Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record for pre-commercial thinning, brush and hardwood cutting, girdling, hardwood clump control, hand piling of cut material and pile burning in the Butte Falls Resource Area OR115-08-38

Description of Proposed Action

This action would occur within the Butte Falls Resource Area of the Medford District BLM (Bureau of Land Management) in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. The proposed activities would occur on lands allocated as Matrix, adjacent Riparian Reserves, and Late Successional Reserves (LSR) as described in the Medford District, Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, June 1995.

The objective of the proposed treatments is to maintain conifer stand survival and vigor, and release existing conifers from competition for moisture, nutrients, light, and growing space by cutting the competing vegetation (conifers, shrubs, hardwoods) and leaving the residual trees for increased growth. In addition, on LSR lands the objective includes maintaining a component of hardwoods along with native conifers.

On Matrix land allocation in units with brush and hardwood cutting, the proposed action would cut brush and hardwoods 6 inches DBH and less and girdle hardwoods 6.1 to 11.9 inches DBH within 6 feet of existing conifer trees. Hardwoods 12 inches DBH and greater would be reserved along with all conifers 8 inches DBH and greater in all units in all land allocations. On LSR land allocations in units with brush and hardwood cutting, up to 2 hardwood stems would be retained within 6 feet of existing conifer trees. In units receiving a pre-commercial thinning (PCT), conifers under 8″ DBH would be thinned on an average 14′x14′ spacing retaining approximately 220 trees per acre, or 16’x16’ spacing retaining approximately 170 trees per acre. On Matrix land allocations, units receiving brush and/or hardwood cutting in conjunction with PCT would have brush and hardwoods cut within 8 feet of reserve conifers. Brush and hardwoods 6 inches DBH and less would be cut and hardwoods 6.1 to 11.9 inches DBH would be girdled within 8 feet of existing conifer trees. On LSR land allocations receiving brush and/or hardwood cutting in conjunction with PCT, treatment would be the same as Matrix except that up to 2 hardwood stems per acre would be retained per 8 foot clearing radius. In all units in all land allocations, severed conifers, brush, and hardwoods would be cut and scattered to a depth of less than 3 feet. Approximately 250 acres are planned for treatment in LSR and 250 acres are planned for treatment on Matrix land.

The objective of hand piling cut slash and burning the piles, on BLM-administered lands, is to decrease the likelihood on high risk areas, of high intensity fire behavior from a wildfire incident. Material slashed 1 to 6 inches in diameter, greater than 2 feet in length, would be hand piled, covered and burned. Pile size would range from 5 feet high by 6 feet diameter to 8 feet by 8 feet. Number of piles would range from 45 to 95 per acre. To prevent fire escapes and to minimize damage to residual vegetation/trees, burning would occur during wet or rainy weather conditions from October through March, and burning would comply with Oregon Department of Forestry’s Smoke Management Plan.

All treatments would occur in the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM, Jackson County, Oregon. See attached maps for exact locations of project units and specific treatments to those units.

Plan Conformance Review

The Bureau of Land Management did not scope this proposal and the public was not involved in its development. This proposal is consistent with policy directed by the following:

- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* and *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (Northwest Forest Plan FSEIS, 1994 and ROD, 1994);
- *Final-Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* and *Record of Decision* (EIS, 1994 and RMP/ROD, 1995);
- *Record of Decision To Remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines from the Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (USDI 2007); and
- *Medford District Integrated Weed Management Plan Environmental Assessment (1998) and tiered to the Final-Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS, 1985).*

The proposed action is in conformance with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Endangered Species Act of 1973, Clean Water Act of 1987, Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (as amended 1986 and 1996), Clean Air Act of 1990 (as amended), and Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.

This proposal is consistent with management direction in the Medford District Resource Management Plan that directs the BLM to conduct silvicultural activities according to management actions and directions summarized in appendix E, Silvicultural Systems, for Matrix and Late Successional Reserves (Medford District Record of Decision USDI 1995, Pgs. 33, 39, 183-185, 195.)

Project Design Features

1. All conifers 8″ DBH and greater, and all hardwoods 12” DBH and greater, would be reserved in all units.
2. In all units on Matrix land allocation with brush and hardwood cutting and no PCT, brush and hardwoods 6” DBH and less would be cut for a 6 foot radius, from the conifer bole, around the reserved conifer. Hardwoods, within the 6 foot radius, between 6″ and 11.9″ DBH, would be girdled.
3. In all units in LSR with brush and hardwood cutting and no PCT, brush and hardwoods 6” DBH and less would be cut for a 6 foot radius, from the conifer bole, around the reserved conifer except that 1 stem from each clump would be retained with no more than 2 stems retained within the 6 foot radius . Hardwoods stems not reserved, within the 6 foot radius, between 6″ and 11.9″ DBH, would be girdled.
4. In all units receiving PCT, conifers under 8” DBH would be thinned on an average 14′x14′ spacing retaining approximately 220 trees per acre, or 16’x16’ spacing retaining

approximately 170 trees per acre. Dominant conifers would be preferred for retention and species preference would depend on site conditions.

5. In all units on Matrix land allocation, that receive brush and/or hardwood cutting in conjunction with PCT, brush and /or hardwoods 6" DBH and under would be cut for an 8 foot radius, from the conifer bole, around the reserved conifer. Hardwoods within the 8 foot radius, between 6″ and 11.9″ DBH, would be girdled.
6. In all units in LSR that receive brush and/or hardwood cutting in conjunction with PCT, brush and hardwoods 6" DBH and less, would be cut for an 8 foot radius, from the conifer bole, around the reserved conifer except that 1 stem from each clump would be retained with no more than 2 stems retained within the six-foot radius . Hardwood stems not reserved, within the 8 foot radius, between 6″ and 11.9″ DBH, would be girdled
7. Within riparian reserves, conifers, brush and hardwoods would be treated along intermittent streams and a no-cut buffer would extend 50′ on both sides of all perennial and fish bearing streams. No big leaf maple, Oregon ash, willow, or red alder would be cut within riparian reserves.
8. In units determined to contain a high fuel hazard rating, slash may be hand piled and burned to reduce the fuel hazard. Entire units may be piled or 250 foot wide strips adjacent to roads, property boundaries, or along ridges may be piled. Slash created along intermittent streams that is piled, would be piled no closer than 20' from stream. Cut brush and hardwoods would be cut into a maximum 8 foot length. Slash created by cutting, that is not piled, would be cut and scattered so that slash would have a maximum depth of 3′.
9. In areas to have slash piled, slash between 1 and 6 inches in diameter and greater than 2 feet in length, would be piled, covered, and burned. Maximum pile size would be 8 feet in height by 8 feet in diameter and minimum pile size would be 5 feet in height by 6 feet in diameter. Number of piles would range from 45 to 95 per acre.
10. Pile burning would occur during wet or rainy weather conditions between October and March, and burning would comply with Oregon Department of Forestry's Smoke Management Plan
11. Units would be surveyed for Bureau of Land Management Special Status plants prior to treatment. If plants are found within treatment units, appropriate, species by species protective measures would be implemented to accommodate those plants.
12. There would be no activity within 200 feet of Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) nest sites or NSO activity centers from March 1 through June 30 of a given year, unless instructed differently by the resource area wildlife biologist. This may be extended up to September 30 if nesting activity is occurring at that time.
13. All trash and garbage would be picked up and disposed of properly.
14. No overnight camping would be allowed at the site or in the surrounding area.
15. Vehicles must stay on existing roads and trails.

