COCONINO COUNTY ARIZONA
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

COCONINO
COUNTY ARIZONA

COCONINO COUNTY TASK FORCE ON POLLING LOCATIONS
2023

COCONINO COUNTY ARIZONA
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

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Executive Summary:

To the Coconino County Board of Supervisors,

The Task Force comprises members from different county communities and interest groups. They include representatives from Page, Williams, Flagstaff, and Native American lands who have election experience as election officials or Election Board Workers. To guarantee a broad spectrum of viewpoints, the Task Force has been appointed with a representative from both the Coconino County Democratic and Republican parties.

The Task Force was concerned with maintaining ease of access to voters on Election Day with high trust, transparency, and security in the eyes of the public and political actors. Legal, practical, and vital responsibilities and implications were considered while making these recommendations. Federal law requires Coconino County to equip each voting location with at least one election ballot marking device compliant with Help America Vote Act (HAVA) standards for use by voters with disabilities.

Furthermore, federal law requires that polling locations meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and provide access to voters with disabilities. The Voting Right Act, Section 203, also requires that Coconino County have election technology available at every polling location to assist voters in English, Navajo, and Hopi languages. To meet these requirements, Coconino County deploys at least one ExpressVote ballot marking device to each polling location and Vote Center.

The Task Force strived to identify guiding principles to select polling locations. They recognize the opportunities and challenges for a County as large as Coconino County. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to apply across the County uniformly. The Task Force members consensually endorse the recommendations included in this report.

Task Force on Polling Locations Membership:

Candy Owens: Chair; Candy Owens served as the Coconino County Recorder from January 1993 through December 2012. Ms. Owens has over 33 years of experience and involvement in leading the County's election administration. She continues to be involved in the community and avidly advocates for voter participation and engagement.

Sue Kennedy: Ms. Kennedy serves as Deputy City Clerk for the City of Page and is a Certified Municipal Elections Official. The Clerk's Office is the Early Voting site for the City of Page and surrounding areas of the Navajo Nation. She manages all aspects of municipal candidate elections, except on Primary and General Election days when the County administers the election.

Sarica Cernous: Ms. Cernous was appointed to the Task Force by the Coconino County Republican Party. She is an active observer of election processes and advocates for transparent election procedures that are easy to understand and implement.

Laura Huenneke: Ms. Huenneke was appointed to the Task Force by the Coconino County

Democratic Party. Ms. Huenneke has participated as a credentialed election observer in both Coconino and Yavapai County. Ms. Huenneke is committed both to election integrity and to voter access.

Sharon Sifling: Sharon has served as an Election Day Technician (EDT) with Coconino County for over 15 years. Her election experience, combined with her professional background as a Public Health Educator, gives Ms. Sifling a great understanding of the needs and challenges in our communities.

Brock Cash: Mr. Cash managed as an Inspector one of the busiest polling locations in Flagstaff during the 2022 Election cycle. Mr. Cash has worked on elections since 2010 and has been an inspector since 2016. In his role, he has seen the evolution of polling locations housed inside public libraries, churches, and, more recently, in a school setting.

Stacy Saltzburg: Ms. Saltzburg is the Clerk for the City of Flagstaff. As a Certified Elections Official, she is the Filing Officer for the city's mayoral and council candidates, city-wide initiatives and petitions, and manages campaign finance. Ms. Saltzburg has advocated for the City of Flagstaff employees to serve as election board workers to support their communities.

Ray Daw: Mr. Daw is the Native American Election Coordinator and was appointed to the Task Force by the Coconino County Recorder. Mr. Daw has over 16 years of experience working in Elections, supporting voter registration, training, and outreach in Native American communities in Coconino County.

Frances Sjoberg: Ms. Sjoberg is a Principal Attorney for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, Economic and Community Development Unit (ECDU). The ECDU works with other governmental entities to facilitate local, state, and federal elections in the Navajo Nation to proactively address concerns and protect Navajo citizens' access to the polls.

Amanda Lugo: Ms. Lugo is the Arizona Grassroots Manager with All Voting Is Local, a community organization that advocates making elections more accessible for voters. The organization has actively advocated for registered voters to work as election board workers in Coconino County.

Pamela Galvan: Ms. Galvan is the City Clerk for the City of Williams. She has worked with the city of Williams since February of 2011. She began as an Administrative Assistant in 2014, promoted to Deputy City Clerk and HR Administrator, then to her current role of City Clerk/HR Director in July 2016.

The Elections Department staff supported the work of the Task Force through research, analysis, note-taking, and meeting preparations. A draft report was prepared by the Elections Department and presented to the Task Force group for feedback, edits, and amendments.

The Task Force Report was consensually adopted by the members of the group.

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Background: Current Election Processes and Trends

The Geography of Coconino County

Coconino County is the largest county geographically in Arizona and the second largest county in the continental United States. Encompassing 18,661 square miles, Coconino County is geographically larger than nine states. The Grand Canyon divides the County from east to west in the northern portion, and the County includes one precinct (Havasupai) located at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, which is only accessible by foot, horseback, or helicopter. The residential population of Coconino County was 145,052, according to 2021 census numbers. This population is dispersed throughout the County, requiring a multitude of rural election precincts. The technological infrastructure in rural precincts, including cell service coverage, Wi-Fi service, and even electricity, can be unreliable and sometimes unavailable.

Registered Voters

Voter turnout continues to grow across the County, with Presidential Election years showing substantial numbers of voters. During the 2022 General Election, Coconino County had 90,829 registered voters. Since 2004, an increasing number of registered voters in the County have chosen to vote early, the highest percentage reaching over eighty percent in 2020. The voter turnout numbers across Coconino County polling locations are displayed in Appendix 1-A with a proportional symbol map and below with graphs in Figures 1-3.

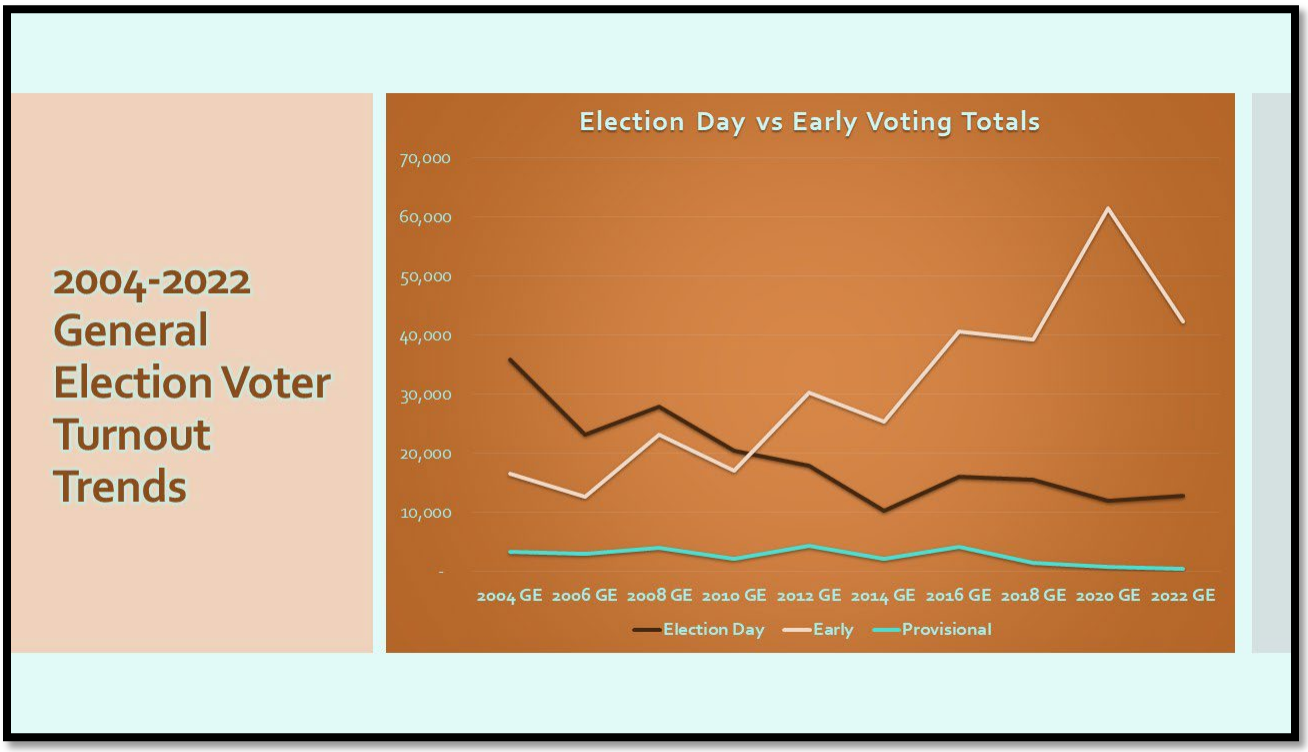

Figure 1. *2004-2022 General Election voter turnout numbers for Election Day (black), Early (tan), and Provisional (teal) ballots cast.*

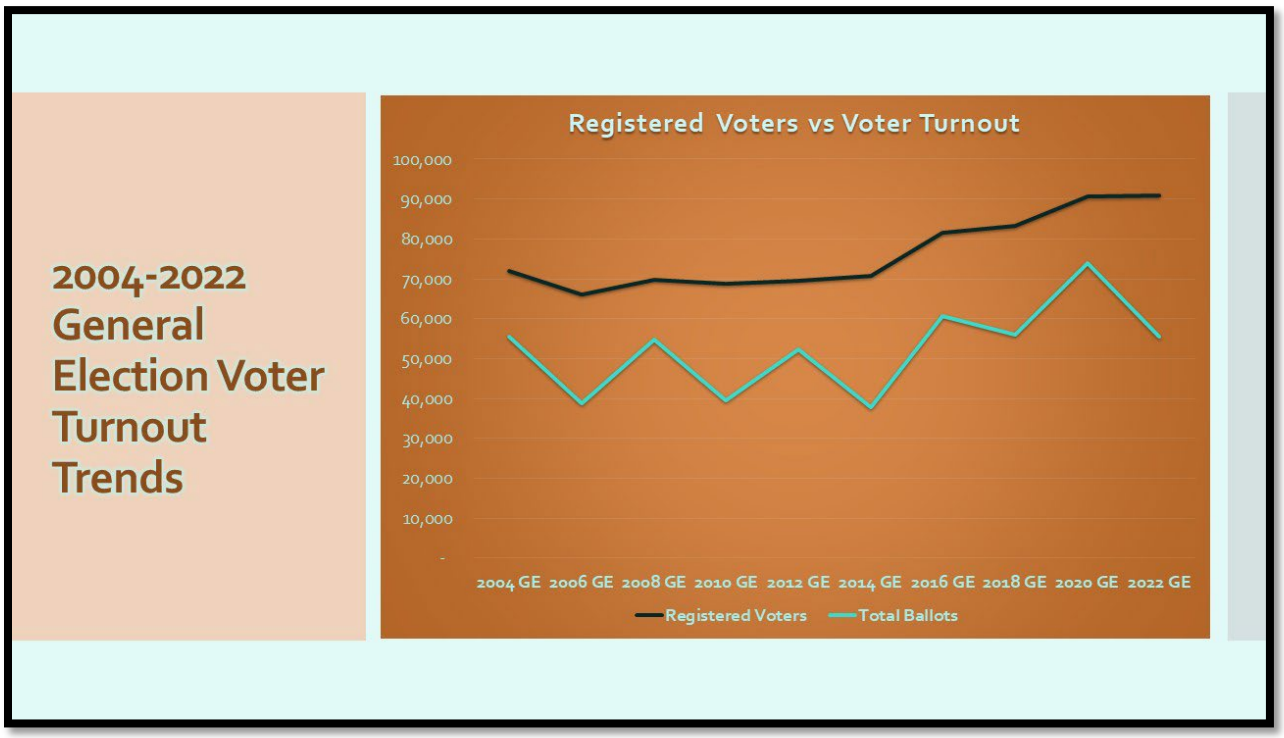

Figure 2. *2004-2022 General Election trend for number of registered voters (black) and total ballots cast for each election (teal).*

