BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LAKEVIEW DISTRICT

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

Coleman Seeding Pasture Division Fence
EA# OR-010-2007-05

The Lakeview Resource Area, Lakeview District of the Bureau of Land Management has analyzed a proposal to implement a range improvement project and rest-rotation grazing system in the Coleman Seeding Allotment (#0432). The allotment is located approximately 29 miles northeast of Valley Falls, Oregon. The allotment is currently divided into 2 pastures. The purpose of the proposal is to divide the South Pasture of the allotment in half, creating 3 pastures, and then implement a rest-rotation grazing system, where one pasture is rested each year.

An Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact have been prepared to document the impacts of the proposal. Copies of these documents are available for review by contacting the Lakeview District Office, 1301 South G Street, Lakeview, Oregon 97630, or by calling Jayna Ferrell at (541) 947-2177. The documents are also available online at http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview/plans/index.php. If you wish to provide comments on the proposal you must do so, in writing, by February 14, 2008.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
COLEMAN SEEDING ALLOTMENT SOUTH PASTURE DIVISION FENCE
EA# OR-010-2007-05

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed analyzing the effects of constructing a pasture division fence and implementing a three-pasture rest-rotation grazing system in the Coleman Seeding Allotment (#0432). The allotment is located approximately 29 miles north of Valley Falls, Oregon. The majority of the allotment is comprised of crested wheatgrass (approximately 72%). The grazing system would consist of a three-year rotation, where one of three pastures is rested and two are grazed every year. This grazing system would provide a portion of the Coleman Seeding Allotment with periodic rest and would provide sustainable livestock grazing and promote improved rangeland health.

The proposed project has been found to be in conformance with the goals, objectives, and management direction of the *Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision* (RMP/ROD; 2003), the *Integrated Noxious Weed Control Program, EA#OR-010-2004-03* (2004), the *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington* (1997), the *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon* (2005), and applicable State, local, and tribal land use regulations or plans.

On the basis of the analysis contained in the attached EA and all other available information, it is my determination that none of the alternatives analyzed would constitute a major Federal action which would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

Thomas E. Rasmussen

Thomas E. Rasmussen, Manager
Lakeview Resource Area

1/11/09
Date

COLEMAN SEEDING ALLOTMENT (#0432)
SOUTH PASTURE DIVISION FENCE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
OR-010-2007-05

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The Lakeview Resource Area, Lakeview District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to implement a rangeland improvement project in the South Pasture of the Coleman Seeding Allotment (#0432). The Coleman Seeding Allotment is located approximately 29 miles from Valley Falls, Oregon (Map 1). The Coleman Seeding Allotment consists of approximately 5,839 acres of BLM administered land, currently divided into two pastures and administered under one grazing permit (Map 2). The legal description of the area covered by this Environmental Assessment (EA) is T. 31 S., R. 23 E. Sections 29, 30, and 32 (Map 3).

B. Purpose of and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to implement a rest-rotation grazing system in the allotment by dividing the South Pasture of the Coleman Seeding Allotment in half, creating three pastures within the allotment. This proposed pasture division fence would allow a three-pasture rest rotation grazing management system to be implemented.

Currently the Coleman Seeding Allotment is not being provided with adequate periods of rest. Each pasture is used during the spring every year. The fence is needed to implement a rest-rotation grazing treatment that provides the allotment with periodic rest. Providing periods of rest would improve plant and overall rangeland health in the Coleman Seeding Allotment.

C. Conformance with Land Use Plans, Laws, Regulation and Policy

The proposed project has been found to be in conformance with the goals and/or objectives of the following applicable BLM plans, strategies, or guidelines:

1) *Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision* (RMP/ROD; 2003), including but not limited to Tables R-1, R-2, R-3, and R-4, pages 8-16; Desired Range of Conditions, pages 23-24; Management Decisions related to Plant Communities, pages 27-38, Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat, pages 44-51, Livestock Grazing, pages 52-55, Cultural Resources, pages 74-79; Visual, page 88; Appendix D – Best Management Practices, pages A-2 – A-7; Appendix E – Livestock Grazing, pages A-8 – A-9, A-99, A-142 – A-148; and Appendix G – Noxious Weeds, page A-165.

The stated purpose of the proposed action is in conformance with the Lakeview RMP/ROD (2003), Appendix E1, page A-71, “Management direction: Improve livestock

management and distribution through improved management practices, installation of livestock management facilities (such as fences and water sources), and/or other actions as opportunities arise. Use management practices and/or better animal distribution; develop range improvement when appropriate; Continue to manage for forage production in seeded areas through season of use adjustments, possible vegetation treatments, fencing, water developments, and/or other actions. Develop/implement a noxious weed management strategy."

Finally, the proposed project is specifically identified for implementation in Table E-1 of Appendix E3, page A-144 of the Lakeview RMP/ROD.

