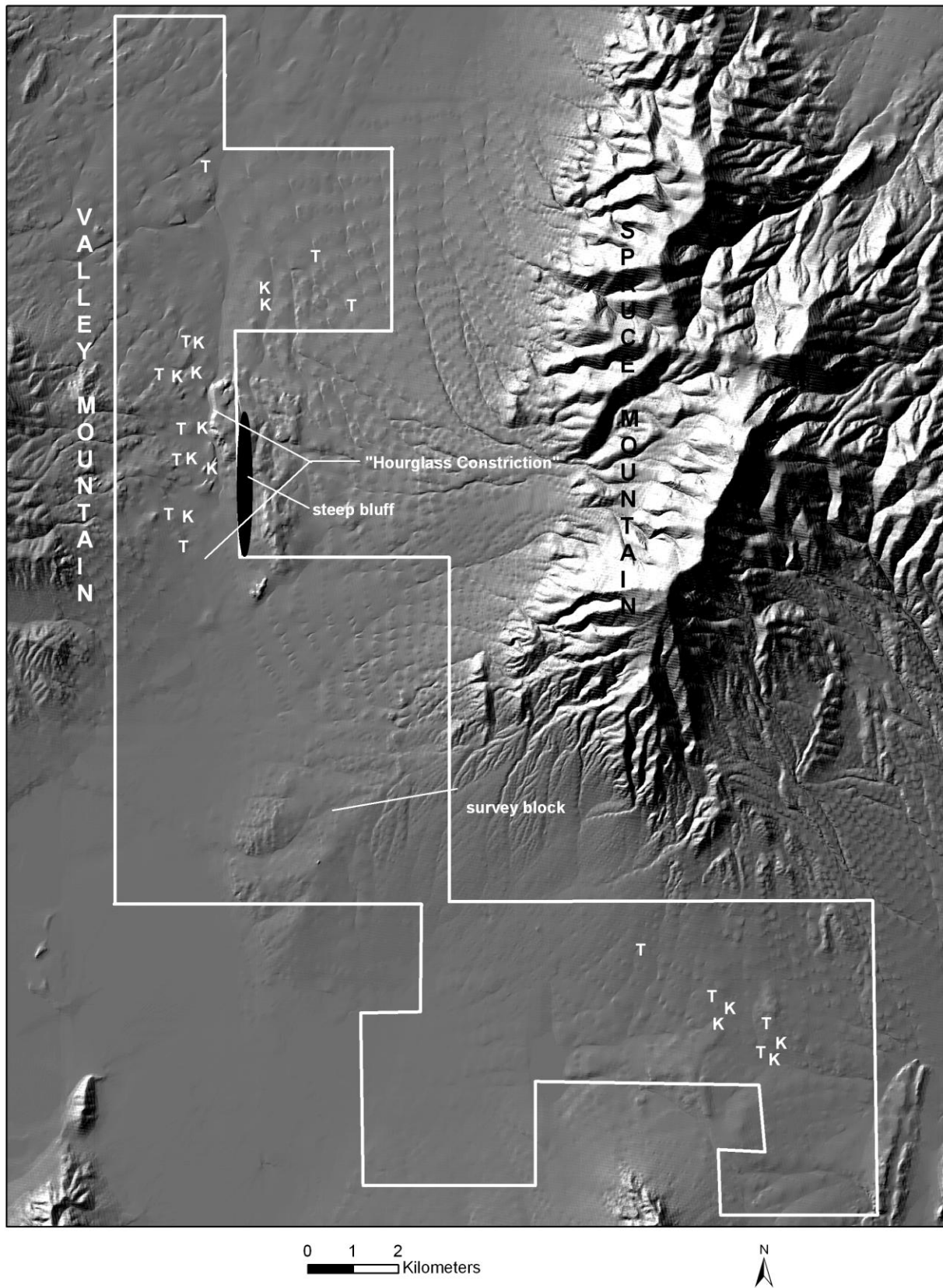
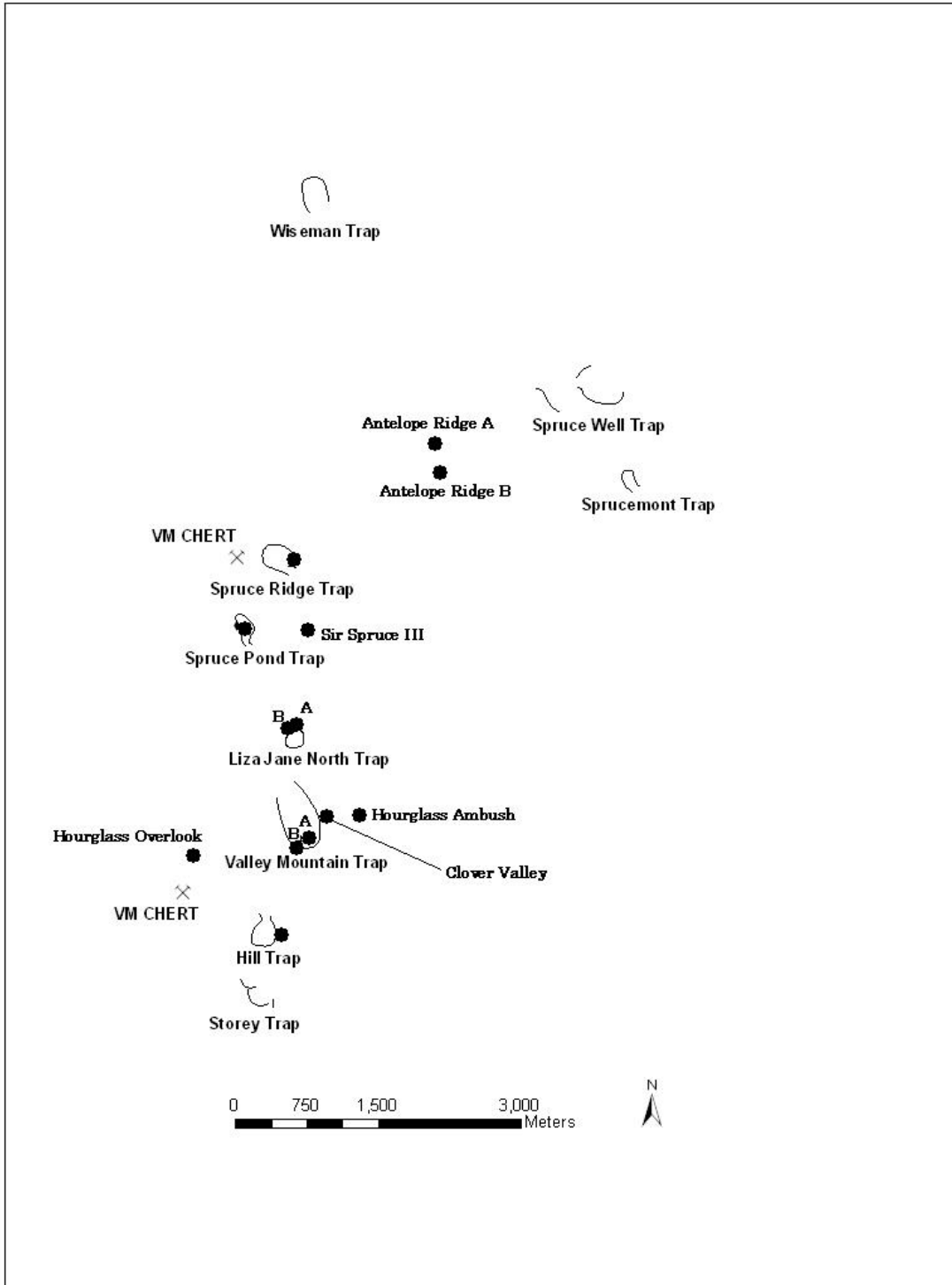


