Decision Document
Dickerson Heights Regeneration Harvest Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-105-98-09)

South River Field Office, Roseburg District
Prepared: April 20, 2006

Decision:

It is my decision to offer the Dickerson Heights Timber Sale, partially implementing Alternative Two, the proposed action, as described in the Dickerson Heights Regeneration Harvest Timber Sale EA (pp. 5-8).

The sale consists of four units totaling 128 acres, 83 acres allocated to the General Forest Management Area and 45 acres to Connectivity/Diversity Block. The units (identified as A, C, D and F in Appendix A of the EA) are located in Sections 9, 11, 15 and 21 of T. 29 S., R. 7 W. The sale will contribute an estimated 4,806 thousand board feet of timber toward the Roseburg District objective of an annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 45 million board feet.

Unit H is being deferred because there is suitable foraging habitat for great gray owls that has not been surveyed located directly to the north of the unit. If surveys determine that the area is not occupied the unit may be offered at a future date.

The entire sale is designated for cable yarding with skyline systems capable of maintaining a minimum one-end log suspension. There are no weather or road related restrictions and units will be available for year round operations, subject to wildlife restrictions described later in this document. Approximately 30 percent of Unit C was designated in the EA (p. 6) for groundbased harvest. This area, located in the northeast portion of the unit, may be tractor yarded if the purchaser so elects, subject to modification of the contract and restriction of operations to the dry season, typically mid-May until the onset of regular autumn rains in mid-to-late October.

Primary access is provided by roads under the control of the BLM or roads under private control over which the BLM has reciprocal rights of use. Renovation of Road No. 29-7-15.2, controlled by Roseburg Resources Company, will total approximately 0.66 miles and consist of surfacing and drainage repair. Other roads comprising the haul route will receive standard maintenance that will include brushing of the road prism, blading of road surfaces, cleaning of culvert catch basins, spot resurfacing and replacement of cross-drain culverts. Renovation and maintenance will not involve replacement of any stream crossings.

New road construction will consist of three spur roads totaling 0.37 miles in length, located entirely within unit boundaries and outside of Riparian Reserves. The spur roads will not be connected to the road drainage network, and will be surfaced with aggregate and retained for future stand management.

Site preparation will be conducted prior to reforestation. Burning will be accomplished in a manner that minimizes effects to soils, large woody debris, snags and retention trees, as described in the EA (p. 7). Unit C (2) will be broadcast burned under moist spring-like conditions. Units A (3), D (4) and F (1) will be hand piled upon completion of logging operations. The piles will be burned in late autumn or winter months under wet conditions to minimize effects on air quality and the risk of broadcast burning the units.

Rationale for the Decision:

The Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) established an objective for an ASQ of 45 million board feet to be harvested from those lands allocated to the Matrix (ROD/RMP, p. 60). Implementation of Alternative Two will help to achieve this objective, whereas Alternative One would not.

Comments on the Dickerson Heights Regeneration Harvest Timber Sale EA were received from two organizations and four individuals, expressing both support for and opposition to the timber sale. Comments opposing the sale were generally non-specific and philosophical in nature, or raised issues that were outside the scope of the EA. Comments that did address specific aspects of the analysis in the EA did not identify issues or concerns not already considered and addressed, or provide any new information that would alter the conclusions of the analysis. Two comments regarding northern spotted owls indicate misinterpretation of the text of the EA and are addressed below for the purpose of clarification.

1) "Two known Northern spotted owl (NSO) home ranges will be further degraded by the regeneration harvest of 150 acres in Dickerson Heights. More owls could be affected because the BLM last did surveys here in 1991."

The EA (p. 14) notes that surveys were last conducted in 1991 and 1992. Owl activity centers were identified in the North Fork Byron Creek drainage and Bushnell Creek, leading to their designation as known owl activity centers and the establishment of 100-acre core areas. Known owl activity centers are surveyed annually as part of ongoing demographic studies. These surveys have determined that the North Fork Byron Creek activity center has been abandoned, while the Bushnell Creek site remains occupied by a pair that regularly produces offspring. Surveys of other suitable habitat were not conducted after 1992 because there were no immediate plans for timber management in the vicinity of Dickerson Rock, nor was there any requirement to conduct surveys. Both circumstances have changed, and as addressed in the EA (p. 34), protocol surveys of suitable habitat within one-quarter miles of sale units will be conducted.