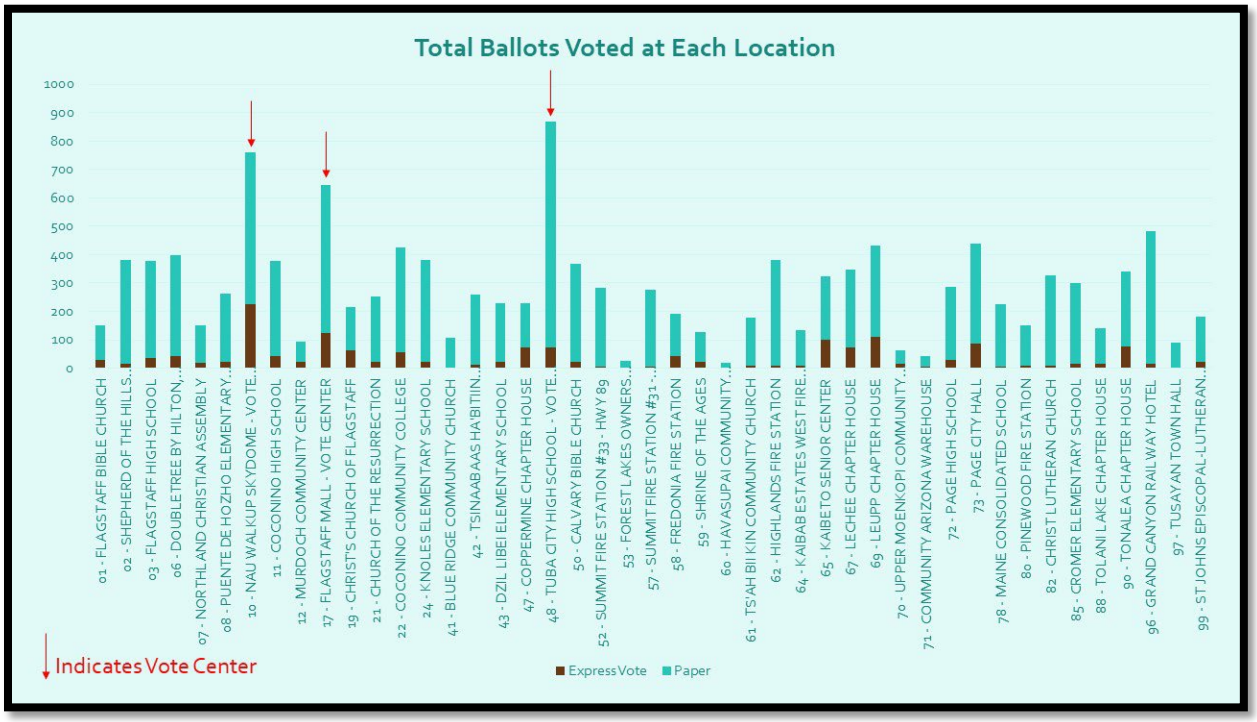

Figure 3. *Total number of votes cast during the 2022 General Election using an ExpressVote (brown) and an official paper ballot (teal) at each polling location across Coconino County. The red arrows indicate the three vote centers used for this election.*

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Challenges in Administering Elections

Challenges with conducting elections in Coconino County include finding suitable locations that can serve as polling places. The greatest challenge we see is finding ADA compliant locations that are centrally located and accessible to all voters with rooms that are large enough to serve as a polling location. During the 2022 election 37 out of 45 polling locations required some form of remediation that ranged from signage to facilities that could not be fitted for ADA accessibility and required a call box to meet ADA compliance.

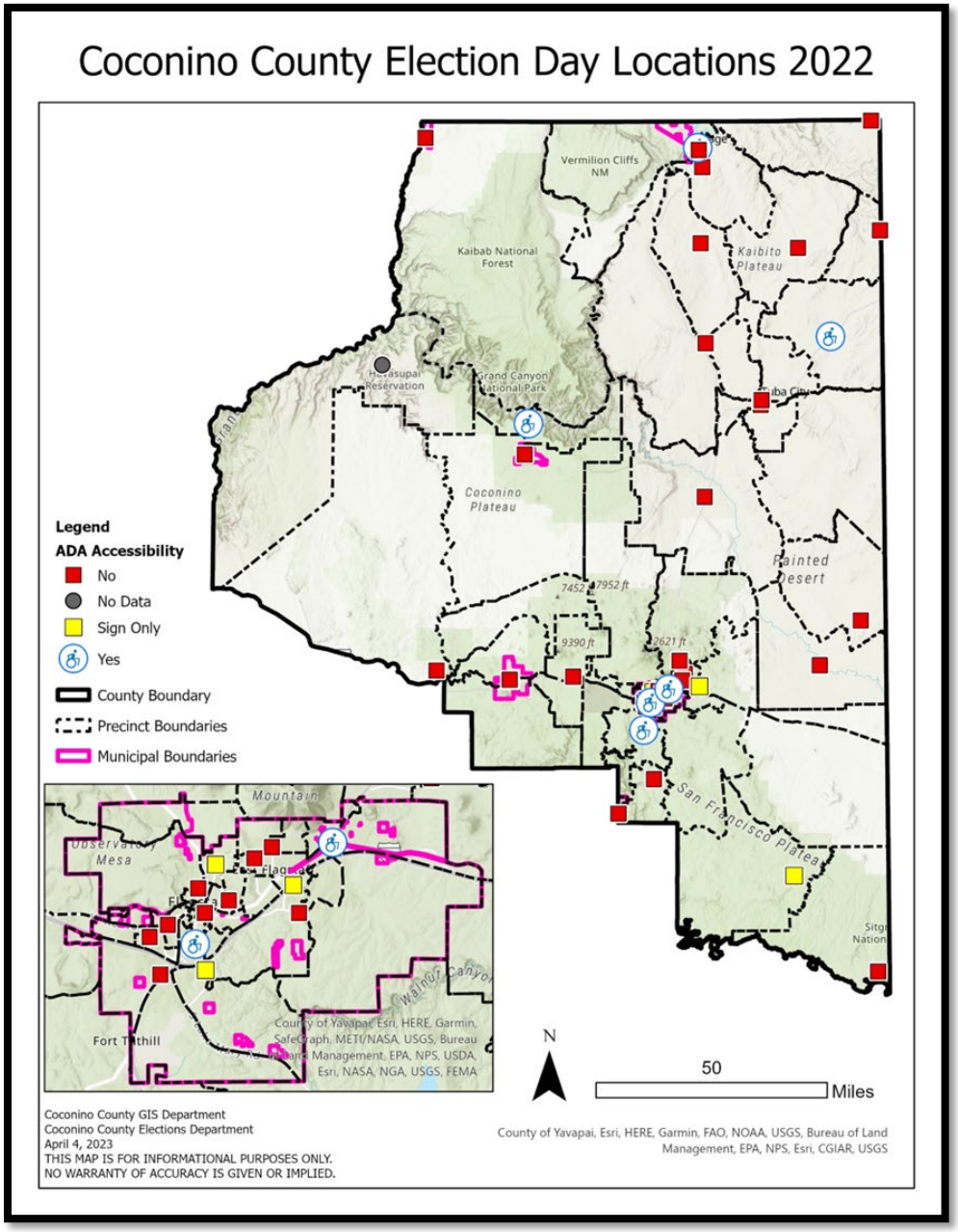
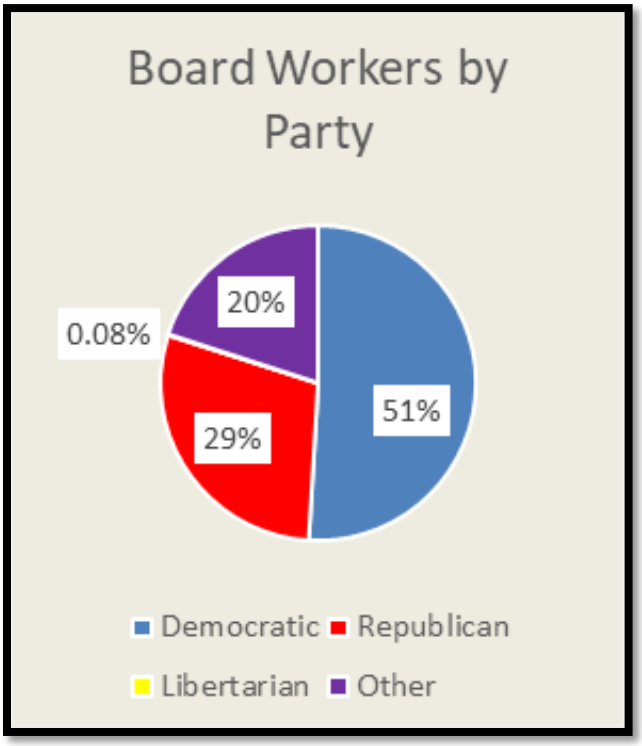


Figure 4. *Map of the polling locations across Coconino County requiring remediation to meet ADA requirements (red and yellow). Red signifies more than a sign is needed and yellow is a sign requirement only. No data is for Havasupai, at the base of the Grand Canyon.*

Recruiting, training, and deploying qualified election board workers continues to be an obstacle. In the 2022 General Election, the County deployed 453 election board workers to administer elections across 45 polling locations. Appendix 1-9B shows the number of polling locations used throughout Coconino County during the 2022 General Election.

Arizona Election Law requires polling locations to be staffed by bi-partisan election board workers to work the entire Election Day. However, the 15-hour election day can be particularly demanding, since many election board workers are 60 years old or older. Providing appropriate support and accommodations for these election workers becomes crucial to ensure their well-being and the effective administration of elections.



