

**ELY DISTRICT
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CX) REVIEW
AND APPROVAL**

Team Leader Kyle Teel Date March 19, 2007

Name of Proposed Action Kixmiller Summit and Meloy Summit Wildland Urban
Interface Project

CX Number: CX-NV-040-07-034 Project or Serial Number: JD28 & JD74

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REFERENCE

516 Departmental Manual 1.12—Hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire not to exceed 4,500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing not to exceed 1,000 acres. Such activities shall be limited to areas (1) in wildland-urban interface and (2) Condition Classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III, outside of the wildland-urban interface; Shall be 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;” Shall be conducted consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land and resource management plans; Shall not be conducted in wilderness areas or impair the suitability of wilderness study areas for preservation as wilderness; Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure; and may include the sale of vegetative materials if the primary purpose of the activity is hazardous fuels reduction.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The need for the project is to reduce the risk of wildfire to private property and improvements at Kixmiller and Meloy Summits. During the 2006 fire season several fires occurred just to the west of these communities emphasizing the need for fuels reduction projects in these areas.

To meet the need for the proposal, the BLM would conduct fuels reduction through the use of mechanical, manual and/or prescribed fire methods on public land within the wildland-urban interface (WUI) of communities at Kixmiller and Meloy Summits. The private property at Kixmiller Summit consists of approximately 500 acres within which there are approximately 12 residences, and at Meloy Summit, approximately 319 acres within which there are also approximately 12 residences. The proposed project areas are located approximately 20 miles north of Pioche, NV west of US Highway 93 (Map 1). The project would occur on approximately 788 acres of public land around the communities; 490 acres at Kixmiller Summit (Map 2) and 298 acres at Meloy Summit (Map 3).

Project Description

Using mechanical (i.e., bull hog, feller buncher, or similar piece of equipment that masticates trees) and/or manual (handcrew with chainsaws) methods, a 600 foot wide buffer around private property would be created, as well as a 400 foot wide buffer along the access roads (200 feet on each side from center) leading to the private property from US Highway 93. Within the private property buffer, tree density would be reduced to approximately 20-25 trees per acre resulting in a tree being left approximately every 41 to 46 feet. Within the road buffer, tree density would be reduced to approximately 30-35 trees per acre resulting in a tree being left approximately every 35 to 38 feet. To reduce the visibility of the road buffer from US Highway 93, tree thinning within the road buffer would start approximately 100 feet from the highway. Trees left in both buffer areas would consist of the larger mature trees greater than 12 inches in diameter at root collar. The smaller saplings, immature trees and dead trees (without obvious cavity nesting) would be targeted for removal. Project implementation could occur year round.

Disposal of slash/biomass created from reducing tree densities would depend on the method used. If chainsaws were used, all or a portion of the felled trees would be consolidated into piles and removed later through prescribed burning. In areas readily accessible by the public, the large trunk portion could be cut up and left for individuals with firewood permits. Small amounts of slash, consisting mainly of smaller branches would be left to degrade naturally. Removal of slash/biomass created if mechanical methods are used would depend on the type of mechanical equipment used. If a masticating type of equipment is used, the residue created would be left on site to degrade naturally. If equipment is used that cuts the trees whole, all or a portion of the trees could be piled and disposed of through prescribed burning or usable tree portions would be hauled off site for biomass utilization while unusable portions would be left to degrade naturally or later burned. Possible offsite biomass utilization could include firewood, mulch, and/or chips. Slash/biomass removal would occur in conjunction with tree density reduction operations except when slash piles are disposed of through prescribed fire. This would occur during late fall to early spring when there is snow on the ground or after a precipitation event to prevent extreme soil heating.

Pre-treatment inventory data would be collected prior to implementing treatments to compare with post-treatment conditions. The area would also be monitored the first and third growing season following treatments to determine if objectives have been met. Inventory and monitoring data would be collected using BLM approved methods.

The project areas would be seeded using certified weed-free seed to reduce the potential for erosion and cheatgrass invasion. If mechanical equipment is used that results in skidding of trees these areas would be reseeded and scarified and/or covered up through back dragging. Seed would be applied using an all terrain vehicle (ATV).