The statement that two owl home ranges would be further degraded is incorrect. As stated in the EA (p. 34), harvest of the Dickerson Heights timber sale will have no effect on the Bushnell Creek home range as no suitable habitat will be removed from within the range.

2) '"We would like the BLM to clarify an apparent discrepancy in the EA. Page 34 says: 'To preclude potential effects to owls that may move into the project area ... seasonal restrictions on operations would be implemented between March 1 and September 30.' Page 52 says: 'Yarding operations would be limited to the dry

> season, typically mid-May to mid-October when soils have dried out and are less susceptible to compaction...' That leaves only the first two weeks to log and yard. '"

This is an inaccurate representation of the discussion found on page 34 of the EA. Seasonal restrictions would apply between March 1 and September 30 unless protocol surveys indicate that: spotted owls are not present; they are present but have not nested; or nesting attempts have been unsuccessful. If there is no owl occupancy, or if owls are present but have not nested or produced young the seasonal restrictions will be lifted. The discussion from page 52 refers exclusively to project design features and restrictions governing the conduct of ground-based (tractor) yarding. They do not pertain to and are not a limitation on cable yarding which may be conducted in the fall and winter months.

Noxious Weeds

Road construction and yarding equipment will be pressure washed or steam cleaned. The equipment cleaning will be inspected and approved by the contract administrator prior to authorizing move-in of equipment into the sale area. The purpose of cleaning is to remove any soil that may be contaminated with vegetative material or seeds in order to minimize, if not eliminate, the risk of transporting new weed species into the project area.

Botany

Following the implementation of the 2004 *Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines,* all vascular and non-vascular botanical Survey & Manage species whose range includes the lands of the Roseburg District were assigned to the BLM Special Status Species Program, and designated as Bureau Sensitive, Bureau Assessment or Bureau Tracking species.

Consistent with the requirements of the BLM Special Status Species Program, clearances and surveys were conducted for all Special Status botanical species with a reasonable likelihood of being present in the timber sale area and for which surveys are deemed practical. No species previously designated for protection under the Survey & Manage were identified. The BLM has fulfilled botanical survey requirements consistent with the direction of the 2001 *Record of Decision For Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Bufer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines,* including any amendments or modifications (Annual Species Reviews) in effect as of March 21, 2004.

As described in the EA (pp. 43-44), surveys for most Survey & Manage fungi species are not considered practical. If any of these fungi species are present, loss of the sites would likely result from the removal of substrate and modification of micro-climate associated with timber harvest. It is anticipated, however, that the network of late-successional forest managed by the BLM within the watershed, much in land use allocations reserved from regeneration harvest, will provide almost 19,000 acres of potential habitat such that the harvest of 128 acres of suitable habitat is not anticipated to contribute to a future need to list any of the species as threatened or endangered.

No effects to of Kincaid's lupine *(Lupinus sulfureus* ssp. *Kincaidii)* are anticipated (EA, p. 40). The boundary of the population adjacent to Unit 1 (F) has been marked and will be protected from any surface disturbance. Between April 1 and July 31 dust abatement will be applied where the haul route passes the site if timber hauling is scheduled, to preclude road dust from interfering with plant pollination.

No effects are expected to the population of tall bugbane *(Cimicifuga elata)* are anticipated, as the site is being protected by an island of retention trees through which yarding is prohibited.

Wildlife

Special Status Species

The Dickerson Heights timber sale will remove 128 acres of suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the Federally-threatened **northern spotted owl.** The timber sale area is located outside of designated critical habitat. As discussed in the EA (p. 14), units in the timber sale are located outside or at the extreme periphery of the two northern spotted owl home ranges in proximity to the sale area.

Harvest operations within one-quarter mile of any known owl activity centers, nest sites or unsurveyed suitable habitat, including the timber sale units, are seasonally restricted from March 1 to September 30 to avoid possible effects from disruption and/or habitat modification. The restriction may be waived if surveys have determined owls are not present, if owls are present but have not nested, or that nesting attempts were unsuccessful. The waiver would remain in affect until March 1 of the following year.

