

## Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record FUEL HAZARD REDUCTION IN THE WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE Seven Basins Title II Project

**OR115-08-26**

---

### Description of Proposed Action

This action would occur within the Butte Falls Resource Area of the Medford District BLM (Bureau of Land Management) in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. The proposed activities, occurring on private residential lands, are funded through the BLM Title II grant. The objective is to decrease the likelihood of high intensity fire behavior which can potentially damage natural resources and homes and threaten the safety of individuals and firefighters. The proposed action would reduce the vertical continuity of hazardous fuels (ladder fuels), which allow fire to carry from the surface fuels into the crowns of trees and/or shrubs, while retaining the species composition and diversity. The proposed action is to manually treat (hand crews with chainsaws) the understory vegetation (conifers, hardwoods, and shrubs) and hand pile, chip, or remove slash on 79 acres of private lands (see Table 1). To sustain the low fuels profiles created, the land owner would be encouraged complete maintenance thinning as needed.

The purpose of this project is to lessen the potential damage from a wildfire initiated within or adjacent to the project areas, and to increase tactical opportunities for firefighters to limit fire spread and damage to residential homes during a wildfire event.

**Table 1: Project Location and Acres**

Project Area	Owner Name	Site Address	Legal	Acres
<b>Sykes Creek</b>	Bob Jones	1701 Sykes Creek Road	T34S-R4W-Sec.35	7
	Kent Ramsey	1615 Sykes Creek Road	T34S-R4W-Sec.35	4
	Robert Lenander	1640 Sykes Creek Road	T34S-R4W-Sec.35	5
	Lee Frakes	2555 Sykes Creek Road	T34S-R4W-Sec.26	5
	Mr. Schulz	2075 Sykes Creek Road	T34S-R4W-Sec.35	2
	David Greene	1975 Sykes Creek Road	T34S-R4W-Sec.35	3
<b>Left Fork Sardine Creek</b>	Mike Klapak	3335 Sardine Creek Road	T35S-R3W-Sec.32	3
	Mike Ellis	5795 Sardine Creek Road	T35S-R3W-Sec.20	2
	Mike Peck	5475 Sardine Creek Road	T35S-R3W-Sec.20	5
	Robert Hardin	5478 Sardine Creek Road	T35S-R3W-Sec.32	4
	Jim Copeland	4083 Sardine Creek Road	T35S-R3W-Sec.32	12
<b>Sams Valley</b>	Vivian Herzog	13800 Duggan Road.	T35S-R2W-Sec.21	5
	Mary Savage	13851 Duggan Road	T35S-R2W-Sec.20	6
	Forrest Hatch	212 W. Crossway Drive	T35S-R2W-Sec.20	7
<b>Right Fork Sardine Creek</b>	Steve Lysinger	4058 Sardine Creek Road	T35S-R3W-Sec.33	3
<b>Foots Creek</b>	Lawrence Chapin	5130 Foots Creek Road	T37S-R4W-Sec.22	4
<b>Wards Creek</b>	Robert Lenander	2299 Wards Creek	T36S-R4W-Sec.13	2

This project is a collaborative effort with Medford BLM, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Southwest Oregon Research and Development Council, Oregon State University Extension Center, City of Gold Hill, and residents of Sardine Creek Road and Gold Hill in an effort to improve community

awareness of wildfire issues and to reduce fire and safety risks to individuals, local communities, and wildland firefighters. The project has been funded through a Title II grant which includes reduction of hazardous fuels on private lands on Sykes Creek Road, Sardine Creek Road, Foots Creek Road, Wards Creek Road, and Sams Valley area by removing vegetation which contributes to wildfire intensities. Land owners would complete 79 acres of fuels reduction on 17 private land tax lots.

This project was identified through a collaborative framework, as described in *A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan* (<http://www.fireplan.gov/reports/11-23-en.pdf>). In addition, the Seven Basins Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified these areas as high priority for receiving hazardous fuels reduction.

### **Plan Conformance Review**

The Bureau of Land Management did not scope this proposal and the public was not involved in its development. This proposal is consistent with policy directed by the following:

- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (Northwest Forest Plan FSEIS, 1994 and ROD, 1994);
- *Final-Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision* (EIS, 1994 and RMP/ROD, 1995);
- *Record of Decision To Remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines from the Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (USDI 2007); and
- *Medford District Integrated Weed Management Plan Environmental Assessment* (1998) and tiered to the *Final-Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS, 1985).

The proposed action is in conformance with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Endangered Species Act of 1973, Clean Water Act of 1987, Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (as amended 1986 and 1996), Clean Air Act of 1990 (as amended), and Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.

This proposal is consistent with management direction in the Medford District Resource Management Plan that directs the BLM to “Coordinate fire management activities in rural interface areas with local governments, agencies, and landowners” (USDI 1995, p.89).

### **Categorical Exclusion Determination**

This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion as provided in United States Department of the Interior Departmental Manual 516 DM 11.9, C(4) which allows for “Precommercial thinning and brush control using small mechanical devices.”

Before any action described in the list of categorical exclusions may be used, the “extraordinary circumstances,” included in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, must be reviewed for applicability. After review, the BLM determined no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have a significant environmental effect. The action will not require additional analysis.

### **Description of the Proposed Action:**

The objective is to decrease the likelihood of high intensity fire behavior which can potentially damage natural resources and homes, and threaten the safety of individuals and firefighters. The proposed action would reduce the vertical continuity of hazardous fuels (ladder fuels), which allow fire to carry from the surface fuels into the crowns of trees and/or shrubs, while retaining the species composition and diversity.

**Understory Thinning:** Thinning the understory vegetation would reduce the vertical continuity or the ladder fuel component which contributes to the initiation of higher intensity fires and the movement of a surface fire up into the crowns of overstory canopy. Vegetation proposed to be removed includes noncommercial (less than 6 inches diameter at breast height) conifer trees, hardwoods, and shrubs on private land.

Thinning of the understory vegetation would be accomplished manually. The landowner would either hire a hand crew or complete the work themselves using chainsaws. The material cut would be disposed of by the land owner at their discretion. The understory vegetation would be reduced by the cutting and spacing of conifers and hardwoods between 1 inch and 6 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh), and shrubs less than 10 inches in diameter at 1 foot above ground level. All conifers and hardwoods greater than 7 inches dbh would be reserved. Sugar pine, silk tassel, ninebark, hazel, mountain mahogany, and riparian species (e.g., maple, alder, willow, ash, and yew wood) would be reserved.

The treatment prescription guidelines would vary and would depend on land owner input. However, each fuels reduction treatment must meet the Oregon Department of Forestry recommendation for reducing hazardous fuels to appropriate levels. In general, vegetation spacing should not exceed 40 feet between the boles of remaining trees.

The following proposed treatment prescriptions have been communicated to each land owner:

1. Cut conifers and hardwoods greater than 1 foot tall and less than 6 inches dbh, to a 40 foot by 40 foot spacing.
2. Cut shrub species greater than 1 foot tall and less than 10 inches in diameter at 1 foot above ground level, to 40 foot by 40 foot spacing.
3. Prune 6 to 14 inch dbh conifers up to 6 feet above ground level.

### **Project Design Features**

Project Design Features are included in this project to reduce potential impacts to natural resources and to ensure the proposed vegetation and fuel reduction treatments are consistent with resource management objectives.

#### **Riparian Reserves**

- To ensure existing shade levels along perennial streams are maintained, vegetation treatment would not occur within 25 feet of perennial streams.
- To prevent sediment from entering intermittent streams, maintain vegetation on stream banks of intermittent streams.
- Do not place hand piles within 25 feet of perennial streams and within the channels or stream banks of intermittent streams.

#### **Wildlife and Botanical**

- Seasonally restrict chainsaw use within 200 feet of the BLM property lines in T35S, R3W, section 20 from March 1 through June 30.

- Buffer Threatened and Endangered wildlife sites according to the management recommendations for that species in effect at the time of treatment. Buffer size and strategy would depend on site-specific conditions, proposed treatments, and species involved. Fuels treatment could take place within these buffers if the species or specific habitat characteristics are not adversely impacted.
- Buffer Threatened and Endangered plant sites according to management recommendations for that species in effect at the time of treatment. Buffer sizes would depend on site-specific conditions, proposed treatments, and species involved. Understory burning may occur through some vascular plant sites during plant dormancy.

#### **Cultural Resources**

- Site-specific protection and mitigating measures would be implemented to preserve the integrity of all existing and discovered cultural and national historic sites and would be completed in consultation with a BLM cultural specialist.

#### **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this project, contact Leanne Mruzik, Fuels Management Specialist, at (541)618-2419

### NEPA Categorical Exclusion Review

#### Proposed Action:

Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3.A(3) provides for a review of the following criteria for categorical exclusion to determine if exceptions apply to the proposed action based on actions which may:

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Yes  No

Initial QW Remarks:

2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resource; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

Yes  No

Initial AS Remarks:

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

Yes  No

Initial QW Remarks:

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

Yes  No

Initial QW Remarks:

5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

Yes  No

Initial QW Remarks:

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

Yes  No

Initial SLS Remarks:

7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

Yes  No

Initial AS Remarks:

8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

Plants  Yes  No Initial mw Remarks: *surveys completed - no T&E sites*

Animals  Yes  No Initial DR Remarks:

Fish  Yes  No Initial SZ Remarks:

9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Yes  No

Initial QW Remarks:

10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

Yes  No

Initial OW Remarks:

11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

Yes  No

Initial AK Remarks:

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

Yes  No

Initial OW Remarks:

**Decision**

It is my decision to allow the manual treatment of understory vegetation and the hand piling, chipping, and removal of the resulting slash on 79 acres of private lands. This action will reduce the vertical continuity of hazardous fuels (ladder fuels), which allow fire to carry from the surface fuels into the crowns of trees and/or shrubs, while retaining the species composition and diversity.

**Decision Rationale**

The proposed action has been reviewed by Butte Falls Resource Area staff and appropriate Project Design Features, as specified above, will be incorporated into the proposal. Based on the attached NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Categorical Exclusion Review, I have determined the proposed action involves no significant impact to the human environment and no further environmental analysis is required.