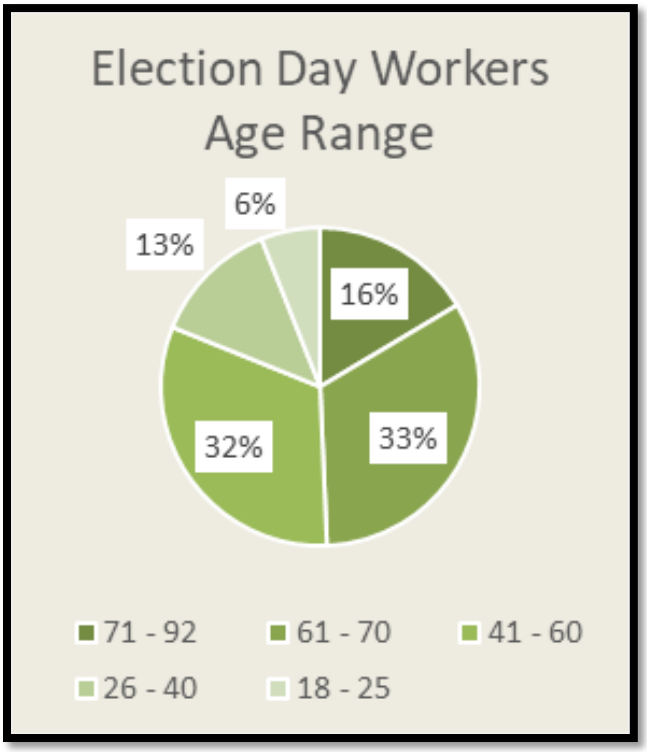


***Figure 5**. 2022 General Election pie chart of board workers by party with blue representing the majority in blue, Republicans as the second highest group in red, other voters like no party determined and independent voters in purple, and Libertarian in yellow.*

***Figure 6**. 2022 General Election pie chart of board workers by ages ranging from ages 18-92. The darker the green the older the population.*

Facility owners have expressed concerns about using their facilities as polling locations, citing safety or incompatibility of business activities. In the 2022 General Election, some polling locations were undergoing renovation or were partially unavailable for use during the election cycle. Parents in many schools have raised safety and security concerns for students, by having voters, observers, and other activities around students.

In conclusion, the administration of elections in Coconino County faces the following challenges:

- Geographic size of the County makes equipment deliveries challenging.
- Rural distribution of the population.

- Limited facilities and infrastructure that can serve as polling locations.
- Facilities do not meet ADA criteria; remediation is needed.
- Difficulty recruiting qualified poll workers; and,
- Declining availability of locations willing to serve as polling places.

The County has demonstrated its ability to overcome these challenges and successfully deliver elections to its voters. The County has managed to conduct elections with no interruptions, good voter experience, and accurate and timely reporting of elections results. During the most recent state-wide recount, Coconino County was one of the three Arizona counties that had not discrepancies on their vote counts.

In 2022 voter check-in times at precinct polling locations experiences 2-36 voters per hour and the vote centers experienced 22-90 voters per hour. The Elections Department is instituting procedures to record the wait times at each polling location. However, it recognizes the importance of continuously improving elections administration to meet the community's evolving needs and concerns.

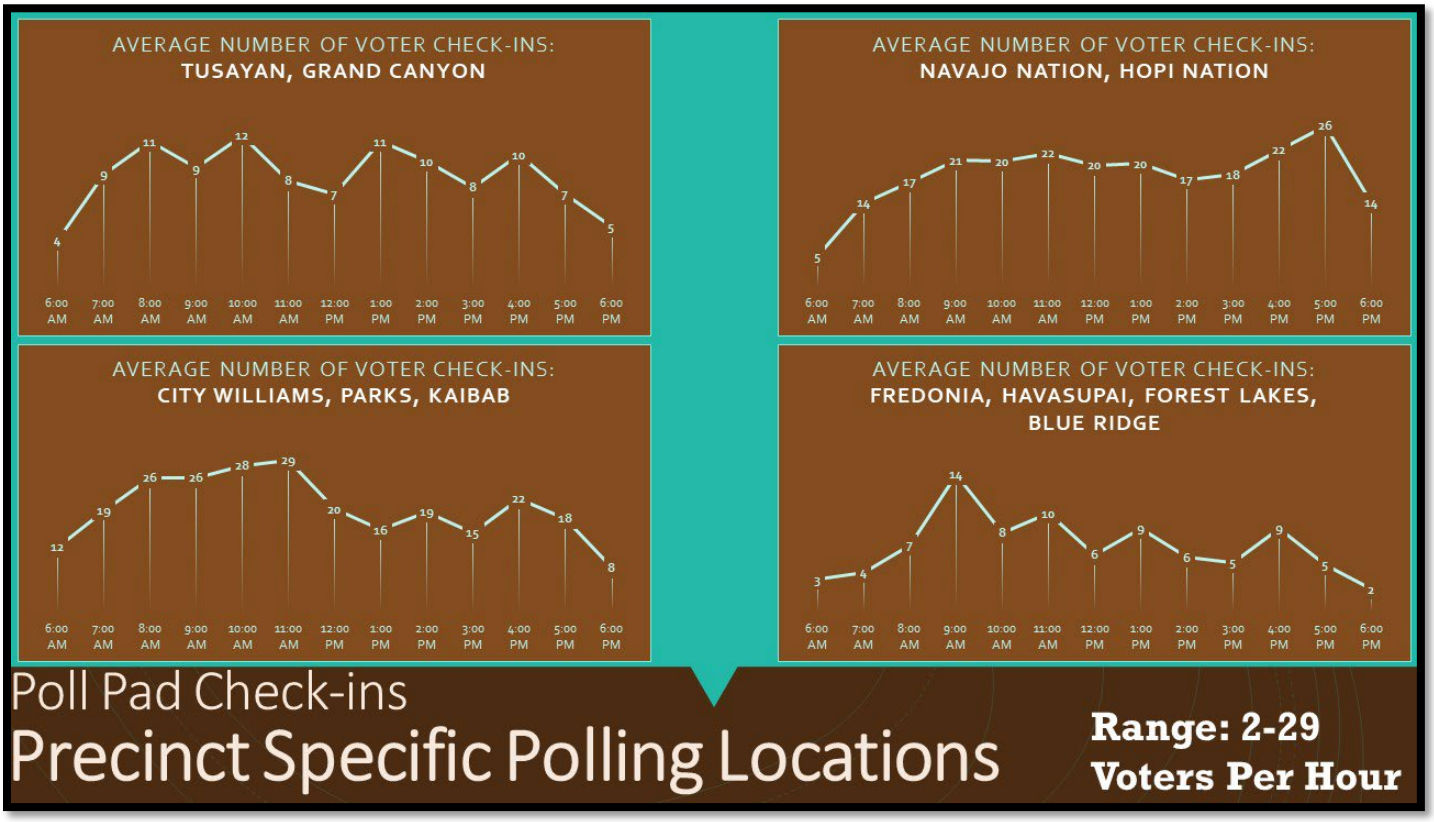


Figure 7. *Precinct polling location check-in with a range of 2-29 voters per hour.*

