

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
BURNS DISTRICT OFFICE

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

**CX Number:** DOI-BLM-OR-B050-2014-0009-CX

**Date:** 12/02/2013

**File Code (Project/Serial Number):**

**Preparer:** Travis Miller, Range Management Specialist

**Applicant:** BLM

**Title of Proposed Action:** Olympus Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Aerial Seeding

**Description of Proposed Action and Project Design Elements (if applicable):** The Olympus Fire (Fire #HXJ4) was a fire ignited by lightning on August 24, 2013 in the Burns District south of Warm Springs Reservoir (Vicinity Map – Olympus Fire Aerial Seeding). Shrubs, native perennial grasses, and medusahead coupled with high temperatures, low humidity, and steep topography fueled a swift-moving, moderate to high intensity wildfire. The fire burned approximately 3276 acres (Map – Olympus Fire Aerial Seeding). The fire was contained on August 28, 2013. This plan would seed BLM administered land within the fire perimeter. This fire was within the Stinking Water HMA, sage-grouse Preliminary General Habitat (PGH), and both the Buck Mountain and Stinking Water Allotments.

The Olympus Fire burned across low sagebrush (*Artemisia arbuscula*), Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. Wyomingensis*), and medusahead invaded plant communities. Topography over the burned area is a mix of steep mountainous slopes and low gradient slopes starting at approximately 4000 feet in elevation and ending at 4500 feet in elevation. The predominate ecological site is described as a Clayey (9-12 PZ). There is a state of emergency to the Burns District that natural recovery would not occur because of the noxious weed medusahead, and it is expected that areas with low or no levels of infestations would be threatened from by the conversion to annual grassland.

The proposed action is to aerial seed 2000 acres in the area with ladak alfalfa (Map – Olympus Fire Aerial Seeding). The fire consumed 100% of the sagebrush in these areas. The fire's intensity would have decreased the survival rate of perennial native grasses and increased the risk of medusahead spread. Aerial seeding is proposed (versus other seeding methods) because topography prevents ground access for equipment such as drills, and that there has been a high probability of success seeding this species with this method. The seeding rate selected includes: Ladak alfalfa 4 lbs. /ac. This species was chosen to improve nutrient cycling and diversity, but it has not been found to compete with medusahead or other invasive weeds. Forage kochia had been selected for the original ESR plan to compete and reduce the spread of invasive annual grasses, but was removed from the ESR plan because medusahead was not a Level A noxious weed in Oregon and therefore not considered an emergency that would justify the cost to seed forage kochia. However, if non-ESR funds become available, forage kochia would be aerially seeded at 2 lbs. /acre.

**Legal Description (attach Location Map):** See Attached maps

**B. Conformance with Land Use Plan (LUP) (name):**

**Date Approved/Amended:** The proposed action is conformance with the Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP), September 1992.

Although they are not specifically provided for they are clearly consistent with the following RMP decisions:

Soil Management 1.2: "Rehabilitate burned areas where erosion hazard is high and/or natural vegetation potential is low."

Vegetation 1: "Maintain, restore or enhance the diversity of plant communities and plant species in abundances and distributions, which prevent the loss of specific native plant community types or indigenous plant species within the RA."

Vegetation 1.6: "...prevent the invasion of noxious weeds into areas presently free of such weeds and to improve the ecological status of sites which have been invaded by weeds...."

**BLM Categorical Exclusion Reference (516 DM, Chapter 11):** I.1 Emergency Stabilization which states, "Planned actions in response to wildfires, floods, weather events, earthquakes, or landslips that threaten public health or safety, property, and/or natural and cultural resources, and that are necessary to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management-approved condition as a result of the event. Such activities shall be limited to: repair and installation of essential erosion control structures; replacement or repair of existing culverts, roads, trails, fences, and minor facilities; construction of protection fences; planting, seeding, and

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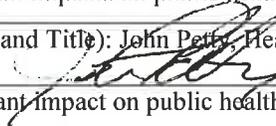
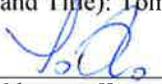
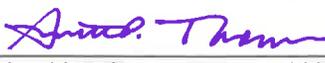
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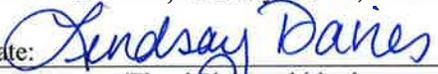
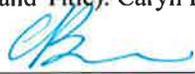
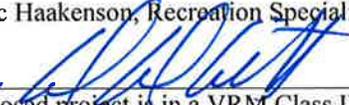
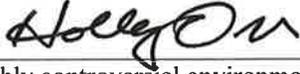
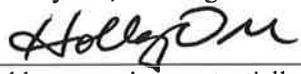
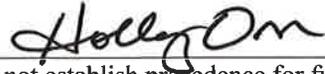
mulching; and removal of hazard trees, rocks, soil, and other mobile debris from, on, or along roads, trails, campgrounds, and watercourses. These activities:

