Categorical Exclusion Documentation

A. Background

BLM Office: **Ashland Resource Area** CE Number: **OR116-08-38**

Proposed Action Project Name: **Burnt Creek Salvage**

Background:

In early January 2008, a series of winter storms hit the West Coast. The storms brought strong winds and heavy rain and snow to southern Oregon and northern California. Wind gusts over 60 miles per hour downed power lines and uprooted trees. Patches of green trees were blown down in a random pattern across the Butte Falls and Ashland Resource Areas. Since the windstorm, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has performed a comprehensive review of the areas impacted by the storm and analyzed the effects of removal of a portion of the timber blown down. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documentation has been completed using both Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Assessment documents.

In order to timely recover some economic value of the damaged timber, reduce potential insect infestation and reduce the risk of fire in advance of the coming fire season, the BLM proposes to implement the Burnt Creek Salvage project as reviewed in this Categorical Exclusion.

Location of Proposed Action:

The Burnt Creek Salvage project area is located on Bureau of Land Management in the Ashland Resource. All proposed salvage would occur on lands designated as matrix in the 1995 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP). Matrix lands are Federal land outside of reserves and special management areas available for timber harvest (RMP p. 38).

Description of Proposed Action:

In the Burnt Creek Salvage project, the BLM proposes to salvage approximately 50 thousand board feet of timber blown down in a wind and snow storm event that occurred in January 2008. The project would remove and sell commercial sized trees that have been blown over or had tops blown out due to the windstorm. The harvest system would be tractor for all units. Trees to be removed are along existing roads with some trees up to 100 feet from the road. The harvest areas are generally able to be reached from existing roads. There are several small areas that may require equipment to leave the road to reach the trees. If leaving the road is required, designated skid trails will be used. See maps for tree locations.

Salvage harvest would include wind thrown trees, trees partially uprooted and leaning, and other trees hazardous to workers and the public. No salvage under this project will occur in

Late-Successional Reserves or Riparian Reserves. Trees proposed for salvage would include trees blown down by the wind storm in excess of those needed to meet the requirements for coarse woody debris established in the Northwest Forest Plan[1] (p. C-40-43 and D-10) and Medford District ROD/RMP (p. 39 and 40). In order to meet coarse woody debris requirements, the BLM would retain a minimum 120 linear feet of coarse woody debris, on average per acre, across salvage units after salvage is completed. Damaged trees with no green limbs remaining could be salvaged; however, standing portions of these trees or portions on the ground would be left on-site if needed to meet coarse woody debris requirements or where salvage is not economically feasible. Merchantable coarse woody debris in excess of the amounts identified as minimum retention levels could be removed as part of the salvage activities.

To reduce the potential wildfire risk logging slash would be hand piled and burned or lopped and scattered where fuel loadings are light.

Design Features for the Proposed Action

- Seasonally restrict harvest activities from March 1 to June 30 to reduce potential disturbance effects to northern spotted owl. The seasonal restriction will be waived if BLM determines no owls are nesting. During implementation of the proposed action, if any owls are discovered in the proximity of harvest units following the sale date, activities will be halted until BLM determines appropriate measures.
- Retain on-site large coarse woody debris of 120 linear feet (16″ X 16′) on average per acre where practical.
- Road surfaces, ditches and culvert catch basins will be cleaned of slash and debris.
- No trees will be removed from riparian reserves. No skid trails allowed in riparian reserves.
- With the exception of a few smaller patches of trees, the harvest areas are able to be reached from existing roads. Designated skid roads will be used to reach trees not accessible via existing roads. No yarding up and down dry draws. Restrict tractor and mechanical operations to slopes generally less than 35 percent.
- Tractor yarding on designated skid trails would occur between June 15 to October 15 or on approval by the Contract Administrator. Some variations in these dates would be permitted dependent upon weather and soil moisture conditions. The sale administrator would immediately shut down all timber harvest and yarding operations if excessive soil damage would occur due to changing weather or soil moisture conditions.
- Wash equipment including undercarriages prior to entry onto BLM-administered lands to remove mud, dirt, and plant parts.

[1] *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, April 1994.

- Areas with disturbance will be seeded with an approved native grass seed mix to encourage rehabilitation and to minimize the potential for post-harvest noxious weed infestation.
- The BLM completed botany surveys and there are several sites of Medford District Sensitive plants in project area. Protection measures have been put in place to prevent impacts to the known botanical species sites. If during implementation of the proposed project, any new District Sensitive plants are found, the BLM will determine appropriate measures to apply based on species, proposed treatment, site-specific environmental conditions, and available management recommendations.
- Diffuse Knapweed and Canada thistle are known to occur on road systems in the area. These populations will be treated manually or chemically prior to the start of the project. All vehicles and heavy equipment working off improved roads will be cleaned of dirt and debris before being transported to the work site.
- Weed monitoring and treatments will occur for at least three consecutive years after contract termination but dependent on funding.
- Store all hazardous materials and petroleum products in durable containers placed outside of riparian reserves so an accidental spill will be contained and will not drain into the stream system.
- Refuel equipment in locations outside riparian reserves.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

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* (PRMP/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* (ROD, 2007)
- *Medford District Integrated Weed Management Plan Environmental Assessment (1998)* and tiered to the *Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program* (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 "Provide for salvage harvest of timber killed or

damaged by events such as wildfire, windstorms, insects, or disease, consistent with management objectives for other resources." "Provide for the safety of forest users (including removing hazard trees along roads and trails, in camp grounds, and administrative sites, etc.)" (USDI 1995, p. 72).