Categorical Exclusion Determination

This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion as provided in United States Department of the Interior Departmental Manual 516 DM 11.9,C (4) which allows for "Precommercial thinning and brush control using small mechanical devices". Slash piling and burning also qualifies for categorical exclusion in accordance with the United States Department of Interior, Departmental Manual, 516 DM 11.9, D (10) which allows for "Vegetation management activities, such as seeding, planting, invasive plant removal, installation of erosion control devices (e.g., mats/straw/chips), and mechanical treatments, such as crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, mowing, and prescribed fire when the activity is

necessary for the management of vegetation on public lands. Such activities: (a) Shall not exceed 4,500 acres per prescribed fire project and 1,000 acres for other vegetation management.

Before any action described in the list of categorical exclusions may be used, the "extraordinary circumstances," included in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, must be reviewed for applicability. After review, the BLM determined no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have a significant environmental effect. The action will not require additional analysis.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this project, contact Doug Stewart, Project Leader, at (541) 618-2264.

Decision

It is my decision to implement the pre-commercial thinning, brush and hardwood cutting, girdling, hardwood clump control, and hand piling of cut material and pile burning as described in the Proposed Action and as shown on the attached project maps, in fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

Decision Rationale

The proposed action has been reviewed by Butte Falls Resource Area staff and appropriate Project Design Features, as specified above, will be incorporated into the proposal. Based on the attached NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Categorical Exclusion Review, I have determined the proposed action involves no significant impact to the human environment and no further environmental analysis is required.