2) *Integrated Noxious Weed Control Program, EA#OR-010-2004-03* (BLM 2004a) – direction in this document is tiered to the noxious weed management direction in the *Lakeview RMP/ROD* and provided more specific details on the locations of known noxious weed sites in the Lakeview Resource Area and how periodic treatments would be conducted on these sites, as well as any new sites discovered during future inventory. The treatment methods addressed in this plan included cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical. The type of treatment used and the frequency of treatment would be based on site/plant characteristics, treatment priorities identified in the plan, and budget.

3) *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington* (BLM 1997) – a rangeland health assessment for the allotment was completed in 2003. The rangeland health assessment found that approximately 1,200 acres of the allotment was not meeting Standards 1 (Upland Watershed) and 3 (Ecological Processes) due to the presence of unhealthy perennial grasses with weak root systems increasing soil erosion potential. This failure to meet the standard was not attributed to livestock grazing. Recommendations to improve conditions included grazing season changes and additional fencing, among other potential treatments.

4) *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon* (ODFW 2005). This strategy replaced both the interim state guidelines and an existing national strategy. Conformance with this strategy is discussed within the Wildlife Impacts section.

In addition, the proposed action is in conformance with State, local, and tribal laws, regulations and/or land use plans.

CHAPTER II: ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of building a three-strand barbed wire fence dividing the South Pasture of the Coleman Seeding Allotment. The fence would be built to standard BLM wildlife passage specifications. The bottom wire of the fence would be smooth

wire at least 18 inches off the ground, and the top wire would be no higher than 42 inches. The posts would consist of 66-inch steel posts, and rock cribs would be constructed as braces. The fence would be approximately 3 miles in length, and would be located in T. 31 S., R. 23 E. Sections 29, 30, and 32. A small fence surrounding the trough and waterhole at the south east corner of the South Pasture would also be constructed. This small fence would allow the water to be accessed from each of the new pastures (Map 3).

Once the fence is constructed, the Coleman Seeding Allotment would consist of three pastures which would be used under a rest-rotation grazing management system. The grazing system would be on a three-year rotation, where one of three pastures is rested and two are grazed every year. This grazing system would provide a portion of the Coleman Seeding Allotment with periodic rest as each pasture would be rested one year out of three.

Best Management Practices: All equipment used for project construction would be cleaned prior to transport to the site to reduce the potential for introducing noxious weeds from outside the area. The new fence line would be monitored periodically for the presence of weeds after construction. If noxious weeds are found, appropriate treatments would occur in accordance with the Lakeview Resource Area's Noxious Weed Management Program Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-010-2004-03).

Other best management practices associated with ground disturbing activities described in Appendix D of the Lakeview RMP/ROD (2003) would be followed, where appropriate.

B. Alternative A - No Action

Under the no action alternative, none of the rangeland improvements or changes in grazing management associated with the Proposed Action would be built. The Coleman Seeding Allotment would continue to be used during the same time each year, with no periodic rest provided.

CHAPTER III: DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The following elements of the human environment are either not known to be present or would not be impacted by the proposed action or the alternatives: floodplains, water quality, riparian or wetland areas, air quality, special status species, prime or unique farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, native American traditional use areas, paleontological resources, hazardous materials, designated wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, areas with wilderness characteristics, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Research Natural Areas, low income or minority populations, fisheries, recreation, energy or minerals, or wild horses. Therefore, none of the resources listed above will be analyzed further in this document.

The following section describes site-specific components of the human environment that

are present.

A. Soils

There are six different soil complexes within the Coleman Seeding Allotment. There are four soil complexes within the South Pasture. The proposed fence would be built across three soil complexes which are described below.

The Shabliss Complex (0-10% slope) consists of shallow loam 8-10" and dry sandy loam 8-10". These soils are well drained with elevations between 4,480 and 4,550 feet. This soil complex is the largest soil complex within the South Pasture. The proposed fence would primarily be located within this soil complex.

The Raz brace complex (2-20%) exists within the north east portion of the South Pasture. This complex consists of shallow loam soils that are well drained. This complex has a slight erosion factor for both wind and water. The elevation ranges from 4,400 feet to 5,800 feet. A small portion of the proposed fence would cross this complex.

The Morfitt L (0-20%) soil has a sight wind and water erosion factor. This soil consists of dry ponded clay that is medium well drained to well drained. The proposed fence would also cross a portion of this soil type.