John J. Bergin  
Christopher J. McAlear

June 30, 2008

Date

(Acting)

Field Manager  
Butte Falls Resource Area

**Administrative Remedy**

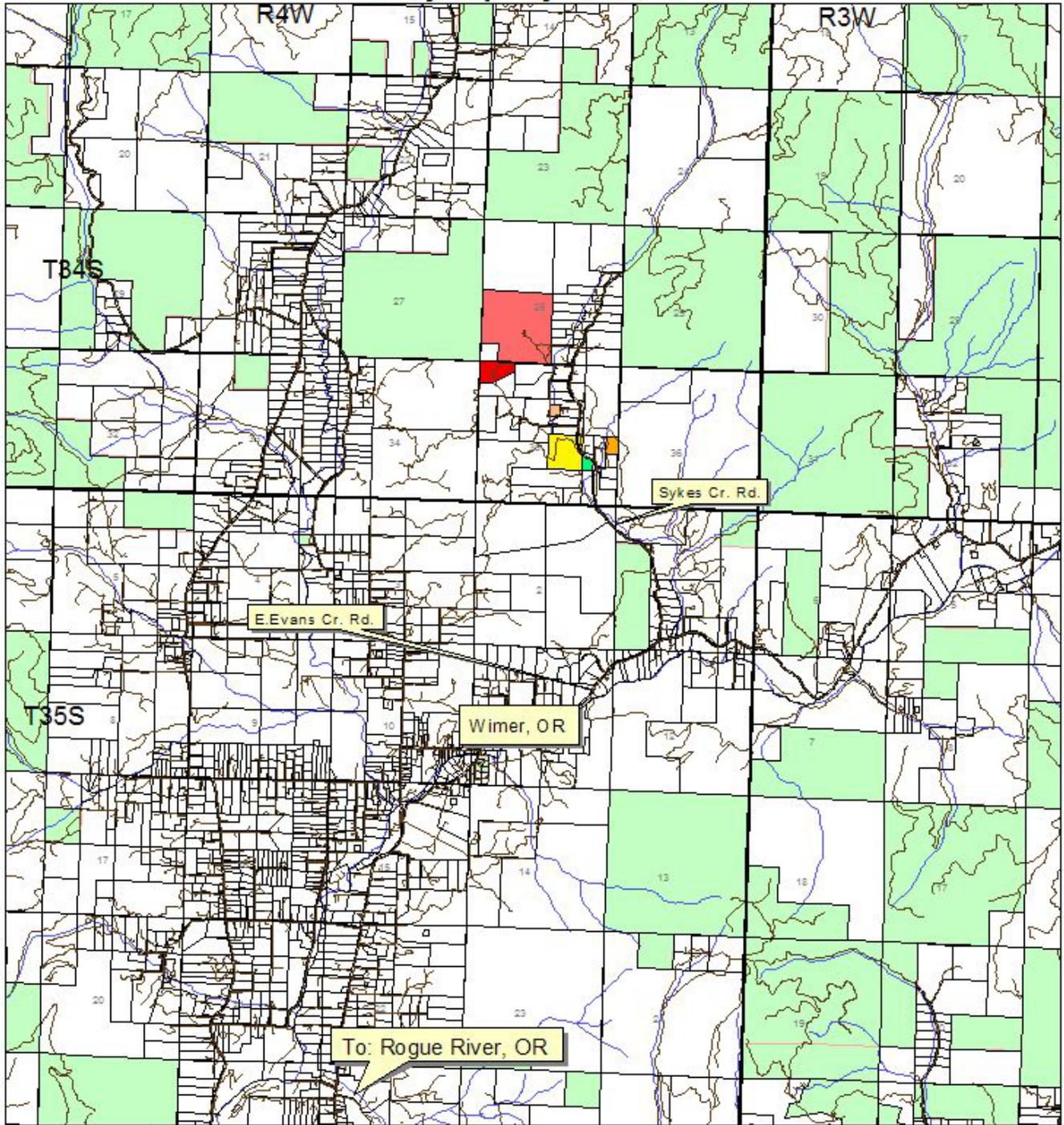
Notice of the forest management decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the District internet website. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR section 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR part 4.

**Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:**

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Jean Williams	NEPA Coordinator	6/30/08	JW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	6/11/08	mw
Linda Hale	Wildlife Biologist	Dave Roelofs 6/11/08	DR
Steve Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	6/12/08	SL
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	6/12/08	SS
Ken VanEtten	Soil Scientist	6/26/08	KBK
Leanne Mruzik	Fire/Fuels Specialist	6/17/08	LM
Lisa Brennan	Cultural Resource Technician	6/26/08	LB
Doug Stewart	Silviculturist	6/30/08	DS



### Vicinity Map - Sykes Creek



#### Legend

	Road		GREENE DAVID W TRUSTEE ET AL
	Federal Ownership		JONES ROBERT I TRUSTEE ET AL
	Section Line		LEVINER ROBERT J & SUSAN M
	Tallies		PLUMBY WILLIAM KICOROL L
	Township/Range Line		SCHULZOOK
	Waterline		TORI CAMELOT TRUST
	Stream		
	Ditch		

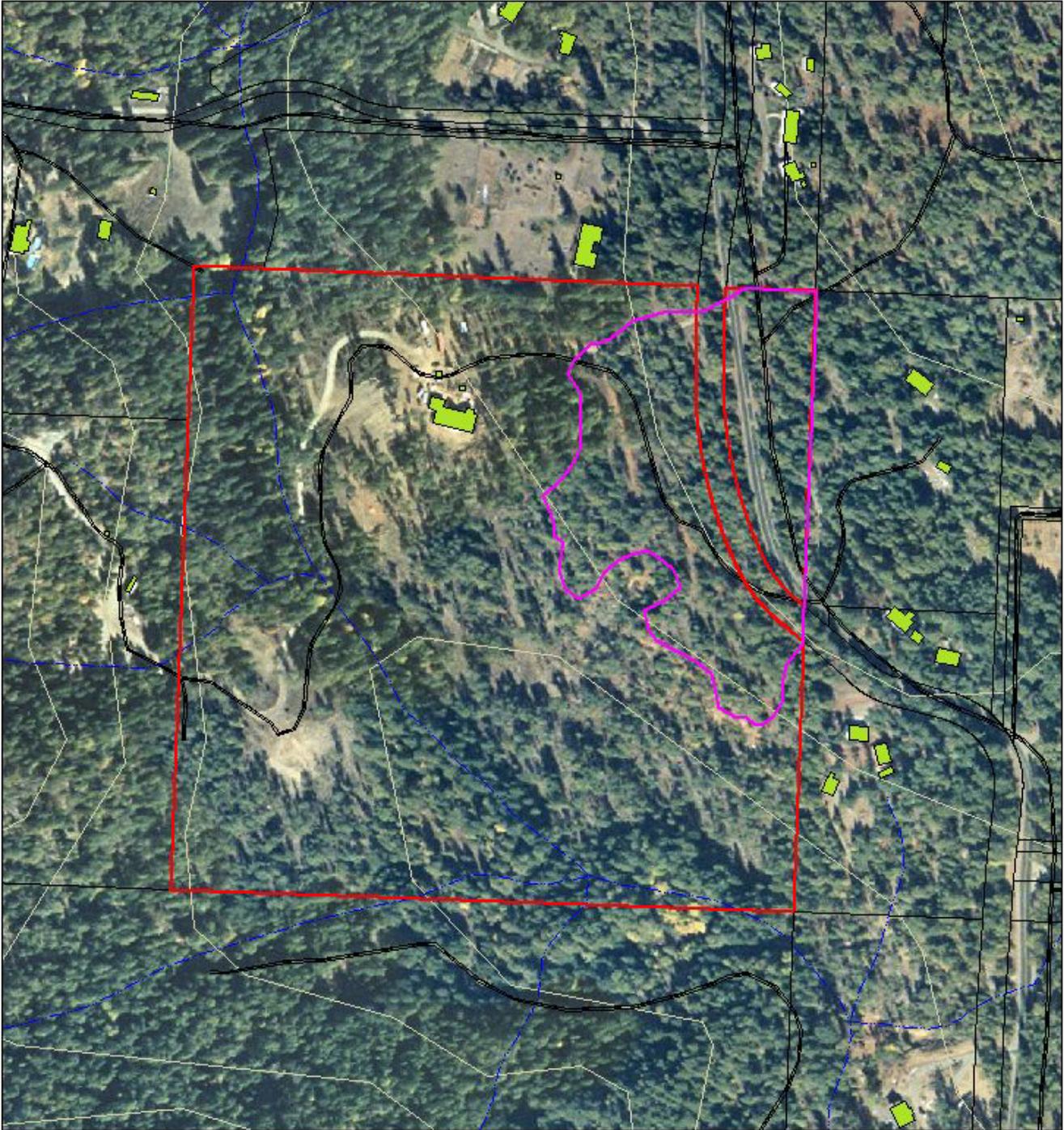


Scale  
1:63360  
1" = 1 Mile



Creation date: Sunday, March 16, 2008 0:00:00 PM C:\Users\j...fuels\project\vicinity\_sykes.apr

Jones 344W35 TL 1100



Legend

-  Building
  -  Contour (40')
  -  Prop. Bdy.
  -  Fuel Treatment Area
  -  Road
  -  Drainage
  -  Section Line
  -  Title Bdy.
- 344w.sld

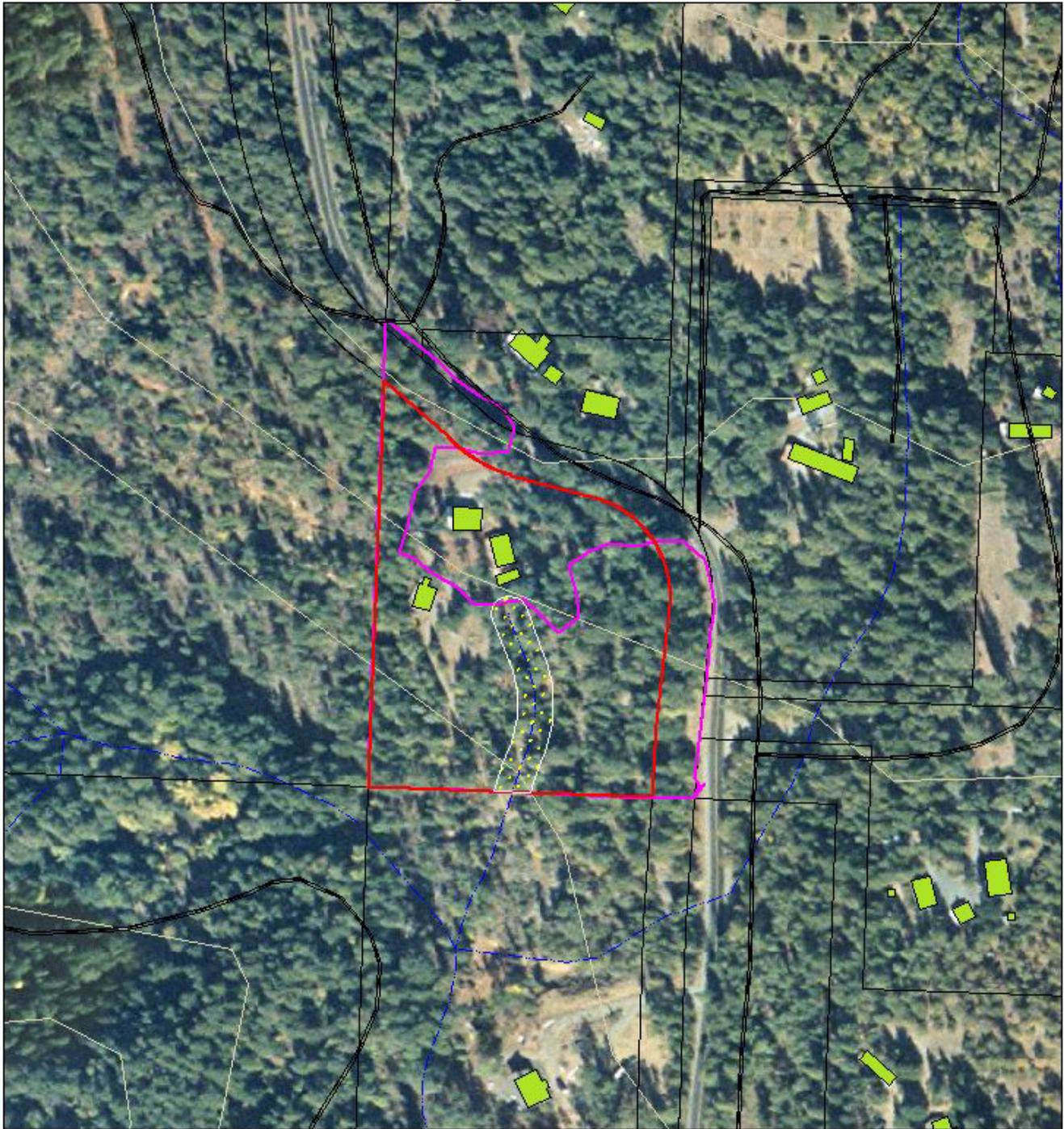
300 0 300 600 Feet

Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!\fuels project\jones\_bob\base map.apr