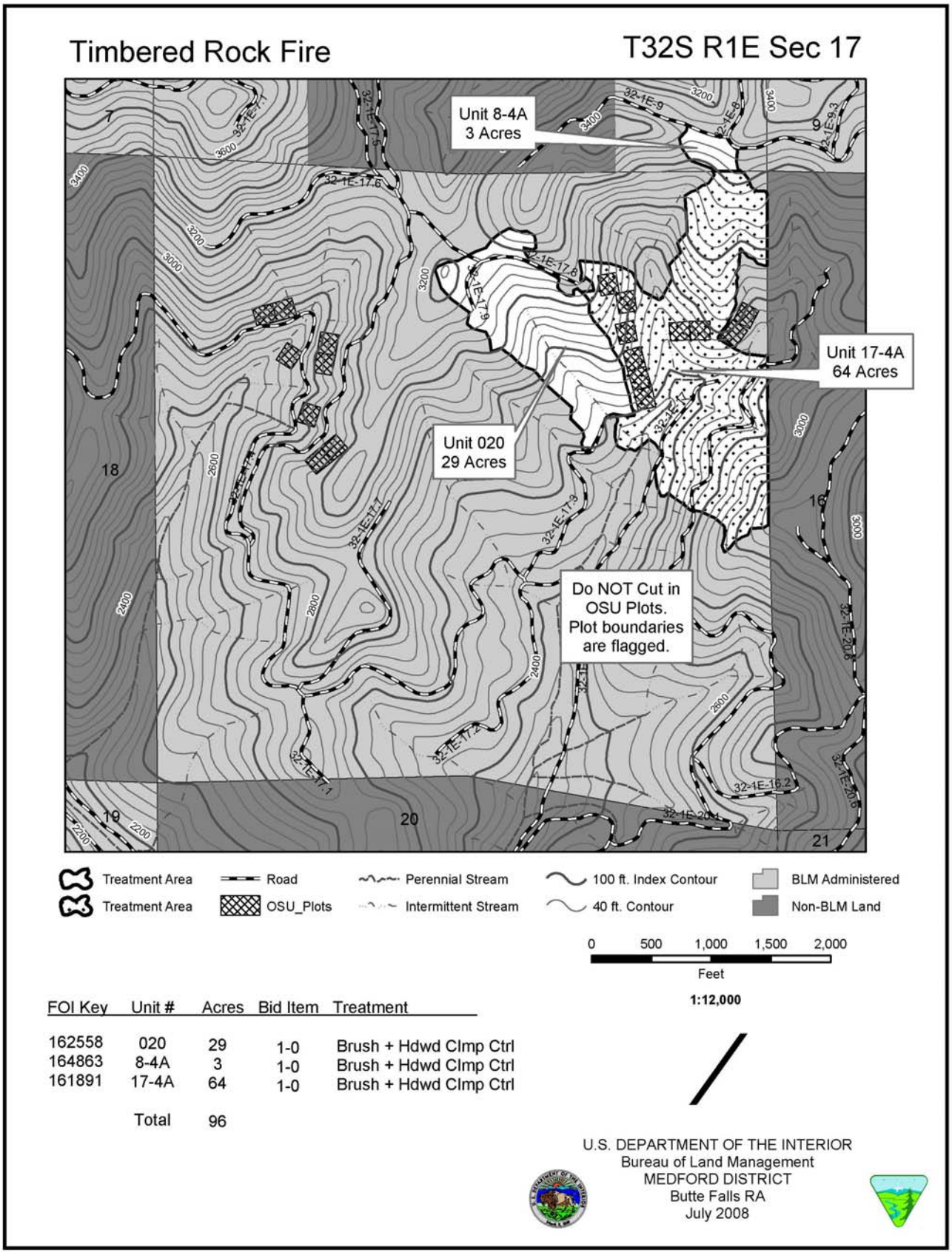
7/28/08

Christopher J. McAlear
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

Date

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

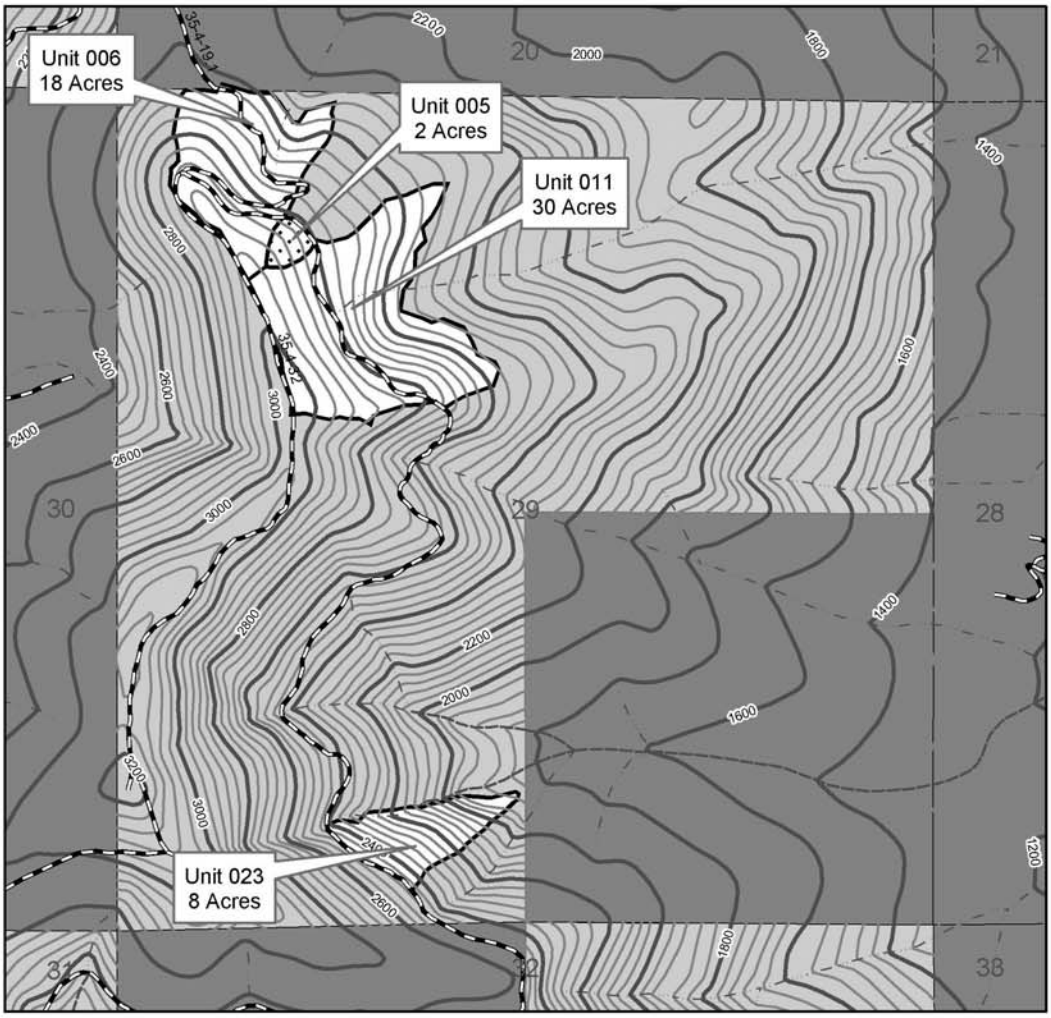
Notice of the forest management decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the Medford District internet website. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR part 4.



FOI Key	Unit #	Acres	Bid Item	Treatment
162558	020	29	1-0	Brush + Hdwd Clmp Ctrl
164863	8-4A	3	1-0	Brush + Hdwd Clmp Ctrl
161891	17-4A	64	1-0	Brush + Hdwd Clmp Ctrl
	Total	96		

Bear Fielder

T35S R4W Sec 29



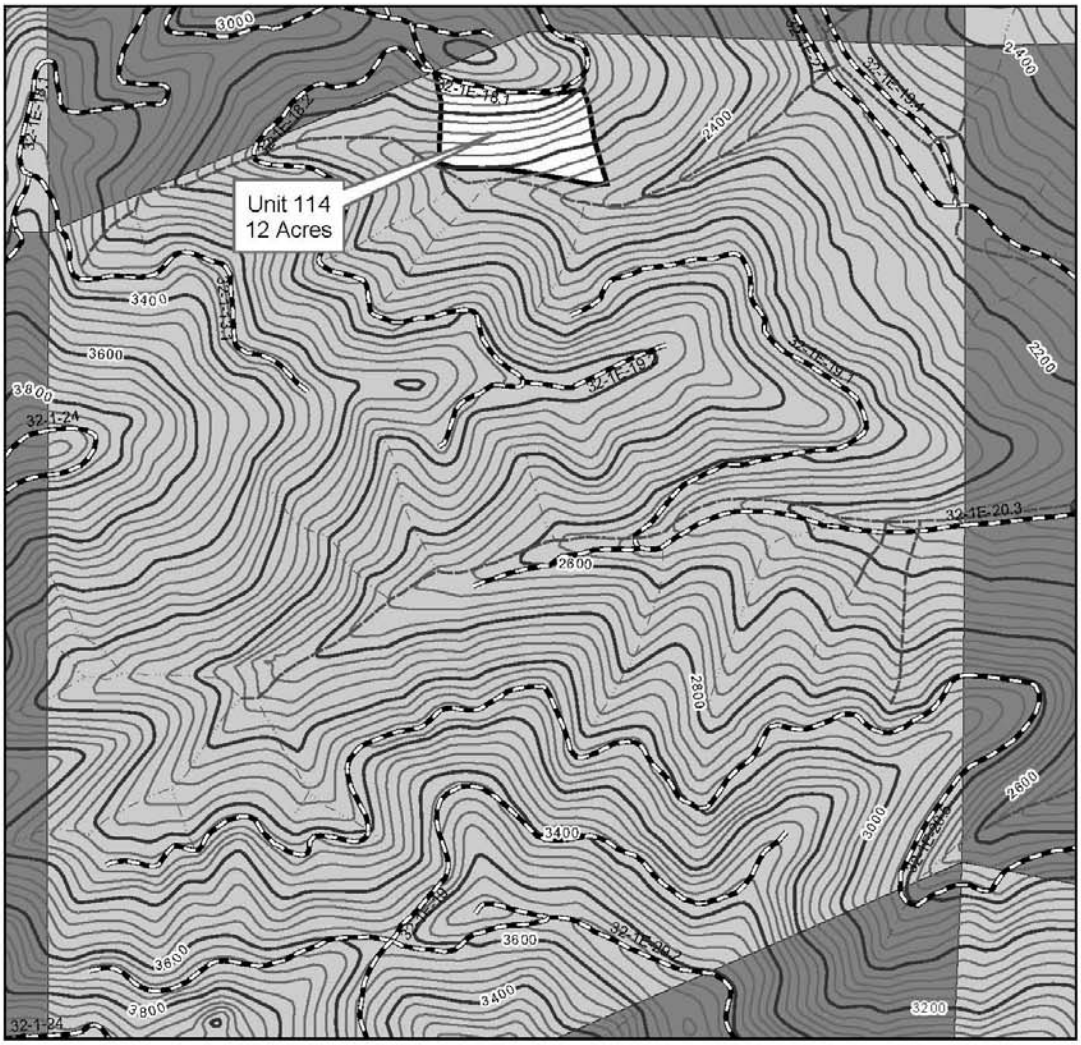
Treatment Area — Road — Perennial Stream — 200 ft. Index Contour — BLM Administered
Treatment Area — Intermittent Stream — 40 ft. Contour — Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
159469	1-F/2D	005	2	PCT + Hdwd Ctrl + Hand Pile/Cover
159470	1-F/2D	006	18	PCT + Hdwd Ctrl + Hand Pile/Cover
159475	1-F/2D	011	30	PCT + Hdwd Ctrl + Hand Pile/Cover
159487	1-F	023	8	Pre-commercial Thin + Hdwd Ctrl
		Total	58	

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
March 2008

Timbered Rock T32S R1E Sec 19



Treatment Area | Perennial Stream | Intermediate 40-ft contour | BLM Administered
Road | Intermittent Stream | Index 200-ft contour | Non-BLM Land

