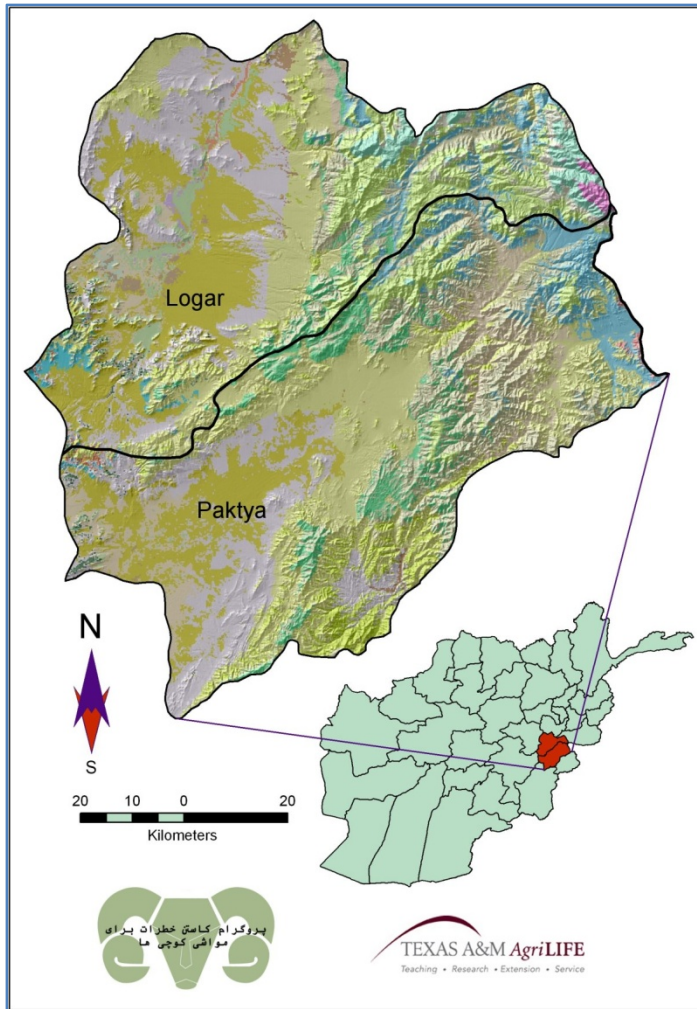


Nomadic herders will reap the benefits of high-tech mapping by the Afghanistan PEACE Project

The Kuchi herders of Afghanistan have been guiding their sheep, goats, and camels across the Afghanistan steppes for thousands of years, relying on extensive knowledge of the land passed down through the generations. Unfortunately, in recent years their travels are increasingly hindered by expanding agricultural lands, political upheavals, illegal taxation and illegitimate land claims. To help Afghanistan maintain a vital component of its economy, the Afghanistan PEACE Project is developing a suite of technologies and information sources that will help the Kuchi reduce their exposure to environmental, social and economic risks in their travels.



To map rangelands across Afghanistan, we have divided the region into bioclimatic zones, shown here for the provinces of Logar and Paktya, which lie between Kabul and Pakistan.

One source of information that will be provided is a new, country-wide map of the rangelands of Afghanistan. This map will be supplied in combination with current and future predictions of forage availability for the purpose of facilitating better decision making, in the forms of maps.

Rangeland mapping requires analyzing field data in combination with satellite imagery, elevation data and weather models. The new maps, currently under development at Texas A&M University - Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, will be available on-line and via government and non-government organizations. They will indicate both the nationwide extent and plant characteristics of many existing rangeland areas, along with seasonal trends in grazing conditions.

The mapping project is expected to be completed no later than March 2009.