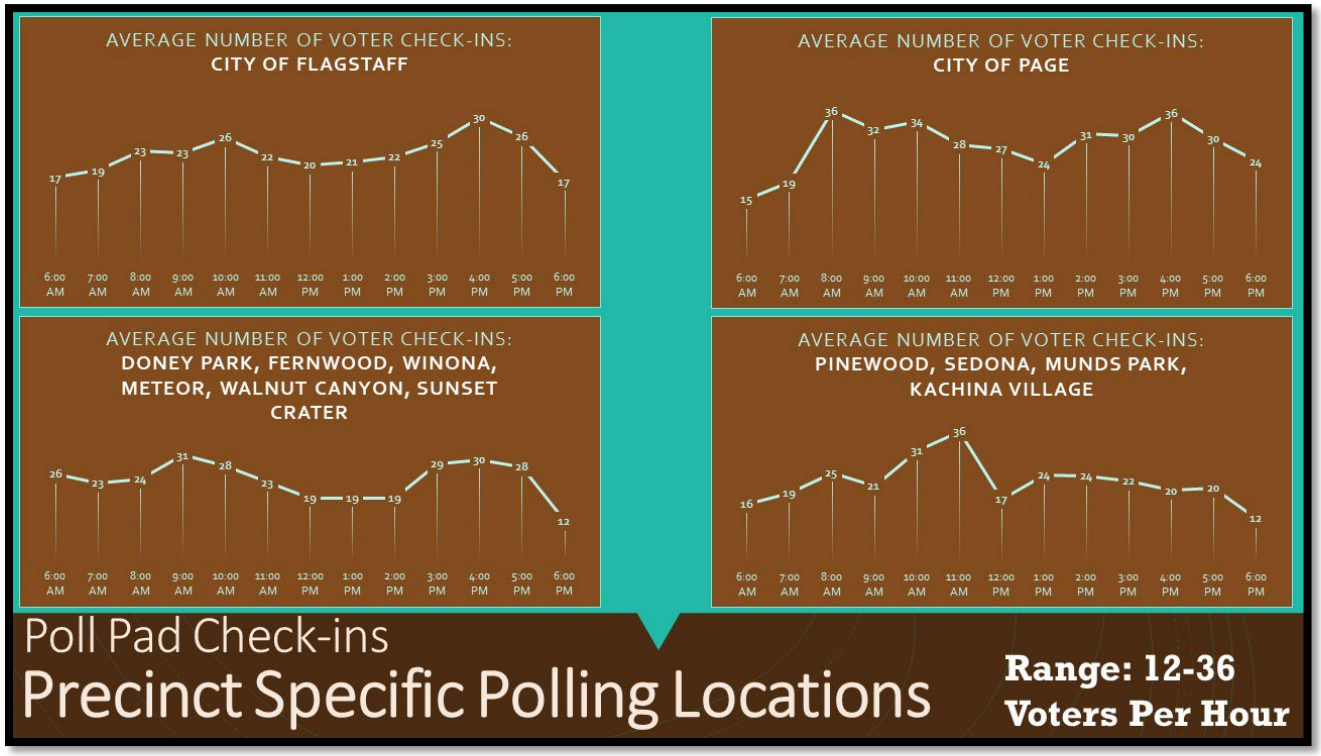


***Figure 8**. Precinct polling location check-in with a range of 12-36 voters per hour.*

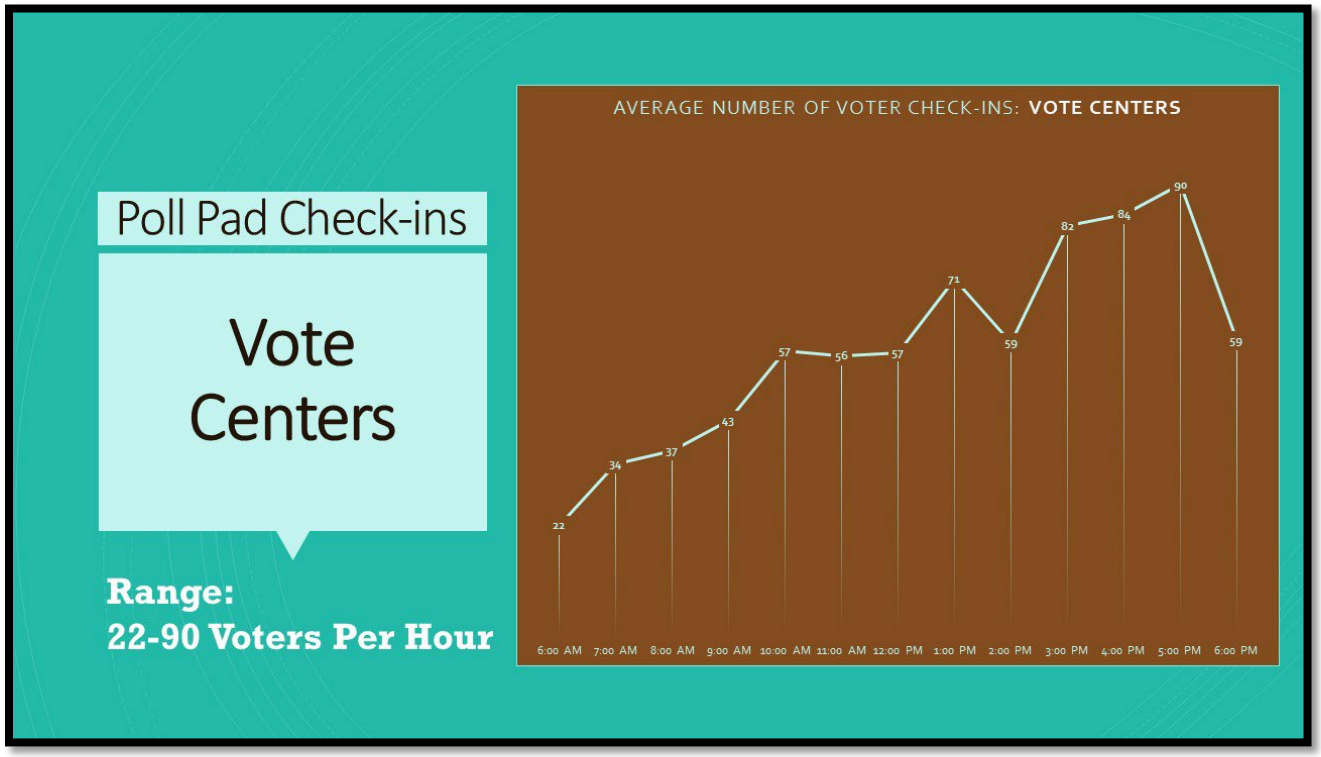


***Figure 9.** Vote Center check-in numbers ranging from 22-90 voters per hour.*

One area of improvement lies in understanding and adapting to emerging trends in voting patterns and choices within the county. By closely analyzing the data on voter behavior in anticipation of the upcoming elections, the Elections Department can gain valuable insights into the preferences and expectations of the electorate. This information aids in the decision-making process to shape the most effective strategies to reach and engage voters, including the possibility of adding additional resources where needed.

By embracing a mindset of continuous improvement, Coconino County can ensure that its elections remain transparent, efficient, and responsive to the needs of a diverse voter base. Through data-driven decision-making, community engagement, technological advancements, and collaborative efforts, the county can build upon its good track record and provide voters with great election day experiences.

The Work of the Task Force

The Task Force was established to develop guiding principles for the selection of polling places in Coconino County. Over the course of its operations, the Task Force convened on five occasions, engaging in comprehensive discussions and hearing testimony on various aspects related to the planning, administration, and organization of polling locations throughout the County. These discussions also encompassed the unique considerations associated with the diverse rural areas and Native American communities within the county.

During its meetings, the Task Force delved into the many dimensions of selecting suitable polling locations. They explored several vital factors to consider when making these decisions. This includes legal considerations such as accessibility for voters and political actors, proximity to population centers, parking availability, infrastructure, voter and worker safety, and the spatial requirements necessary to accommodate the voting process effectively.

Furthermore, the Task Force deliberated on the specific dynamics associated with Coconino County's distinctive rural communities. They recognized these regions' unique challenges and characteristics, including issues related to geographical dispersion, limited resources, and potential barriers to voter accessibility, especially in our Native American communities. By discussing these factors, the Task Force aimed to develop comprehensive guidelines that address the specific needs and circumstances of rural communities within the county.

Through thoughtful discussions and examination of relevant testimonies, the Task Force established a framework to guide the decision-making process for selecting polling locations in Coconino County. The aim was to ensure that these locations are chosen to promote effectiveness, facilitate voter participation, and respect the county's diverse geographical and demographic aspects.

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Meeting Dates and Summary

1st Meeting - March 10, 2023:

- Defining the purpose and goals of the Task Force
- Overview of Elections in Coconino County
- Reviewing the critical elements for facilities to serve as polling locations: Accessibility and ease for voters, the ability for political parties and candidates to engage in electioneering activities, safe and secure operation, and storage of voting equipment.
- Discussion and definitions of Vote Centers and Precinct-based polling locations and how they are utilized across the state and our County. The County uses a 'hybrid' model both of precinct-based polling locations and Vote Centers, each Vote Center is equipped with a Ballot-On-Demand printer wherein a voter from any precinct may vote their specific paper ballot.

2nd Meeting - March 29, 2023:

- Testimony from Mike Penca, Superintendent of Flagstaff Unified School District, and Mike Sifling, Security/Resource Officer FUSD, on ways to collaborate and alleviate security concerns from different community members.
- Testimony from Holly Roth on overall voter trends and data across the county. She noted the increased overall number of voters casting ballots each General Election. An increasingly more significant number of voters cast their ballots early.
- Testimony from Lynndel Custodio on Coconino County polling places, the logistics and geographic locations of all 45 polling places utilized in the 2022 elections.
- Testimony from Ray Daw, Native American Outreach Coordinator, on polling locations in the Navajo Nation, reviewing both sites and voter participation.

3rd Meeting - April 19, 2023:

- Testimony from Stan Pierce on Election Board Worker recruitment and training efforts, including the legal and curriculum requirements.
- Testimony from Holly Roth on the technology used to improve voter checking and assist voters with ADA accessibility requirements. An essential part of administering Election Day operations includes developing contingency plans. These contingency plans include investment in additional equipment to maintain the same number of polling locations.
- Testimony from Lynndel Custodio on current ADA compliance data for all polling sites. Currently, 37 of 45 polling locations utilized during the 2022 election cycle did not meet all the ADA requirements. As a result, many places, especially in the county's more rural areas, needed much equipment to address the remediations.

4th Meeting - May 10, 2023:

- Discussion to create criteria.
- 5th Meeting – May 24, 2023
- Discussion on the Draft Report

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Guidelines Identified

The Task Force engaged in extensive discussions concerning establishing guidelines for selecting polling locations in Coconino County. Throughout these deliberations, the primary focus remained on enhancing the voter experience, polling location security, ensuring convenience and accessibility, and efficiency for all voters.

Task Force members discussed the diverse needs and desires of selecting polling locations and Vote Centers within the county. They examined various factors, such as proximity to existing sites, transportation, including public transit, and parking availability. After considering these factors, the Task Force recommend the following guidelines that the Election Department would utilize in selecting polling locations:

1. **Continue Using the Hybrid Model for Polling Locations.**
   Continue with the Coconino County hybrid model but increase the number of Vote Centers when appropriate. Vote Centers provide flexibility, access, and efficiency and can be utilized effectively in the more populated areas of the County. Vote Centers are designed to combine two or more polling locations, reducing the overall number of needed locations. In rural areas, continuing to use precinct-based polling locations will keep voter travel minimal. Vote Centers should be of sufficient size to accommodate the number of voters casting a ballot and include appropriate contingency plans. To create a Vote Center at all 45 polling locations is fiscally challenging as each location requires to be equipped with a Ballot-On-Demand printer. Consolidating polling places in rural and Native communities would negatively impact voters by increasing travel time and distance. For this reason, we recommend enhancing polling locations in rural communities and educating voters on the use of Accessible Voting Equipment through a coordinated educational campaign.

2. **Sites Should Meet ADA Accessibility Standards for Voters.**
   In all instances possible polling locations should meet the requirements of the Americans with Disability Act; Voting Rights Act of 1965; Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Disabled Act of 1984; Help America Vote Act of 2022. ADA standards guarantee access for all voters to the polls.

3. **Selecting Sites that Allow Electioneering Should Be Prioritized.**
   ARS 16-517 defines areas outside 75’ of the polling location to allow electioneering activities. Transparency for the public and access to credentialed observers at the polling places increases trust in the administration of elections.

4. **Location Agreements Must Guarantee Availability for All 2024 Elections.**
   Presidential Preference 3/19/24, Primary 8/6/24, General 11/5/24 and be available for Monday prior and Wednesday post-election day for polling location delivery.

5. **Consideration of Parking and Transit Accessibility.**
   Vote Centers and polling locations should have ample parking, good walkability, and easy accessibility for public transportation, such as proximity to bus stations.

6. **Consider The Safety and Security of Voters, Election Workers, and Neighbors/Users of the Facilities.**
   Selection of vote centers and polling locations should maximize the safety and wellbeing of voters, election workers, and party observers. The ability to deliver, store and retrieve safely election supplies and equipment should be considered. Ability to maintain health and safety security plans for each location through effective use of resources, including ensuring the size of the facility enables safety of voter flow when all voting equipment and materials are set up.

7. **When Possible, Share Polling Locations with the Navajo Nation Elections.**
   Recognizing two distinctive elections administered by the Navajo Nation and County may happen simultaneously, sharing polling locations or facilities in the vicinity increases the visibility and participation of voters. In those cases when elections take place in different buildings, clearly and consistently post notices for the locations of the Navajo Nation and County elections.

8. **Investing in Elections**
   The public's expectations in administering elections require continuous investment in the elections infrastructure, including voter education, technology and equipment. Staffing is critical in putting together and delivering free, fair, and secure elections.

9. **When Possible, Continue to Utilize Current/Existing Locations, and Increase the Number of Sites if Necessary.**
   Many communities, especially those on the Navajo reservation, have familiarity and ties to the current/existing locations. If a current/existing location meets all legal criteria, it is suggested that it not be re-located unless a more suitable location is identified.

   The Elections Department will monitor wait times in a consistent manner, review the data from the Presidential Preferential Election in March, August Primary to make educated decisions about polling sites and wait times, in anticipation of the 2024 General Election.

Other Considerations of Note

The Task Force expressed concern for voters wishing to vote outside their assigned precinct due to traveling, time constraints, or employment location. If a voter wishes to vote at a location other than their designated polling location, they must vote on the ExpressVote ballot printer or cast a Provisional Ballot and risk their vote not being counted as a paper ballot is not available for precincts outside of each polling location. Due to the number of ballot styles in Coconino County (536 for the 2022 Primary), paper ballots for all precincts are only available in Vote Centers. To vote a paper ballot outside the voters'

assigned polling location, the voter must vote at a Vote Center where ballot-on-demand printers are available.