Treatments identified above would be implemented over a 10-year period or until the projects are completed. When necessary, maintenance activities consisting of treatments as proposed above would be implemented to maintain original project objectives.

The project objectives are:

Short Term (Immediately Post Treatment)

1. Reduce pinyon and juniper tree density to 20 – 25 trees per acre within a 600 foot buffer around the private property/public land boundary at Kixmiller and Meloy Summits.
2. Reduce pinyon and juniper tree density to 30 - 35 trees per acre within a 400 foot buffer (200 feet each side) of the access routes from US Highway 93 to the private property at Kixmiller and Meloy Summits.

Long Term (Five to Ten Years Post Treatment)

1. Reduce the risk of wild fire to the private property and improvements at Kixmiller and Meloy Summits.
2. Obtain Fire Regime and Condition Class 1 within the project area.

The following Standard Operating Procedures are Common to all Projects

For projects that involve the use of prescribed fire, a burn plan would be prepared and a smoke permit would be acquired from the State of Nevada prior to burning.

All treatment actions would comply with the *Ely District Policy Management Actions for the Conservation of Migratory Birds* (Instruction Memorandum NV-040-2001-02).

A cultural survey of the treatment area would be conducted and appropriate site documentation would be completed prior to project implementation. National Register eligible cultural resources would be avoided or impacts would be mitigated as necessary before treatments are implemented.

No permanent new roads or trails would be created. Some off-road travel could occur to facilitate operations. Off-road travel would be limited to that necessary to safely and practically achieve resource objectives.

The Ely District Noxious Weed Prevention Schedule and Policy would be adhered to during project treatments. Recommendations contained in the Weed Risk Assessment for the project would be followed.

Equipment would not be allowed to operate when the ground is unsuitable (i.e. excessively muddy or when saturated with moisture) or in terrain too steep to minimize ground impacts.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

On December 6, 2006, a letter indicating the Bureau's intent on initiating the planning process and our general thoughts on the project was mailed to property owners and individuals/groups who have expressed interest in participating in hazardous fuels reduction projects as well as state, county and federal agencies.

Comments in the form of letters, e-mail, and phone conversations were received from eight of the property owners from both properties at Kixmiller and Meloy Summits. They all expressed support for the projects. General comments included concerns over erosion, not cutting all of the trees within the buffer, and making available some of the wood for collection as firewood. Their comments were incorporated as appropriate when developing the proposed action.

The specialists listed in Table 1 below were involved in reviewing the proposed action for impacts and the screening questions (Table 2) for Categorical Exclusions.

Table 1. Specialist involved in reviewing the proposed action for exceptions to National Environmental Policy Act Categorical Exclusions

NAME	RESOURCE ASSIGNED
Kyle Teel	Fire and Fuels Management
Shirley Johnson	Range Management and Invasive, Non-Native Species, Noxious Weeds
Ben Noyes	Wild Horses & Burros
Kurt Braun	Archeology/Historic/Paleontological
Steve Leslie	Wilderness Values
Bruce Winslow	Recreation, VRM
Heather McKenny	Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Special Status Animal & Plants
Brenda Linnell	Lands
Elvis Wall	Native American Religious Concerns

Table 2. SCREENING FOR EXCEPTIONS TO CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS

The following exceptions apply to actions being considered as categorically excluded. Environmental documents must be prepared if any of these exceptions apply. Place an “X” in appropriate box. Would the proposed action:	Yes	No
1. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety?		X
2. Have adverse effects on such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of Natural Landmarks?		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects?		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?		X
6. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?		X
7. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?		X
8. Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		X
9. Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?		X
10. Threaten to violate a Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		X