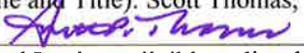
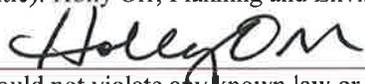
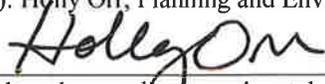
- a. Shall be completed within one year following the event;
- b. Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides;
- c. Shall not include the construction of new roads or other new permanent infrastructure;
- d. Shall not exceed 4,200 acres; and
- e. May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and
- f. Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment by artificial or natural means, or vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.”

**DOI Categorical Exclusion Reference (516 DM 2, Appendix 1): None**

**Screening for Exceptions:** The following extraordinary circumstances (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) may apply to individual actions within the categorical exceptions. The indicated specialist recommends the proposed action does *not*:

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION	
2.1	Have significant impacts on public health or safety.
Specialist (Print Name and Title): John Petty, Health and Safety Specialist	
Signature and Date:  12/17/13	
Rationale: No significant impact on public health or safety.	
2.2	Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; 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); flood plains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.
<u>Migratory Birds</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Tomas Kamienski, Wildlife Biologist	
Signature and Date:  12/17/13	
Rationale: There would be no effects to migratory birds from this action since most migratory birds that use this area for breeding, nesting and fledging would be gone when the seeding is completed. Any individuals remaining in the area may be displaced from or avoid the area during the seeding process; however, effects would be temporary and not last much longer than the period required to complete the seeding. Birds would be expected to return to the area once project activity ceases or shortly (few hours) thereafter. Over the longer term (few years), migratory birds may benefit from the active management proposed because native vegetation should recover more quickly than if left to recover under natural conditions (not seeding).	
<u>Historic and Cultural Resources</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Scott Thomas, District Archaeologist	
Signature and Date:  12-17-13	
Rationale: No cultural or historic resources would be affected by this proposed project because aerial seeding is not ground disturbing.	
<u>Areas of Critical Environmental Concern/Research Natural Areas</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Caryn Burri, NRS-Botany	
Signature and Date:  12.17.13	

Rationale: There are no botanical ACEC/RNAs within the proposed project area.
<u>Water Resources/Flood Plains</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Lindsay Davies, Fisheries Biologist Signature and Date:  12/17/2013
Rationale: Water Resources/Flood Plains within the proposed project area would not be affected because there are none in the project area. <i>will be no disturbance along streams/watercourses</i>
<u>Soils, Biological Soil Crust, Prime Farmlands</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Caryn Burri, NRS-Botany Signature and Date:  12-17-13
Rationale: Because this is an aerial seeding with no follow-up ground disturbing activity, there would be no impacts to soils or biological soil crusts as a result of the proposed project. There are no prime farmlands within the proposed project area.
<u>Recreation/ Visual Resources</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Eric Haakenson, Recreation Specialist Signature and Date: <i>FOR ERIC</i>  12/17/2013
Rationale: Visual Resource: The proposed project is in a VRM Class IV. In a VRM Class IV modifications are allowed to the existing character of the landscape; therefore, VRM Class IV would be met.  Recreation: The proposed action is to aerial seed the site. This would not affect the recreation resource.
<u>Wilderness/Wild and Scenic River Resources</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Tom Wilcox, Wilderness Specialist Signature and Date:  12/17/2013
Rationale: There is no wilderness, WSR or Lands with Wilderness Characteristics within the proposed project area.
<b>2.3</b> Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)]. Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator Signature and Date:  12/09/13
Rationale: There are no known highly controversial environmental effects or unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects. Aerial seeding would not cause any surface disturbance.
<b>2.4</b> Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator Signature and Date:  12/09/13
Rationale: There are no known highly uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks associated with implementation. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects. Aerial seeding would not cause any surface disturbance.
<b>2.5</b> Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator Signature and Date:  12/09/13
Rationale: Implementation would not establish precedence for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental risks. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects. Aerial seeding would not cause any surface disturbance.