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with the Department of the Interior Manual Section 516 DM 11.9 C(8) and C(3) as follows:

Salvaging dead or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 miles of temporary road construction.

These categorical exclusions are appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment as documented in the following table. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply.

D. Categorical Exclusion Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	**YES**	**NO**
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
Rationale: Salvage operations will follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards designed to prevent job-related illness or injuries. Salvage operations will remove or fall standing trees that represent a hazard to workers and the public. The BLM will require the use of signs and flaggers for controlling traffic on roads that pass through the project area when necessary for public 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); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
Rationale: Salvage will occur only within designated sale units. These units by design, are located outside the unique geographic areas listed above. There are no park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild and scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; or other ecologically significant or critical areas within the project area. The project was reviewed for heritage sites and there are no known sites that will be affected by the implementation of the project. A site specific heritage survey was conducted at all individual locations with no heritage resources discovered. This project will be a no effect undertaking relative to heritage resources. The windstorm and resulting tree blowdown altered the habitat for migratory birds. The salvage would not change the overall habitat function as it now exists; therefore, the proposed action would not have significant impacts on migratory birds.		

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	**YES**	**NO**
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X
Rationale: Public comments received during scoping indicated differences of opinion regarding whether or not to salvage blown down timber. While differences in public opinion regarding managed versus unmanaged forests reflect a range of values that humans place on public lands and its management, they do not indicate the presence of highly controversial environmental effects. "Highly controversial", in the context of 40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4), refers to substantial disagreement within the scientific community about the environmental effects of a proposed action. It does not refer to expressions of opposition or expressions of preference among alternatives. The effects of the Burnt Creek Salvage project are similar in nature to those of other commercial timber sales, including timber salvage projects that have been implemented within the scope of the Medford District Resource Management Plan.		
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists for the Burnt Creek Salvage project reviewed the project and determined there is no threat of significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks.		
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
Rationale: Salvage operations have occurred on the Medford District in the past and are likely to occur in the future. However, each salvage project contains its own set of conditions that must be evaluated on its own merit, as the BLM has done with this project. Land use allocations and environmental conditions, such as remaining vegetation, slopes, soils, and streams, are unique to each project and must be considered anew as each opportunity for salvage occurs.		
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the project based on current conditions on the ground. The team did not find any resource issues of concern that will be affected by this project. The salvage project would reduce the potential of an insect infestation and the increased fire hazard risk within the project area resulting from conditions caused by the blowdown. Implementation of full riparian reserves and Design Features will aid in the preventing stream sedimentation. The Project Design Features serve as a basis for resource protection in the implementation of this project.		
2.7 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.		X
Rationale: The project was reviewed for heritage sites and there are no known sites that will be affected by the implementation of the project.		
2.8 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.		X
Rationale: BLM has surveyed the salvage areas for Bureau special status species plants and provided protection measures to protect known sites. If, during implementation of the proposed action, a species is discovered the BLM will apply the appropriate protective measures in accordance with the Design Features listed for this project. BLM will implement a seasonal restriction to reduce potential for disturbance to spotted owls. The salvage will not change the function of spotted owl habitat. Activities are not proposed for riparian reserves, therefore, designated Critical Habitat for fish will not be affected.		

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	**YES**	**NO**
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team for the Burnt Creek Salvage project reviewed the project for compliance with applicable laws such as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, and Archaeological Resources Protection Act, among others. The specialists found the project conforms to the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District ROD/RMP, which complies with all applicable Federal and State law.		
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
Rationale: Based on past projects in the Medford District, the proposed salvage will provide job opportunities in communities such as Butte Falls, the closest incorporated city to the project area. In the 2000 census, 22 percent of the population of Butte Falls was below the poverty level. The Burnt Creek Salvage could provide job opportunities for Butte Falls that range from the harvesting of trees to processing the wood into lumber.		
2.11 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).		X
Rationale: The project Archaeological Technician conducted a cultural survey in the project area. No Indian sacred sites were identified during the survey.		
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native 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).		X
Rationale: The implementation of Design Features such as washing equipment prior to entry to the project area and using native seed and weed-free mulch after final disturbance, and the ongoing treatment of noxious weeds in the project area will reduce the risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds. Vehicles accessing the project area would stay on existing roads (no road construction is proposed), reducing the potential of picking up and dispersing noxious weeds or seed.		