A meta-analysis of available demographic data was conducted in 2004 by Anthony et al. that combined population data from 14 study areas located throughout the range of the spotted owl. In 1999, Lint et al. found that owl populations were declining range-wide, particularly in the State of Washington. This information was synthesized with existing literature in *Scientific Evaluation of the Status of the Northern Spotted Owl* in 2004 by Courtney et al. Causes of population decline could not be identified with certainty, but researchers feel that a combination of previous habitat loss, recent loss of habitat to wildfire, predation on spotted owls, weather, prey abundance, and competition from barred owls is responsible. Researchers also noted that the importance of each of these agents likely varies by region.

Spotted owl populations in the Klamath Mountains physiographic province were shown to be stable or declining very slightly. This finding is consistent with the prediction of the Northwest Forest Plan that populations would slowly decline and eventually reach equilibrium with available habitat. Courtney et al. stated that: "the fact of such a decline is not in and of itself unexpected or reason to doubt the effectiveness of the core NWFP strategy."

As described in the EA (Appendix E), the best available information indicates that the Northwest Forest Plan and associated Roseburg District ROD/RMP will continue to provide for survival and recovery of the spotted owl as originally anticipated.

The BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on the effects of timber harvest on the northern spotted owl. The effects of the removal of suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat are addressed in the August 29, 2005, *Biological Opinion for fiscal year 2003-2008 Management Activities* (1-15-05-F-0512).

The Service found in the Opinion (p. 78) that conducting surveys and applying seasonal restrictions, where indicated, would minimize the possibility of directly injuring or killing individual owls. Timber harvest would, however, indirectly affect owls ". . . by removing habitat elements necessary for nesting, roosting, foraging, and dispersal." This could result in indirect effects that include: displacement from nest areas; concentration into smaller, fragmented areas of suitable habitat that may already be occupied; increased competition for nest sites; increased risk to predation; reduced prey base; diminished reproductive success; declines in productivity and recruitment; reduction in future nesting opportunities; and reduced dispersal capabilities.

Based on these factors the Service concluded that regeneration harvest was likely to adversely affect spotted owls. In the Opinion (p. 79), the Service concluded although some sites on the Roseburg District would be rendered non-viable, the effect is not expected to appreciably reduce the likelihood of spotted owl survival and recovery, noting that such declines were anticipated in the Northwest Forest Plan, and that the best available information indicates that there is no reason to believe that the conservation strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan is flawed.

No direct effects to **marbled murrelets** are anticipated in association with either disruption or habitat modification because the stand containing an occupied site was dropped from the timber sale and, as addressed in the EA (p. 35) the site would not be affected because of its distance from other units and the haul route. As described in the EA (p. 40), populations on Federal lands are expected to remain stable and well distributed through the next century.

The BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on the effects of timber harvest on marbled murrelets. The effects of the removal of suitable nesting are addressed in the August 29, 2005 *Biological Opinion for fiscal year 2003-2008 Management Activities* (1-15-05-F-0512). In the Opinion (p. 76), the Service found that "Remaining suitable habitat on the District in murrelet critical habitat/LSR, Riparian Reserves, and in stands determined to be occupied by murrelets will be sufficient to support the well-dispersed murrelet population expected in the Northwest Forest Plan . . . and District RMP."

Two Survey & Manage species present or potentially present in the timber sale are the **Chace sideband snail** *(Monadenia chaceana)* and **great gray owl** *(Strix nebulosa).* As described below, surveys for the Chace sideband snail have been conducted and the sites protected. As previously discussed, a potential harvest unit is being deferred because of the presence of potential great gray owl habitat that has not been surveyed. The BLM has fulfilled requirements for wildlife species consistent with the direction of the 2001 *Record of Decision For Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Bufer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines,* as amended or modified through March 21, 2004.

Oregon shoulderband snails *(Helminthoglypta hertleini)* and Chace sideband snails located in Unit C (2) will not be directly affected as designation of islands of retention trees and avoidance of disturbance of the road cut site will maintain microclimate conditions, prevent substrate compaction, and retain cover and forage for these snails (EA, p. 36).

Fish and Essential Fish Habitat

There are no fish species listed as threatened or endangered or currently proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout remain Bureau Sensitive species, though. With the establishment of Riparian Reserves on all intermittent and perennial streams adjacent to or within the timber sale units, harvest operations will have no effect on the current availability or future recruitment of large wood for in-stream habitat and processes; no effect on the present or future availability of pool habitat, and no effect on sediment, substrate and stream bank stability (EA, pp. 45-48). As a consequence, timber harvest has no potential for directly affecting any fish species or Essential Fish Habitat.