During the 2022 election, every polling location and Vote Center had at least one ExpressVote ballot printer available. The task force supports additional ExpressVote equipment and Ballot-On-Demand printers to allow voters to vote a regular ballot outside of their assigned polling location.

The Elections Department should produce a coordinated public outreach campaign to educate voters on added Vote Centers, any changes to polling locations and utilizing Accessible Voting Equipment. This campaign should include local media (radio, newspapers, community boards), presentations to civic organizations and clubs, and presentations to Chapter meetings on the Navajo reservation.

The task force recommends that the Election Department work with the Flagstaff Unified School District and other districts in the County to create an Election Day Holiday for all election days that fall within the school year. This recommendation aims to help alleviate concerns about polling locations in public schools, educate students on the importance of elections, and allow public schools to be polling locations. These discussions are recommended to take place before August 2023 for placement on the 2024-25 calendar.

Conclusions

In summary, the Task Force identified the following items as guidelines for the Coconino County Elections Department to prioritize for voting center and polling location site selection:

- Utilize a hybrid model of voting centers and polling locations throughout the County.
- ADA Accessible and allowing Electioneering are critical to meeting legal requirements.
- Continue sharing sites with the Navajo Nation during simultaneous elections conducted by the separate jurisdictions (Coconino County and the Navajo Nation) when possible.
- Ensure selected locations provide reliable access throughout the year for every election.
- Prioritizes sites that support a safe environment and are easily accessible for all forms of transportation.
- Provide public outreach and education around a polling location versus a voting center, new site locations, clarification of Provisionals, and the use and flexibility provided through the ExpressVote devices.
- Work with school districts in the County on the possibility of creating an Election Day Holiday for election days, to utilize schools as polling locations and to educate students on the importance of elections.

The criteria developed by the Task Force will be the foundation for the Coconino County Elections Department to build and research voting center and polling location selection for

the 2024 election cycle. The goal of the Department is to ensure the success of election-day voting throughout all future election cycles.

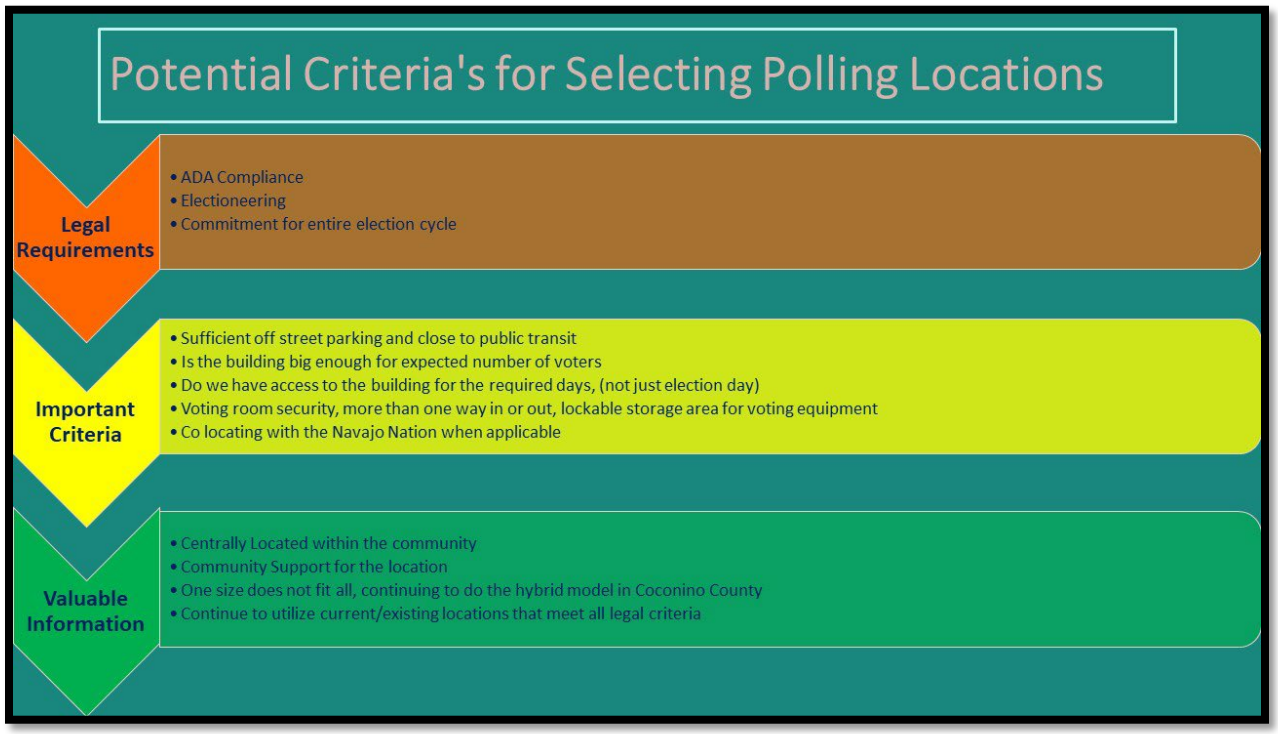

Figure 10. *The Task Force identified the separation between the legal requirements (high priority), important requirements (medium priority), and the valuable (low priority), of the identified criteria. These levels of priority are identified in this figure.*

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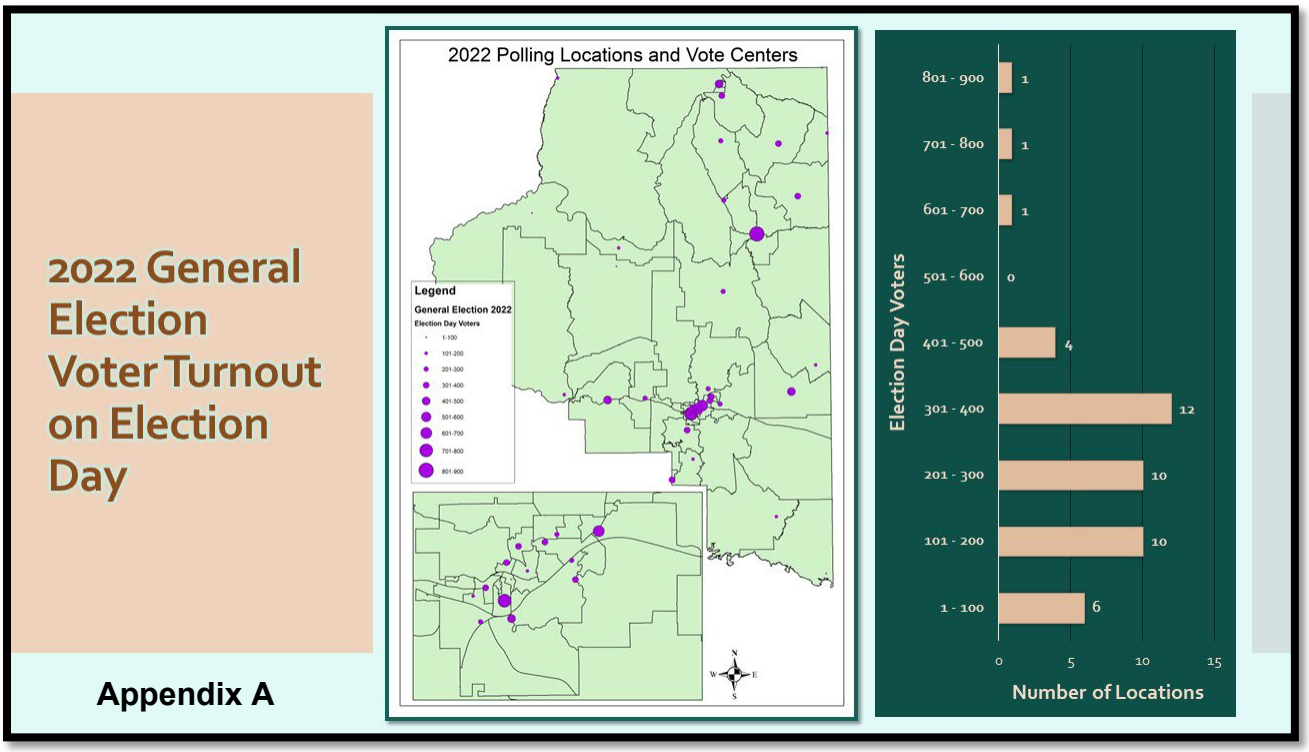
Appendix



Appendix 1-A. *Map of the 2022 General Election voter turnout by voting center using a proportional symbol map. The larger circles indicate the greater number of votes cast at the polling site.*

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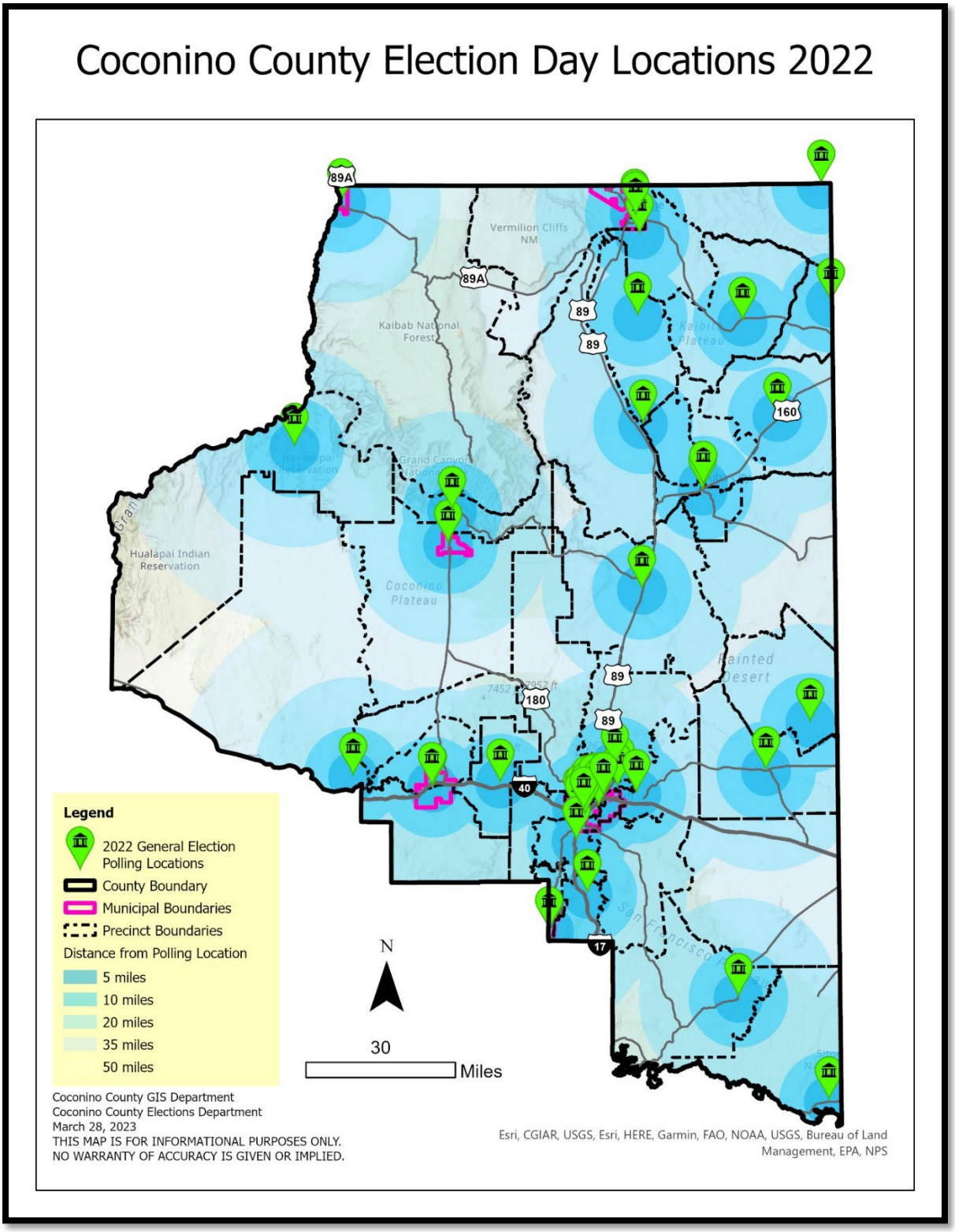