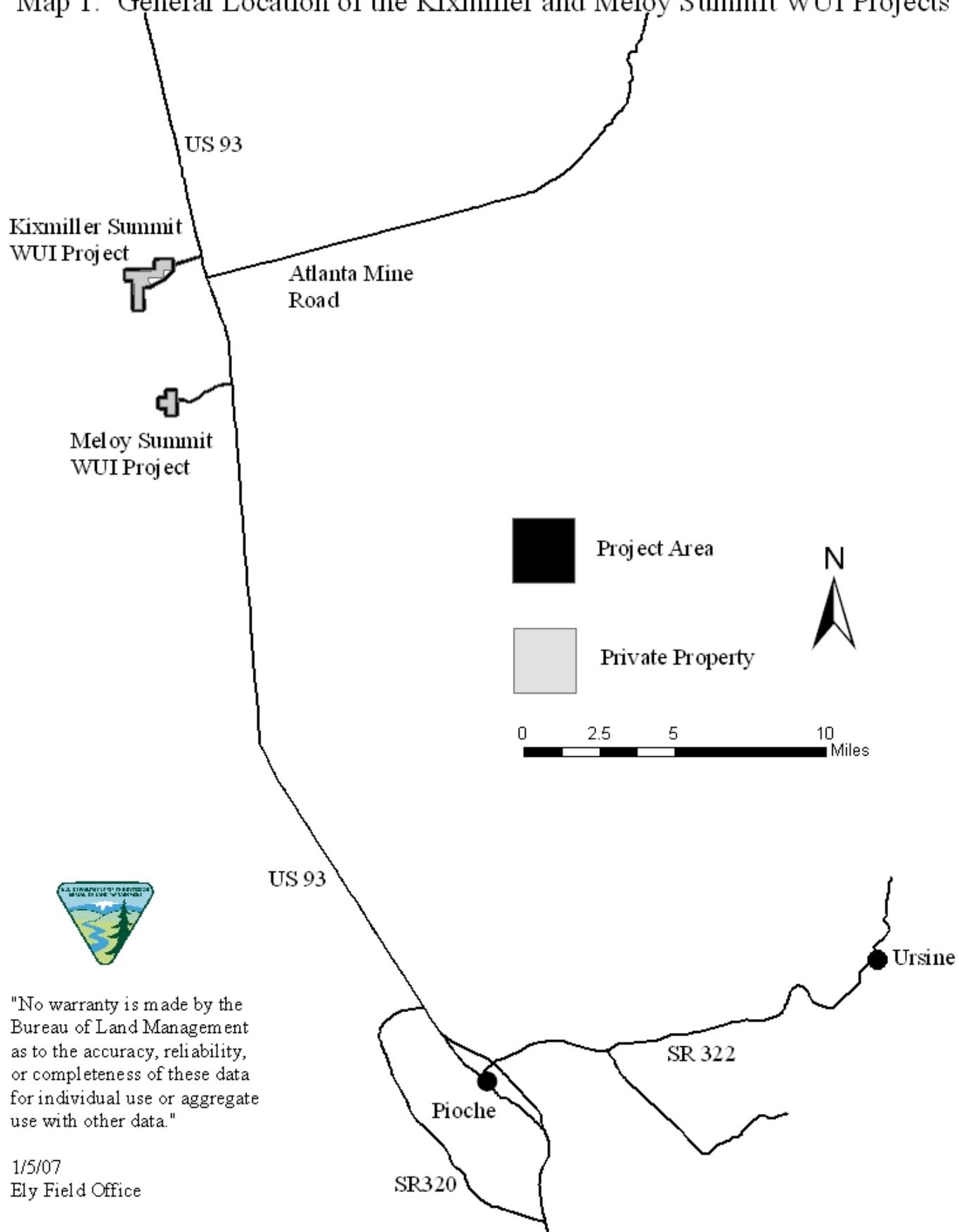
FINDINGS

Based on review of the proposal and the ten exceptions listed above, this action qualifies as a categorical exclusion and an environmental analysis is not required. The proposed action is in conformance with current BLM Land Use Plans.