Sediment that could be generated in association with road construction and renovation, and timber hauling will be negligible and discountable. As described in the EA (p. 46), all new road construction is sited on ridge top locations outside of Riparian Reserves. The roads will be surfaced and will not be connected to the drainage network so that they pose no risk for sediment. The haul route is largely free of stream crossings. The only noteworthy perennial stream is crossed by a road on a flat gradient with no ditch line connection to the stream. Other mitigation identified in the EA (p. 46) further ensure that the potential for stream sedimentation and effects to Essential Fish Habitat downstream of the timber sale area is remote.

Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with provisions identified in Appendix I of the ROD/RMP (p. 84, 190, 193-199) and will include: Riparian Reserves; Matrix; Air Quality; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status and Special Attention Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the first publication date of the timber sale notice. Publication of such notice on August 24, 2004, in *The News-Review,* Roseburg, Oregon, constitutes the decision date from which such protests may be filed.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

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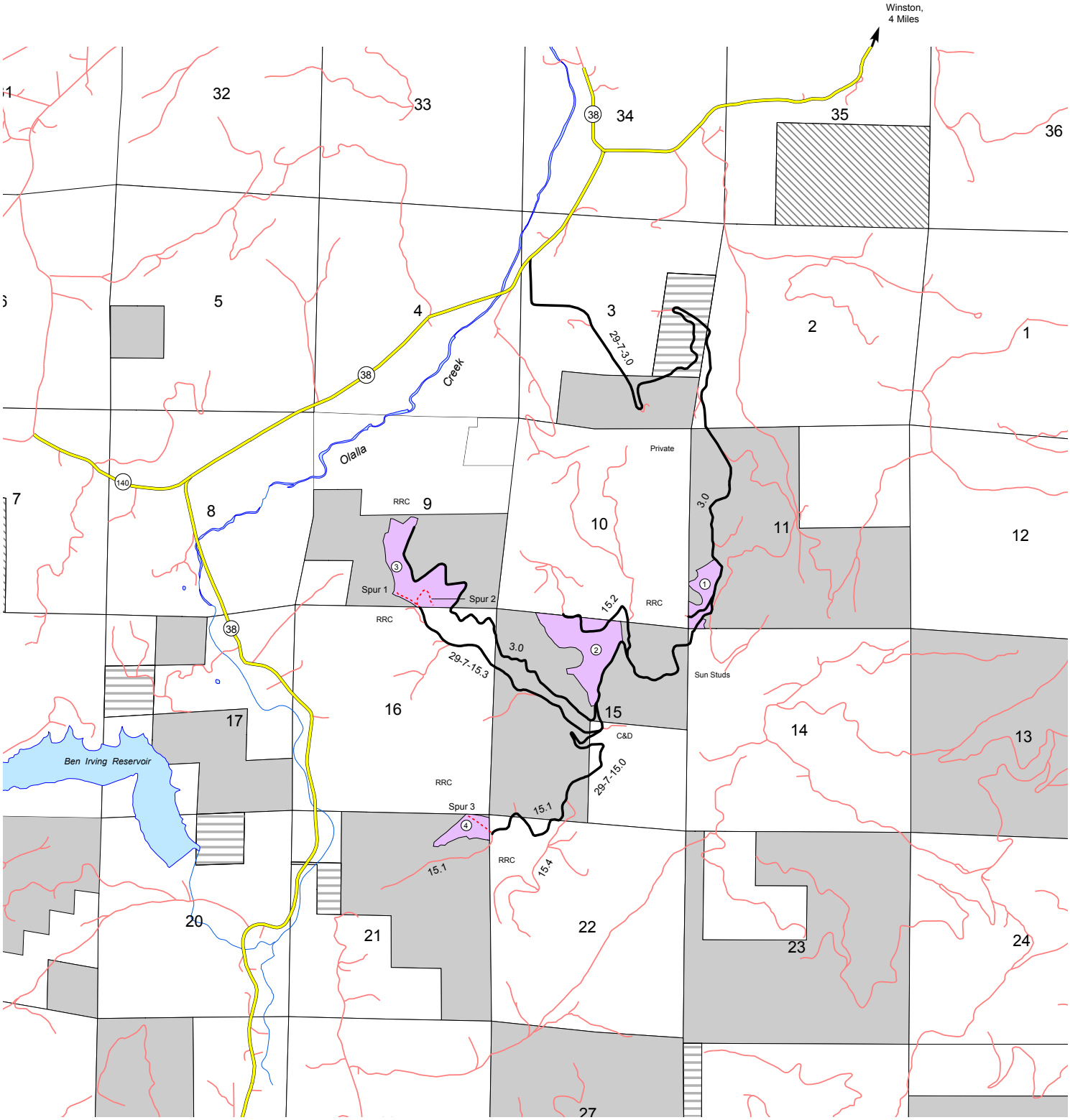
William Haigh Date
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Contract # OR10-TS06-06