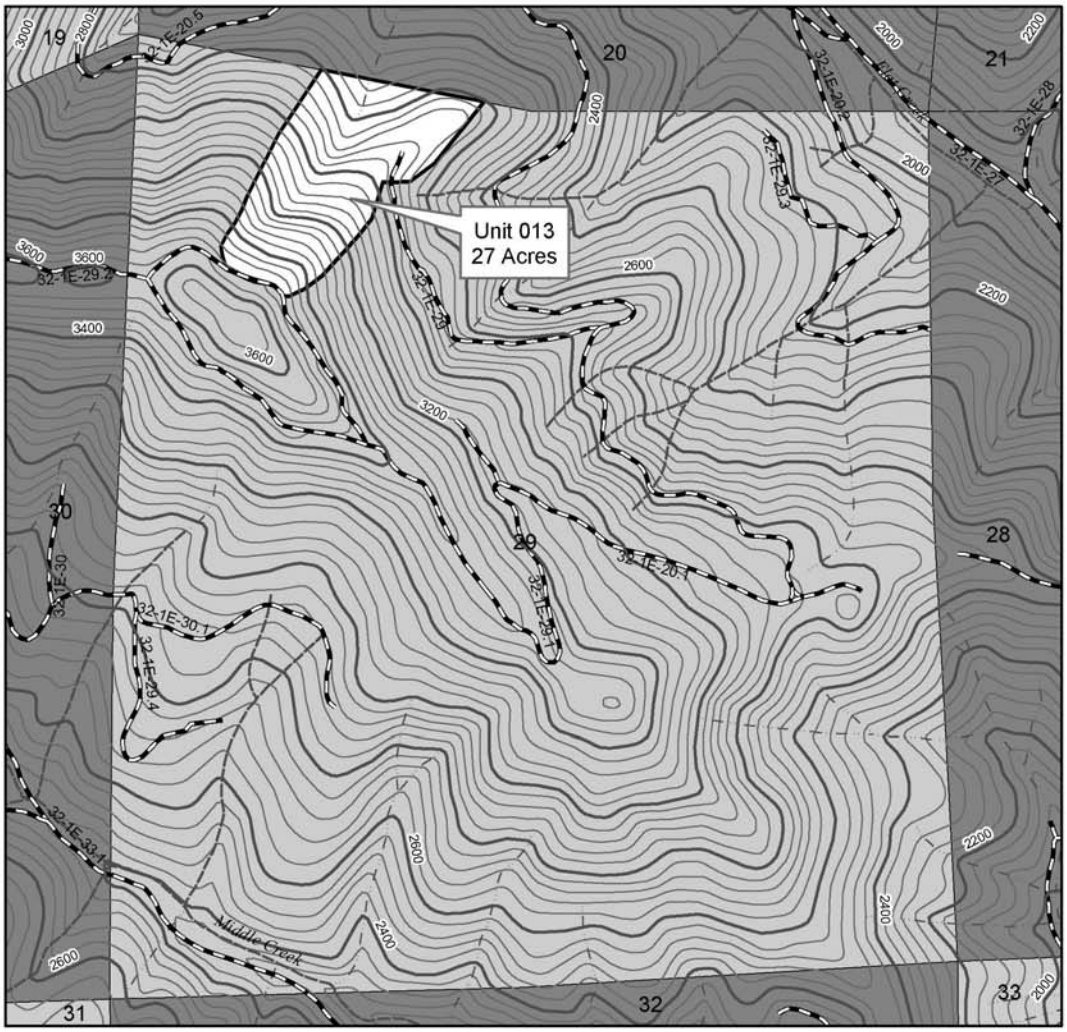
0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key #	Unit #	Acres	Bid Item	Treatment
164176	114	12	1-O	Brush + Hdwd Clmp Ctrl
	Total	12		

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
April 2008

Timbered Rock Fire

T32S R1E Sec 29



Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Unit #	Acres	Bid Item	Treatment
162575	013	27	1-0	Brush + Hdwd Clmp Ctrl
	Total	27		

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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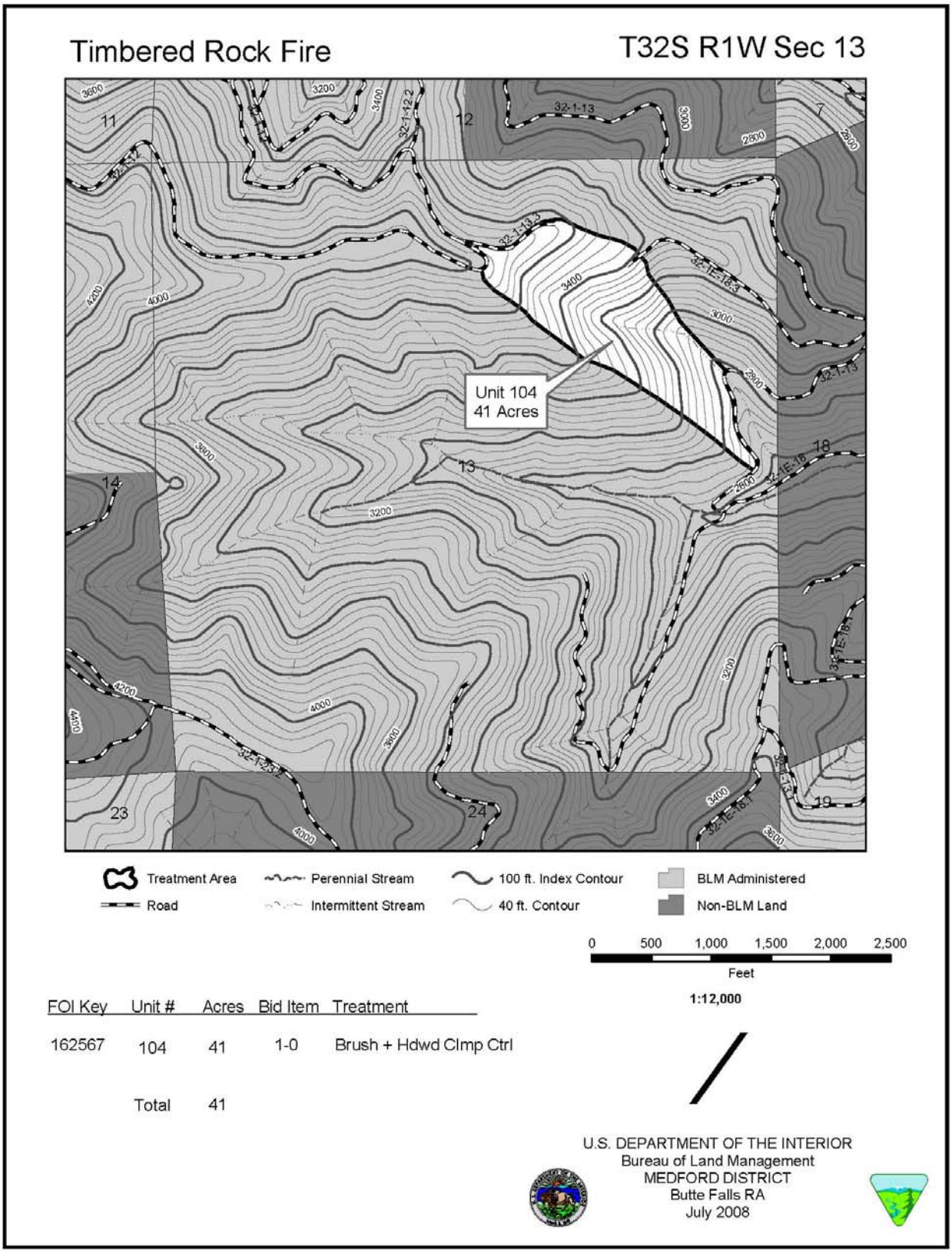
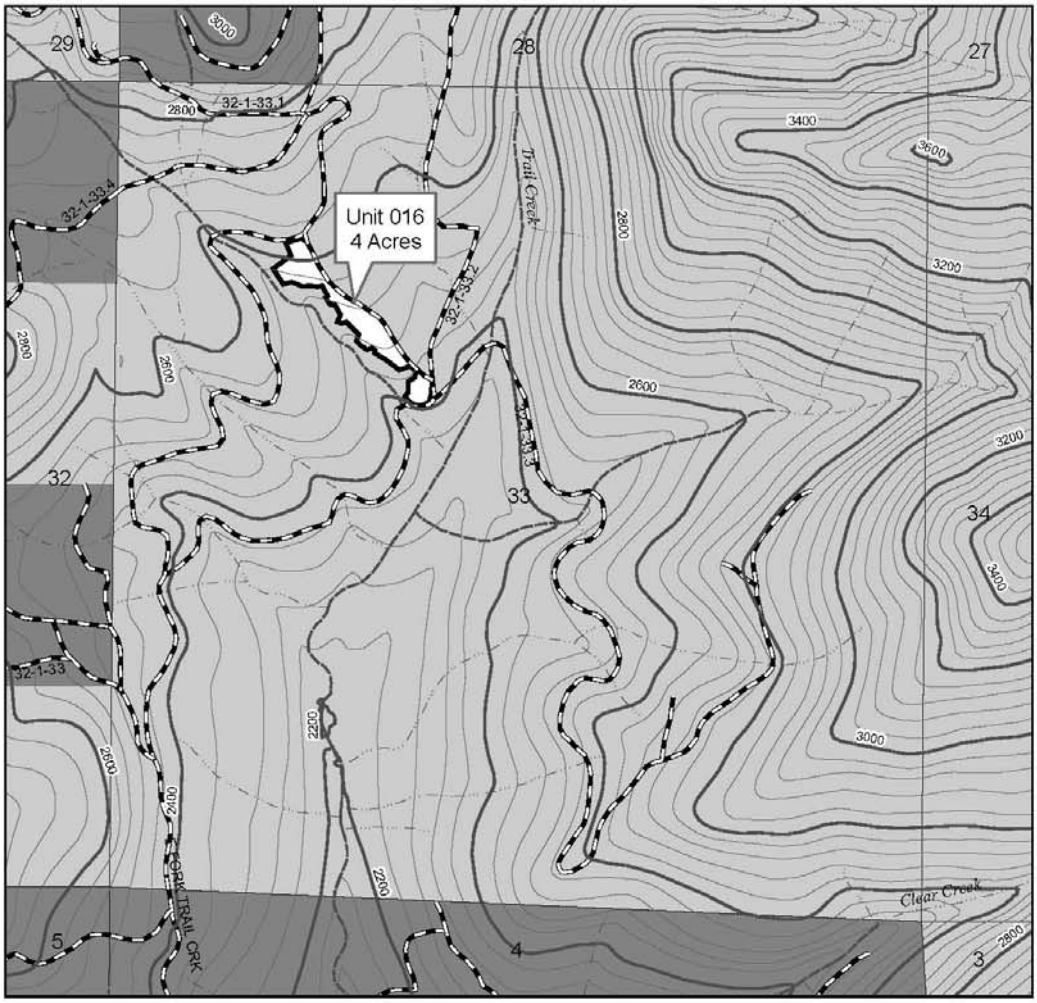
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
July 2008