Approving Official: _____ Date: _____

Tye Petersen
Fire Management Officer

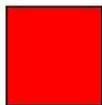
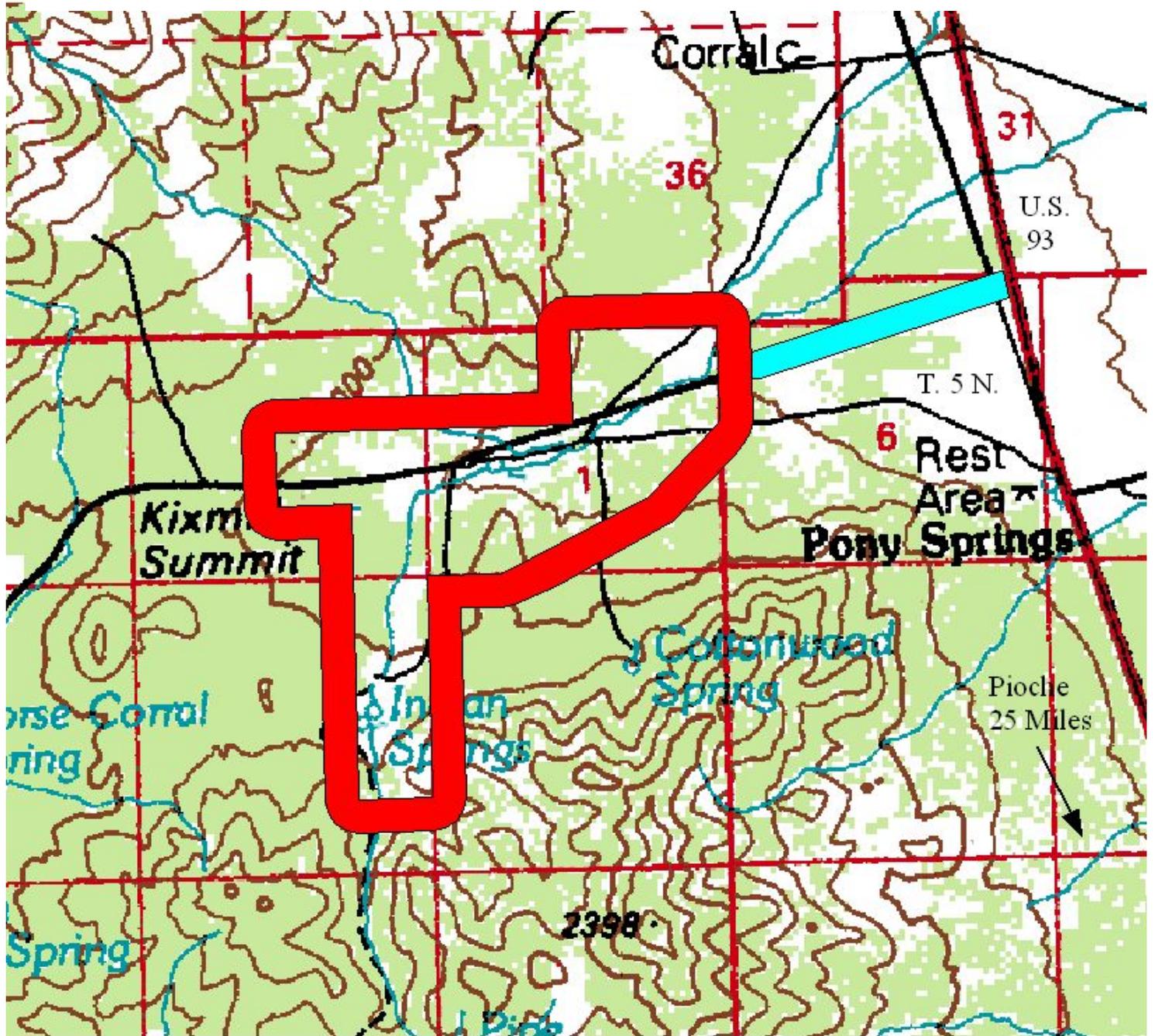
Map 1: General Location of the Kixmiller and Meloy Summit WUI Projects



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Map 2: Kixmiller Summit Wildland Urban Interface Project