<b>2.6</b>	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator	
Signature and Date:	 12/09/13
Rationale: Implementation would not have any known direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant effects. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects. Aerial seeding would not cause any surface disturbance.	
<b>2.7</b>	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.
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Scott Thomas, District Archaeologist	
Signature and Date:	 12/17/13
Rationale: No National Register eligible or listed historic properties would be affected by this project because aerial seeding is not a ground disturbing activity.	
<b>2.8</b>	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.
<u>Endangered or Threatened and/or Special Status Species -Fauna</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Tomas Kamienski, Wildlife Biologist	
Signature and Date:	 12/17/13
Rationale: There are no known Threatened or Endangered species or Designated Critical Habitat in the area in and around the seeding. The project(s) are located in greater sage grouse Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) as adopted by the BLM from low density habitat, delineated and classified by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The greater sage grouse has been placed, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on the list of species that are candidates for protection under the Threatened and Endangered Species Act. The proposed action would take place out of the breeding/nesting season. Therefore there would be no negative effect to the greater sage grouse.	
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Aquatic</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Lindsay Davies, Fisheries Biologist	
Signature and Date:	 12/13/2013
Rationale: There are no Aquatic Threatened or Endangered or special status species or critical habitat in the project area.	
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Flora</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Caryn Burri, NRS-Botany	
Signature and Date:	 12-17-13
Rationale: There are no documented T&E or special status species or designated critical habitat within the project area.	
<b>2.9</b>	Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator	
Signature and Date:	 12/09/13
Rationale: Implementation would not violate any known law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment as aerial seeding would not cause any surface disturbance.	
<b>2.10</b>	Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator	
Signature and Date:	 12/09/13
Rationale: Implementation would not have a disproportionately high or adverse effect on low income or minority populations as such populations do not exist within the project area.	
<b>2.11</b>	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).

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Scott Thomas, District Archaeologist
Signature and Date: <u>Scott Thomas 12-17-13</u>
Rationale: Access to and integrity of Indian sacred sites would not be affected by this project because no Indian sacred sites are known to occur in the vicinity of the project.
<b>2.12</b> 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).
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Lesley Richman, Weed Specialist
Signature and Date: <u>Lesley Richman 12/17/2013</u>
Rationale: Noxious weeds in particular medusahead are known to exist in the area. Treatments are on-going. The area burned in the fire would be monitored for noxious weeds for at least 2 years. Any weeds found would be treated using the most appropriate methods.

**Additional review** (As determined by the Authorized Officer): None

**RMP conformance and CX review confirmation:**

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Signature: Holly Orr Date: 12/17/13

**Management Determination:** Based on review of this proposal, I have determined the Proposed Action is in conformance with the LUP, qualifies as a categorical exclusion and does not require further NEPA analysis.

Authorized Officer (Print Name and Title): Richard Roy, Three Rivers Field Manager

Signature: Richard Roy Date: 12/17/13

**Decision:** It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action as described above.

**Authority:** Authority for this decision is found under 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4190.1 (a), "...when BLM determines that vegetation, soil, or other resources on the public lands are ... at immediate risk of erosion or other damage due to wildlife, BLM may make a rangeland wildfire management decision effective immediately or on a date established in the decision. The effective date is date of authorized officer's signature. Wildfire management includes but is not limited to: ... (2) Projects to stabilize and rehabilitate lands affected by wildfire."

**Appeal Procedures:** This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and Form 1842-1. If an appeal is filed, your notice of appeal should be received by the Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738, within 30 days of receipt of the decision. The appellant has the burden of showing the decision appealed is in error.

A copy of the appeal, statement of reasons, and all other supporting documents should also be sent to the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Northwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 805 SW Broadway, Portland, Oregon 97205. If the notice of appeal did not include a statement of reasons for the appeal, it must be sent to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 801 North Quincy Street, Arlington, Virginia 22203. It is suggested appeals be sent certified mail, return receipt requested.

**Request for Stay**

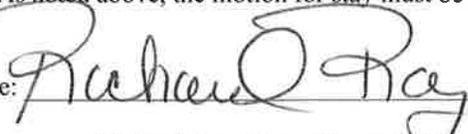
Should you wish to file a motion for stay pending the outcome of an appeal of this decision, you must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CFR 4.21:

- The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.