FOI Key	Unit #	Acres	Bid Item	Treatment
162567	104	41	1-0	Brush + Hdwd Clmp Ctrl
	Total	41		

Trailhead

T32S R1W Sec 33



Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
163791	1C	016	4	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl

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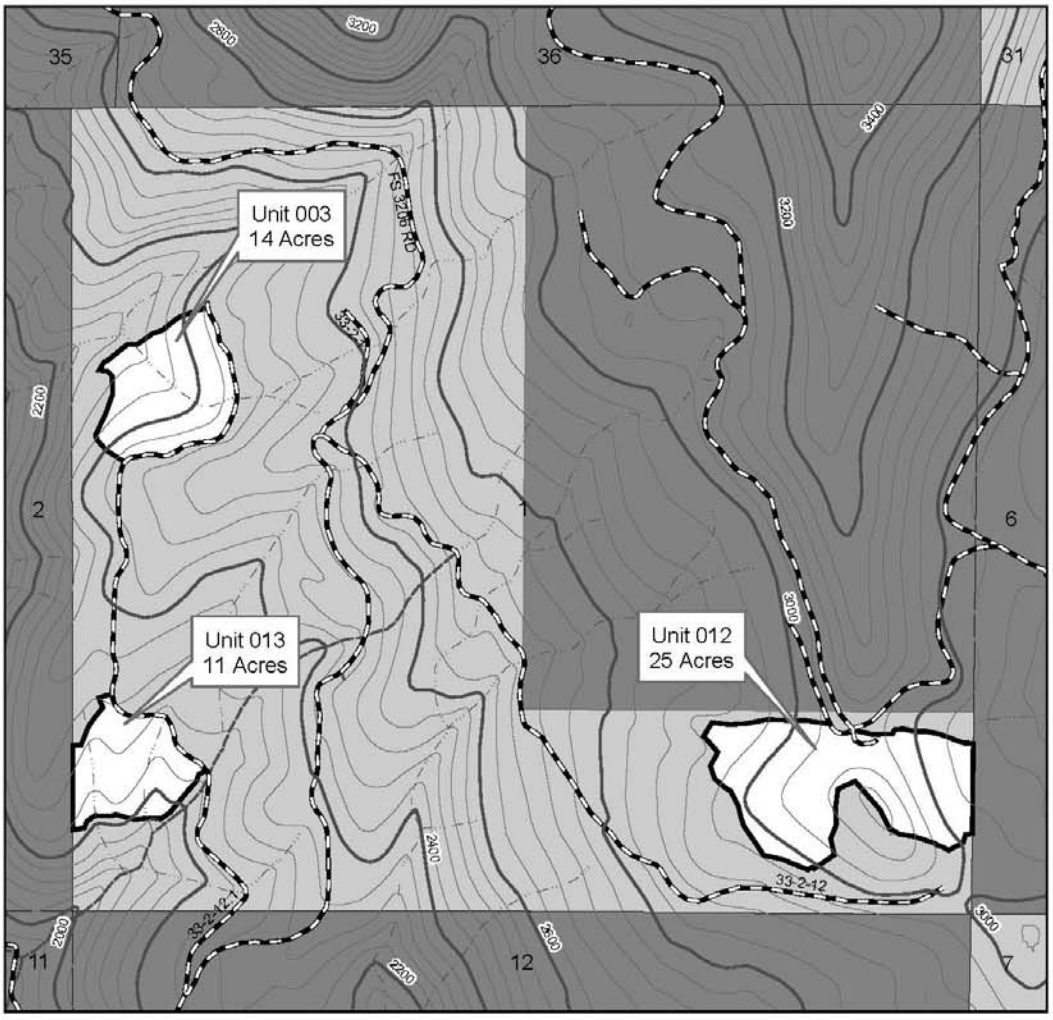
July 2008