I considered the potential for significant impacts to threatened and endangered or Bureau sensitive species of fish, wildlife, and plants; cultural resources; noxious weeds; and soil and hydrologic resources. Where appropriate, BLM has completed surveys for those resources and implemented appropriate management recommendations where deemed necessary. The Design Features in Section A of this Categorical Exclusion Documentation will further protect those resources from the potential for significant impacts resulting from implementation of the Proposed Action. Implementing the Burnt Creek Salvage project enables the BLM to timely recover some economic value of the damaged timber, reduce potential insect infestation danger and increase the ability to control a wildfire should one occur in the area.

E. Signature of Authorizing Official

John Gerritsma
Field Manager, Ashland Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

8/14/08
Date

F. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this Categorical Exclusion review, contact Edward Reilly, Environmental Coordinator, 541-618-2497, Medford District BLM, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504

U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 38 S. R. 3 E. SEC 22 AND 27
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
CONTRACT NO. OR 110-TS08-33
EXHIBIT A
PAGE ? OF ?

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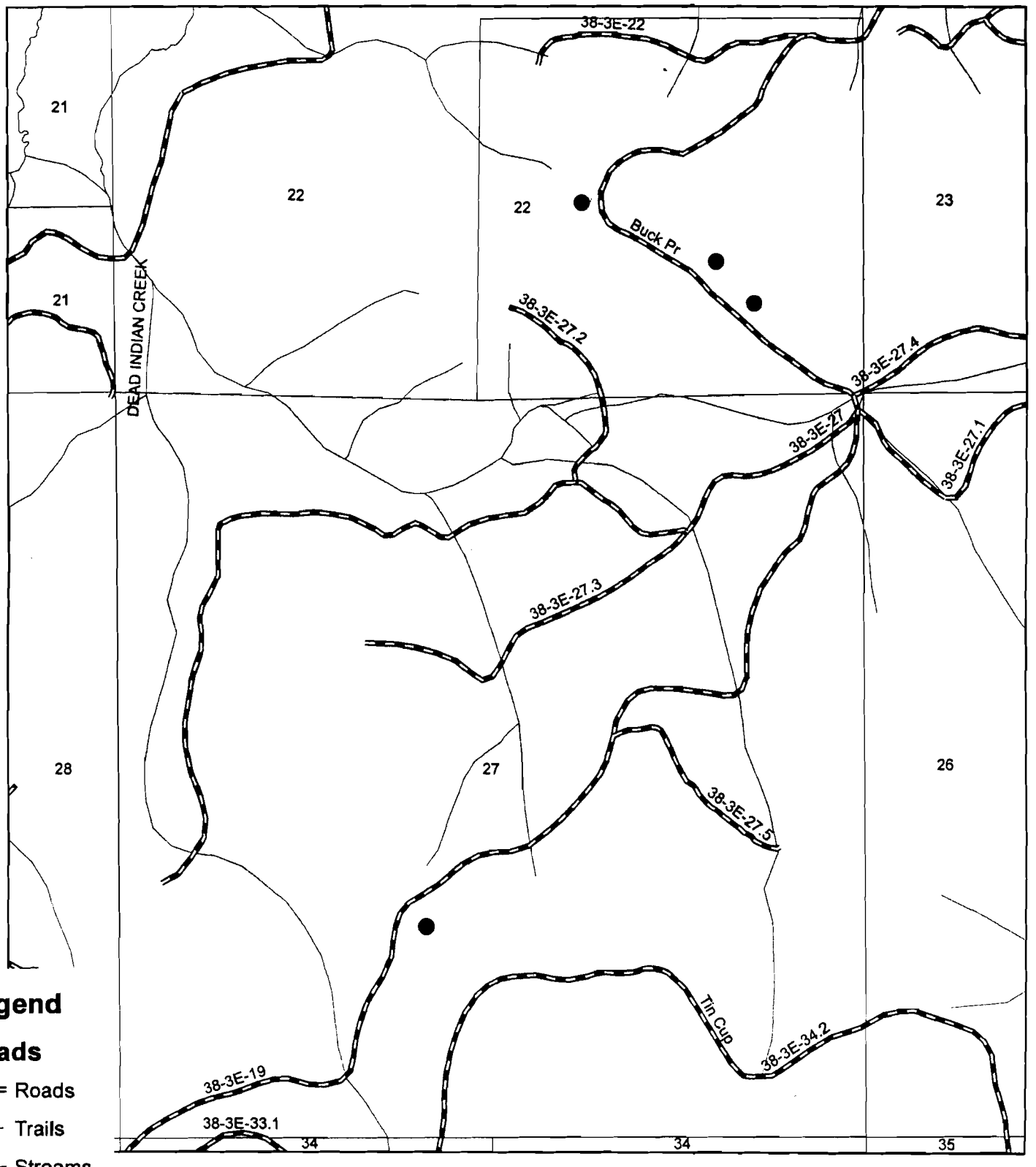

