

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Klamath Falls Resource Area

**DECISION RECORD #2
FOR
SILVICULTURE AND FUELS TREATMENTS
KENO LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
#DOI-BLM-OR-L040-2011-008-EA**

INTRODUCTION

The potential effects of multiple proposed actions are analyzed in the Keno Landscape Analysis Environmental Assessment (EA) #DOI-BLM-ORL040-2011-008. This EA analyzed proposed commercial timber harvest (Slippery Topsy, Slipping South, Ham and Chase Timber Sales), hazardous fuels treatments, small diameter (understory and plantation) thinning, tree planting, juniper treatments, road management actions, noxious weed treatment, and construction of a waterline at Topsy Recreation Site. The timber sales, road management actions, and waterline will be addressed in separate decision records. This Decision Record, #2, addresses the hazardous fuels treatments, small diameter (understory and plantation) thinning, tree planting, juniper treatments, and noxious weed treatments in the Keno project area.

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) interdisciplinary team analyzed the proposed actions based on: (a) current resource conditions in the project area, (b) the results of monitoring previous activities within and surrounding the project area, (c) meeting the purpose and need as identified in the Keno Landscape EA, (d) implementation of the management action and direction stipulated in the 1995 Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP), and (e) comments from the public. The proposals presented and evaluated in the Keno Landscape EA reflect what the interdisciplinary team determined to be the best balance and integration of resource conditions, resource potentials, competing management objectives, and expressed interests and concerns of the public.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement Alternative 1 (the Proposed Action) of the Keno Landscape EA for the silvicultural treatments (thinning and planting), noxious weed treatment, and hazardous fuels treatments. As part of this action, applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) and the Project Design Features (PDFs) in Appendix B of the EA will be applied. This decision will result in the implementation of the actions outlined below and shown in the attached Decision Record #2 maps. For detailed descriptions of the treatments, refer to “Actions Common to All Alternatives” on page 7-8 of the EA and “Alternative 1 – Proposed Action” descriptions on pages 12-13 of the EA.

Silvicultural Management Actions

With this Decision Record #2, I am authorizing these Alternative 1 actions analyzed in the Keno Landscape EA, which include density management, understory thinning, plantation thinning, and juniper removal. Depending upon market conditions and available funding, the materials produced could be utilized as small diameter sawlogs, chipped or ground, and hauled off site for utilization, sold for firewood, or burned on-site. A mechanical harvesting system will be used to

cut and remove material unless specified otherwise. If the material is utilized, any residual, unusable material will be burned in accordance with an approved burn plan. A site specific description for each unit can be found in the Project Record. Projects include:

- **Density Management** - Approximately 225 acres that were analyzed for timber sales did not meet the minimum specifications necessary for an economical timber sale. These areas will be treated through stewardship or service contracts.
- **Understory thinning** - Approximately 520 acres of understory thinning will be conducted. Trees 3-7" DBH (diameter at breast height) will be thinned on 220 acres. The remaining 300 acres have an upper diameter limit of 14-20" DBH.
- **Plantation thinning** - Approximately 400 acres of plantations will be thinned. These units have an upper diameter limit of 12-16" DBH and will include 18 acres of riparian plantation to be thinned mechanically (outer half of riparian area), and 18 acres will be thinned manually (inner half of riparian).
- **Juniper Removal**- Approximately 65 acres of juniper will be cut and skidded to roads for utilization or firewood.
- **Conifer planting**- Approximately 160 acres will be planted with conifers, in addition to inter-planting in areas where stocking levels are low.

Hazardous Fuels Management

Hazardous Fuels treatments will be implemented on approximately 2,080 acres and will include prescribed burning (underburning), hand thinning, hand piling, and burning, and brush mastication. Hand ignition methods will be used on all firing operations. Burning within Riparian Reserves will be in accordance with Appendix B of the Keno Landscape EA. Burning will be conducted after thinning activities.

- **Underburning** - Approximately 1,130 acres of pine-dominated stands will be underburned. Control lines approximately two feet wide will be constructed using a skid steer tractor or an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) or hand tools.
- **Hand thin, pile, and burn** - Approximately 350 acres will be hand thinned, hand piled, and burned, in addition to the burning of mechanical slash piles throughout the project area. Approximately 200 acres of juniper woodland will be hand thinned, hand piled, and burned. Juniper exhibiting old growth characteristics will be retained. Some tops will be retained for nutrient cycling and coarse woody debris.
- **Brush mastication (Slashbusting)** – Mechanical fuels treatment of slash, brush, and small trees will be conducted on approximately 400 acres.