Snow Trail

T33S R2W Sec 1



Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
160569	1-C	003	14	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
162407	1-C	012	25	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
162408	1-C	013	11	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
		Total	50	

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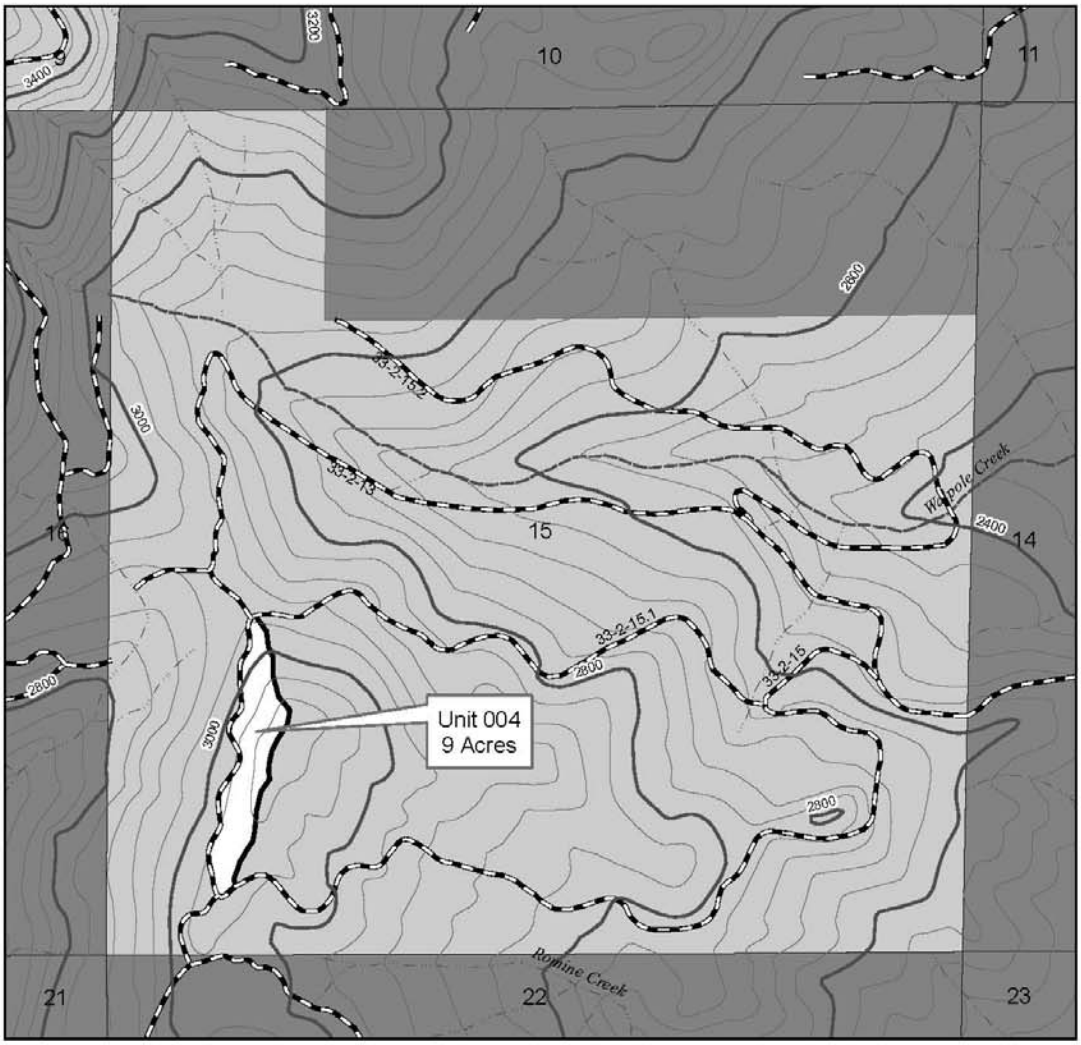
July 2008

What's Walpole

T33S R2W Sec 15



Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162296	1C	004	9	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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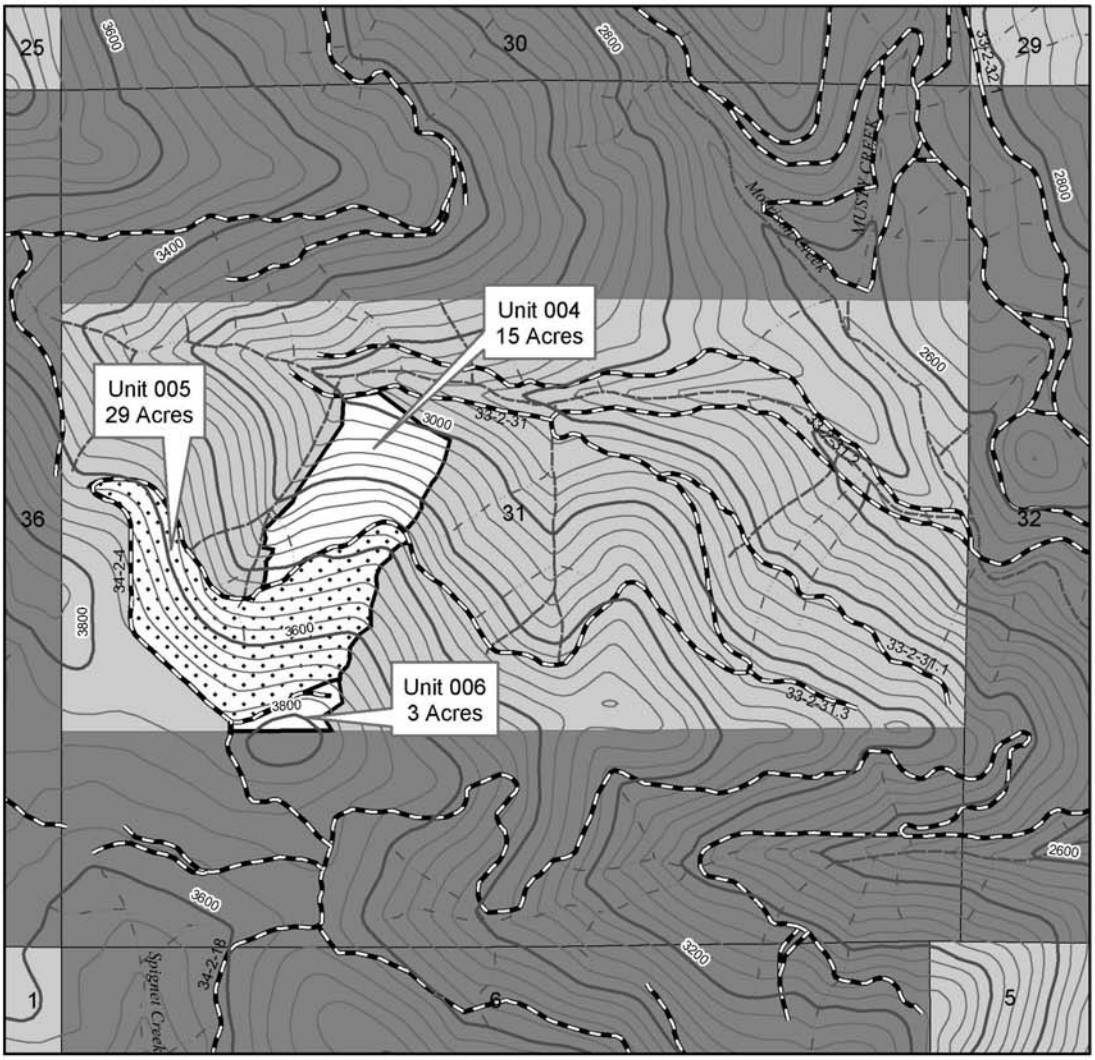
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
July 2008

