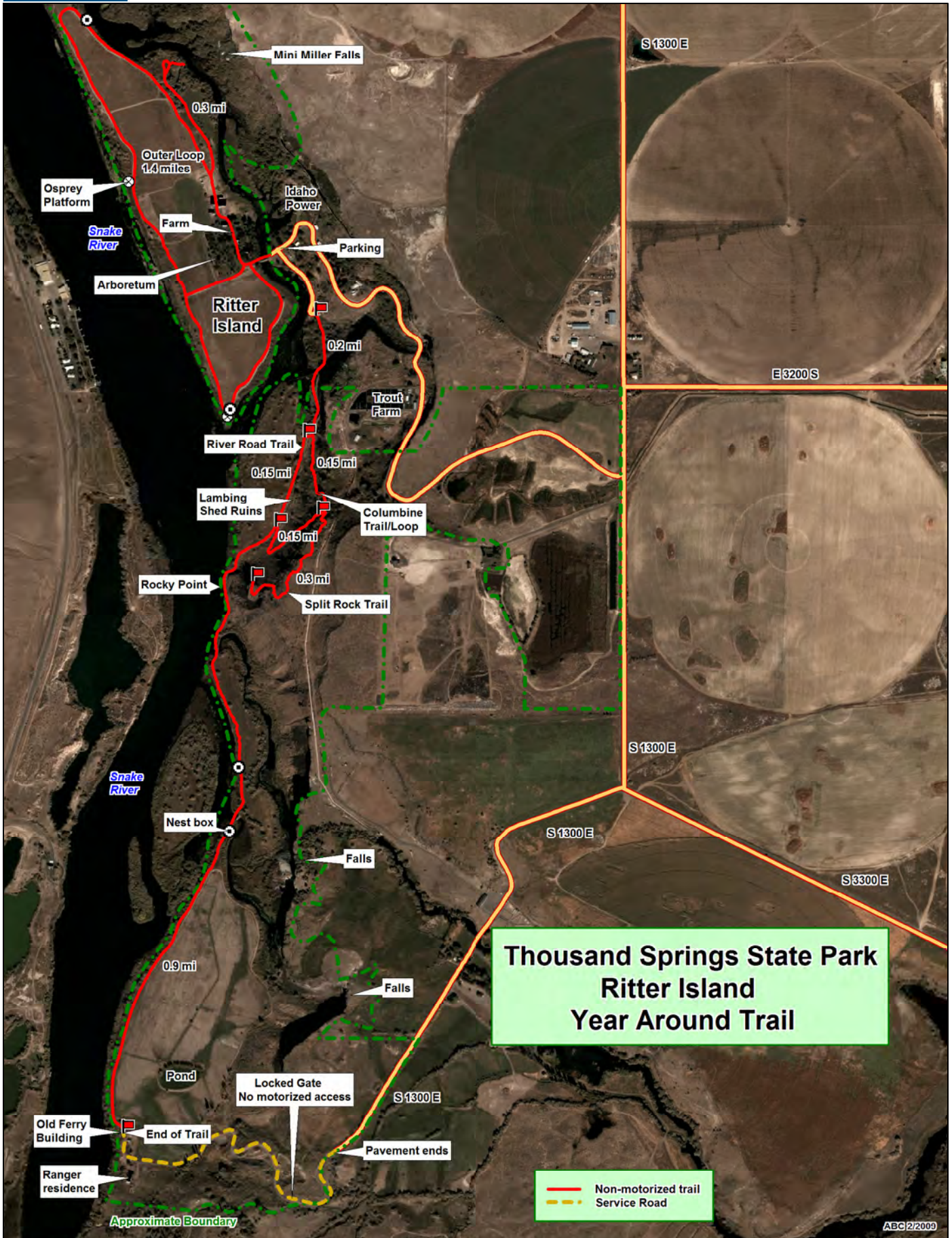


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**Thousand Springs State Park
Ritter Island
Year Around Trail**

— Non-motorized trail
- - - Service Road

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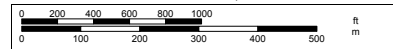
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Scale 1 : 12,800



1" = 1,066.7 ft Data Zoom 14-0