DICKERSON HEIGHTS

Regeneration Harvest



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Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

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County Road
Existing Road
Access/Haul Route
Road to be Constructed

Harvest Area
BLM (O&C) Land
BLM (Coos Wagon Rd.) Land
BLM (PD) Land
Non-BLM Land

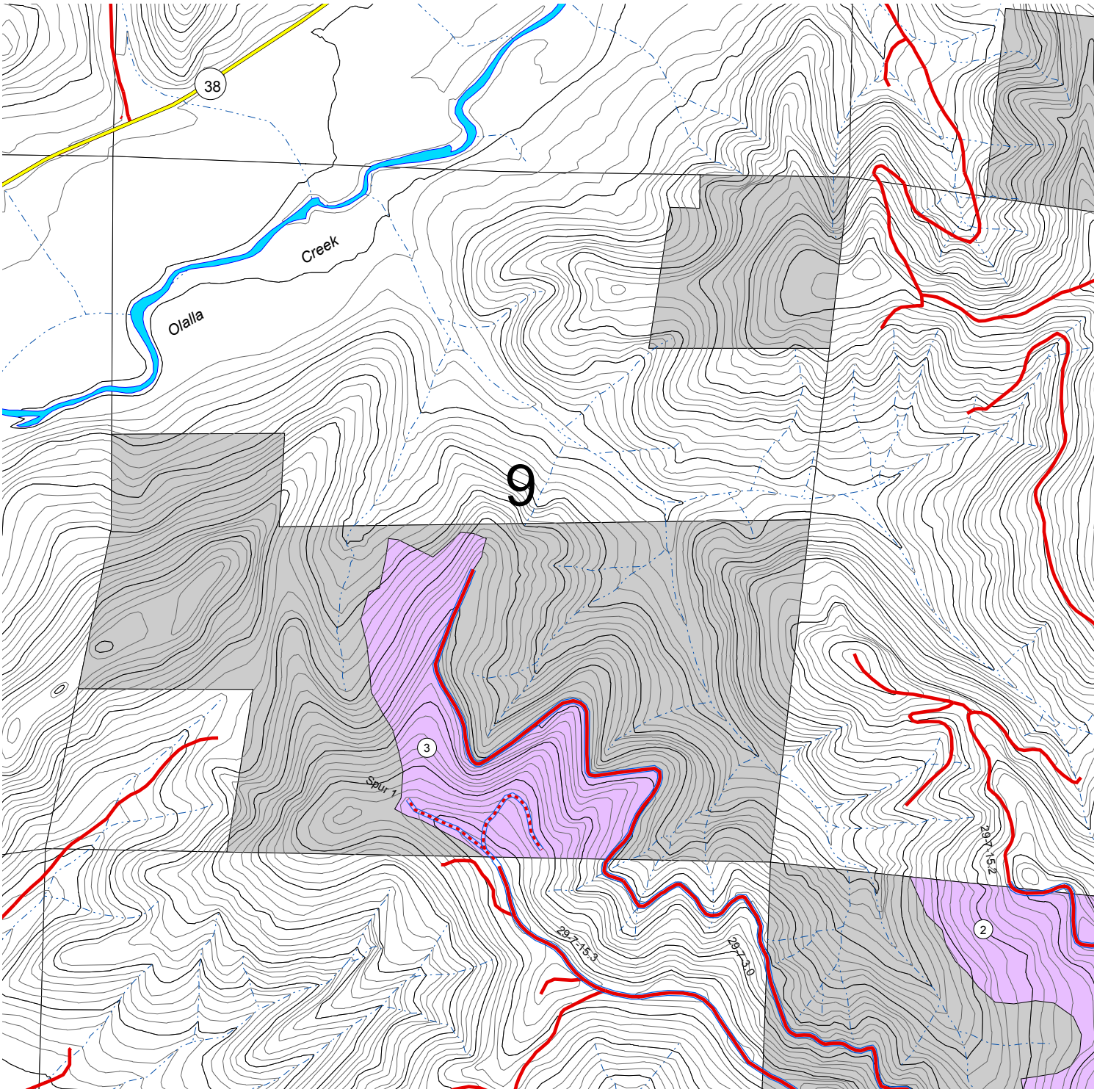
4-13-2006

'Final Decision' Document

Contract # OR10-TS06-06

DICKERSON HEIGHTS

Regeneration Harvest



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Existing Road
Access/Haul Route
Construct, Permanent Rock
Stream
20 ft. Contour
100 ft. Contour