B. Vegetation

The majority of the Coleman Seeding Allotment is comprised of crested wheatgrass (approximately 72%), a non-native species, which was seeded following the Sharptop wildfire that occurred in 1983**.** The vegetation in the remainder of the allotment includes basin big sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush, squirreltail, Thurbers's needlegrass, great basin wild rye, Sandberg's bluegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, gray rabbitbrush, cheatgrass, tansy mustard, and green rabbitbrush. The majority of the native vegetation in the allotment is located in the Triangle Pasture (Map 2). Approximately 60% of the Triangle Pasture burned again in 2001, as part of the larger Jump Fire. Approximately 650 acres of the burned area was aerial seeded with a Wyoming big sagebrush/perennial grass (forage kochia, bottlebrush squirreltail, bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, basin wildrye) seed mix. The rangeland health assessment completed in 2003 found that approximately 1,200 acres of the allotment was not meeting Standard 1 (Upland Watershed) due to the presence of unhealthy perennial grasses with weak root systems increasing soil erosion potential.

C. Noxious Weeds

There are several known noxious weeds occurring in the Coleman Seeding Allotment. They occur mainly along roads and in the disturbed areas around water troughs and waterholes. These noxious weed species include Mediterranean sage, Scotch thistle, Halogeton, and spotted knapweed. These weed sites are currently being monitored and/or treated in accordance with the Lakeview Resource Area's Noxious Weed

Management Program Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-010-2004-03). Cheatgrass is present and occurs throughout the allotment. Hoary cress also occurs in neighboring allotments. The potential for the introduction or spread of noxious weeds is high in this allotment because of its close proximity to Highway 395 and the Highway Well Rest Area.

D. Wildlife

Common wildlife species in these areas include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, deer mouse, western fence lizard, and numerous other species common to the sagebrush steppe of southeastern Oregon.

Migratory birds are known to use the allotment for nesting, foraging, and resting as they pass through on their yearly migrations, although no formal monitoring has been conducted. Migratory birds that use grassland and sagebrush habitats in eastern Oregon, as well as juniper habitats could occur on this allotment. Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, and loggerhead shrike, all of which are Birds of Conservation Concern for the Great Basin Region, may inhabit the allotment.

The sagegrouse habitat map (W-1) in the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (2003) identifies the entire allotment and surrounding lands as summer/fall sagegrouse habitat. However, the dominance of crested wheatgrass and lack of sagebrush makes the allotment very poor habitat for sagebrush obligate species such as sagegrouse and pygmy rabbits. No sagegrouse leks exist in the allotment. Further, pygmy rabbit habitat surveys conducted to date in the Lakeview Resource Area have not found any pygmy rabbits in this area.

E. Livestock Grazing Management

The Coleman Seeding Allotment is utilized by livestock within the permit dates (February 1st to June 1st). However, livestock are usually gathered from the allotment before the middle of May. Each pasture has traditionally been used simultaneously into May without periodic rest. The Triangle Pasture has been used primarily with yearling heifers and the South Pasture with cow/calf pairs. Flexibility is currently limited within the allotment because there are only two pastures to rotate livestock use through.

F. Cultural Resources

There are no known cultural resources occurring within the proposed project area. A cultural resource survey was conducted and no cultural material was found.

D Visual Resources

The proposed project lies within visual resource management (VRM) Class III. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of activities that are authorized may attract attention, but should not dominate the

view of the casual observer. Much of the allotment is visible from Highway 395.

CHAPTER IV: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The following impacts may result from implementation of the alternatives.

A. Soils

Proposed Action: Minimal short-term soil-disturbing activity would take place from implementing the proposed range improvement project. The proposed project area is within an existing crested wheatgrass seeding, therefore, there would be minimal brush clearing or blading (disturbing the soil) required in order to build the fence. Minimal soil compaction may result from driving pickups, 4-wheelers, and/or tractors along the fence line during construction. Trailing by livestock and associated soil disturbance or compaction may also occur in a small area (approximately one to two acres) along both sides of the new fence line over the long-term.

No Action Alternative: There would be no changes in existing levels of soil impacts or disturbance to the existing soils under the No Action Alternative. Current conditions resulting from grazing a two-pasture system would remain unchanged under this alternative.

B. Vegetation

Proposed Action: Native and crested wheatgrass plant communities would benefit from the proposed action. The periodic rest provided by a three-pasture grazing system would improve the overall vigor and health of plant species throughout the allotment. The proposed action would also improve community composition, age class distribution, and productivity of plant communities within the allotment. In turn, this should improve conditions on the 1,200 acres not currently meeting rangeland health standards 1 and 3 towards meeting those standards in the future.

No Action Alternative: Vegetation would remain unchanged in the short-term. However, the lack of periodic rest would likely degrade the crested wheatgrass and native plant communities within the allotment over the long-term.

C. Noxious Weeds

Proposed Action: Any soil-disturbing activity increase the potential to introduce or favor the establishment of noxious weeds. The proposed project is in close proximity to Highway 395 which is a known corridor for weed spread. However, because of easy accessibility, the project area would be easily monitored for noxious weeds. Current infestations and any future noxious weeds discovered would be treated using methods described in the Lakeview Resource Area's Noxious Weed Management Program Environmental Assessment (EA No. OR-010-2004-03). Mitigations for soil disturbing

activities would be achieved by following appropriate best management practices described in Appendix D of the Lakeview RMP/ROD (2003).