Noxious Weed Treatment

Prescribed burning, followed by pre-emergent application of imazapic, will be applied to 2.7 acres of medusahead rye. The area will then be seeded with native perennial grasses.

Roads

Road closures and construction are addressed in a separate decision (Decision Record #1) for the Keno Landscape EA. No new road construction is required for the actions and treatments authorized in this Decision Record.

Mitigation

No additional mitigation was deemed necessary.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (as amended) was completed for the Keno Landscape EA for all the treatments listed above. The BLM made a “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination for the northern spotted owl (NSO) and NSO designated critical habitat due to the downgrading of nesting, roosting, foraging (NRF) habitat to dispersal outside of NSO nest territories. Surveys were conducted in suitable habitat within the project area and no spotted owls were detected. There is only one historic NSO site within the project area, and it was deemed “abandoned” by Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and FWS due to the site history and the limited amount of habitat available within the core and home range. NSO designated critical habitat would be affected from proposed activities, but NRF habitat would be maintained from planned silvicultural and fuels projects, and the planned treatments would not change the connectivity or demographic function for which it was designated. Dispersal habitat within the project area will also be maintained. The FWS concurred with this determination and issued a letter of concurrence on June 25, 2013 (08EKLA-2013-I0026).

There are no other listed species or designated critical habitat that would be affected from these actions within the project area, therefore the BLM made a “No Effect” determination for all other listed species and critical habitat.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public scoping input and EA comments were considered in development and refinement of the proposed action and alternatives, and in this decision.

Scoping Issues and Comments

The Keno project was first listed in the KFRA’s Planning Update in the summer 2010 edition. A scoping letter was mailed to adjacent landowners, permittees, agencies, and other interested parties on January 27, 2012, with a notice of public scoping published in the Klamath Falls *Herald and News* on February 1, 2012. As a result of scoping, the BLM received eight emails or letters from interested parties. A summary table of Scoping Comments with BLM responses is available on the Keno Landscape EA webpage at the following address:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview/plans/collaborative/keno/files/Summary-Scoping-Comment.pdf>

Consideration of Public Comments

The Keno Landscape EA and corresponding draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were available for review during a 30-day comment period from May 21 to June 20, 2013. The EA was posted on our website, mailed to interested parties, and a legal notice of the EA availability was published in the Klamath Falls *Herald and News* newspaper on May 21, 2013.

The KFRA BLM received five letters of comment on the Keno EA. Public comments on the Keno EA were reviewed and issues were discussed with the interdisciplinary team. The comments received do not provide any substantially new information or new analysis, nor do they identify substantial new data gaps that indicate additional analysis is needed. Finally, the comments do not identify any significant new data which would alter the effects described in the EA. A summary table of EA Comments with BLM responses is available on the Keno EA webpage: <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview/plans/collaborative/keno/documents.php>

DECISION RATIONALE

I am confident that the Keno Landscape EA plus the supplemental information, including responses to public comments, in addition to the comprehensive analysis done in the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP/EIS to which the EA is tiered, represents a thorough analysis of potential effects associated with actions identified in the Keno Landscape EA. I have chosen Alternative 1 for the silvicultural, weed, juniper, and hazardous fuels treatments in the Keno Landscape EA because these actions best meet the Purpose and Need (EA, pages 2-3), and the direction established in the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP for the following reasons:

- The selected silvicultural treatments in Alternative 1 will meet the need to reduce tree stocking level densities to improve growing conditions (reduce competition for water, nutrients and light) and increase the vigor of the remaining trees. The analysis has shown that many of the existing stands in the proposed project area are presently overstocked and have reduced annual growth. Trees within densely stocked stands are generally more susceptible to stress and vulnerable to attack by insects and diseases.
- Implementation of the fuels treatments will meet the need to reduce the overall hazardous fuel loading and overstocked stands in the area. These treatments will help decrease fire intensity and severity in and adjacent to the Keno Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). As described in the EA on page 3, throughout the 20th century, fire suppression and livestock grazing has effectively eliminated fire from the landscape. Due to this, conditions have become favorable for numerous small trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to become established. The resulting increase in surface, ladder, and crown fuels contributes to the risk of a stand-replacing fire.
- Herbicide treatment and seeding with native grasses on a 2.7-acre patch of medusahead rye will help prevent the spread of this noxious weed into surrounding areas. Medusahead is an aggressive non-native species that forms dense mats of persistent dead vegetation that effectively force out other plants including desirable native plants. It does not provide good quality forage for wildlife and livestock, and left untreated, this small population will likely spread with negative impacts to plant communities in the Keno Analysis area.
- Alternative 1 best met the Purpose and Need (EA, page 2) of all the action alternatives. Alternative 1 includes the application of Ecological Forestry principles in managing the landscape, and also meets the management objectives in the 2011 Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Recovery Plan and 2012 NSO Designated Critical Habitat rule.
- Although implementation of Alternative 1 will downgrade scattered patches of NRF to dispersal habitat, the silvicultural, weed, juniper, and hazardous fuels treatments in this Decision Record #2 will maintain NRF within NSO designated critical habitat. The NRF habitat within the Keno project area is scattered in small parcels and patches and does not provide large enough blocks of habitat to provide for resident owls. Implementation of treatments and reduction of habitat will not substantially change the current condition of not supporting resident owls. The discussion on NRF habitat in the Keno EA (pages 50-53) shows that there would be less than 1% reduction in NRF habitat in Alternative 1. Due to the general lack of high quality NSO habitat across the Keno landscape and the checkerboard landownership pattern, the amount and configuration of the NRF habitat within the project area will not support resident or nesting spotted owls pre- or post-treatment. Therefore, there

would be no substantial benefit to retaining the NRF habitat for the spotted owl in this project area.

Plan Conformance and Consistency with other Direction

The Klamath Falls Resource Area initiated planning and design for this project to conform and be consistent with the 1995 Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan and the 2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines

On July 16, 2009 the U.S. Department of the Interior, withdrew the Records of Decision (2008 ROD) for the Western Oregon Plan Revision and directed the BLM to implement actions in conformance with the resource management plans for western Oregon that were in place prior to December 30, 2008. These projects have been designed to comply with the land use allocations, management direction, and objectives of the 1995 Resource Management Plan.

The actions of the selected alternative will help to move this portion of the landscape towards the desired future condition considered in development of the RMPs. The actions will comply with the Endangered Species Act, the Native American Religious Freedom Act, cultural resource management laws and regulations, and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). This decision will not have any adverse effects to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

Finding of No Significant Impact

No significant impacts were identified. No impacts beyond those anticipated in the KFRA RMP/EIS will occur. Refer to the accompanying Finding of No Significant Impact.

CONCLUSION

In consideration of public comments, the consistency with the RMP and the finding that there will not be any significant impacts, this decision allows for activities mentioned within this document and included in the Keno Landscape EA.