### Ramsay 344W35 TL 907



#### Legend

-  25' buffer/shp
-  Building
-  Contour (40')
-  Road
-  Drainage
-  Ramsay\_prop/shp
-  Ramsay\_trans/shp
-  Section Line
-  Taylor Hwy.
- 344w.sld

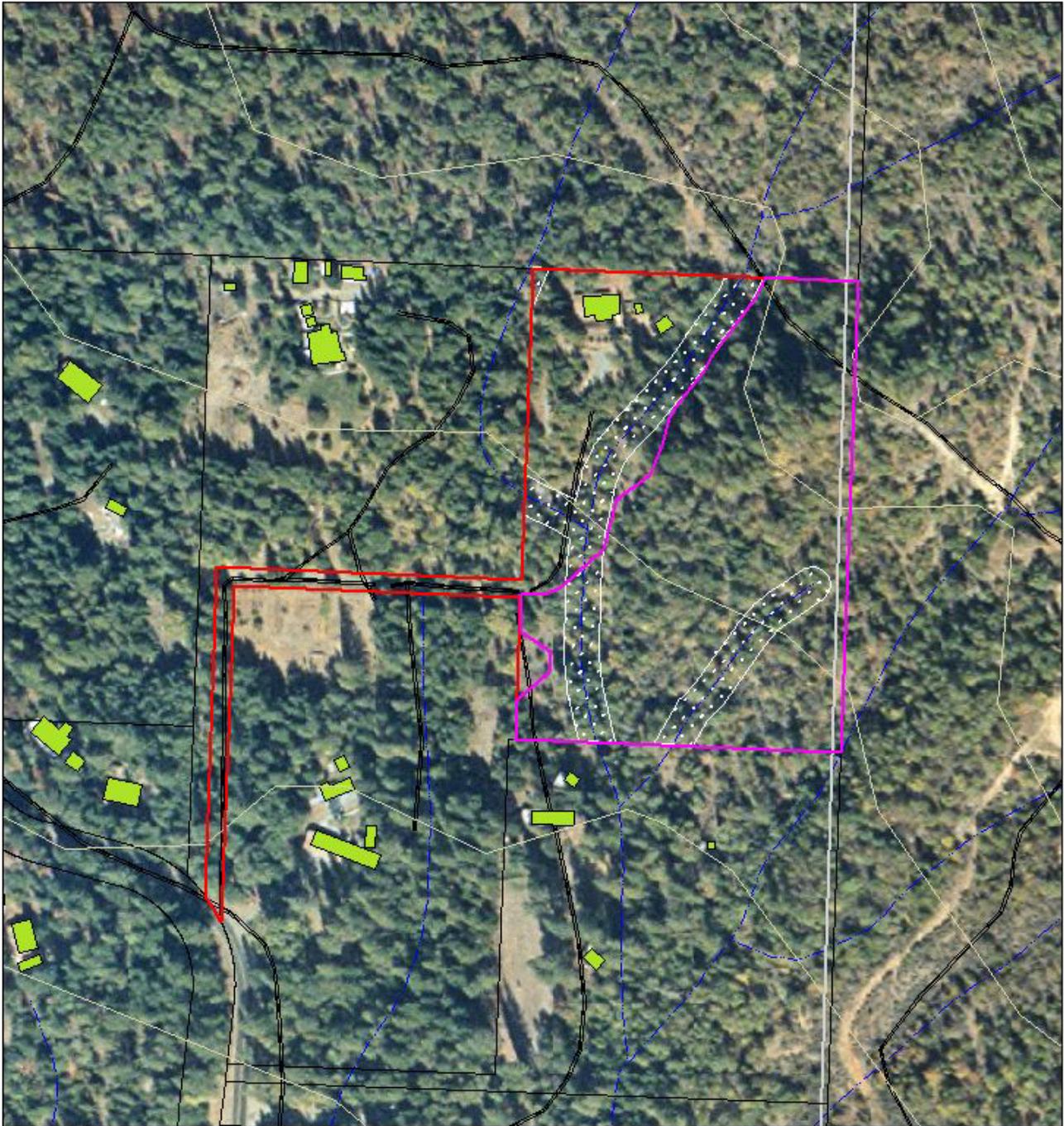
200 0 200 400 Feet

Scale  
1:2400  
1" = 200'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!\fuels project\ramsay\base map.apr

### Lenander 344W35 TL 903



#### Legend

- 50' buffer, nonstream (each side)
- Building
- Contour (40')
- Fuel\_treatment.shp
- Road
- Drainage
- Property
- Section Line
- Taylor Sideline
- 344w.sid

200 0 200 400 Feet



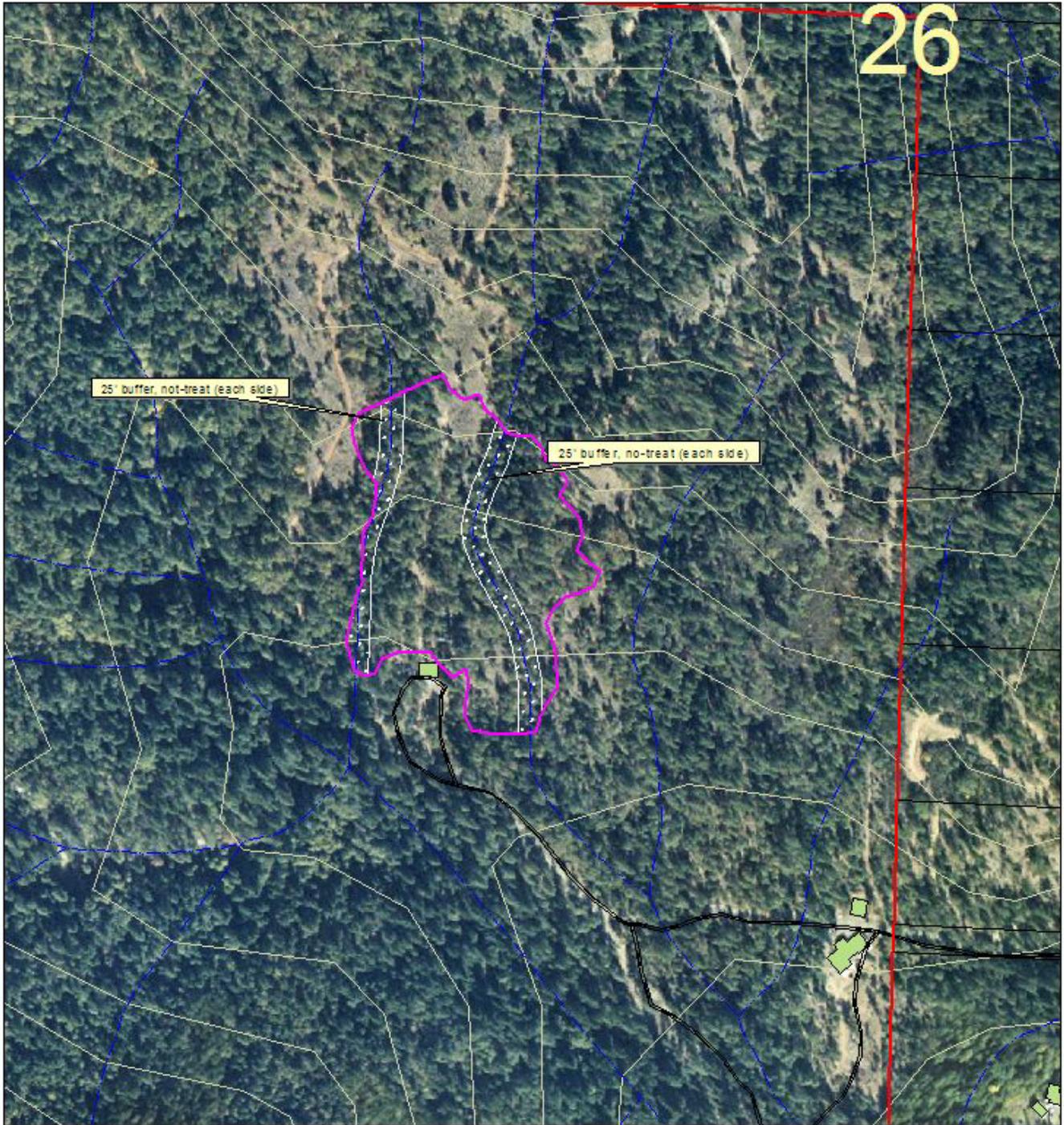
Scale  
1:2400  
1" = 200'

Note: Boundaries Lines are Approximate

Creation date: Tuesday, March 18, 2008 c:\!!!!!!\fuels project\lenander\_sykes\base map.apr

Frakes 344W26 TL 600

26



Legend



300 0 300 600 Feet

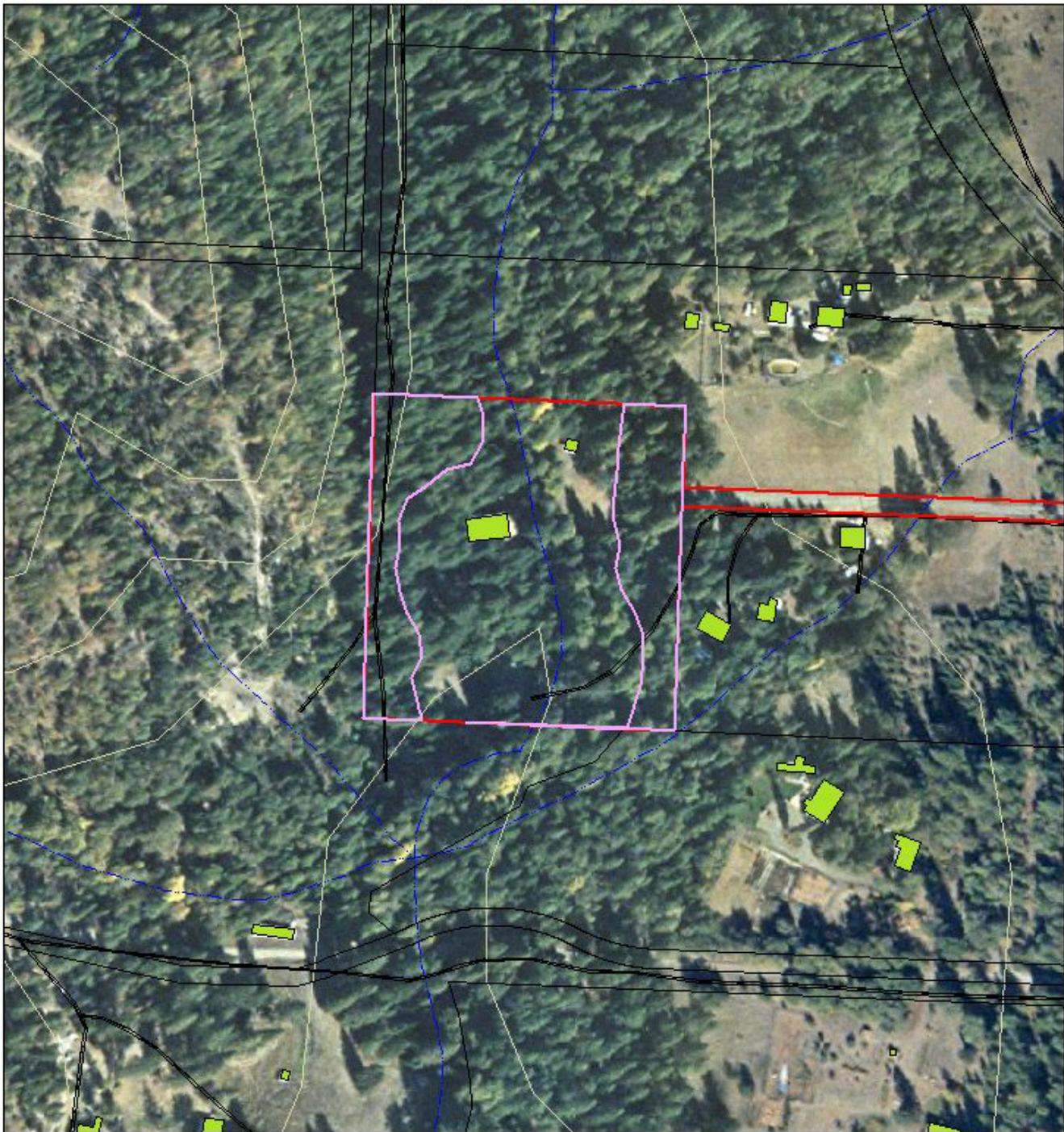


Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 0:11:11!!!!!! fuels project/frakes/base map.apr