Why are the Spruce antelope traps concentrated in this area? One answer probably lies in the fact that pronghorn antelope have migrated along a north-south corridor here for thousands of years. During this migration, they passed through a natural topographic constriction between Spruce Mountain and a steep bluff located on the valley bottom to the east and Valley Mountain to the west (see figure below).



Another answer probably lies in the fact that a large natural outcropping of chert can be found in the foothills of Valley Mountain (see figure below). Thus, prehistoric peoples had a wealth of raw material with which to fashion their projectile points that could be used to kill the trapped antelope. On the figure below, a number of the Spruce Complex traps are shown in relation to the point concentrations (black dots). "VM CHERT" shows the location of the Valley Mountain chert source in relation to the traps and point concentrations.



Despite the fact that a natural source of chert is located within the topographic constriction, very interesting and surprising patterns emerged when we compared the raw material used to kill trapped antelope through time (see the figure below). For examples, during the earliest Middle Archaic when Gatecliff and Humboldt points were manufactured between about 5,500 and 4,000 years ago, Gatecliff points tended to be made of fine-grained volcanics such as basalts located to the south of the trapping and killing area. Humboldt points, on the other hand, tended to be made from the local Valley Mountain chert. Elko points, generally made between about 4,000 and 2,000 years ago, also tended to be made from Valley Mountain chert. In contrast, during the last 600-800 years (Eagle Rock Phase, which represents the ethnohistoric Western Shoshone occupation), points tended to be made from the Browns Bench Obsidian Source Area located some 60-80 miles northeast of the trapping area. So within this general continuity in behavior of antelope trapping over thousands of years, prehistoric peoples employed different strategies of raw material use. Sometimes, people waited to “gear up” until they got to the trap site, and manufactured their projectile points just before the trapping began. At other times, people were fully “geared up” before they entered the trap area, having already fashioned their projectile points from raw materials found elsewhere.