Legend

Roads

- Roads
- Trails
- Streams
- Sections
- BLM
- Appoximate Areas of Blowdown

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

1 inch equals 1,000 feet

N

U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 38 S. R. 3 E. SEC 29
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
CONTRACT NO. OR 110-TS08-33
EXHIBIT A
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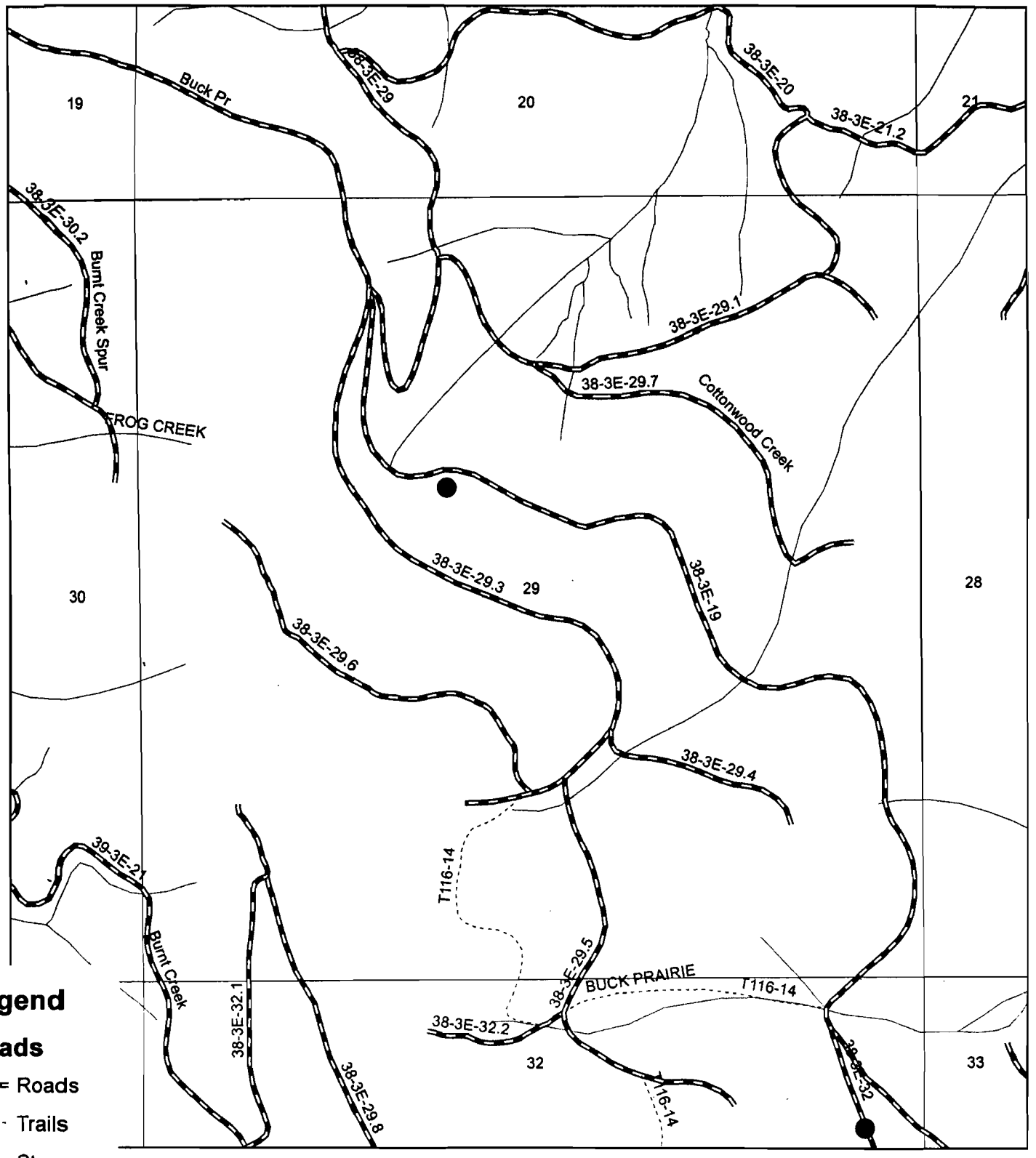

Legend

Roads

- Roads
- Trails
- Streams
- Sections
- BLM
- Appoximate Areas of Blowdown

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1 inch equals 949.798744 feet