***Appendix 1-B**. Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations across Coconino County. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*

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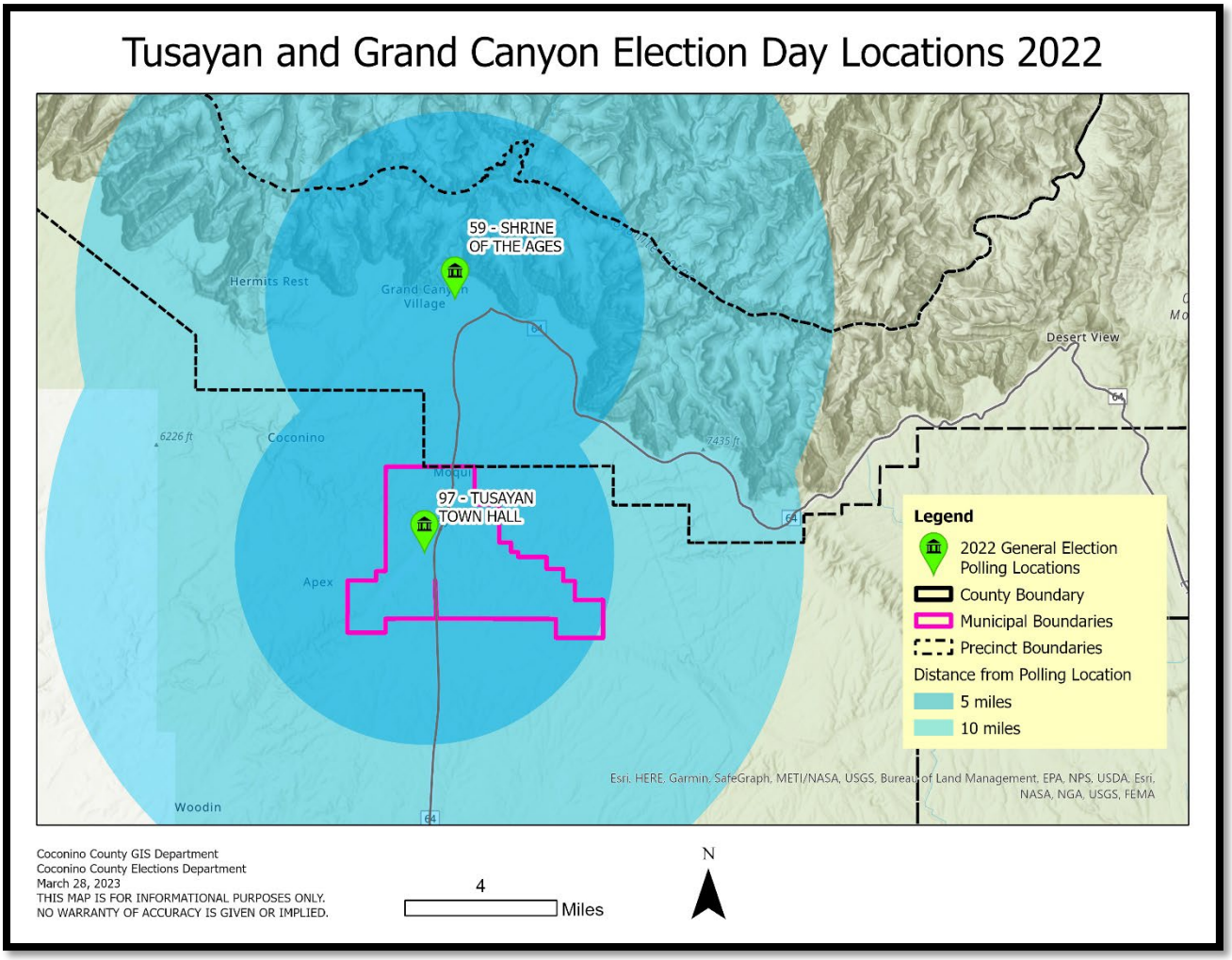

Appendix 2-B. *Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Tusayan and the Grand Canyon. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*

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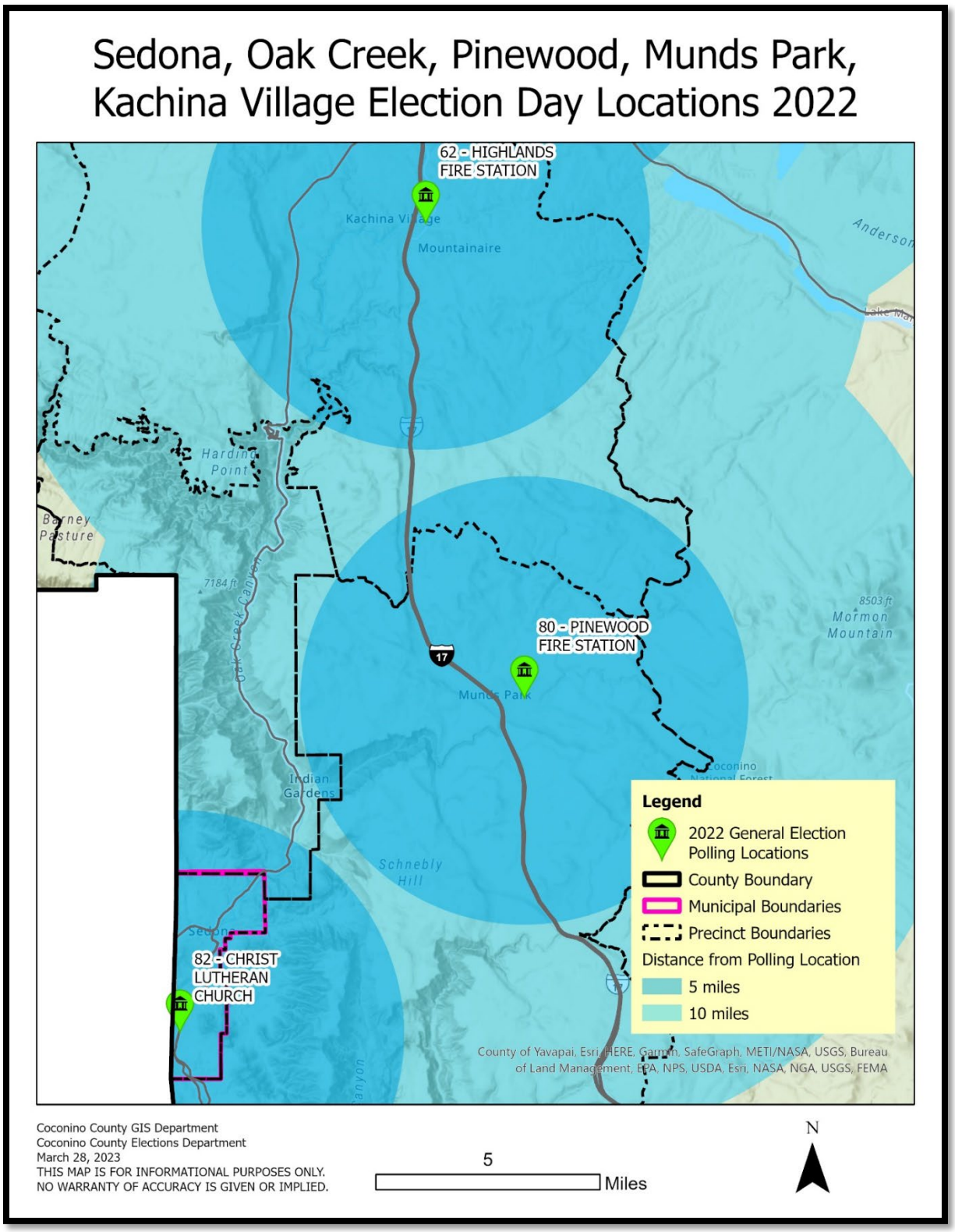
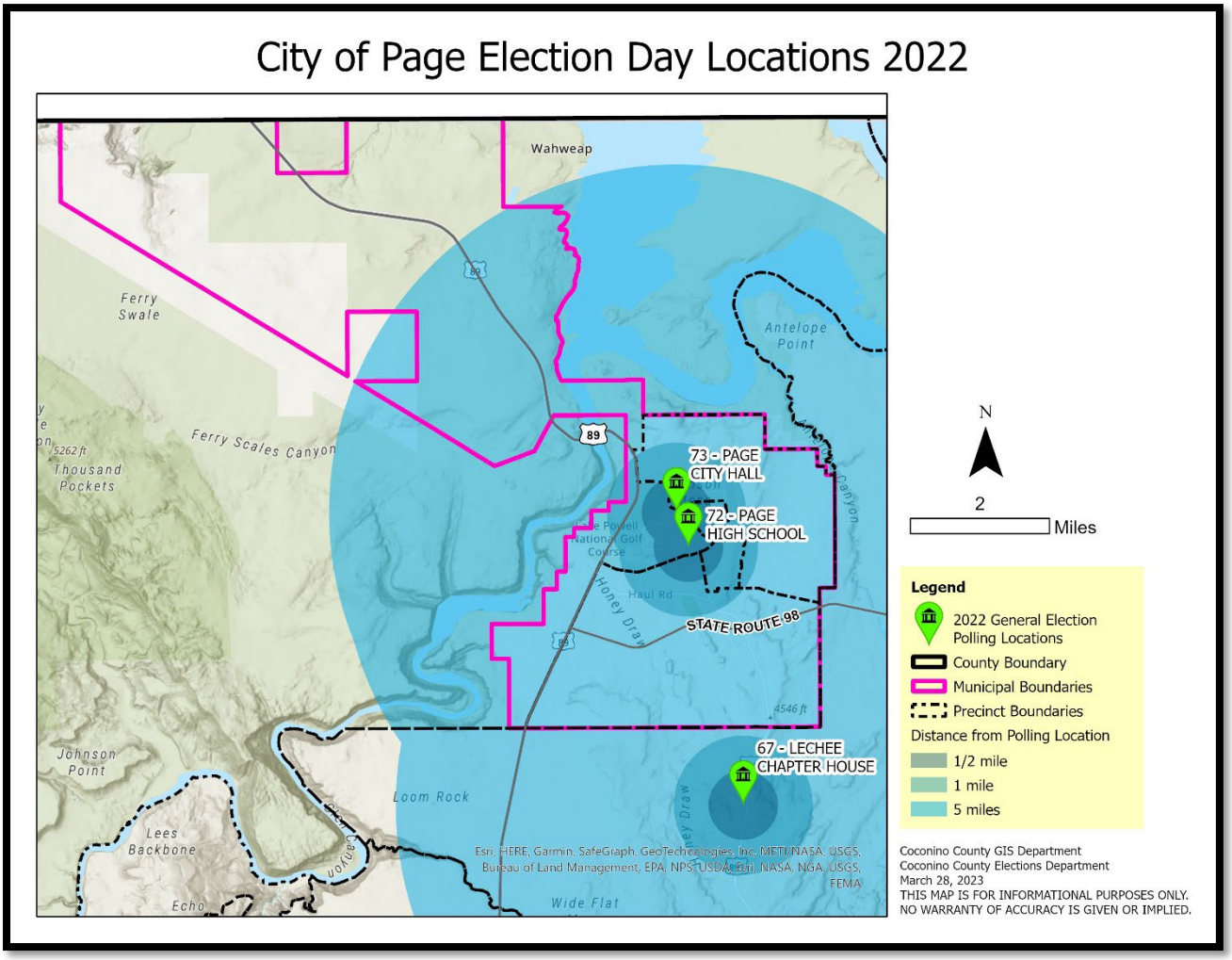