Harvest Area
BLM (O&C) Land
Non-BLM Land

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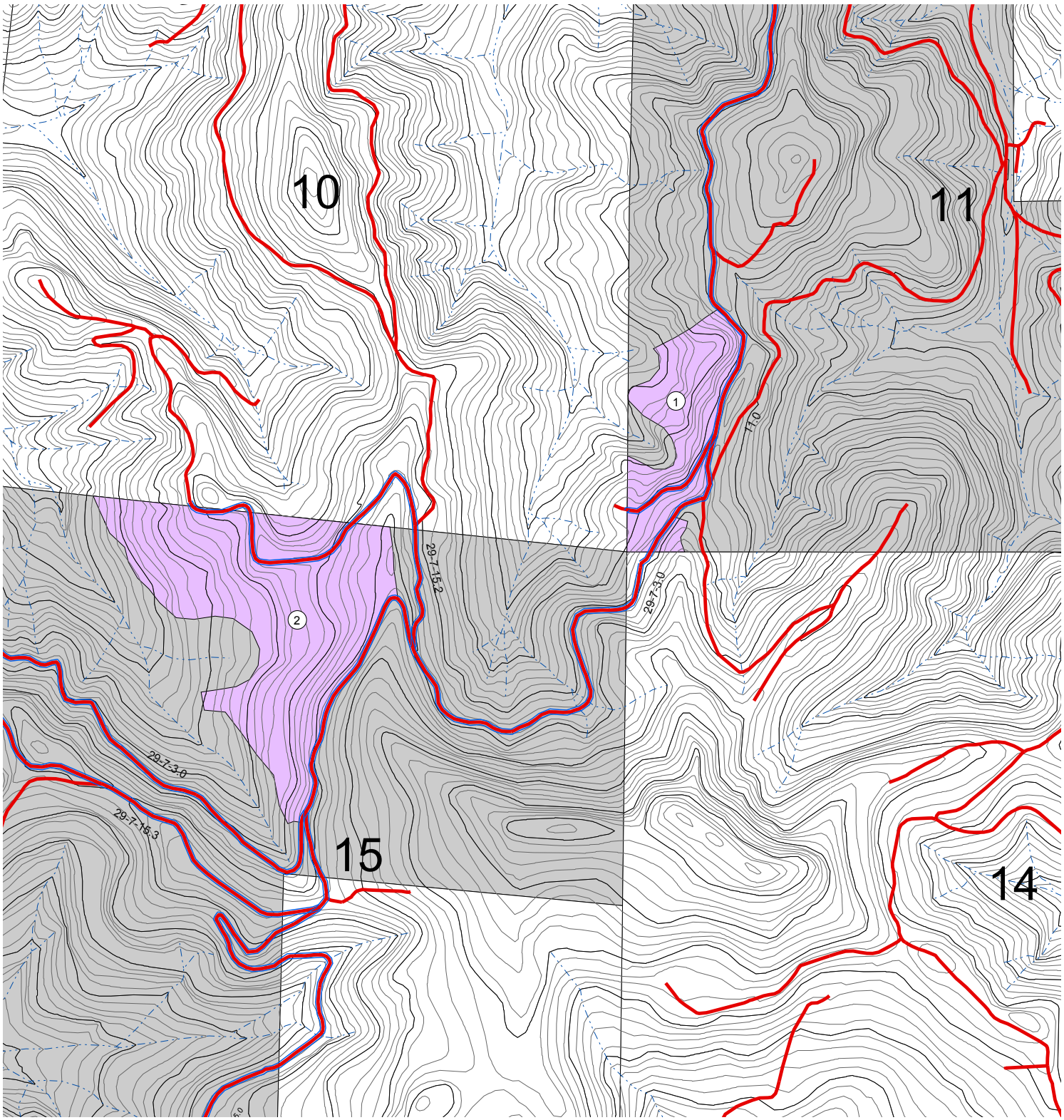