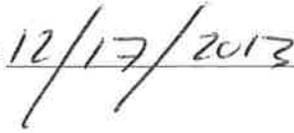
- The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
- Whether or not the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

Signature:



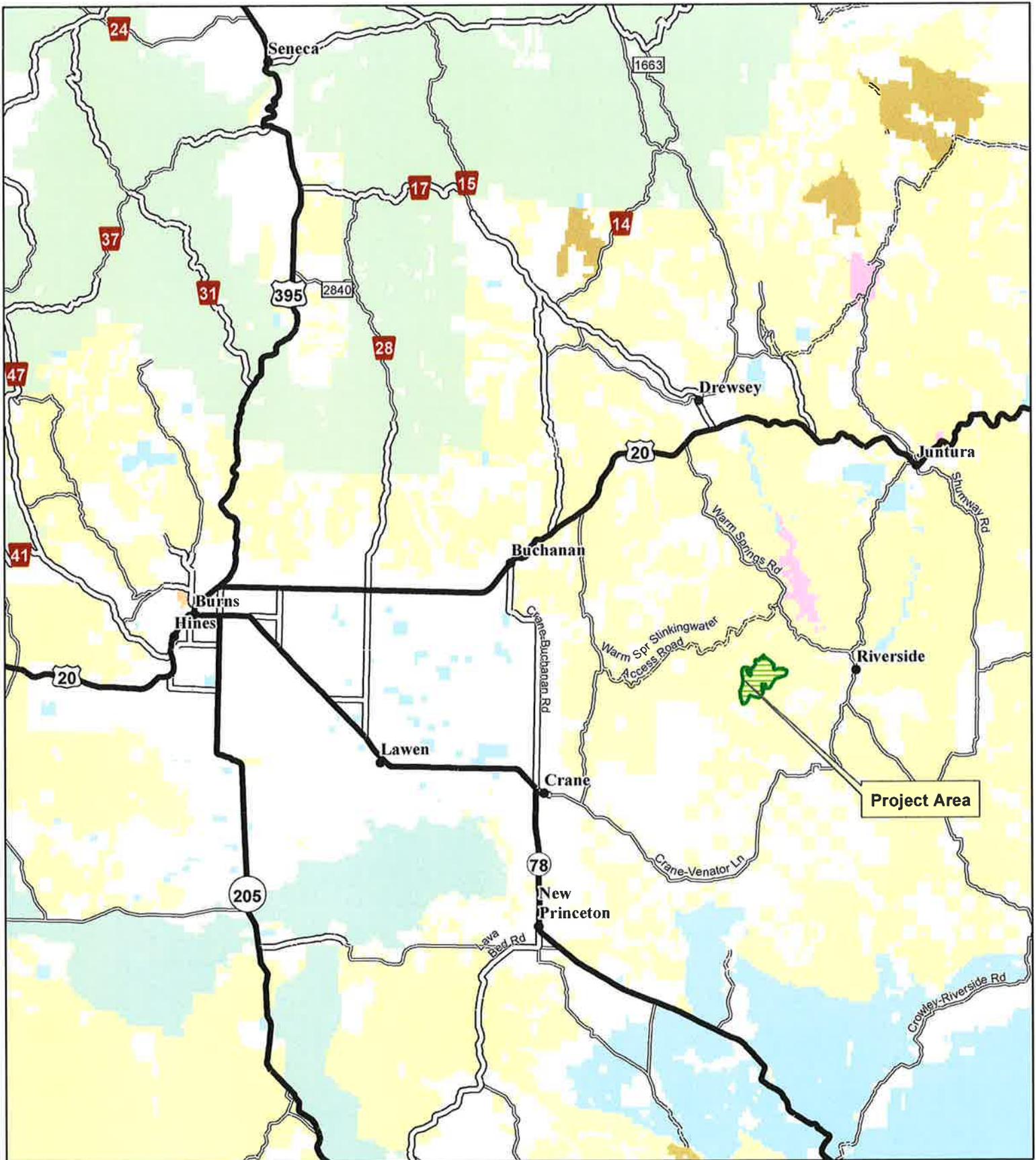
Date:



Richard Roy, Three Rivers Field Manager

# VICINITY MAP

# Olympus Fire Aerial Seeding



US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management  
Burns District, Oregon



Note: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data was compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.  
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10 Miles