### Schulz 344W32 TL 702



#### Legend

	Building
	Contour (40)
	Rue_transsect.arp
	Road
	Drainage
	Prop.arp
	Section Line
	Text(80)
344w.sld	

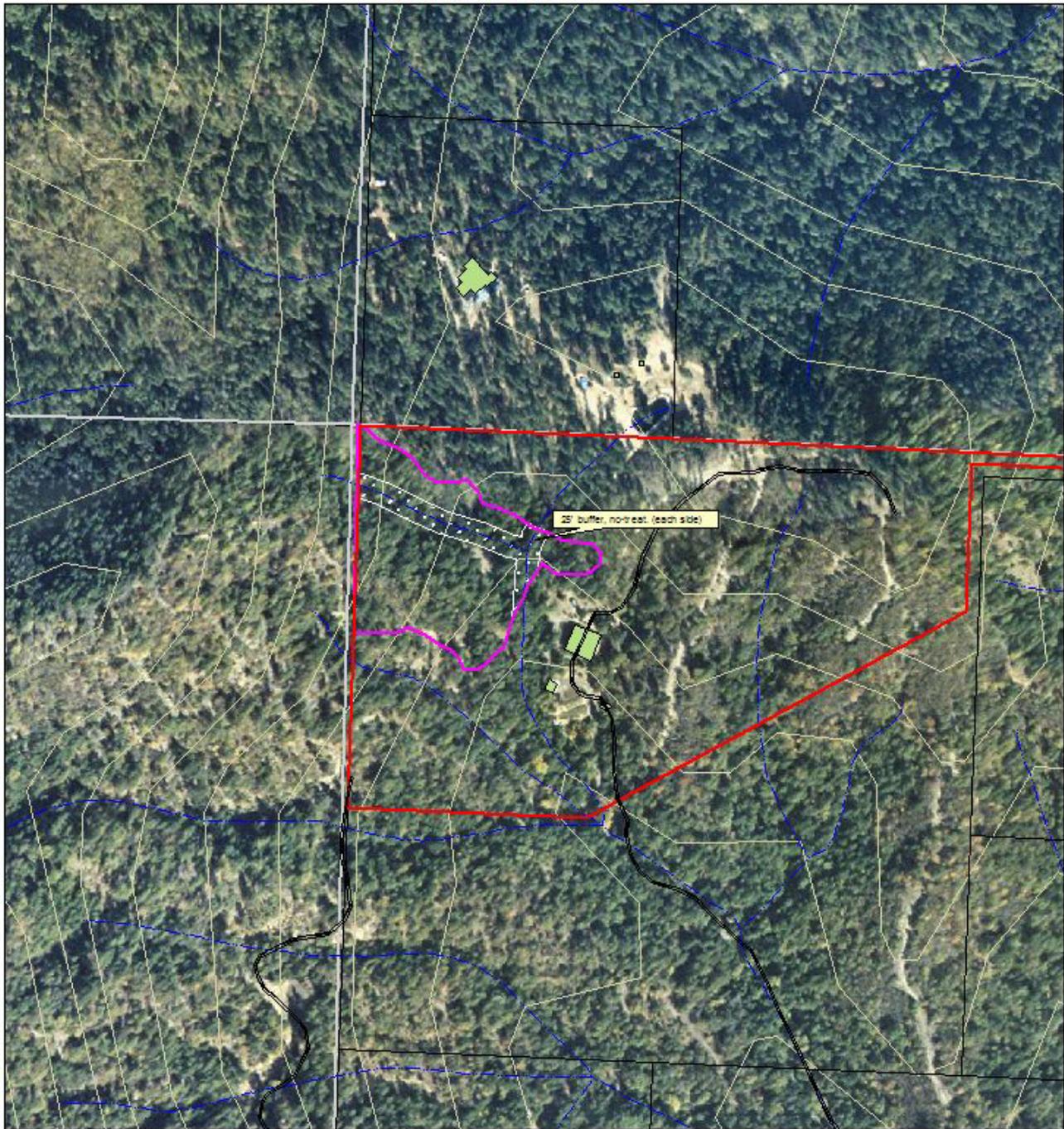


Scale  
1:2400  
1" = 200'



Creation date: Monday, March 17, 2008 c:\!!!!!!fuels\proj\otischulz\base map.apr

### Greene 344W35 TL 400



#### Legend

	25' stream buffer.shp
	Consur (07)
	Green_prop.shp
	Green_transact.shp
	Medusa.shp
	Medusa.shp
	Federal Rd.
	Section Line
	Taylor Rd.
	344w/sld

300 0 300 600 Feet

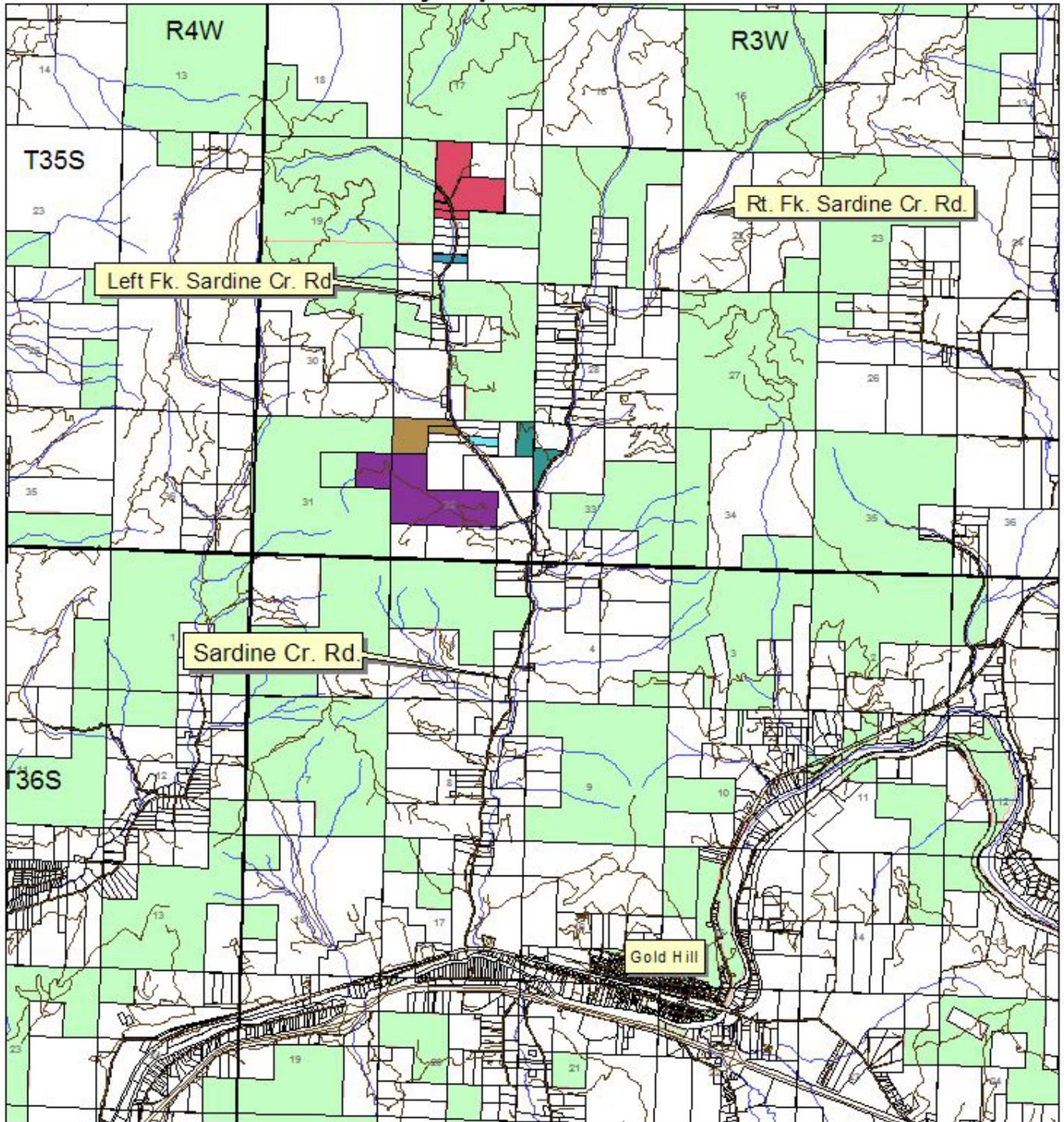
Scale  
1:3600

1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!\fuels project\greene\base map.apr

### Vicinity Map- Sardine Creek



#### Legend

Copeland	Section Line
Sls	Section Line
Heron	Township
Knapak	Township/Range Line
Lyanger	Waterline
Road	Stream
Peck	Ditches
Federal Ownership	



Scale  
1:63360

1" = 1 Mile



Creation date: Sunday, March 16, 2008 0:11:11 PM fuelis project\vicinity\_sardine.apr

### Kalpak 353W TL110



#### Legend

	Building
	Contour (40')
	20' Buffer (no treatment)
	Property (60')
	Full Treatment Area
	Road
	Drainage
	Section Line
	Tail or Sdy.
	353w.sld