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, there would be no range improvements or grazing system changes implemented in the allotment. This would reduce soil-disturbing activities and decrease the possibility of introduction or establishment of additional noxious weeds in the short-term. However, plant community health is expected to decline over time due to the lack of periodic rest. Therefore, the potential for weeds moving out into the pastures and becoming established from existing sites on the periphery of the allotment or transported in on a vehicle would increase over the long-term.

D. Wildlife

Proposed Action: Minor disturbance to existing wildlife species/populations may take place during construction. A short adjustment period would probably be needed for animals to become accustomed to the new fence following construction. This fence would be built to BLM wildlife passage specifications and would not limit pronghorn antelope or other wildlife species movements.

The proposed grazing system change is expected to improve overall vegetation and rangeland health. In general, as rangeland health improves the quality of habitat for most wildlife species, including big game, migratory birds, and other common Great Basin wildlife species would also improve.

Though most of the allotment currently does not contain sagegrouse or pygmy rabbit habitat, improved rangeland health conditions could lead to invasion by sagebrush into the crested wheatgrass seeding. This, in turn, could lead to the development of habitat conditions more favorable to establishment of these types of sagebrush obligate species over the long-term. This desired outcome is consistent with the goals of the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon (ODFW 2005).

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there would be no range improvements implemented, thus limiting short-term disturbance to wildlife. However, the lack of periodic rest would likely degrade the native and non-native plant communities, rangeland health, and the associated wildlife habitat over the long-term. This result would not be consistent with the goals of the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon (ODFW 2005).

E. Livestock Grazing Management

Proposed Action: The proposed project would increase the flexibility to manage livestock use within the Coleman Seeding Allotment. The proposed fence would create a third pasture, providing the ability to implement a rest-rotation grazing system. This would provide periodic rest for both crested wheatgrass and native plant species. Plant community vigor and health and overall rangeland health would improve under the

proposed action. This would have a positive affect on the permittee's livestock operation, because as rangeland health improves, the forage base (both quantity and quality) within the allotment would also improve.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the allotment would receive no periodic rest. Thus, rangeland health would remain unchanged in the short-term, but is likely to decline over the long-term. This would negatively affect the permittee's operation, because the forage base (both quantity and quality) within the allotment would decrease over the long-term as rangeland health declines.

F. Cultural Resources

Proposed Action: A cultural resource inventory was completed for the proposed fence. There were no cultural materials found within the proposed project area. Therefore, no impacts would occur to cultural resources.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, there would be no additional surface disturbance or potential for effects to cultural resources.

G. Visual Resources:

Proposed Action: The proposed fence would be visible from Highway 395. The fence would be constructed out of steel posts, barbed wire, and rock cribs. A fence constructed out of these materials would not dominate the view, but may attract minimal attention by the casual viewer.

No Action Alternative: Visual resources within the area would not be affected under the No Action Alternative, because no range improvement project would be implemented. However, the allotment would not be provided with periodic rest; therefore it is likely that rangeland health would decline over time. As rangeland health declines, the visual quality associated with healthy vegetation would likely also decline.

H. Cumulative Impacts:

Introduction:

For the purposes of this analysis, cumulative impacts are considered at the allotment scale. The reason for choosing this analysis scale is because the BLM has a good idea of other potential reasonably foreseeable actions that may occur within the allotment based upon management direction and projects outlined in the Lakeview RMP/ROD (2003). The timeframe of analysis is defined as the same 15-20 year expected life of the RMP/ROD.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued cumulative impact guidance on June 24, 2005, that states the "environmental analysis required under NEPA is forward-looking," and review of past actions is required only "to the extent that this review

informs agency decision-making regarding the proposed action." Use of information on the effects of past action may be useful in two ways: one is for consideration of the proposed action's cumulative effects, and secondly as a basis for identifying the proposed action's direct and indirect effects.

The CEQ stated that "[g]enerally, agencies can conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions." This is because a description of the current state of the environment (ie. affected environment section) inherently includes the effects of past actions. Further, the "CEQ regulations do not require the consideration of the individual effects of all past actions to determine the present effects of past actions." Information on the current environmental condition is more comprehensive and more accurate for establishing a useful starting point for a cumulative effects analysis than attempting to establish such a starting point by adding up the described effects of individual past actions to some environmental baseline condition in the past that, unlike current conditions, can no longer be verified by direct examination.

The second area in which the CEQ guidance states that information on past actions may be useful is in "illuminating or predicting the direct and indirect effects of a proposed action. The usefulness of such information is limited by the fact that it is anecdotal only, and extrapolation of data from such singular experiences is not generally accepted as a reliable predictor of effects".