Treatment Area

Not All Roads Are Shown

Paved Road

Non-Paved Improved Road

Natural/Unknown Road Surface

Highways

BLM Wilderness Study Area

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

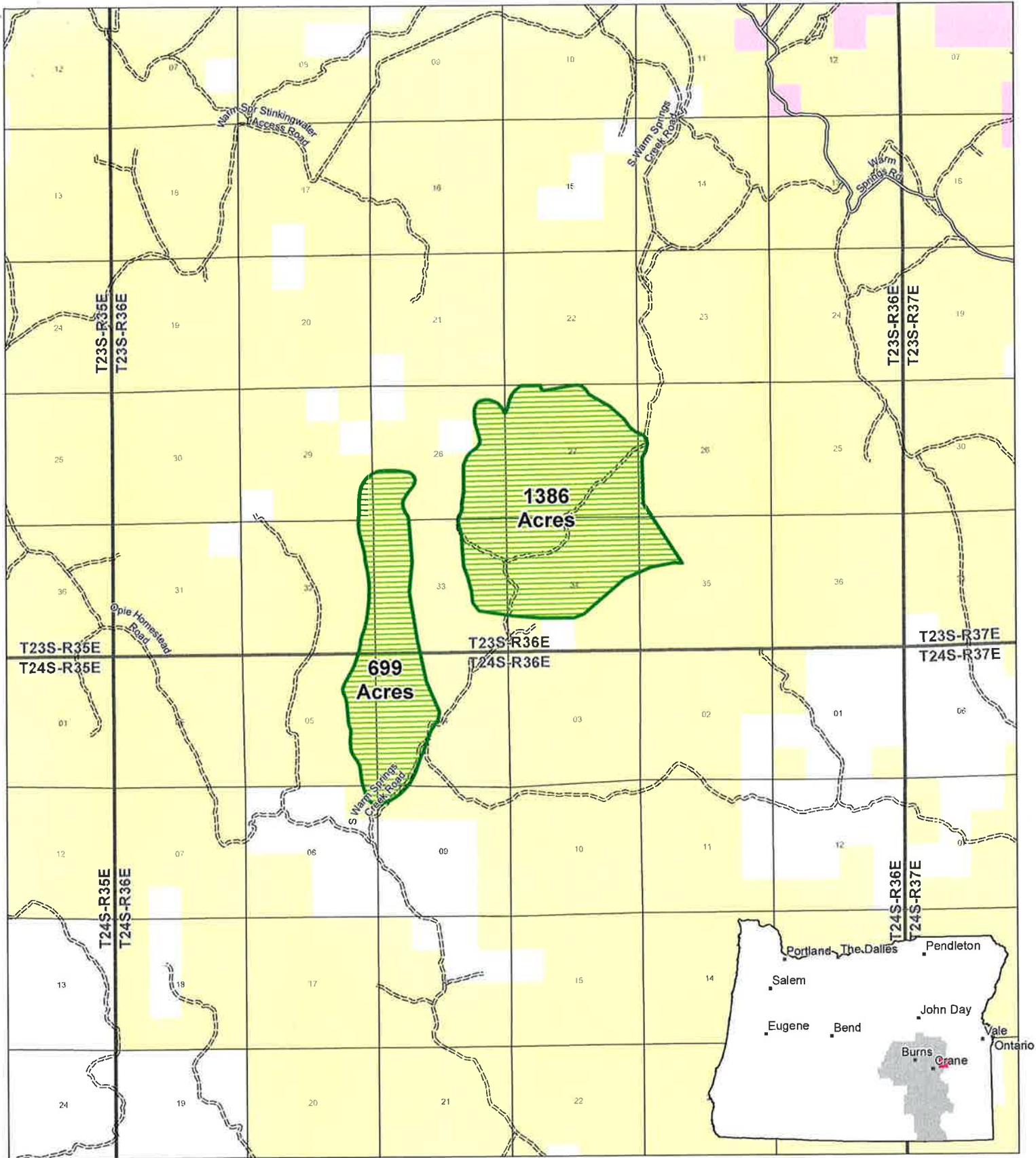
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Other Federal

Private/Unknown



# Olympus Fire Aerial Seeding



- Treatment Area
- Non-Paved Improved Road
- Natural/Unknown Road Surface
- Bureau of Land Management
- Other Federal Private/Unknown

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US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 Burns District, Oregon

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