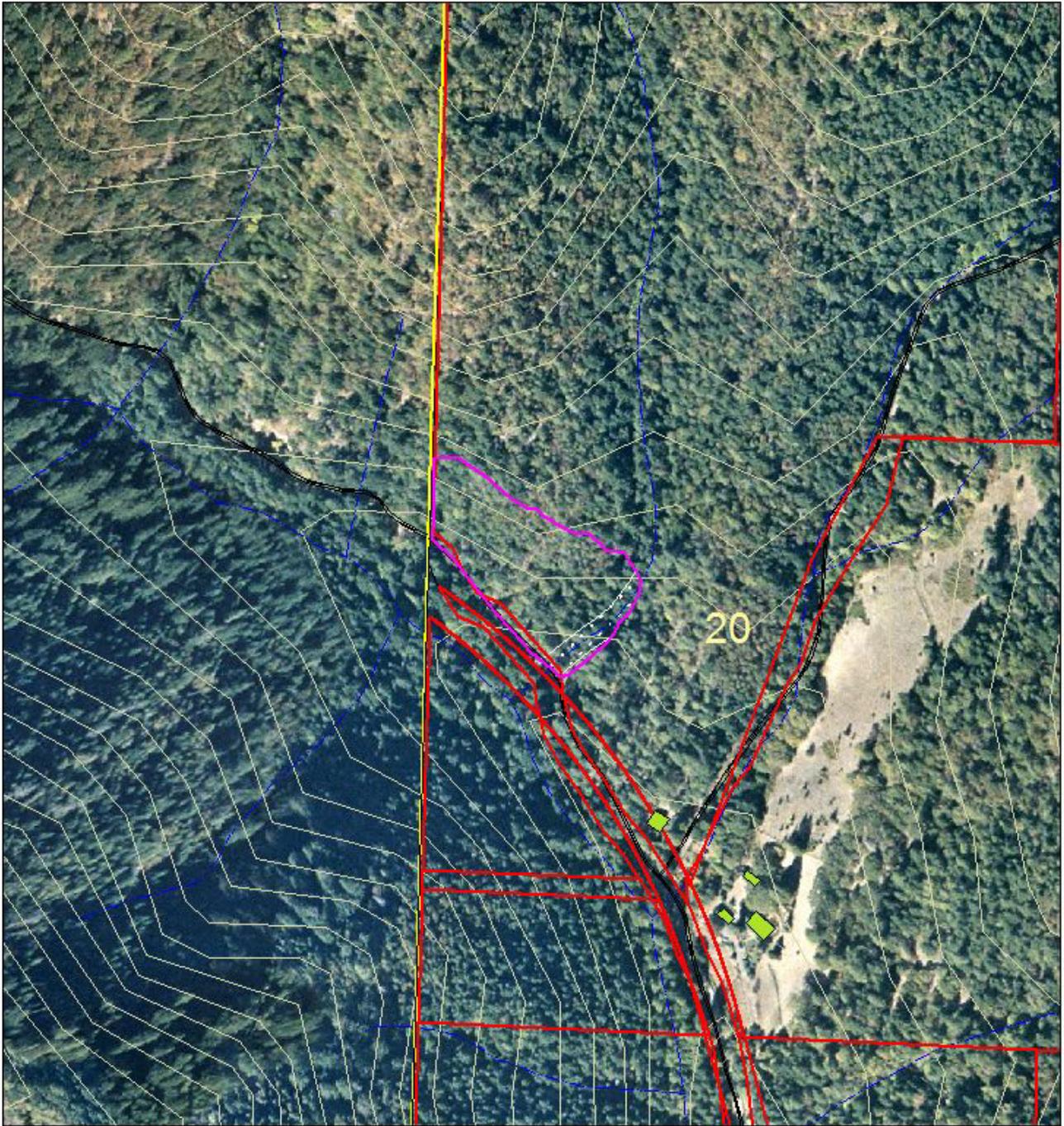
200 0 200 400 Feet

Scale  
1:2400  
1" = 200'

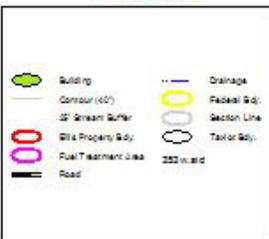


Creation date: Wednesday, March 19, 2008 c:\!!!!!!\fuelis project\kalpak, m\lchael & nancy\base map.apr

Ellis 353W20 TL 300



Legend



Scale  
1:3600

1" = 300'



Creation date: Wednesday, March 19, 2008 08:11:11 AM fuelis project\ellis\ellis map.apr

Peck 353W20 TL 1700



Legend

25' Stream Buffer	Fuel Treatment Area
Building	Federal Bdy.
Contour (40')	Section Line
Road	Taxlot Bdy.
Drainage	353w. sld
Prop. Bdy.	

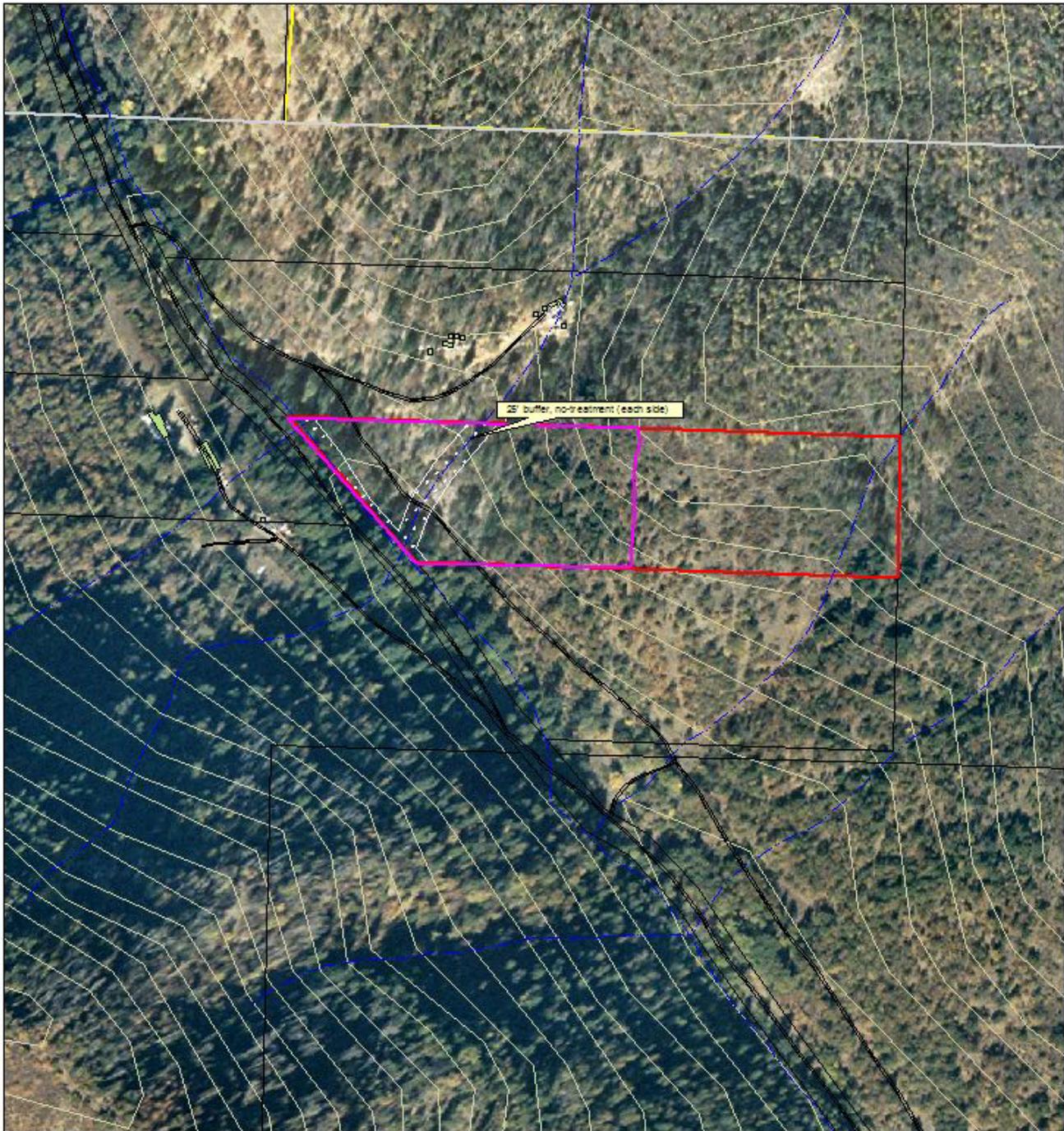


Scale  
1:2400  
1" = 200'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!fuels project\peck\peck map.apr

### Hardin 353W32 TL 800



#### Legend

	Building
	Contour (40')
	35' Stream Buffer
	Prop. Bdy.
	Fuel Treatment Line
	Road
	Stream
	Section Line
	Taxlot Bdy.
	353W sid

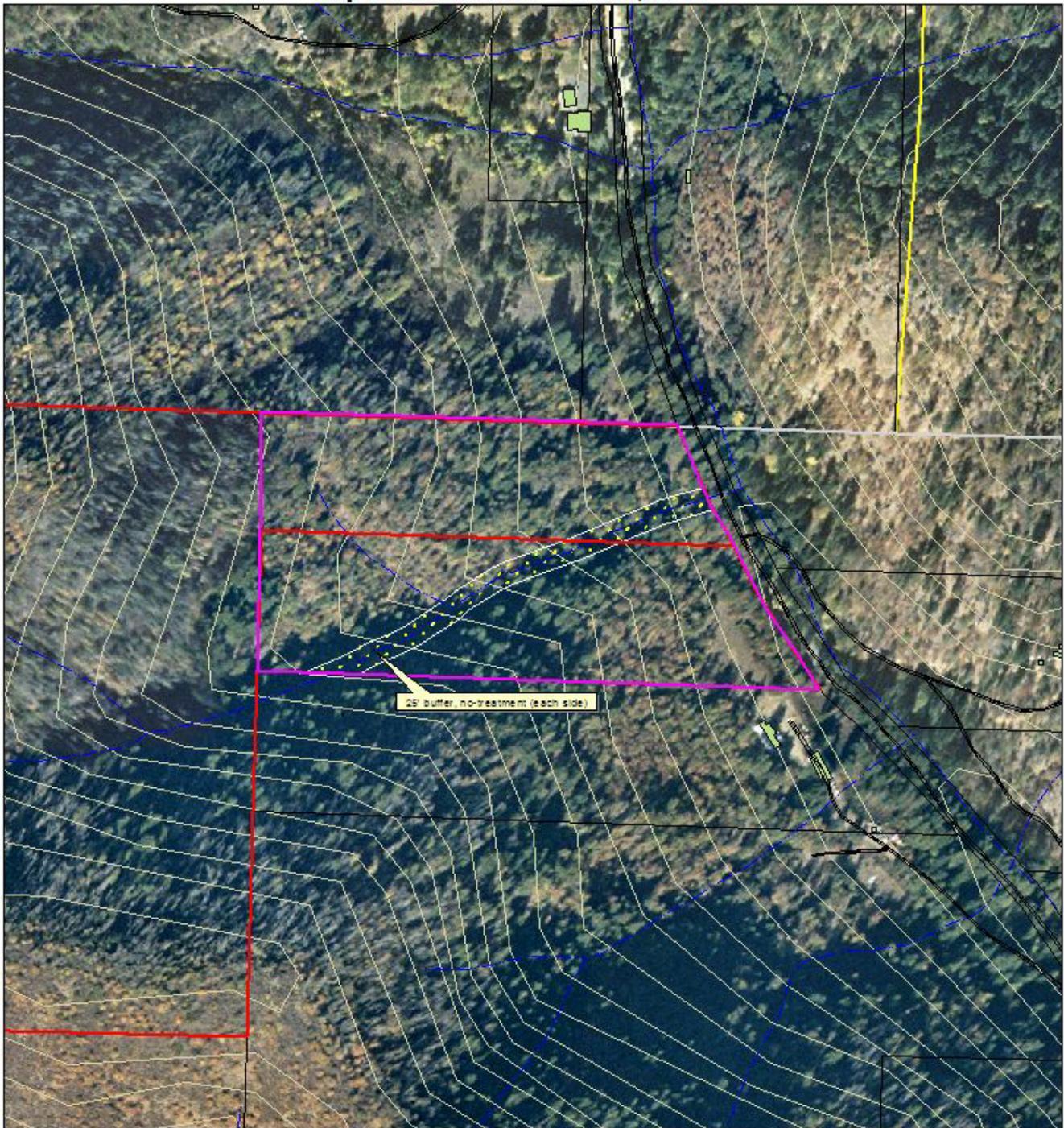
300 0 300 600 Feet

Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!fuels project\hardin\base map.apr