Known Past and Present Management Activities:

To date, no public, agencies, or tribal representatives have identified any need to exhaustively list individual past actions or to analyze, compare, or describe the environmental effects of individual past actions, in order to complete an analysis which would be useful for illuminating or predicting the incremental cumulative effects of either alternative.

The Affected Environment section (Chapter III) documents the current environmental conditions within the allotment which are, in fact, the direct result of past and present management actions. Chapter III also includes a description of some of the past disturbances that have occurred in the allotment as part of past or current management activities. These disturbances include large-scale wildfires and subsequent reseeding with native and non-native species, a major highway corridor, approximately 3.2 miles of overhead utility lines, presence of noxious weed sites, and approximately 17.9 miles of allotment/pasture boundary fences. In addition, road construction and maintenance (approximately 3.7 miles), and other range improvement project construction and maintenance activities (approximately 0.09 miles of pipelines, 2 wells, and 5 waterholes) have occurred in and around the allotment in the past. All of these past activities have affected or shaped the landscape within and surrounding the allotment into what it is today. The reader should refer to Chapter III of this document, as well as to the rangeland health assessment for the allotment completed in 2003 for further details.

Reasonably Foreseeable Management Activities:

The *Lakeview RMP/ROD,* Appendix E, page A-71 (2003), lists developing and/or implementing a noxious weed management strategy in the allotment, removing wild horses which stray into the allotment from the adjacent Paisley Herd Management Area (HMA), and maintaining fences along the southern allotment boundary as potential projects or management activities that could occur in the allotment over the 15-20 year life of the plan. Further, page 100 identifies a number of potential operation and maintenance activities that could occur in the allotment during the life of the plan. These include "routine maintenance of existing roads, ditches, culverts, water control structures, recreation facilities, reservoirs, wells, pipelines, waterholes, fences, cattle guards, seedings, fish and wildlife structures, signs, and other similar facilities/projects".

It is also likely that a wildfire(s) could occur in the allotment over the life of the plan resulting in the need to conduct fire suppression and rehabilitation activities in the area. It is impossible to accurately predict the amount of area or level of impacts that might be associated with this type of event.

The permittee has expressed interest in brush beating the sagebrush within the Coleman Seeding Allotment. Specifics on size (acreage) and location have not been discussed. It is highly speculative that this prospective project would be implemented.

As previously mentioned, it is also possible that future noxious weed treatments could be necessary in specific portions of the allotment. Any such sites would be identified, treated, and monitored in accordance with the *Integrated Noxious Weed Control Program EA#OR-010-2004-03* (BLM 2004a). This prevention and treatment program would continue regardless of the alternative adopted as the final decision.

Cumulative Impacts by Alternative:

No Action Alternative: The additive cumulative effects of conducting noxious weed management activities, conducting wild horse gathers, conducting wildfire suppression and rehabilitation, and operating and maintaining existing roads, range improvements, and other facilities have previously been described and analyzed at the resource area scale in Chapter 4 of the Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (2003). This analysis will not be repeated in here and the reviewer should refer to that document for more information.

Road, fence, and range improvement operation and maintenance activities are generally considered to be of so little impact on the environment that they are typically categorically excluded from analysis under NEPA, even when considered collectively at a regional or national scale. There is no data or other evidence to indicate that continuing to conduct these types of routine activities in the foreseeable future would have any significant direct or incremental cumulative impacts at the allotment scale.

Removal of stray wild horses from the allotment could involve a temporary increase in

motorized vehicle use on and off-road in the allotment, potentially resulting in increased disturbance to area soils and vegetation during herding operations. Herding could also involve the use of aircraft over the allotment causing short-term or temporary noise and disturbance impacts to wildlife. Removal of stray horses would assist in the improvement of vegetation and rangeland health conditions by reducing overall competition for forage.

Though it is difficult to predict with any certainty, the vegetation communities/wildlife habitat present in the allotment could be subject to wildfire(s) in the foreseeable future if the right conditions occur. The Lakeview Proposed RMP/Final EIS (2003) describes the typical fire return intervals for several vegetation types (page 2-83). The impacts of any future wildfire(s) would vary depending upon the existing fuel loads, moisture content, wind direction and speed, intensity of the burn, amount of area burned, and fire suppression tactics and rehabilitation methods used. In general, wildfire moves later vegetative seral stages (shrub and woodland) back to earlier vegetative stages (grass and forb), removes biotic crust cover, and can make an area more susceptible to noxious weed or cheatgrass invasion. Neither alternative would reduce future wildfire risk, but the long-term decline in vegetation health associated with the No Action Alternative would make the allotment less likely to recover naturally should a wildfire occur. This, in turn, could require more active fire restoration actions following a wildfire.

