SMYTH-KIGER ALLOTMENT (#5331) MANAGEMENT PLAN
NOTICE OF SCOPING

Dear Reader:

This notice of scoping is provided to you for your review and comment by March 5, 2007.

The Three Rivers Resource Area of the Burns District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently in the earliest stages of preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze proposed grazing management and range improvements within an Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for Smyth-Kiger Allotment. Smyth-Kiger Allotment #5331 is located approximately 50 air miles southeast of Burns, Oregon. Total BLM and Private land acreage for the allotment is 29,863 acres which are divided up into eight pastures. One grazing permit exists for this allotment with a permitted season of use from April 1 through October 31 and 2,295 Active Animal Unit Months (AUMs). All or a portion of five grazing pastures as well as fenced private pastures are within the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA). A majority of the allotment overlaps the Kiger Herd Management Area (HMA) and Kiger Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Maps of the allotment are enclosed.

Current livestock grazing management is providing one full year of rest followed by early season use that allows for riparian regrowth on Deep Creek and Hamilton Individual Pastures, both riparian pastures. Ruins Pasture is generally grazed by livestock during the late summer and fall. Uplands are in good condition; however Smyth Creek typically has heavy livestock and wild horse utilization levels on the riparian vegetation, thus not providing sufficient vegetation to stabilize banks and capture sediment during high flow periods. Swamp Creek Pasture is generally grazed during the critical growing season for upland vegetation, yet upland trend monitoring shows upward trend with a diverse community. Wood Camp Pasture is generally receiving growing season rest every other year since 2003. Ant Hill Pasture is generally receiving early growing season use with regrowth provided when late spring rains follow grazing. Upland trend monitoring shows stable to upward trend.

The purpose of the AMP/EA is to analyze the grazing management actions developed and recommended by an interdisciplinary team of Burns BLM staff during the 2004 Smyth-Kiger Allotment Evaluation. The results of the evaluation describe how three of the five Standards for Rangeland Health were not being achieved in the allotment with livestock and wild horses as causal factors. Standard 2: Riparian/Wetland Areas was not achieved for Yank, Smyth and Riddle Creeks due to heavy utilization levels which discourage sufficient deep-rooted vegetation to stabilize the sloughing and downcut streambanks. This standard was achieved for Deep Creek. Standard 4: Water Quality was not achieved for Smyth and Riddle Creeks due to water temperatures exceeding Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's (ODEQ) water temperature standard for salmonid fish rearing. Habitat surveys show barren streambanks and suppressed woody

vegetation by livestock and wild horses has contributed to this condition. This standard was achieved for Yank Creek and unknown for Deep Creek. Standard 5: Native, Special Status and Locally Important Species was achieved for sage-grouse and redband trout on Yank Creek, but not achieved for redband trout and Malheur mottled sculpin on Smyth and Riddle Creeks. Indicators are the same as those for Standards 4 and 5.

The AMP/EA is needed to ensure that livestock grazing on public lands moves toward achieving the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (S&Gs) and meets the resource objectives identified for the Smyth-Kiger Allotment.

A summary of the proposed action is as follows.

**Grazing Management**

- Adjust grazing rotation: The proposed action would initiate grazing management that provides periodic critical growing season rest for upland species within all the pastures in the Smyth-Kiger Allotment. Grazing management in riparian pastures would provide periodic rest and regrowth after livestock use periods.
- Permitted Season of Use: The proposed action would change the permitted season of use from April 1 through October 31 to April 1 through November 30 in order to carry out recommended grazing treatments designed to meet resource objectives.

**Range Improvement Projects**

- Smyth Creek Corridor Fence: Construct a corridor fence along Smyth Creek within the Ruins pasture that would remove livestock and wild horse use from the riparian zone in order to move toward meeting standards. The corridor fence would have three livestock/wild horse crossings within the approximate 3 miles stretch. Livestock season of use can be controlled but wild horse use cannot, therefore a corridor fence is the proposed solution.
- Water Gaps: Construct two water gaps into the existing Smyth Creek exclosure in areas where the gradient lessons and livestock as well as wild horses would be able to easily traverse in and out of the canyon. Both water gaps would provide additional water sources for the Wood Camp Pasture to aid in livestock and wild horse distribution and provide additional water sources for later season livestock use. Reliable water sources in this pasture that last late into the season are necessary to carry out proposed grazing management use periods.
- Gap Fences: Remove existing nonfunctional fencelines along the southwest side of Smyth Creek in the Wood Camp Pasture that were originally put in place along private land boundaries. These existing fences are on the flats along the rim overlooking Smyth Creek. The proposal is to use the rim as a natural barrier and construct gap fences in places where livestock and wild horses could traverse down to the creek.
- Spring Development: Develop three springs. One is within the Swamp Creek Pasture and would have a pipeline (approx. 1.0 mile) with a trough at the end that takes the water toward the center of the pasture. Piping the water to this location

would aid in improved livestock distribution and more uniform utilization patterns. The other two springs are within the Ruins Pasture and would be typical spring developments with a collection box at the spring source, a trough installed, with the spring fenced and protected from livestock and wild horse trampling.