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U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 38 S. R. 3 E. SEC 32
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
CONTRACT NO. OR 110-TS08-33
EXHIBIT A
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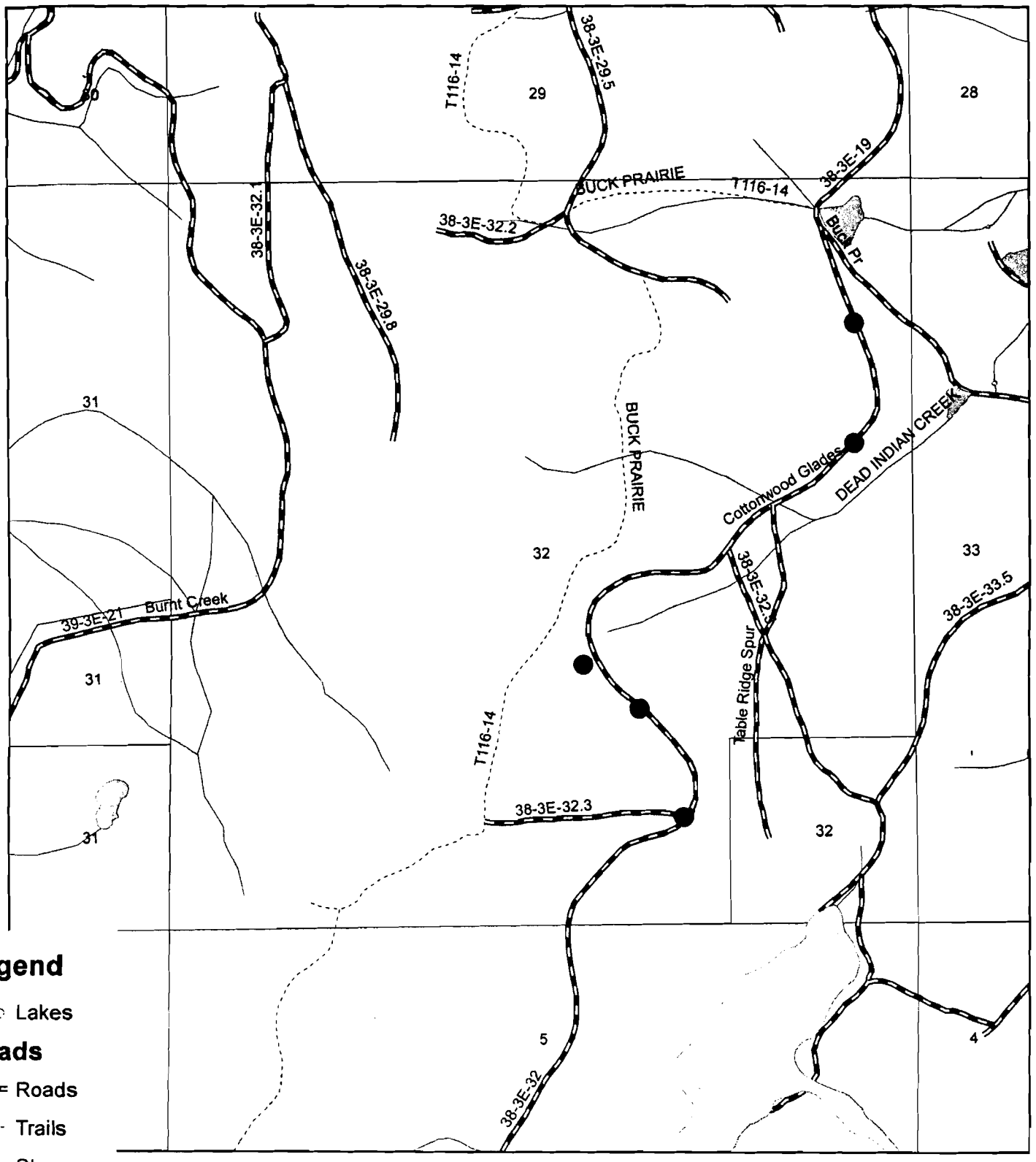