Most of the existing plant communities in the allotment currently have limited value to sagebrush obligate wildlife species, including pygmy rabbits and sage-grouse, due to the lack of a well-developed sagebrush component. Sagebrush is gradually invading seeded areas and over the long-term there is some limited potential to naturally increase sagebrush habitat which may eventually be suitable for use by some sagebrush obligate wildlife species at some point in the future. However, future wildfires have the potential to remove sagebrush from the small areas of native plant communities, as well as sagebrush encroaching into the larger areas of non-native seedings. If a wildfire was to remove all or a portion of the existing sagebrush in the allotment, this would have a negative effect on the natural sagebrush recovery and habitat for sagebrush obligate wildlife species would remain limited.

Brush beating, if implemented, would have a negative, incremental impact on sagebrush obligate species by decreasing sagebrush cover and sagebrush habitat quality. Specific impacts of brush beating are unknown at this time because the size, location, and project specifications are unknown and highly speculative. Should such a project be proposed in the future, the impacts would need to be analyzed in a separate EA.

Based on the analysis contained earlier in Chapter IV of this EA, the incremental cumulative effects of continuing current management would be an overall, long-term declining trend in vegetation, wildlife habitat, and rangeland health into the foreseeable future. This would be attributed to a loss of native and non-native plant community vigor and structure. The forage base available for livestock and wildlife use would also decline in quantity and quality over the long-term. The risk of noxious weed invasion and spread would increase, possibly resulting in the need for expanded weed treatment across the

allotment.

Proposed Action Alternative: The additive cumulative effects of conducting noxious weed management activities, conducting wild horse gathers, conducting wildfire suppression and rehabilitation, and operating and maintaining existing roads, range improvements, and other facilities would be similar to the No Action Alternative.

The incremental cumulative effects of constructing the new pasture division fence and implementing a rest-rotation grazing system, when added with the impacts of the other reasonably foreseeable future actions described previously, would be expected to reverse the long-term, declining trend of vegetation, wildlife habitat, and rangeland health in the allotment.

The proposed new fence, when added to the 17.9 miles of existing fence in the allotment, and the continued maintenance of other existing range improvements in the allotment, would cumulatively benefit or contribute to the ability for the permittee to operate an effective rest-rotation grazing system where all pastures in the allotment meet or are moving rapidly towards meeting all of the 5 rangeland health standards.

As discussed above, neither alternative would reduce future wildfire risk, but the long-term improvement in vegetation health associated with the Proposed Action Alternative would make it more likely to recover naturally should a wildfire occur in the future.

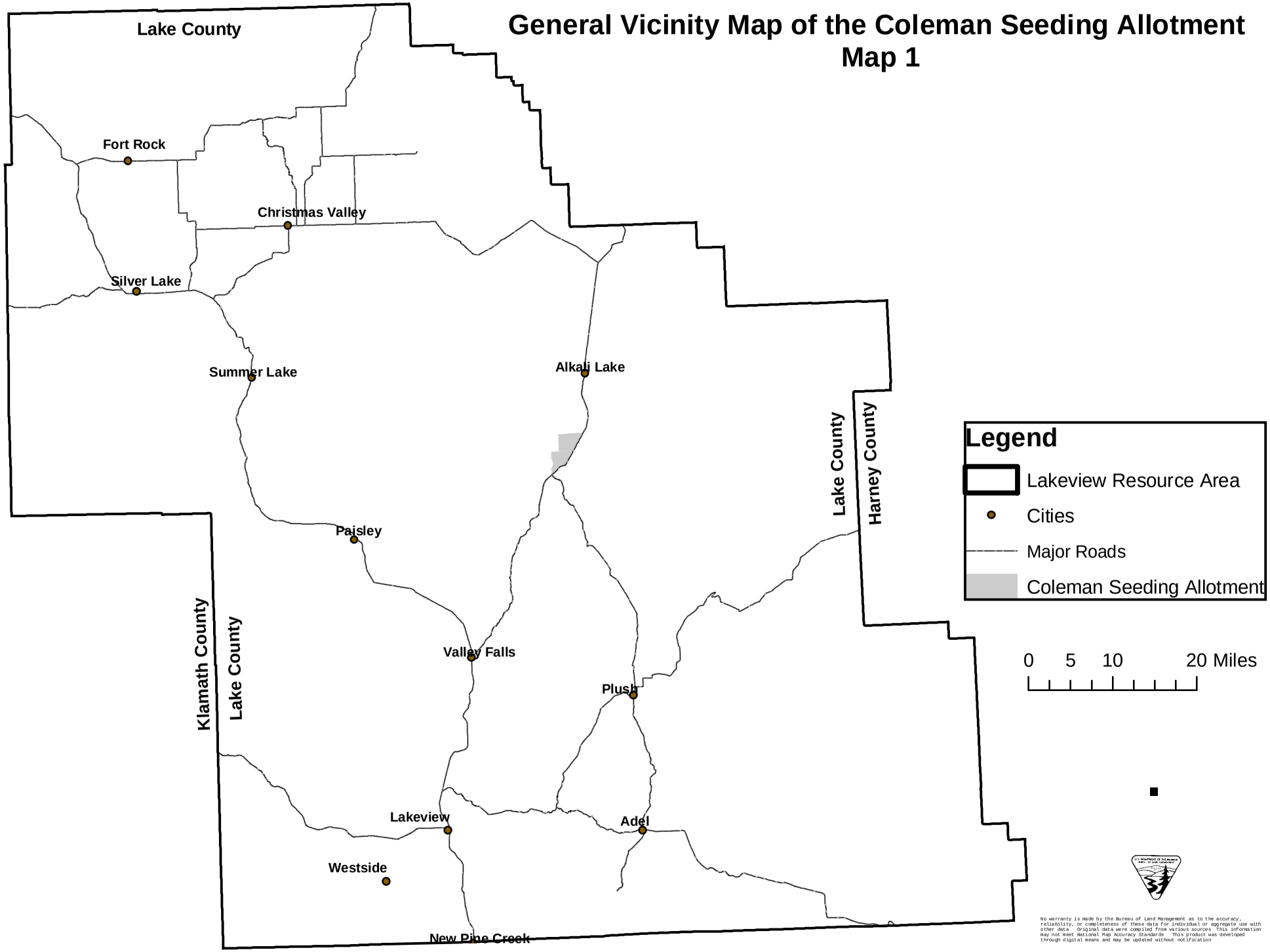
CHAPTER V: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Persons, Groups, and Agencies that have been sent a copy of the EA for review