Changes in grazing management and additional range improvements may be included in the proposed action based upon responses to scoping.

There is also a No Action Alternative under consideration. Under this alternative, any activities addressed in the proposed action would not be implemented. Current grazing management would continue and no movement toward achieving standards for rangeland health would be made.

All interested members of the public are encouraged to submit comments to the Burns District Office by March 5, 2007. Comments may be mailed to:

Lisa Grant
Bureau of Land Management
28910 Hwy 20 West
Hines, OR 97738

Or e-mail to:

Lisa_Grant@blm.gov

Following the scoping period the completed EA and unsigned FONSI will be available for review and comment. If you would prefer not to be on the mailing list, please let us know and we will promptly remove your name.

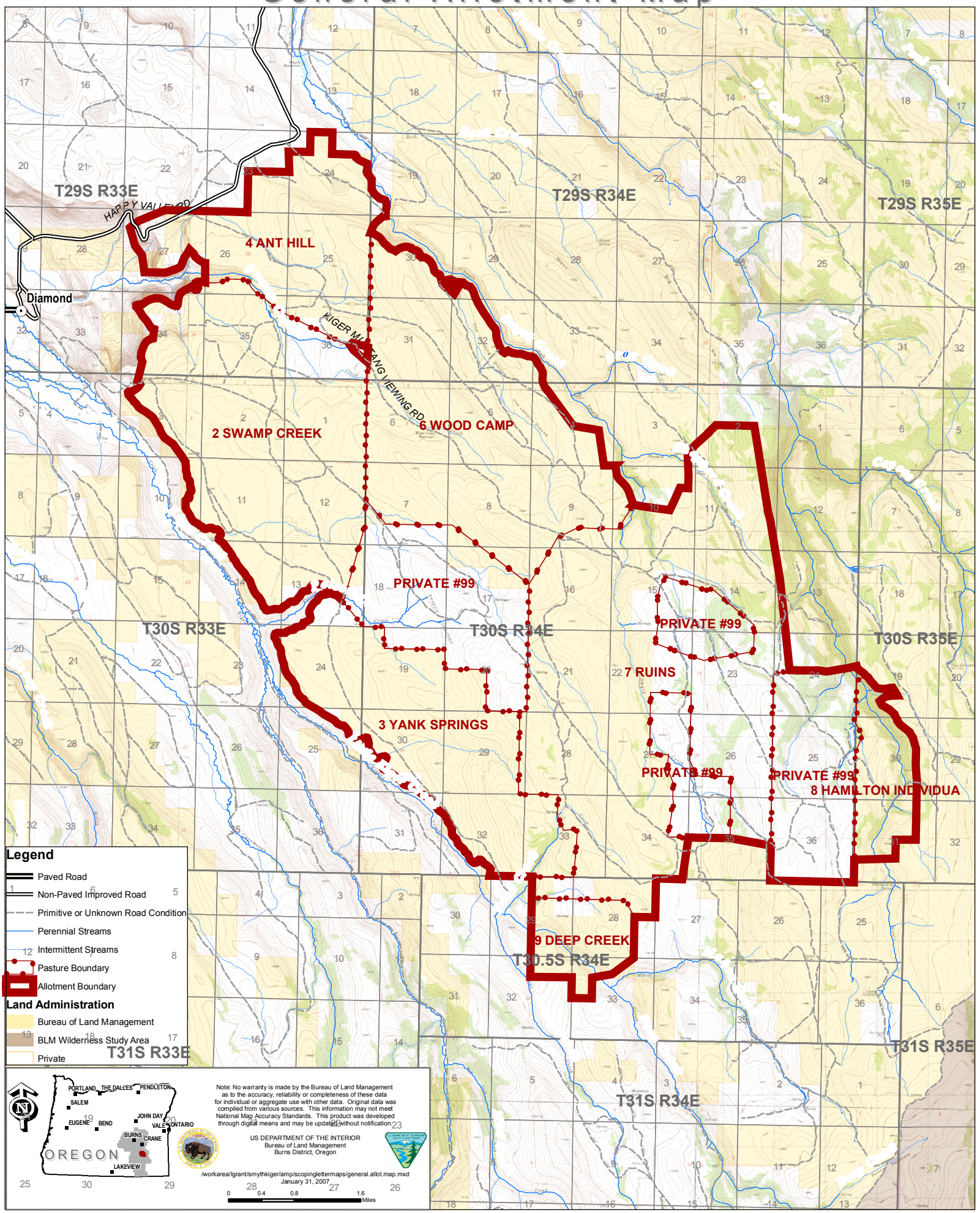
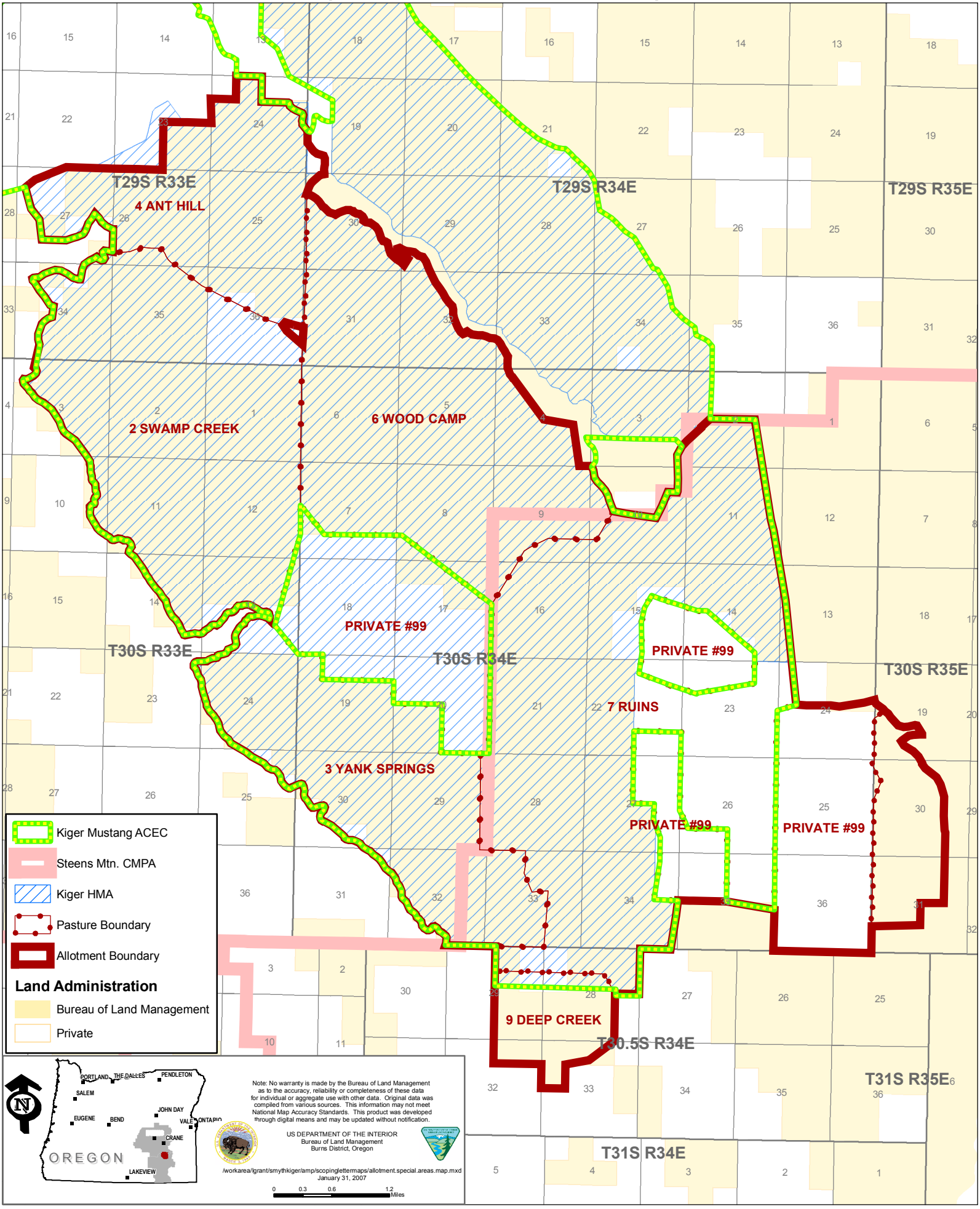
Sincerely,

*Signature on file*

Joan Suther
Three Rivers Resource Area Manager

Enclosures
Maps (2)

# Smyth-Kiger Allotment #5331
# General Allotment Map



# Smyth-Kiger Allotment #5331
# Special Areas Map