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Lakes

Roads

Roads

Trails

Streams

Sections

BLM

Appoximate Areas of Blowdown

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

1 inch equals 1,000 feet

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U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 38 S. R. 3 E. SEC 33
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
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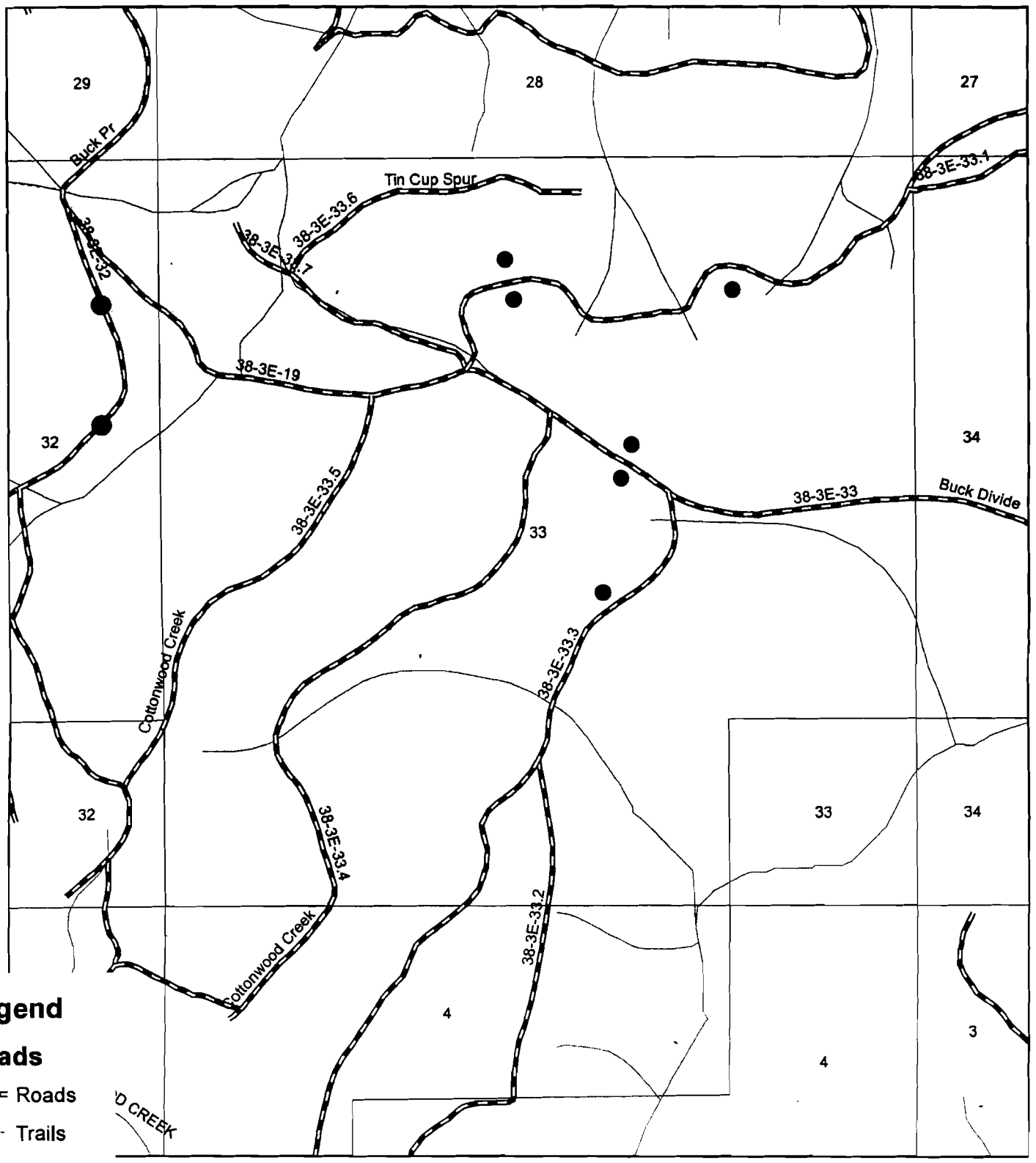

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Roads

- Roads
- Trails
- Streams
- Sections
- BLM
- Appoximate Areas of Blowdown

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

1 inch equals 1,000 feet

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U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 39 S. R. 3 E. SEC 7
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
CONTRACT NO. OR 110-TS08-33
EXHIBIT A
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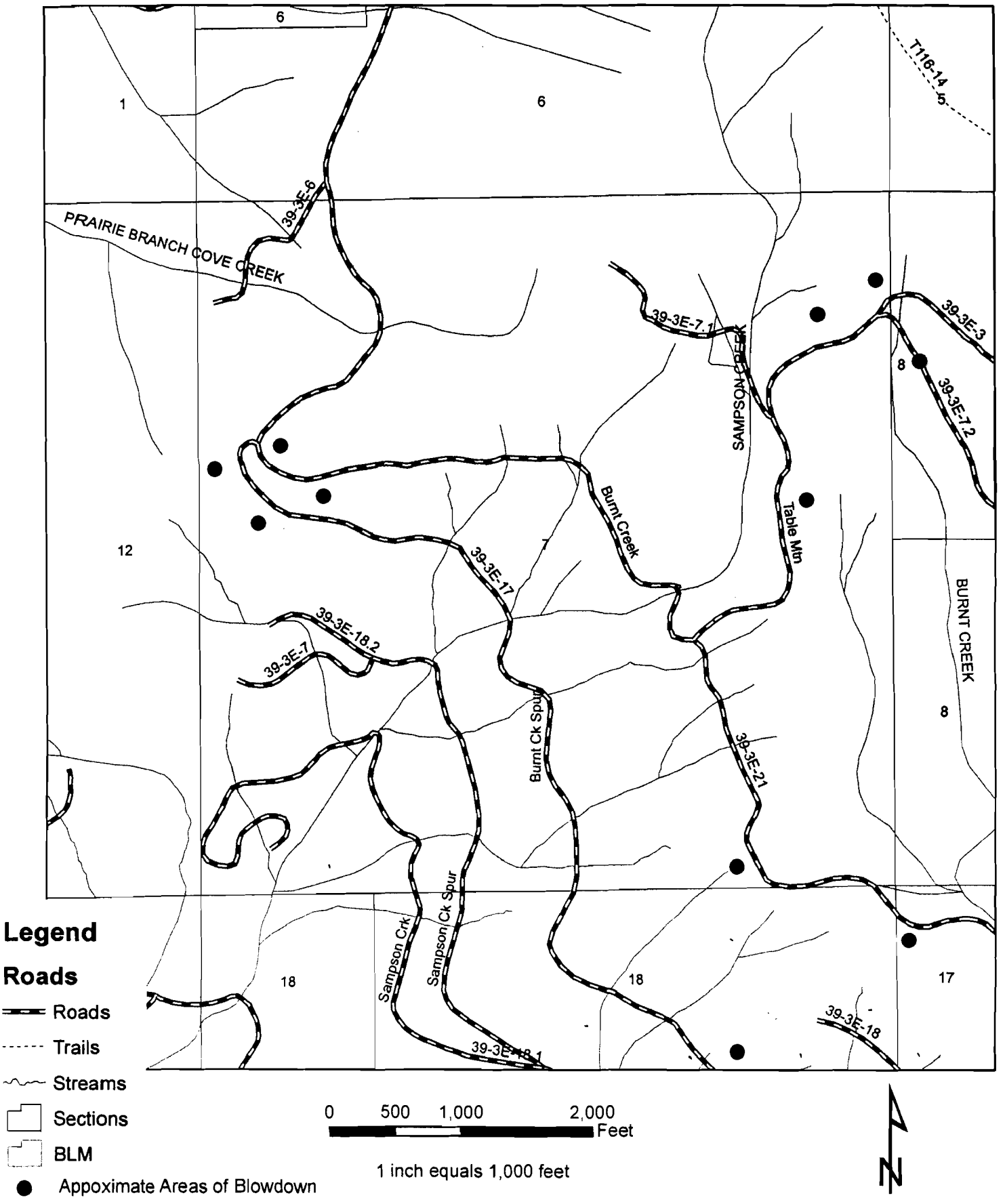