### Copeland 353W32 TL 400, & 401



#### Legend

	Building		Stream
	Contour (40')		Federal Bdy.
	25' Stream Buffer		Section Line
	Prop. Bdy.		Taxlot Bdy.
	Rural Treatment Area		353 w. sid
	Wetlands		

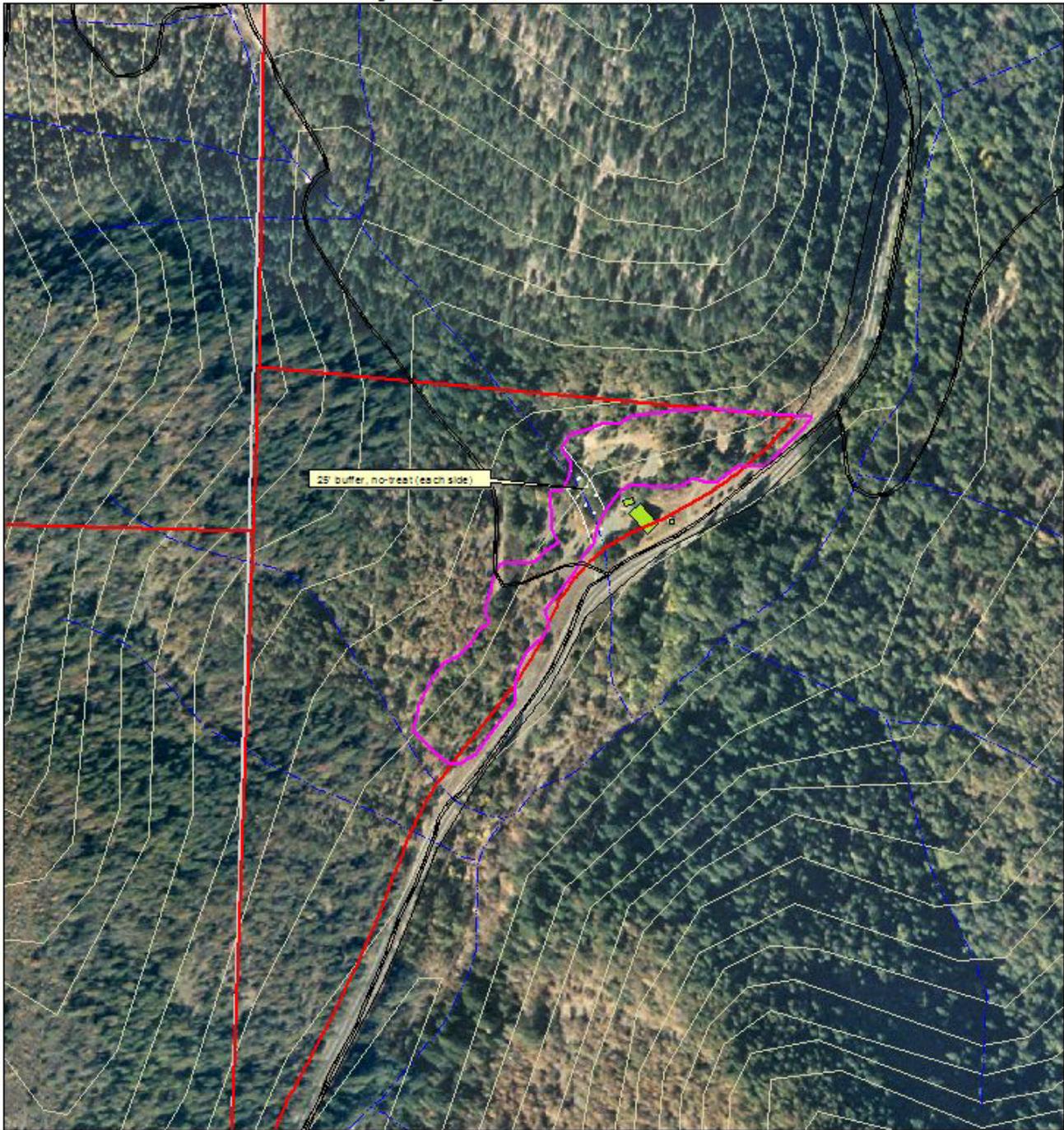


Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!\fuels project\copeland\base m.apr

### Lysinger 353W33 TL 300



#### Legend

	Building		Drainage
	25' Stream Buffer		Section Line
	Contour (40')		Tailor Bay
	Final watershed		344' road
	Lysinger_prop_40'		352' road
	Road		

300 0 300 600 Feet

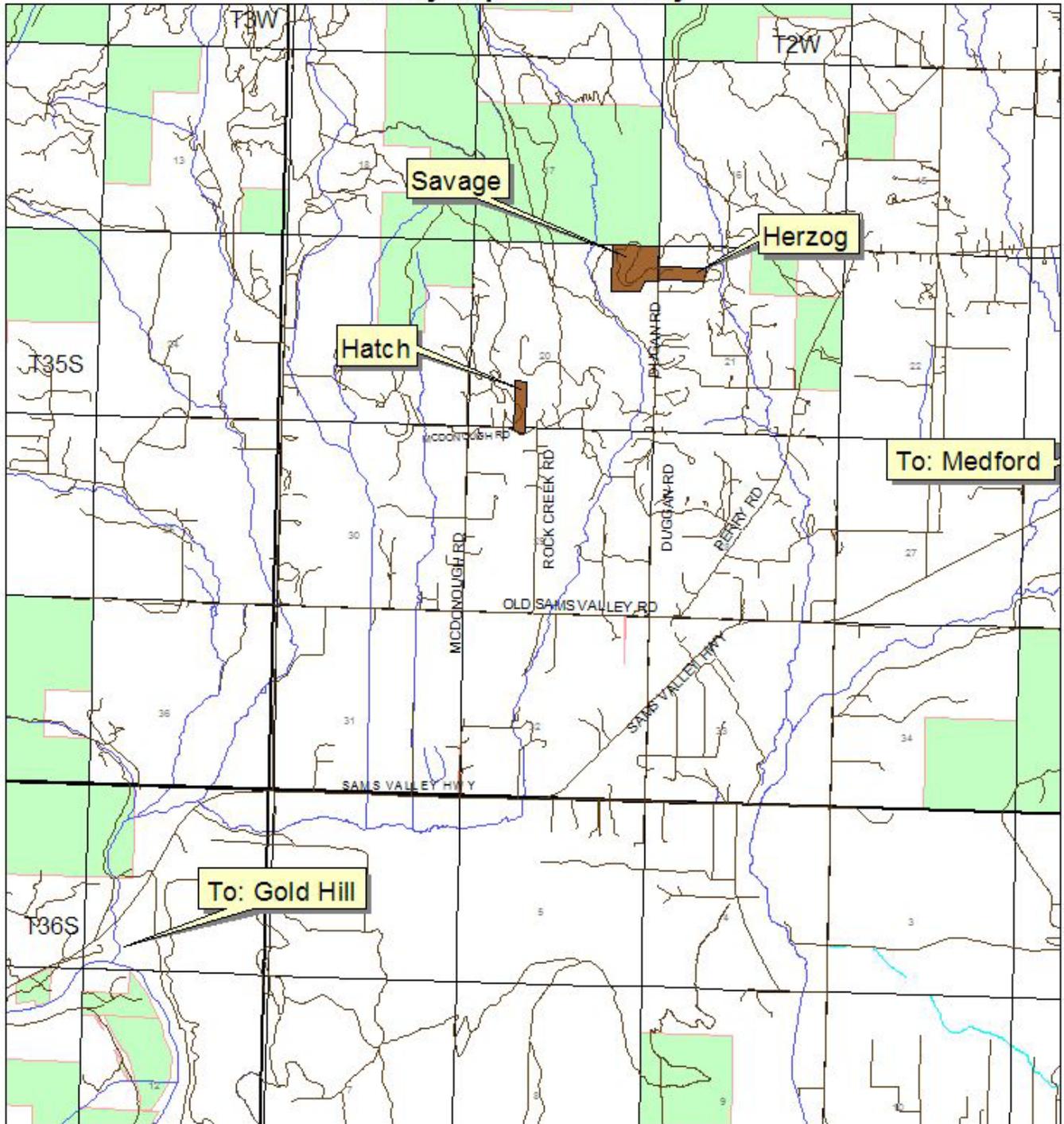
Scale  
1:3600

1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!fuels project\lysinger\_steve\base map.apr

### Vicinity Map - Sams Valley



#### Legend



4000 0 4000 8000 Feet

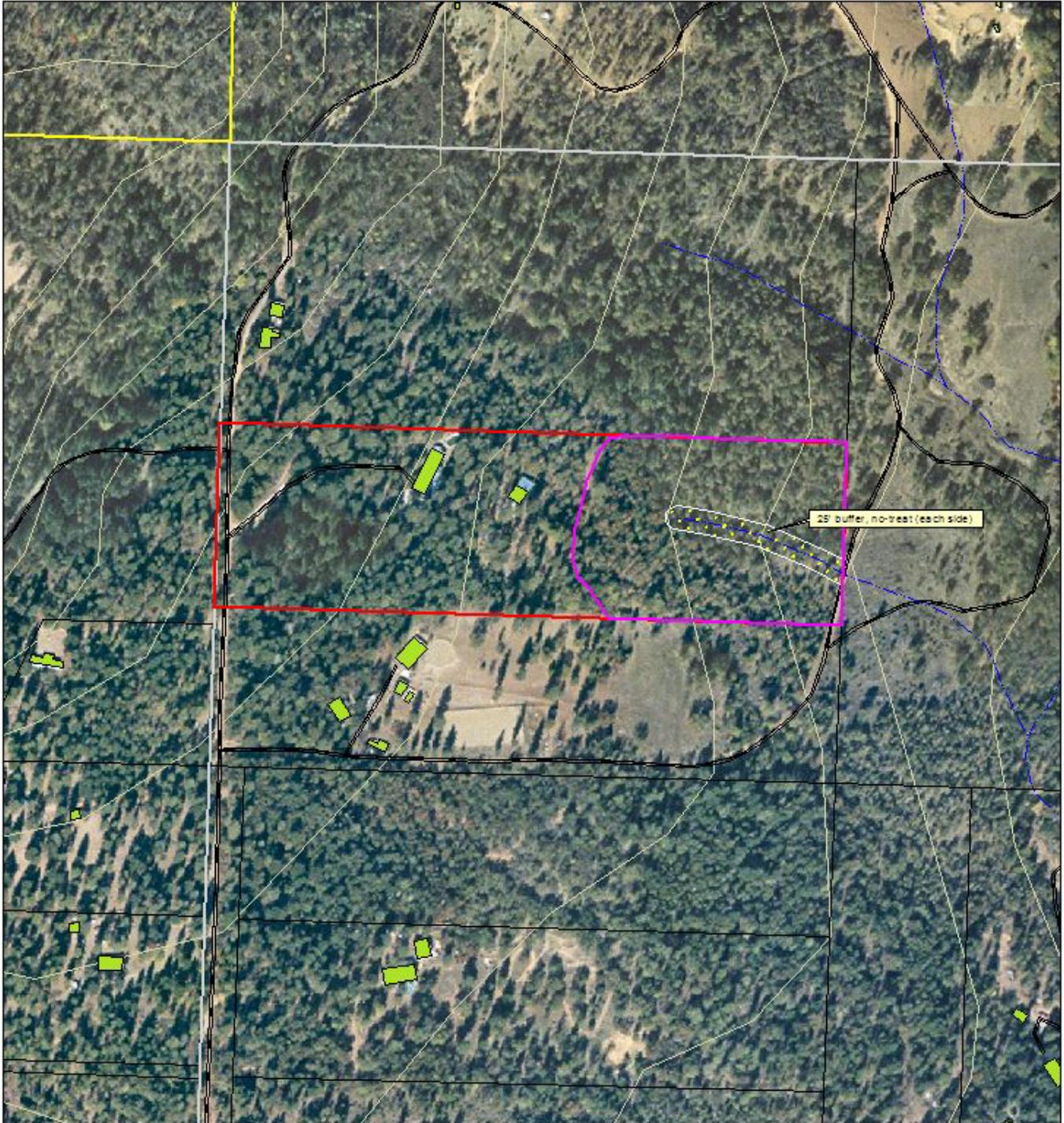


Scale  
1:48000  
1" = 4,000'