Sprigg Morr T33S R2W Sec 31



Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
163216	1C	004	15	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
163217	1C	005	29	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
163218	1C	006	3	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
		Total	47	

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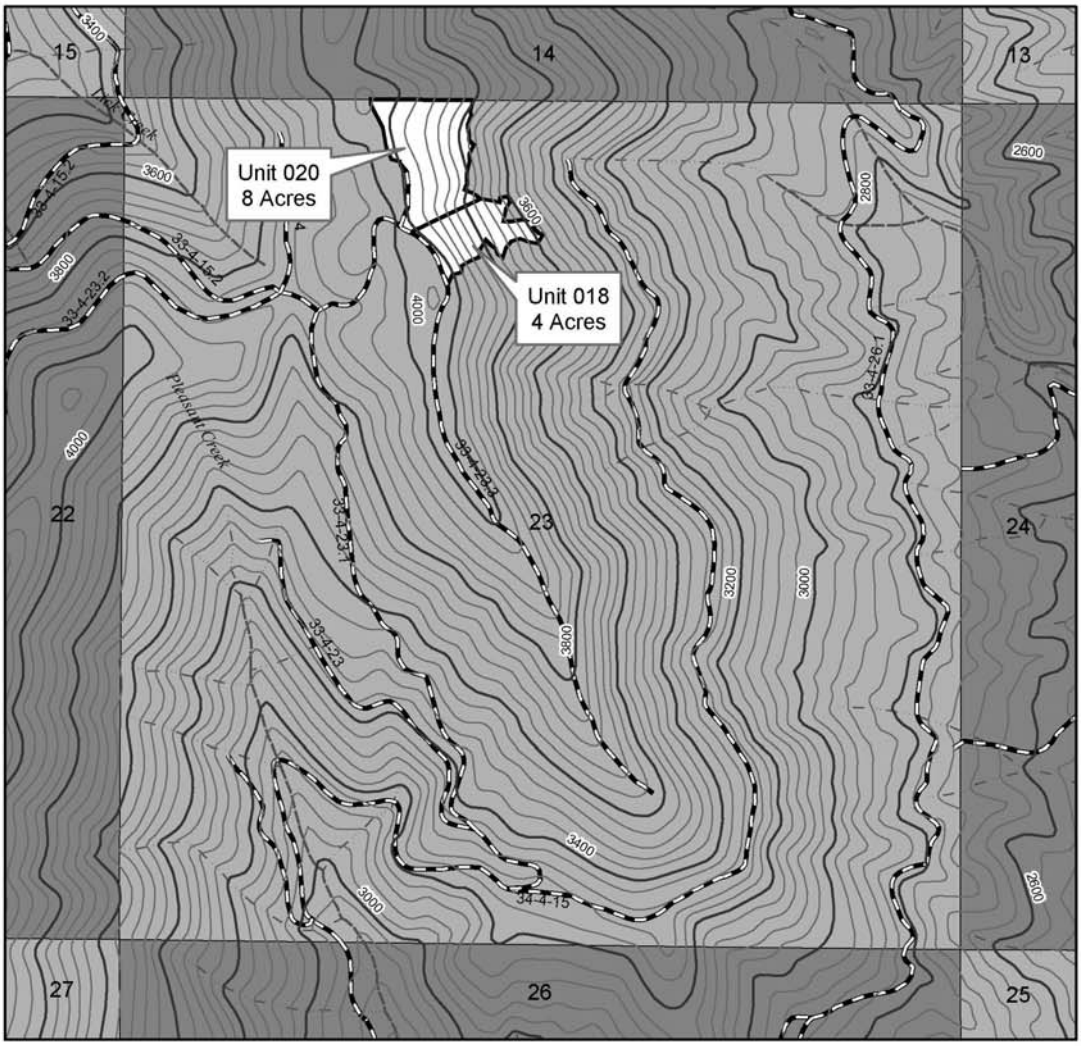
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
July 2008

Pleasantly Hot

T33S R4W Sec 23



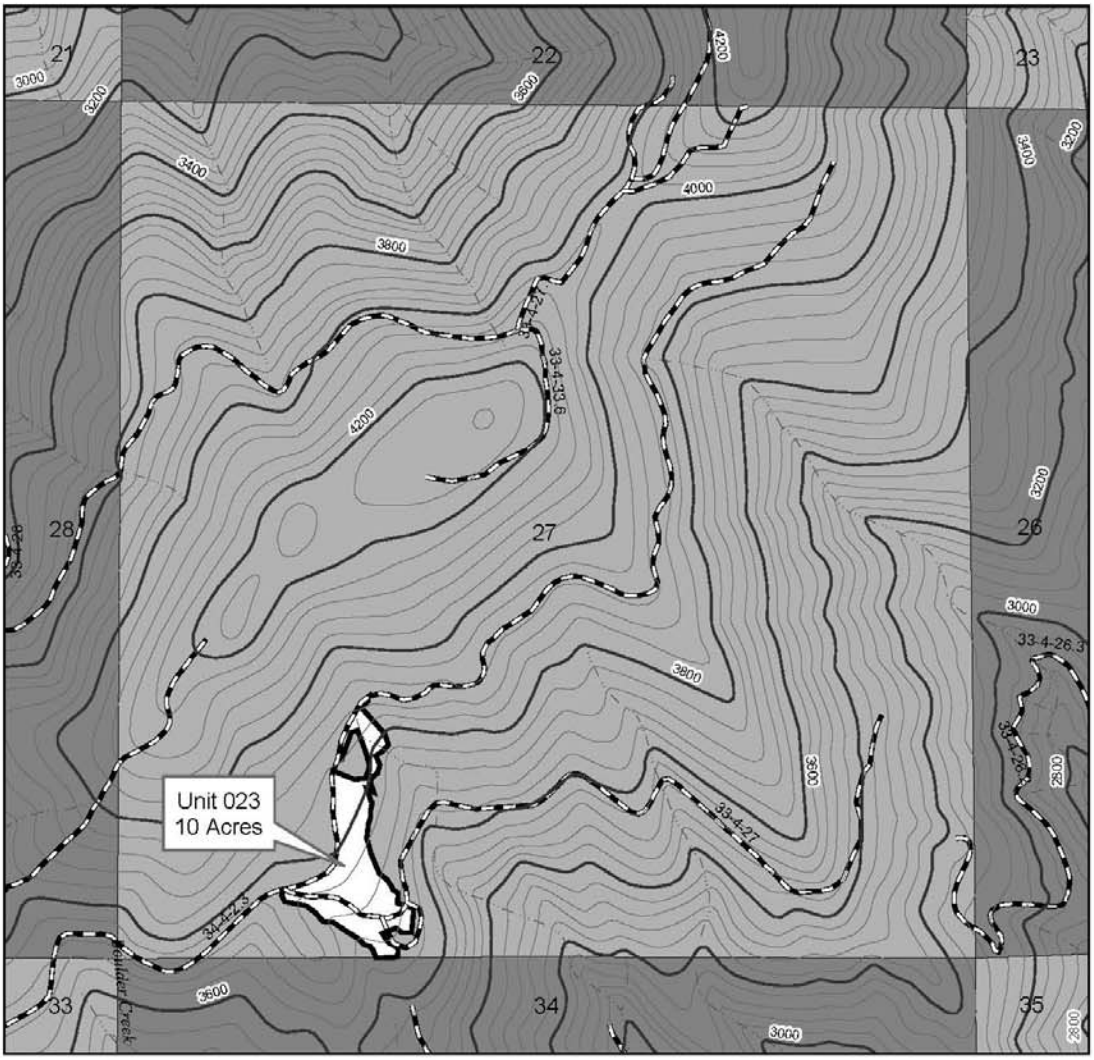
Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
158804	1E	018	4	PCT (16x16)
158806	1E	020	8	PCT (16x16)
		Total	12	