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Existing Road
Access / Haul Route
Road to be Decommissioned
Stream
20 ft. Contour
100 ft. Contour

Harvest Area
BLM (O&C) Land
Non-BLM Land

4-13-2006

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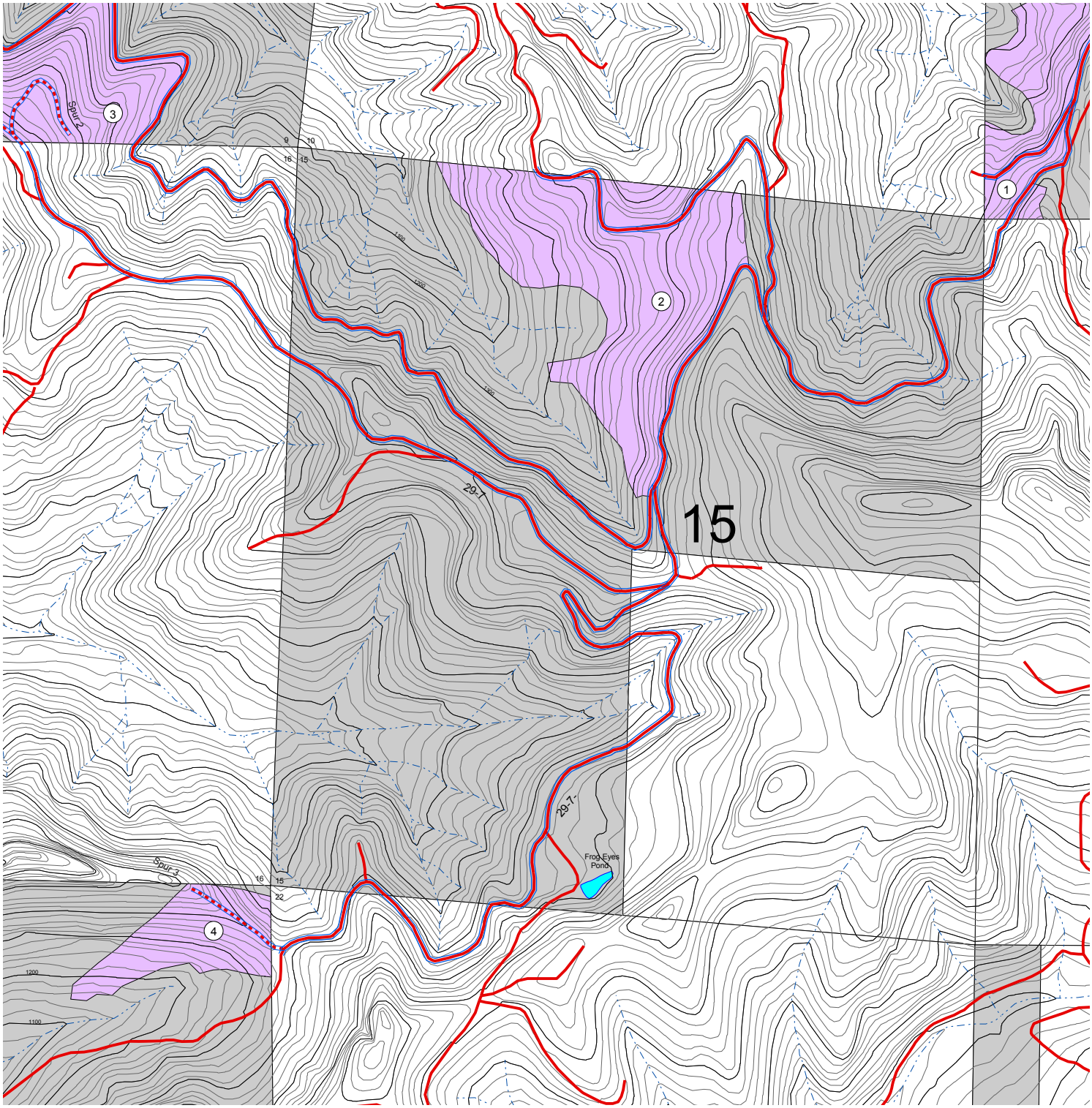
DICKERSON HEIGHTS

Regeneration Harvest



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