Creek, which joins Rock Creek north of Boyd, likely have the greatest potential for Yellowstone cutthroat trout restoration in the Clarks Fork drainage.

6.6.17 Bluewater Creek

Bluewater Creek (Figure 6-39) enters the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone near the town of Fromberg. The creek originates as a series of large springs, and provides cool, clear, oxygenated water in the middle of a desert area. FWP operates the Bluewater Springs Trout Hatchery, which is located on the creek about 10 stream miles upstream from the mouth of the creek. Bluewater Creek contains a healthy population of brown trout, and some rainbow trout. The hatchery primarily raises rainbow trout. Upstream from the hatchery, there may be some potential for Yellowstone cutthroat trout restoration. Future work should investigate the potential to establish a Yellowstone cutthroat trout population here.

6.7 Upper Yellowstone-Pompey's Pillar Subbasin (HUC 10070007)

The Upper Yellowstone-Pompey's Pillar Subbasin (Figure 6-40) encompasses the portion of the Yellowstone River drainage downstream of Billings to downstream of Custer. Landownership is mostly private, with state lands and BLM lands interspersed throughout the drainage. Land uses are agricultural, and include livestock production and irrigated crops.

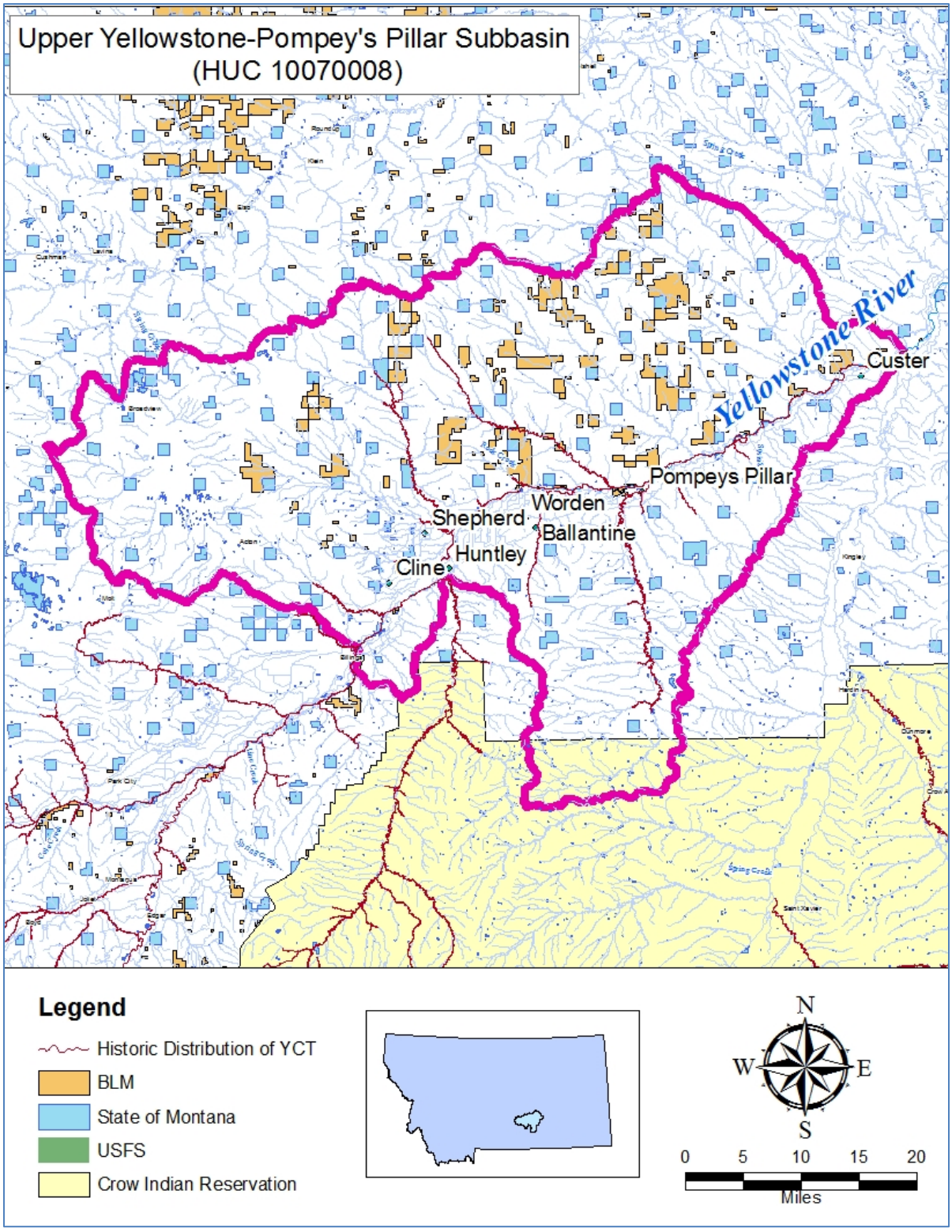

Figure 6-40: Upper Yellowstone-Pompey's Pillar HUC.

The presumed historic distribution of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the basin includes the main stem of the Yellowstone River and several unnamed tributaries (Figure 6-40). This portion of the

historic range was likely marginal habitat for Yellowstone cutthroat trout, as the river and its tributaries are transitional between cold-water and warm-water systems in this subbasin. The distribution of representative cold-water and warm-water fishes illustrates this transitional character. Rainbow trout are the only cold-water species rating as common in this portion of the Yellowstone River (MFISH database). Brown trout and mountain whitefish are rare, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout are not present. In contrast, warm-water fishes, such as channel catfish, goldeye, flathead chub, and river carpsucker are common to abundant within the subbasin (MFISH database).

As this portion of the Yellowstone cutthroat trout's historic range is marginal for cold-water fisheries, restoring Yellowstone cutthroat trout to this area faces natural impediments. Improvements in the reaches upstream may result in increased representation of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in this reach, especially during colder seasons. Specific actions to restore Yellowstone cutthroat trout to the Upper Yellowstone-Pompey's Pillar HUC would be low priority compared to portions of its historic range.

6.8 Pryor Creek Subbasin (HUC 10070008)

The Pryor Creek hydrological unit (Figure 6-41) lies to the east of Billings, and is mostly within the Crow Reservation. Originating in the Pryor Mountains, Pryor Creek flows north for over 100 miles until its confluence with the Yellowstone River near Huntley. Most of the basin's streams flow through prairie, and only the extreme headwaters are within montane or foothills environments.