Creation date: Sunday, March 16, 2008 0:00:00 PM \\fs1\project\title\_ii\projectivity\projectivity\_duggan.apr

### Herzog 352W21 TL 502



25' buffer, no-treat (each side)

#### Legend

	25' Stream Buffer
	Building
	Contour (40')
	Fuel Treat Area
	Road
	Drainage
	Section Line
	Tax or Sd. Prop. Sd.
	352w.sld

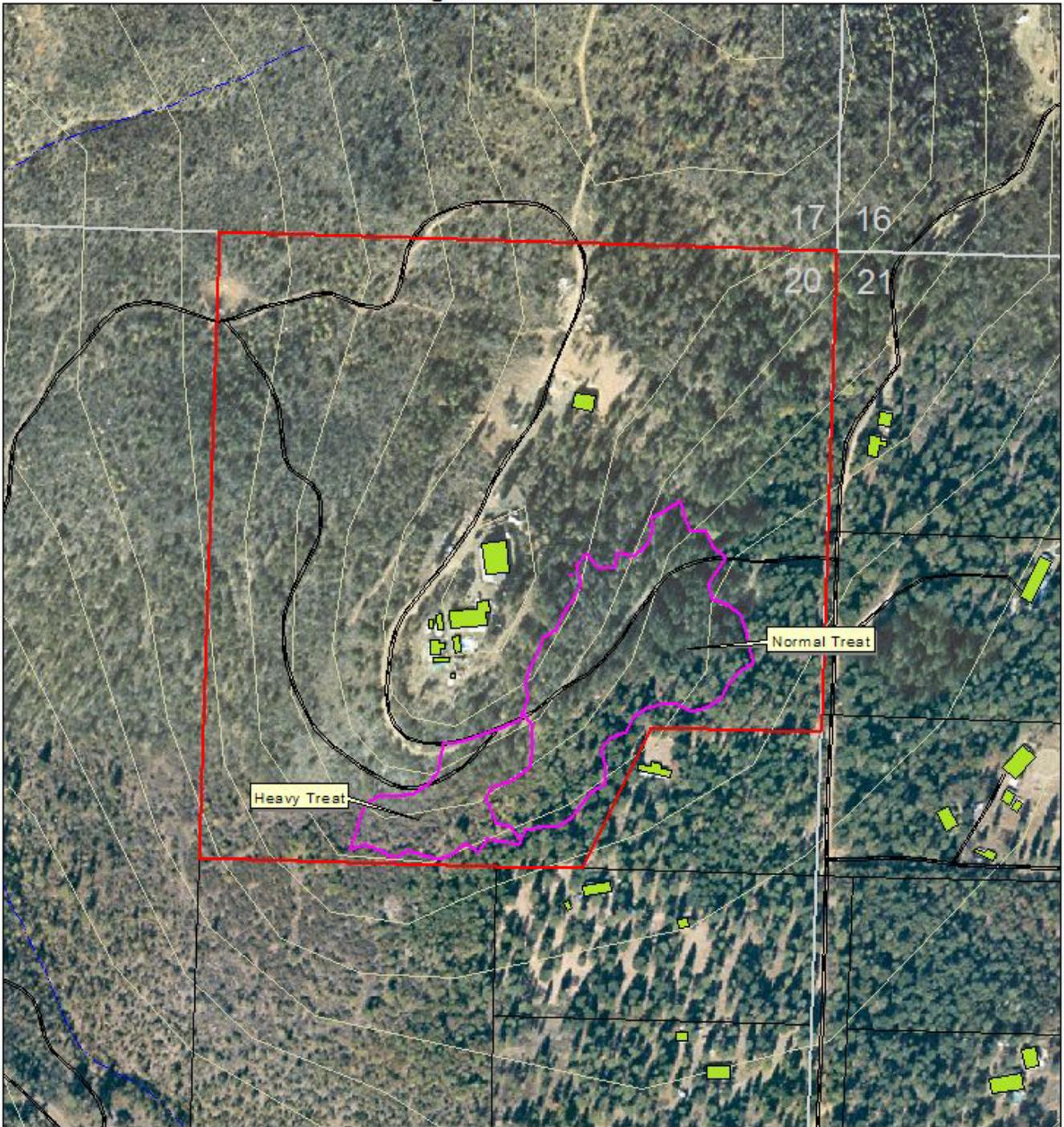
300 0 300 600 Feet

Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 10:00:00 AM c:\fuel\project\herzog\base map.apr

### Savage 352W20 TL 101



#### Legend

	Building		Section Line
	Contour (40')		Taxlot Bdy.
	Road		Prop. Bdy.
	Drainage		244 w. sid
	Treated Bdy.		252 w. sid
	Savage_heavy.shp		
	Savage_normal.shp		

300 0 300 600 Feet

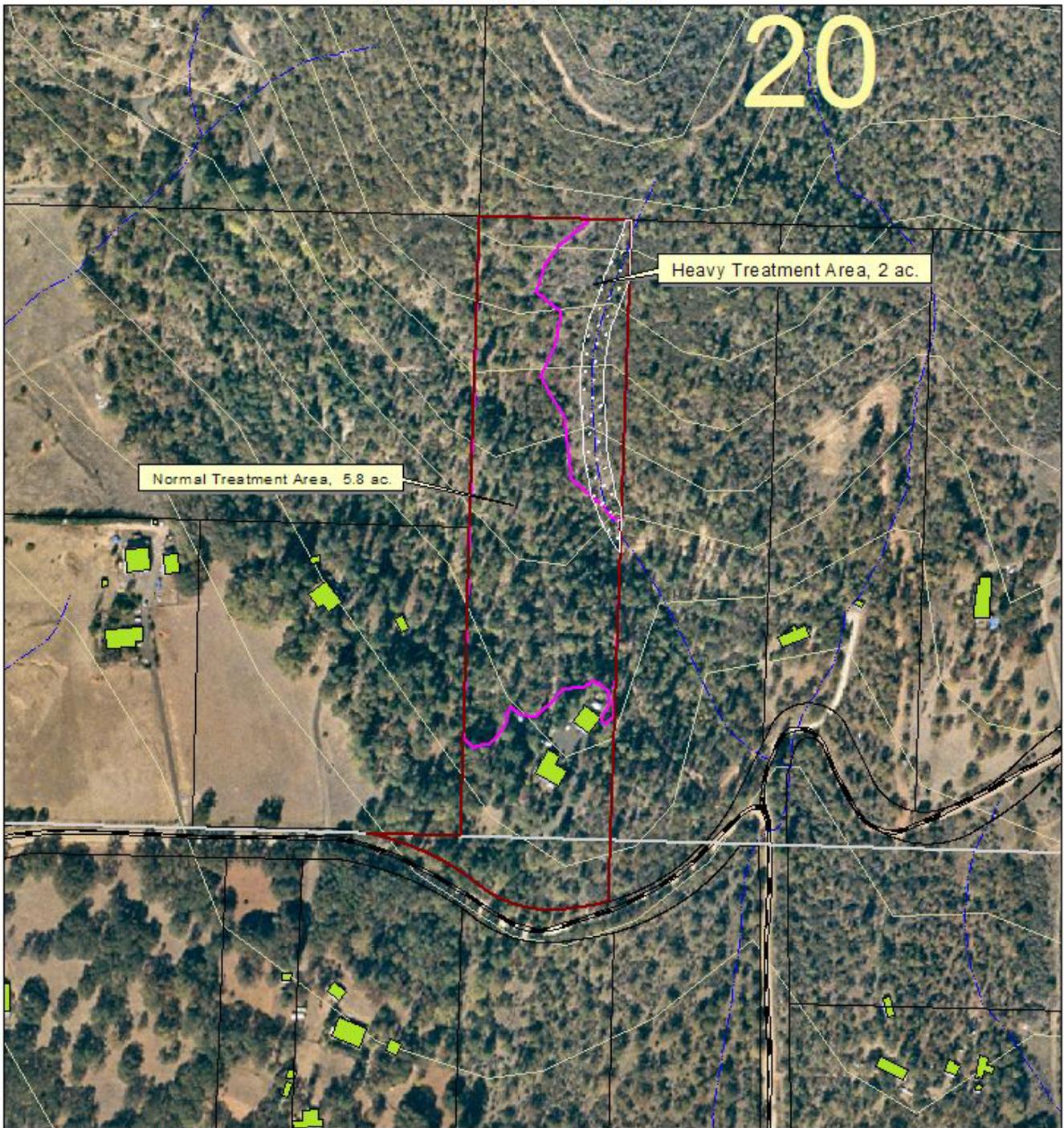
Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Thursday, March 13, 2008 c:\!!!!!!!\fuels project\savage\base map.apr

Hatch 352W20 TL1600

20



Legend

-  Building\_poly.shp
  -  Contour\_40.shp
  -  Hatch\_17area.shp
  -  Nadeam.shp
  -  Prop.shp
  -  Scape.shp
  -  Stream.shp
  -  Twpd.shp
- 352w.sid