***Appendix 3-B**. Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Sedona, Oak Creek, Pinewood, Munds Park, and Kachina Village. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*



***Appendix 4-B**. Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Page. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*

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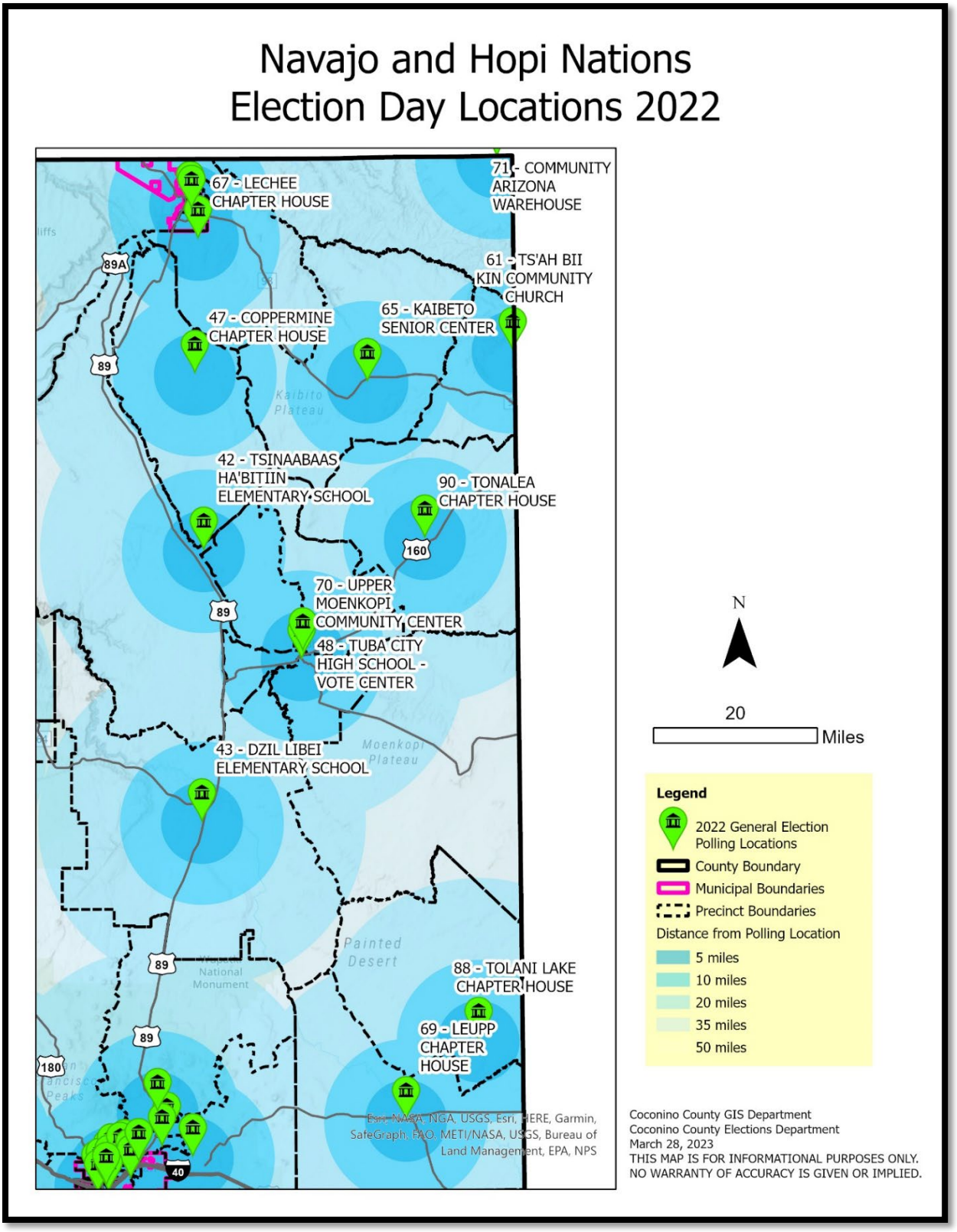

Appendix 5-B. *Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations across Navajo and Hopi Nations. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*

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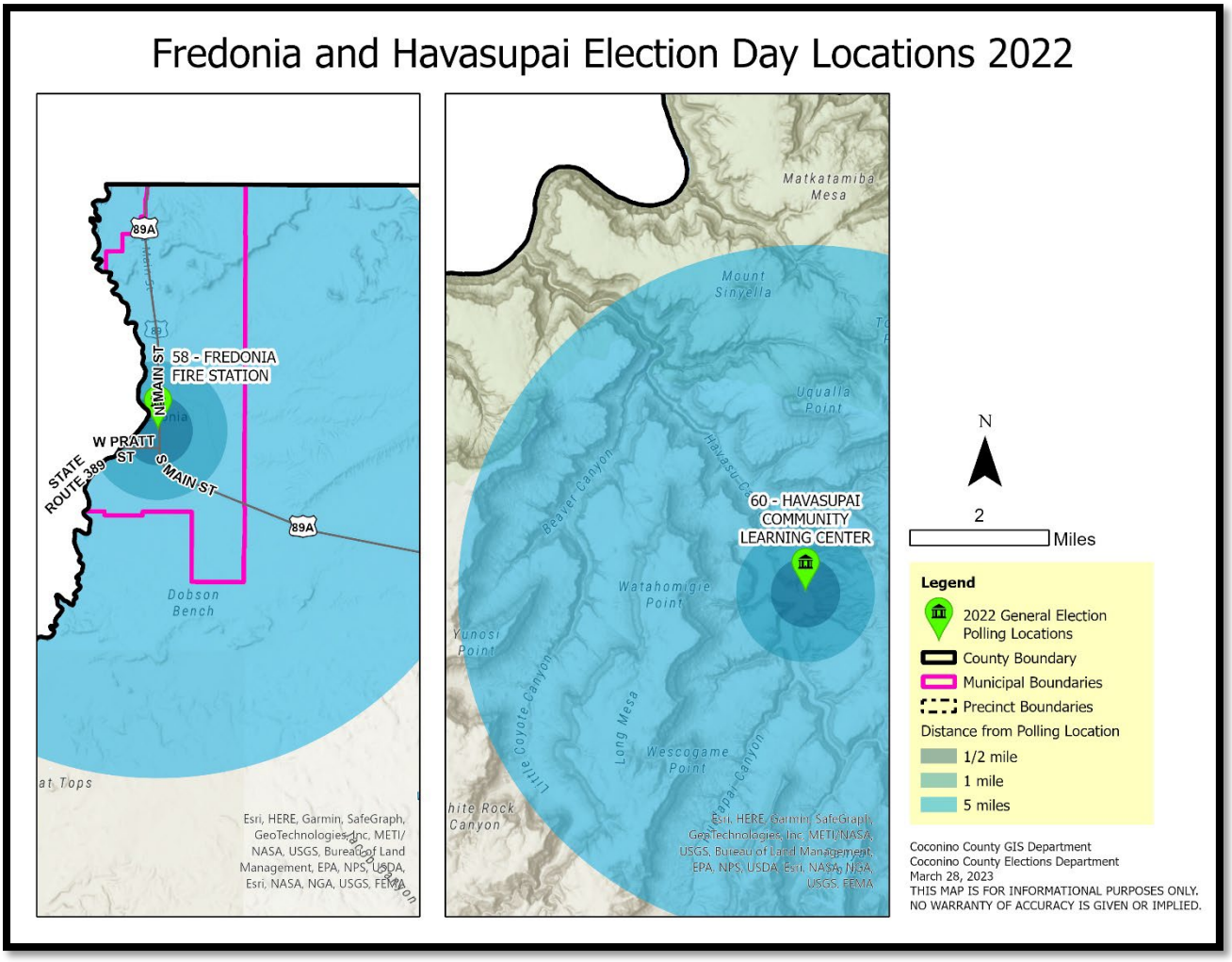
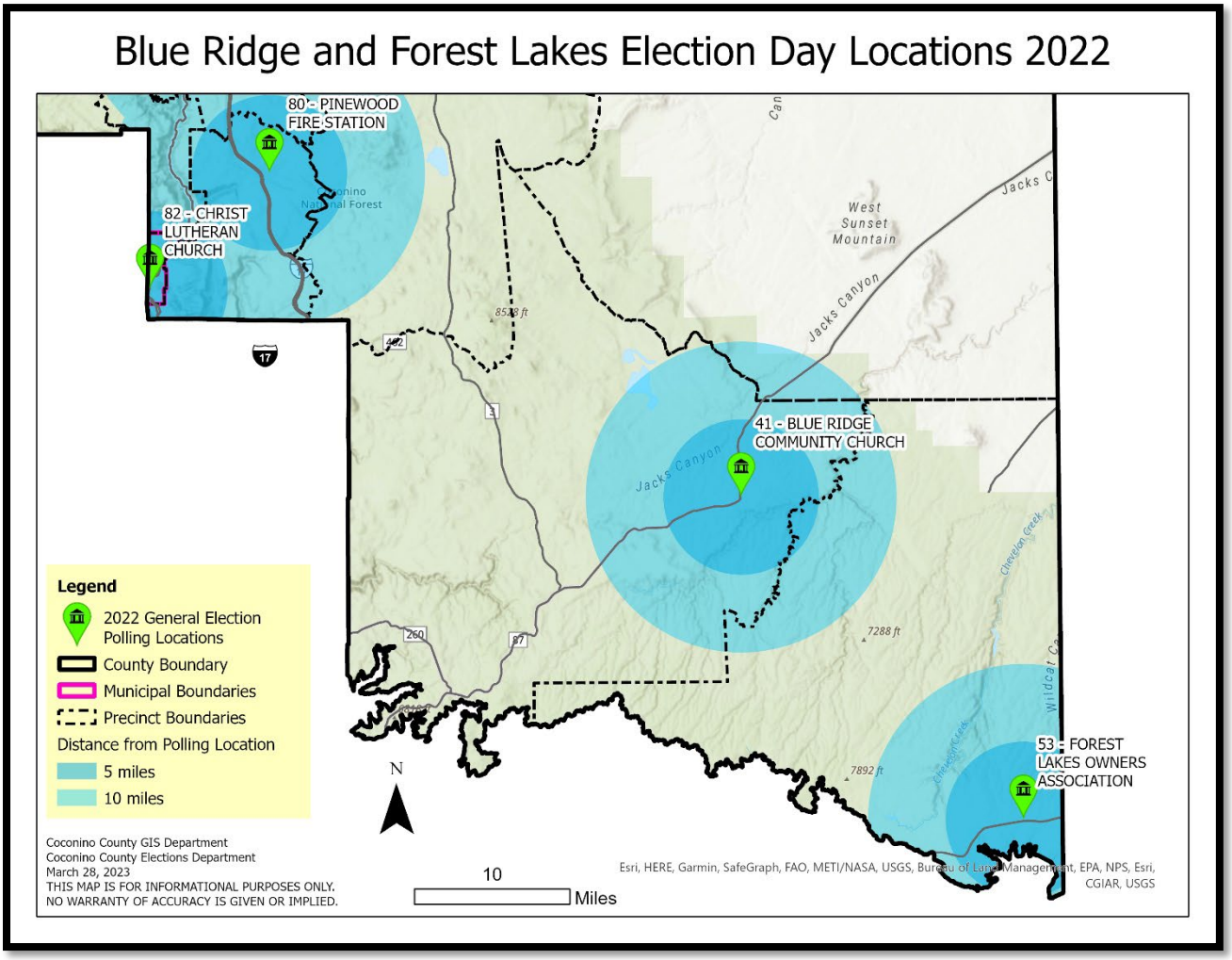