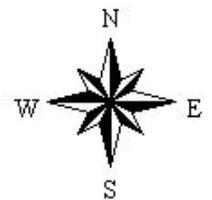


600 ft Buffer
Around Private
Property 445 acres



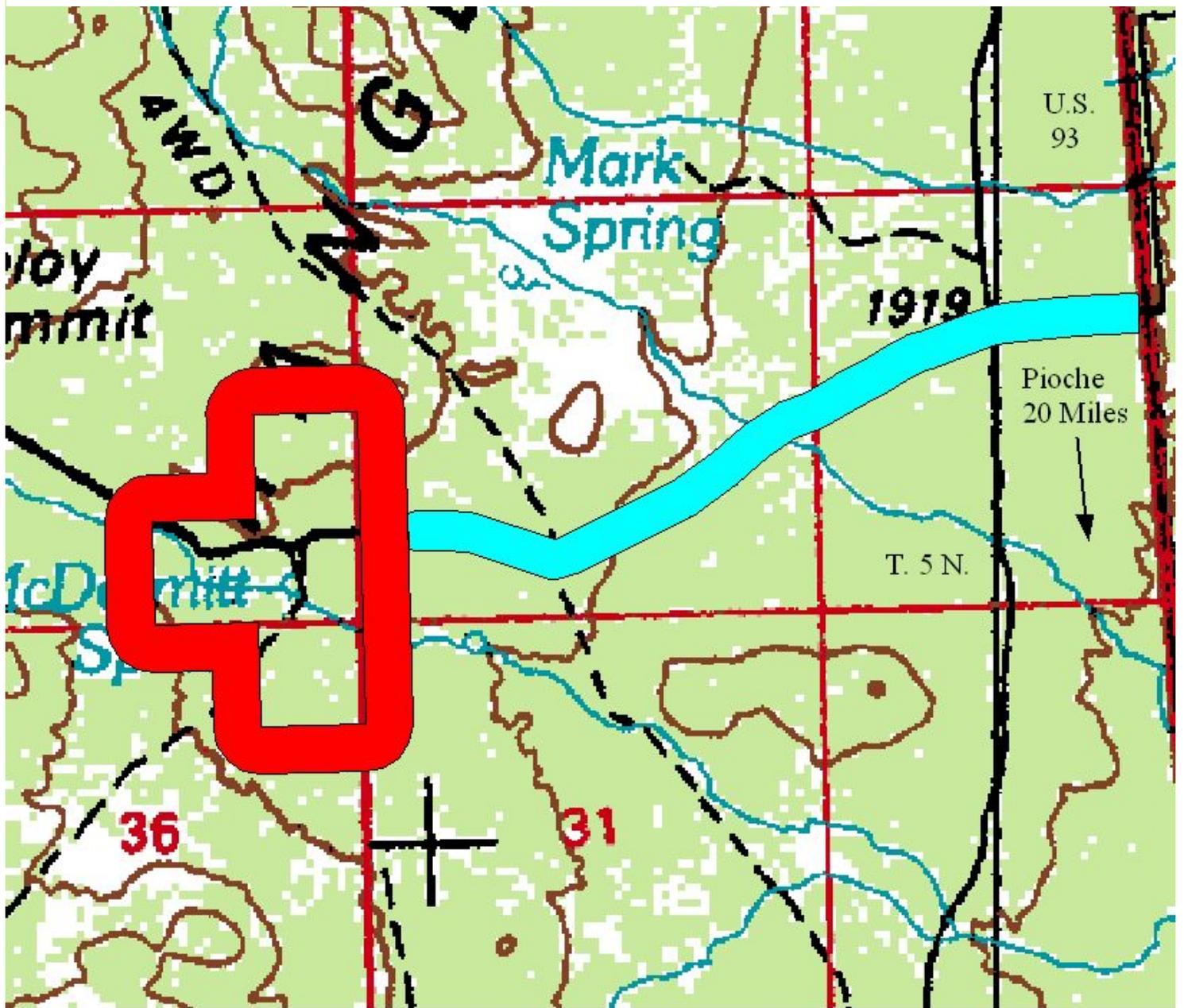
400 ft Buffer along
Route to Private
Property 45 acres

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Map 3: Meloy Summit Wildland Urban Interface Project



R. 65 E. R. 66 E.



600 ft Buffer
Around Private
Property 203 acres

400 ft Buffer along
Route to Private Property
95 acres

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