U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 39 S. R. 3 E. SEC. ~~5 AND 6~~ 8 and 9
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
CONTRACT NO. OR 110-TS08-33
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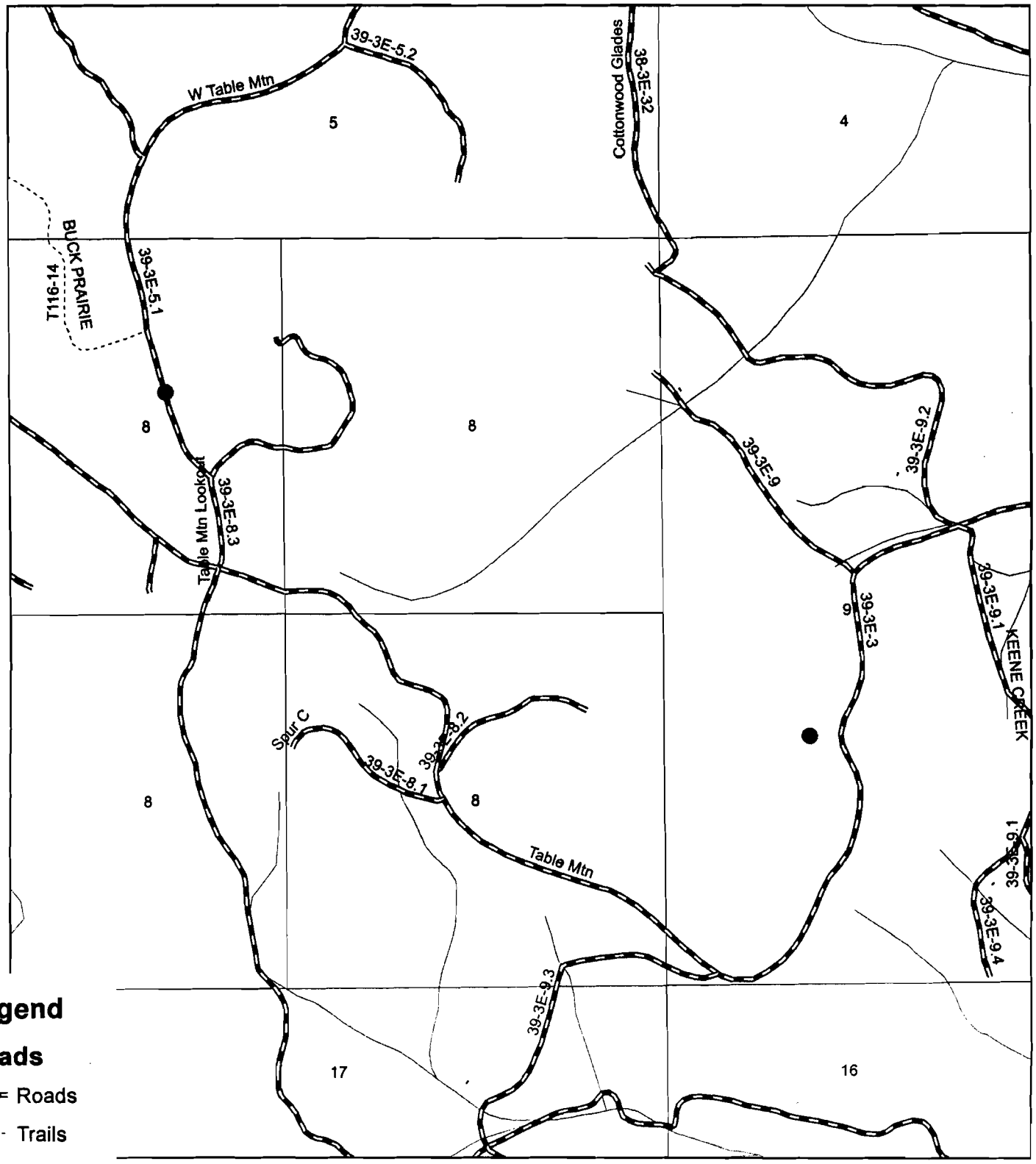