Tracy Land Company, Permittee
Oregon Natural Desert Association

In addition, a legal notice was published in the *Lake County Examiner* announcing the availability of the EA and FONSI for 30-day public review.

General Vicinity Map of the Coleman Seeding Allotment
Map 1



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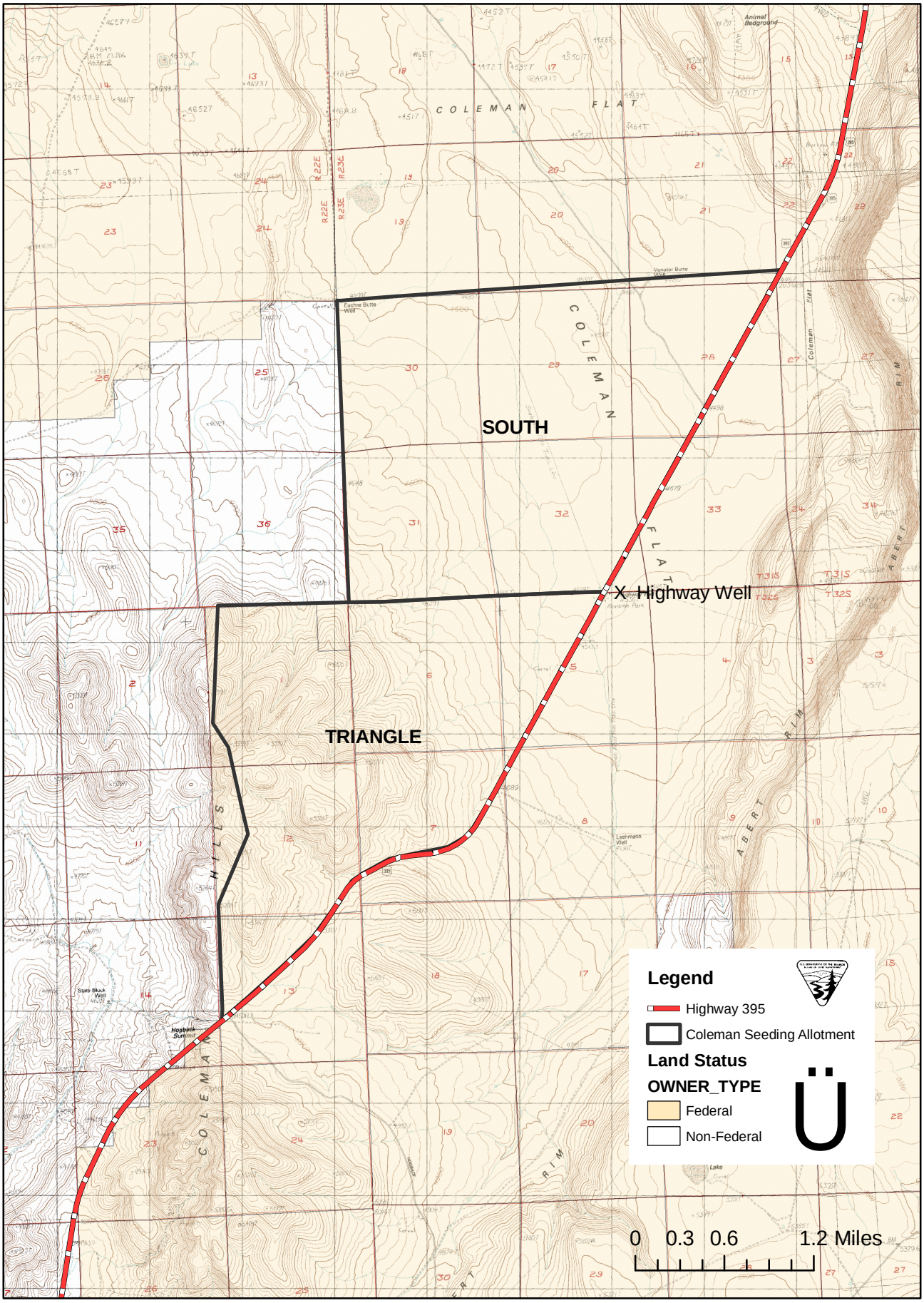
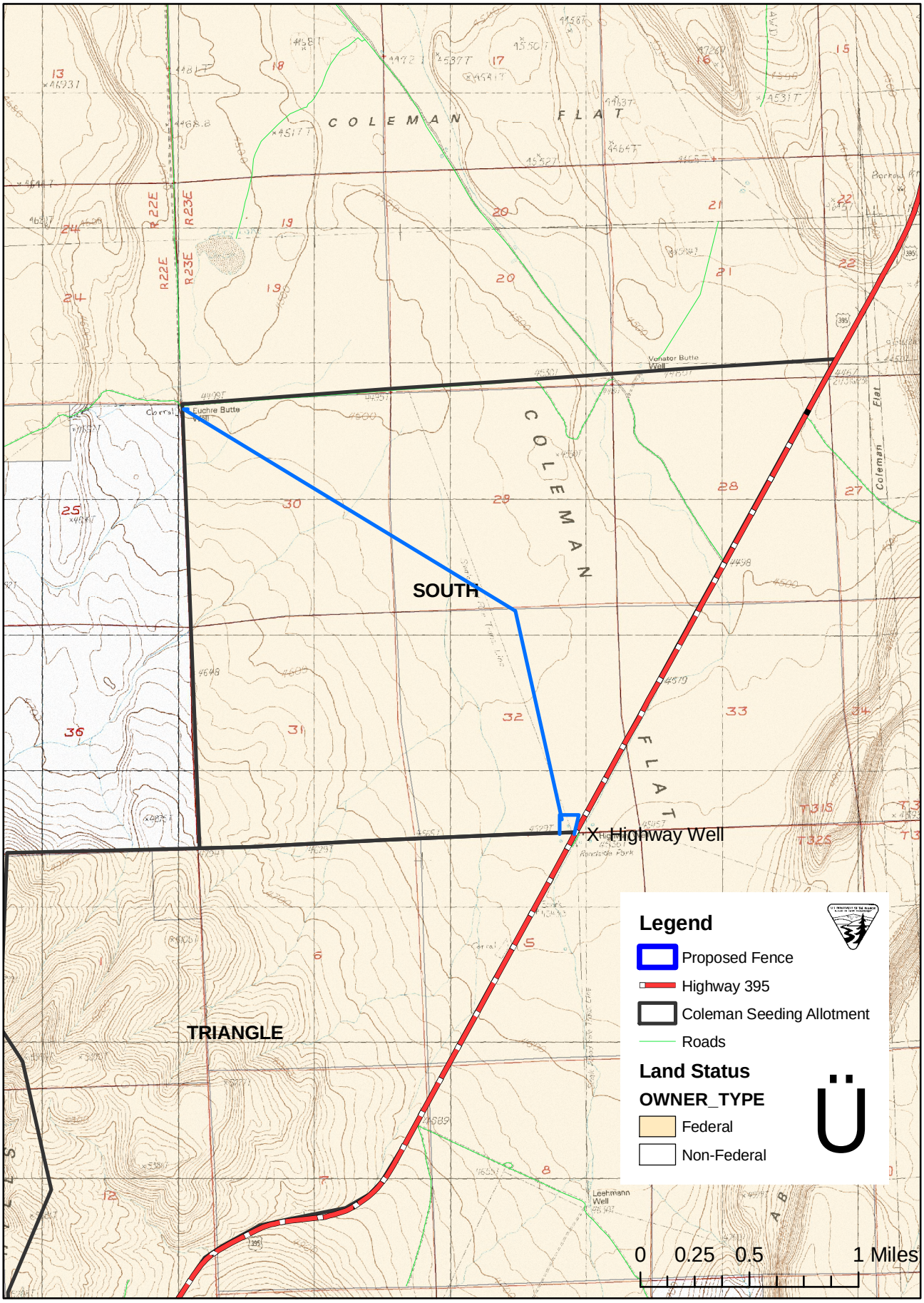
Coleman Seeding Allotment South Pasture Division Fence, Ownership Map 2



Coleman Seeding Allotment South Pasture Division Fence, Proposed Project Map 3