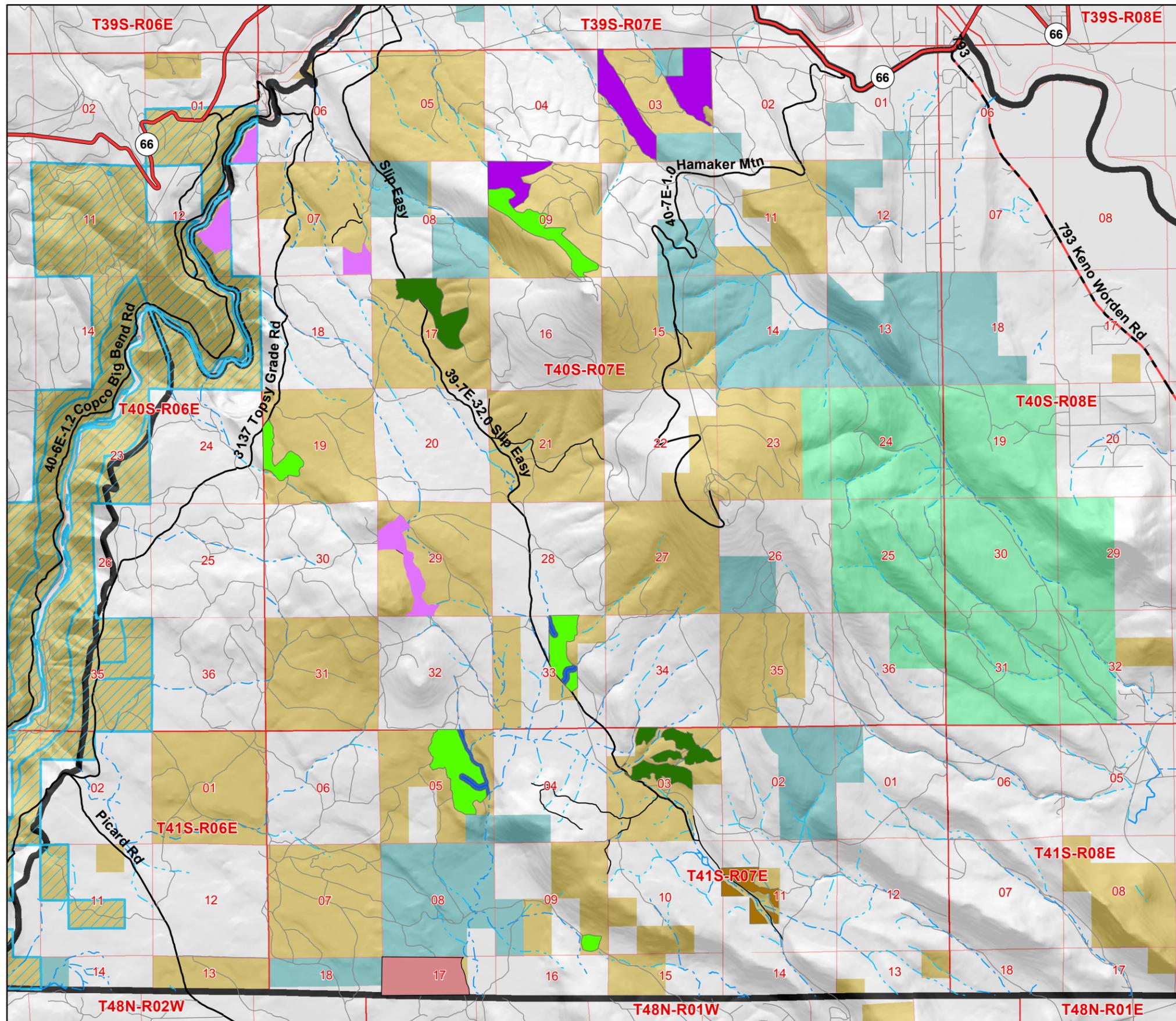
A Notice of Decision for these silviculture, weed, juniper, and hazardous fuels treatments (Decision Record#2) will be published on **August 14** in the Klamath Falls *Herald and News*. This notice will constitute the decision date and as outlined in 43 CFR § 5003, Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the publication date of the Notice of Decision. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. 43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states: "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 Klamath Falls Resource Area office will be accepted.

/s/ Donald J. Holmstrom
Donald J. Holmstrom, Field Manager
Klamath Falls Resource Area
Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management

8/14/2013
Date

Silviculture and Vegetation Management Actions Alternative 1- Proposed Action

**Klamath Falls Resource Area
Lakeview District
Bureau of Land Management
2795 Anderson Ave. #25
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603
(541)883-6916**



Silviculture and Vegetation Actions

Treatment	
	Density Management- 225 Acres
	Understory Thin- 300 Acres
	Understory Thin (3-7")- 220 Acres
	Plantation Thin- 370 Acres
	Plantation Thin Riparian Rx- 36 Acres
	Juniper Removal- 65 Acres
	Plant Trees- 160 Acres

Reference Themes	
	Keno EA Analysis Area
	Northern Spotted Owl Critical Habitat 2012
	Highway
	Major road
	Intermediate road
	Minor road
	Perennial Stream
	Intermittent Stream
	Ephemeral Stream
	Bureau of Land Management
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
	State Lands
	Private Lands