Appendix 6-B. *Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Fredonia and Havasupai. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*



Appendix 7-B. *Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Blue Ridge and Forest Lakes. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*

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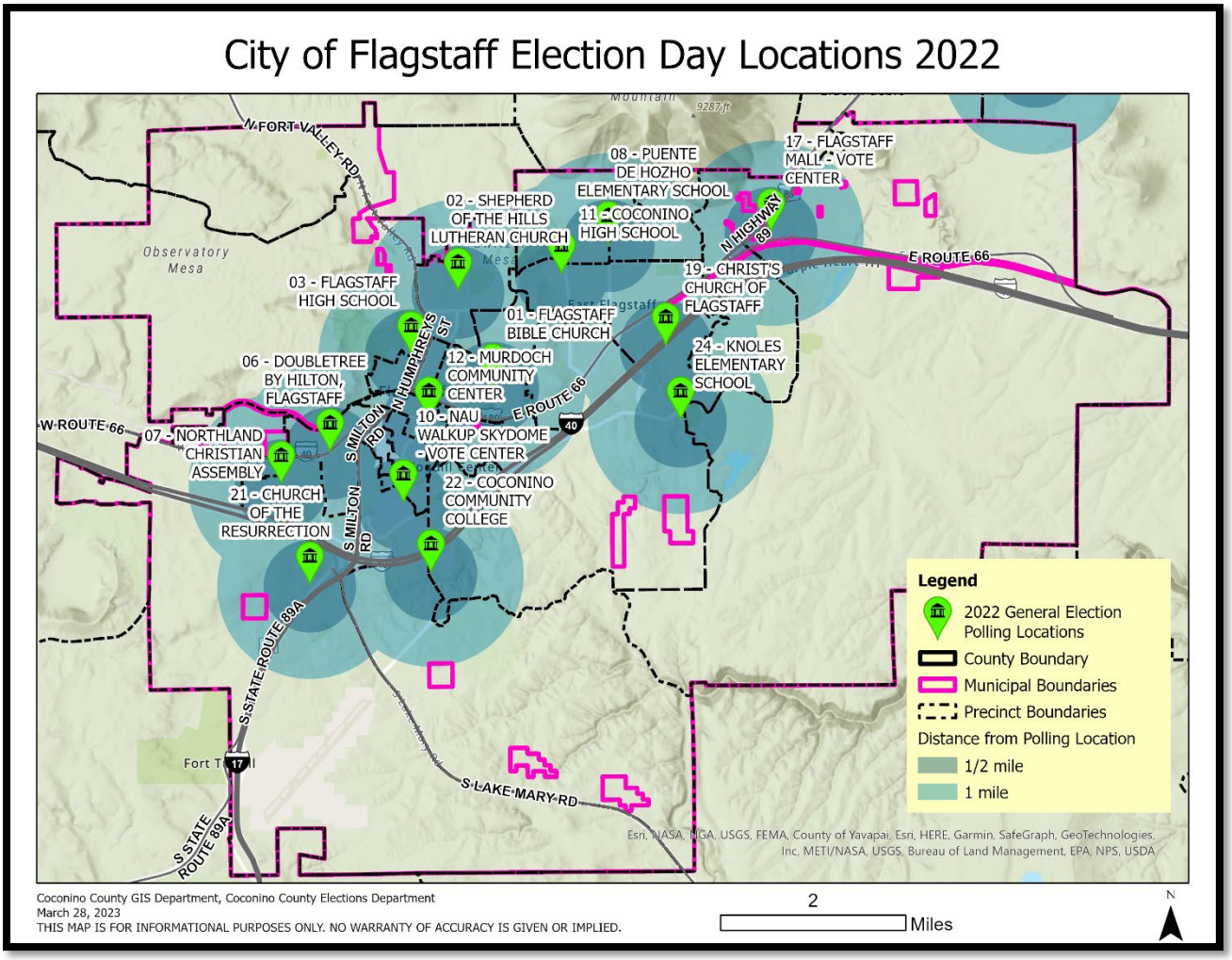

Appendix 8-B. *Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Flagstaff. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*

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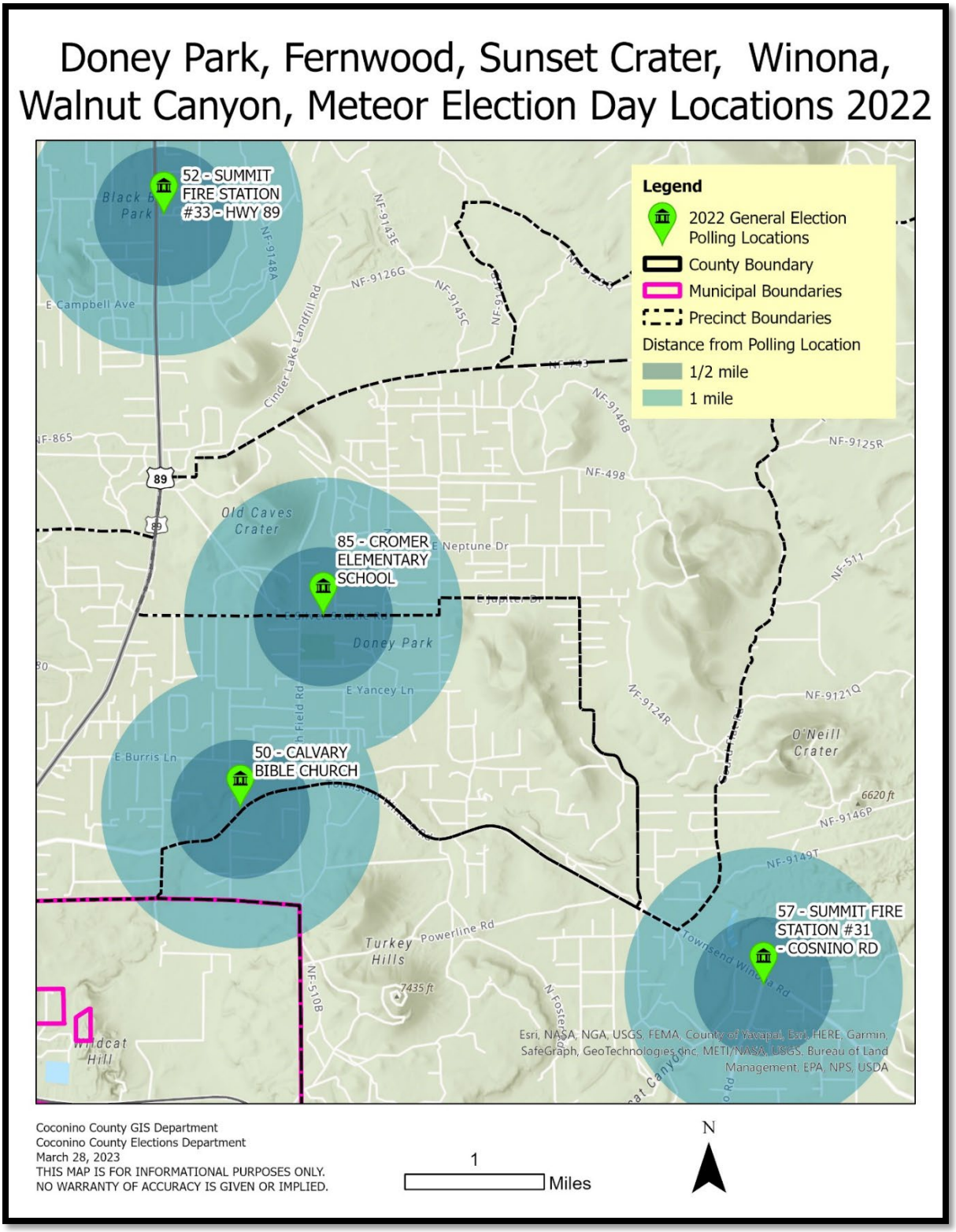

Appendix 9-B. *Map of the 2022 General Election polling locations for Doney Park, Fernwood, Sunset Crater, Winona, Walnut Canyon, and Meteor. Each site is identified by the green icon and the radius shows the distance between each polling location.*