300 0 300 600 Feet

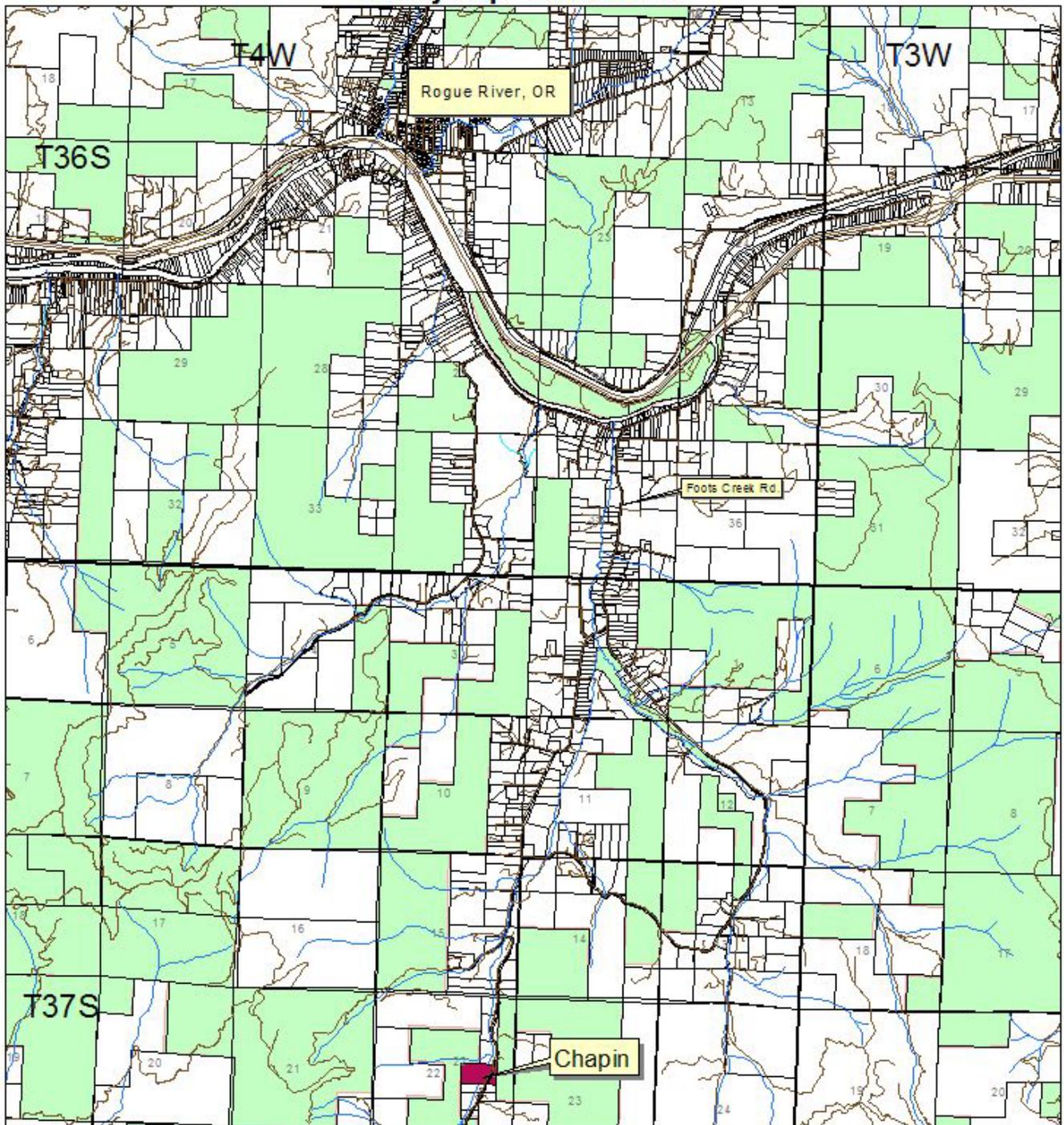


Scale  
1:3600  
1" = 300'



Creation date: Friday, February 15, 2008 c:\!!!!!!\fuelis\project\rams\rams\_say\_final\_map.apr

### Vicinity Map - Footh Creek



#### Legend



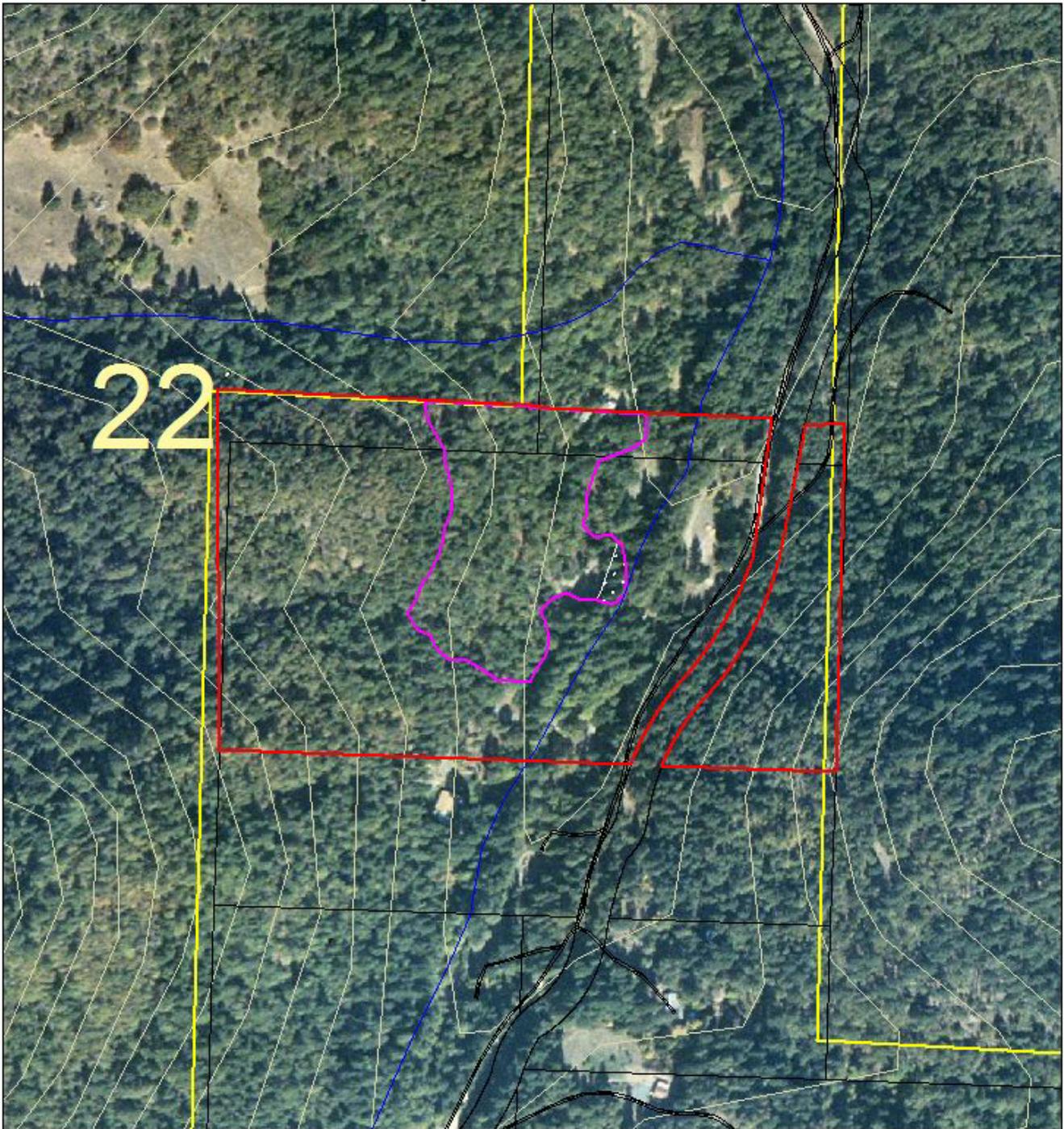
Scale  
1:63360

1" = 1 Mile



Creation date: Sunday, March 16, 2008 0:11:11 PM Issue is project\vicinity\_fooths.apr

### Chapin 374W22 TL 800



#### Legend

Full Treatment Area	Total Bay
22 Basin Full Treatment	Watership
Center (CD)	Basins
Road	Ditches
Pop. (Approved)	374W22
Revised Bay	Section Line
Section Line	

300 0 300 600 Feet

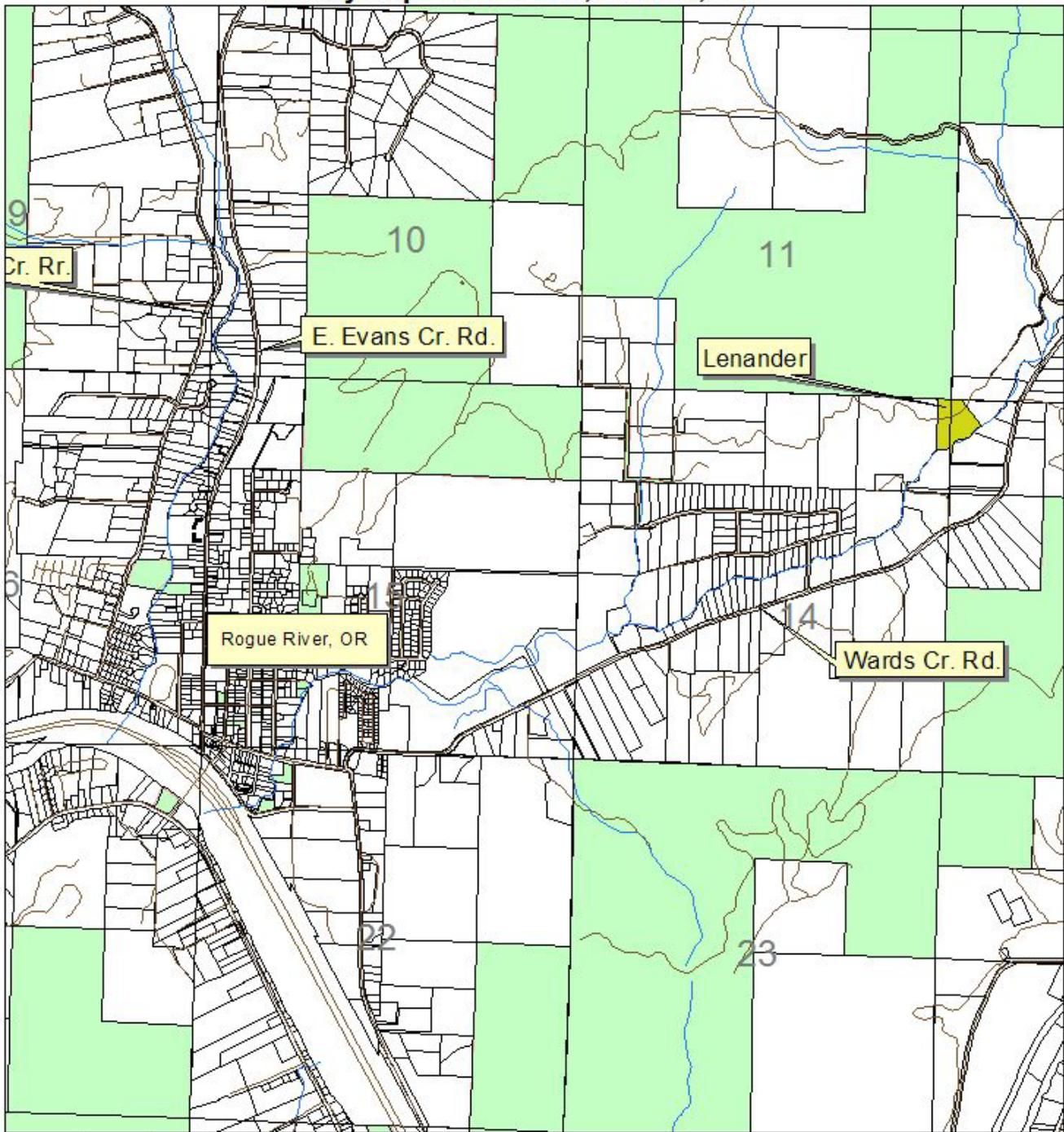
Scale  
1:3600

1" = 300'

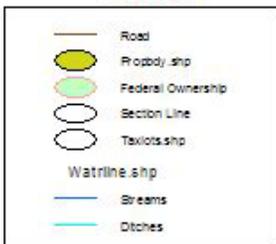


Creation date: Tuesday, March 18, 2008 c:\!!!!!!\fuels projection\chapin\base map.apr

### Vicinity Map - Wards Cr. , 364W13, & 14



#### Legend



2000 0 2000 4000 Feet

Scale  
1:24000  
1" = 2,000



Creation date: Sunday, March 16, 2008 c:\!!!!!!\!!!!!!\project\vicinity\_wards.apr