Legend

Roads

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- Streams
- Sections
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- Appoximate Areas of Blowdown

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

1 inch equals 1,000 feet

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U.S.D.I. BLM MEDFORD DISTRICT SALE NO. TS08-33
T. 39 S. R. 3 E. SEC 18
BURNT CREEK BLOWDOWN SALVAGE

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP
CONTRACT NO. OR 110-TS08-33
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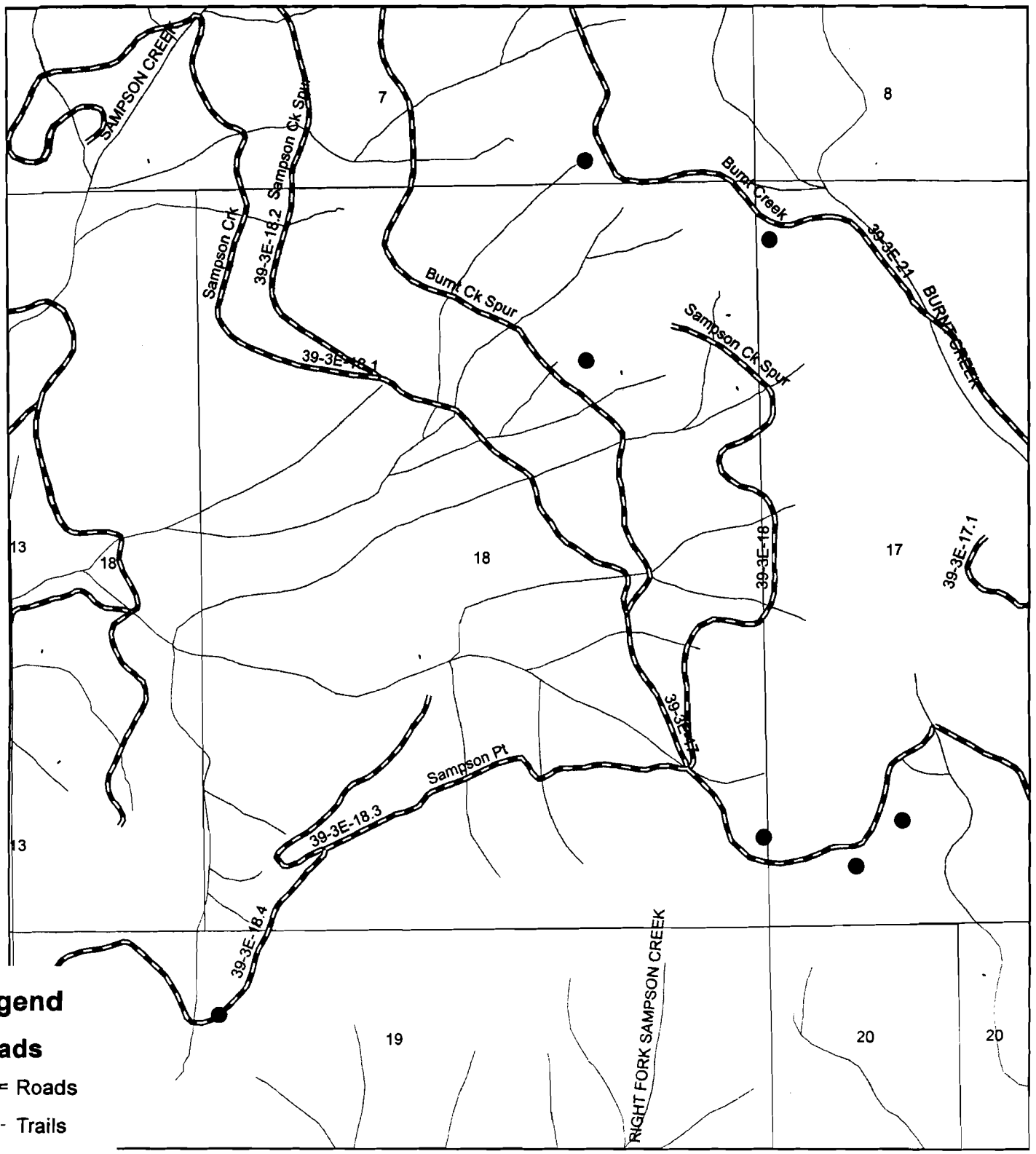

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