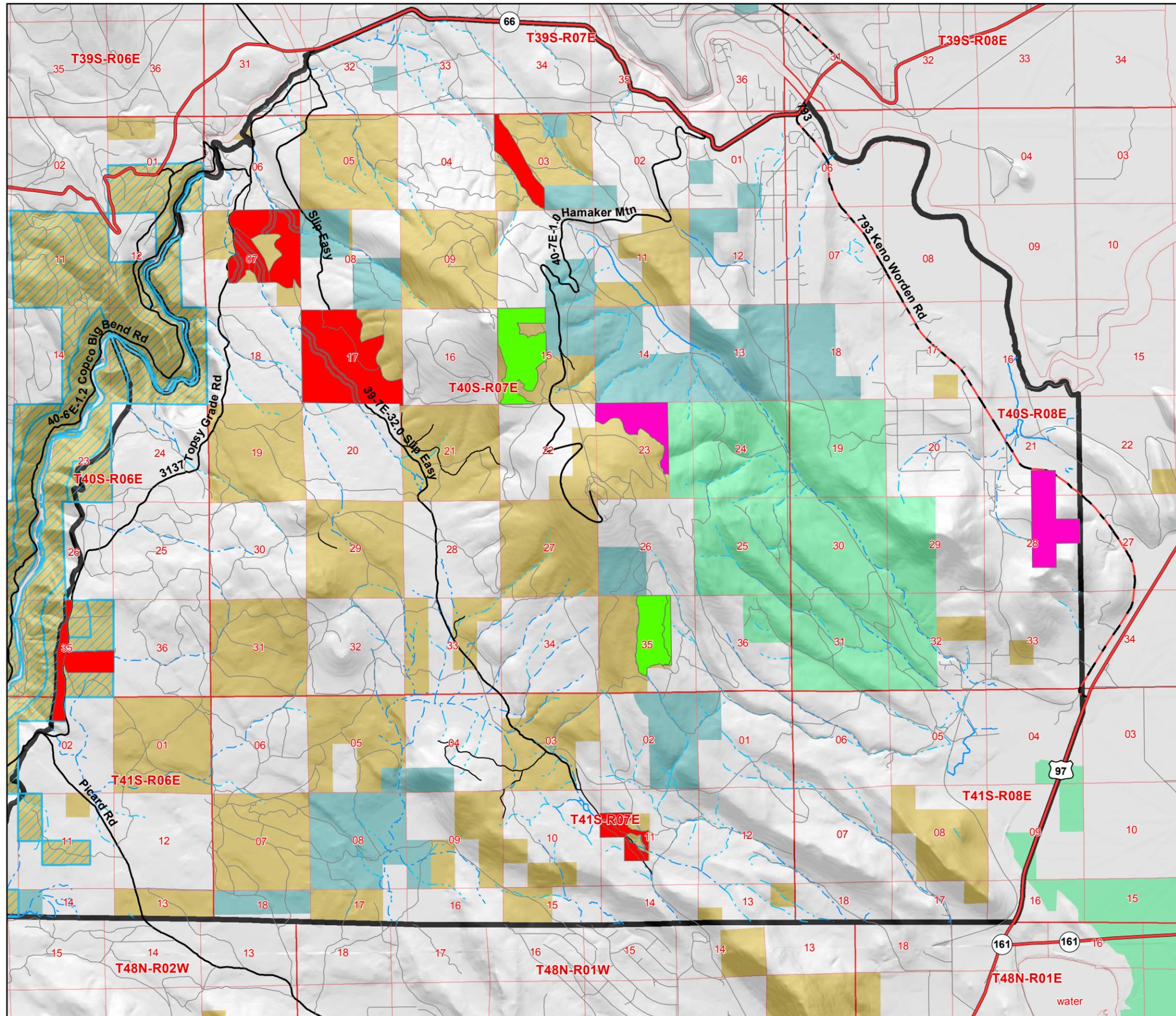
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Fuels Treatments Alternative 1- Proposed Action

**Klamath Falls Resource Area
Lakeview District
Bureau of Land Management
2795 Anderson Ave. #25
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603
(541)883-6916**



Fuels Treatments

- Hand Thin, Pile and Burn- 350 Acres
- Slashbusting- 400 Acres
- Underburn/Broadcast burn- 1,130 Acres

Reference Themes

- Keno EA Analysis Area
- Northern Spotted Owl Critical Habitat 2012
- Highway
- Major road
- Intermediate road
- Minor road
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Ephemeral Stream
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- State Lands
- Private Lands



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