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
June 2008

Pleasant Grave T33S R4W Sec 27



Road
Treatment Area
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
158866	1E	023	10	PCT (16x16)
		Total	10	

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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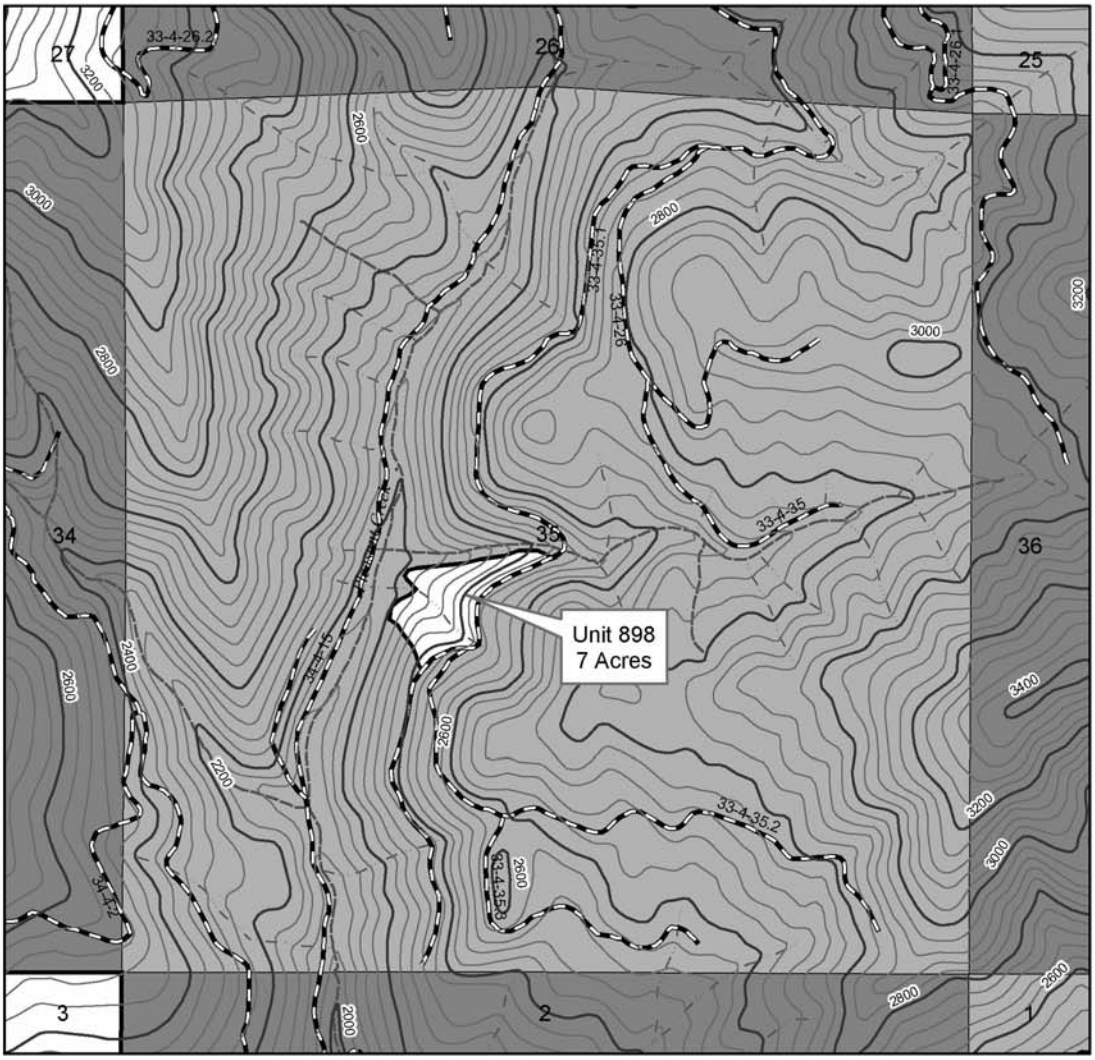
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
July 2008

Pleasant Creek Fir

T33S R4W Sec 35



Treatment Area
Road
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
100 ft. Index Contour
40 ft. Contour
BLM Administered
Non-BLM Land

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
1:12,000

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
158921	1C	898	7	PCT (14x14) + Hdwd Ctrl
		Total	7	

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
July 2008

NEPA Categorical Exclusion Review

Proposed Action:

This action would release existing conifers and selected hardwood sprouts from competition for moisture, nutrients, light, and growing space, by cutting brush and hardwood sprouts within a 6 to 8 foot radius of conifer seedlings and pre-commercially thinning conifers in dense stands. It also would handpile cut material and burn piles in selected units.

Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3.A(3) provides for a review of the following criteria for categorical exclusion to determine if exceptions apply to the proposed action based on actions which may:

1. *Have significant impacts on public health or safety.*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

2. *Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resource; 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); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

3. *Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

4. *Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

5. *Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

6. *Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.*

   ☐ Yes ☒ No

   Initial SLS Remarks:

7. *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.*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

8. *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.*

   Plants ☐ Yes ☒ No Initial MW Remarks:

   Animals ☐ Yes ☒ No Initial DR Remarks:

   Fish ☐ Yes ☑ No Initial JS Remarks:

9. *Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.*

   ☐ Yes ☑ No

   Initial JW Remarks:

10. *Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).*

    ☐ Yes ☑ No

    Initial JW Remarks:

11. *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).*

    ☐ Yes ☑ No

    Initial JW Remarks:

12. *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).*

    ☐ Yes ☒ No

    Initial MW Remarks:

Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Jean Williams	NEPA Coordinator	7-28-08	JW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	7/25/08 mw - 32-1E-17	cleared
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	7-25-08	DR
Steve Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	7-24-08 For Steve Liebhardt	DJ
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	7/23/08	SS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	7/23/08	KVE
Leanne Mruzik	Fire/Fuels Specialist	For Pat Butler 7/24/08	LMG
John McNeel	Cultural Resource Technician	7-23-08	JCM
Randy Bryan	Engineer	7-24-08	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	7/23/08	PL