

## **Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record for Precommercial Thinning, Brush and Hardwood Cutting, Girdling, and Hardwood Clump Control in the Butte Falls Resource Area**

### **DOI-BLM-OR-M050-2010-0021-CX**

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#### **Description of Proposed Action**

The Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to treat up to 450 acres. These acres would be treated 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.

**Precommercial Thinning:** In precommercial thinning (PCT) units, conifers less than 8 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) would be manually cut using chainsaws or hand tools, leaving an average 14-foot by 14-foot spacing retaining approximately 220 trees per acre, or a 16-foot by 16-foot spacing retaining approximately 170 trees per acre. Thinned conifers 6 to 8 inches DBH would be girdled rather than felled. Dominant conifers would be preferred for retention and species preference would depend on site conditions. Generally, drier sites would retain more ponderosa pine and incense cedar, and moist sites would retain more Douglas-fir, sugar pine, and true fir. Spacing would be varied to leave dominant trees; however, the overall trees per acre retained would average 220 trees for 14 foot spacing and 170 trees for 16 foot spacing.

**Brush and Hardwood Cutting:** Units receiving brush 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.

**Girdling and Hardwood Clump Control:** Units located in the Timbered Rock Fire area receiving brush cutting and hardwood clump control would have the competing vegetation (shrubs and hardwood sprouts) cut with chainsaws or hand tools within a 6-foot radius of the conifer. Brush and hardwoods 6 inches DBH and less would be cut and hardwoods 6.1 to 11.9 inches DBH would be girdled. Up to 2 hardwood stems, if present, would be retained within 6 feet of existing conifer trees. Hardwoods 12 inches DBH and greater would be reserved along with all conifers.

In all units, severed brush and hardwoods would be cut and scattered to a depth of less than 3 feet. All vegetation outside of the 6- or 8-foot radius around the conifer would be retained. All conifers 8" DBH and greater, and all hardwoods 12" DBH and greater would be reserved in all units.

The project is proposed on BLM-administered lands in the following locations:

Township 32 South, Range 1 East, section 33

Township 32 South, Range 1 West, sections 21, 28

Township 33 South, Range 3 West, section 23

Township 34 South, Range 2 East, section 5  
Township 34 South, Range 2 West, section 1  
Township 34 South, Range 3 East, section 25  
Township 34 South, Range 3 West, sections 1, 33  
Township 34 South, Range 4 West, sections 3, 31, 32

The proposed project is located in the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM, Jackson County. See attached unit list and maps for exact locations of project 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 in conformance with objectives, land use allocations, and management direction of the 1995 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) and any plan amendments in effect at the time this document is published.

This project also conforms with the 1994 *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)

The proposed action was designed to be consistent 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 1995 ROD/RMP that directs the BLM to:

- “Apply silvicultural systems that are planned to produce over time, forests that have desired species composition, structural characteristics, and distribution of seral or age classes (Appendix E)” (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 72).
- “Silvicultural practices include: site preparation, conifer regeneration, stand protection, stand maintenance, precommercial thinning and release, commercial thinning, fertilization, pruning, forest condition restoration treatments, and salvage.” (1995 ROD/RMP, Appendix E, p. 183)
- “Plan and implement silvicultural treatments inside late-successional reserves that are beneficial to the creation of late-successional habitat (Appendix E). This will be accomplished by precommercial or commercial thinning of stands regardless of origin” (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 33).

## **Project Design Features**

1. Within riparian reserves, do not treat brush and hardwoods within 35 feet slope distance (each side) of intermittent streams and within 60 feet slope distance (each side) of all perennial and fish-bearing streams. Units receiving PCT would have conifers thinned to the specified spacing (14 or 16 feet) through the riparian area. Hardwoods and brush would be reserved.
2. Protect known Special Status plant sites using no-entry buffers. Buffers will be determined based on species, proposed treatment, site-specific environmental conditions, and available management recommendations.
3. Seasonally restrict activities from March 1 through June 30 within 200 feet of northern spotted owl nest sites, unless instructed differently by the BLM wildlife biologist. The restriction may be extended up to September 30 if nesting activity is occurring at that time.
4. If any cultural materials (i.e., historic or prehistoric) are discovered during project implementation, cease all activities immediately and notify a BLM archaeologist.
5. Refuel equipment, including chainsaws and other hand power tools, at least 100 feet from water bodies to prevent direct delivery of contaminants into a water body.
6. Operate vehicles on existing roads and trails.
7. Pick up all trash and garbage and dispose of properly.
8. Prohibit overnight camping at the project site or in the surrounding area.

## **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.”

Before any action described in the list of categorical exclusions may be used, the “extraordinary circumstances,” included in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 43 CFR 46.205(c) 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.

**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 precommercially thinning conifers in dense stands.

The Code of Federal Regulations at 43 CFR 46.205(c) requires that "any action that is normally categorically excluded must be evaluated to determine whether it meets any of the extraordinary circumstances in section 46.215" (listed below). Additional analysis and environmental documents must be completed for any normally categorically excluded action which may

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

Yes  No

Initial JJ& Remarks:

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.*

Yes  No

Initial RW 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 JJ& Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial JJA 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 RW Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial JS Remarks:

7. *Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.*

Yes  No

Initial RW 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 AS 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 RW Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial JS 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 RW 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:

## Decision

It is my decision to implement the precommercial thinning, brush and hardwood cutting, girdling, and hardwood clump control, as described in the Proposed Action and as shown on the attached project maps, in fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

## 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.



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Jon K. Raby  
Field Manager  
Butte Falls Resource Area

9/10/10

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.

**Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:**

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Robyn Wicks	NEPA Coordinator	8/30/2010	RW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	8/17/10	mw
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	7/29/10	D.R.
Angela San Filippo	Fisheries Biologist	7/21	AS
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	7/27/10	SLS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	7/27/10	KBV
Al Mason	Fire/Fuels Specialist	7/21	APM
Ron Gregory	Archaeologist	8/30/10	R24
Randy Bryan	Engineer	7/26/10	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	7/21/10	TL

Seasonal restriction  
for owls  
34-4W-31/32  
34-3E-25  
3/1 - 6/30

Map 1. Timbered Rock Fire

T32S R1E Sec 33



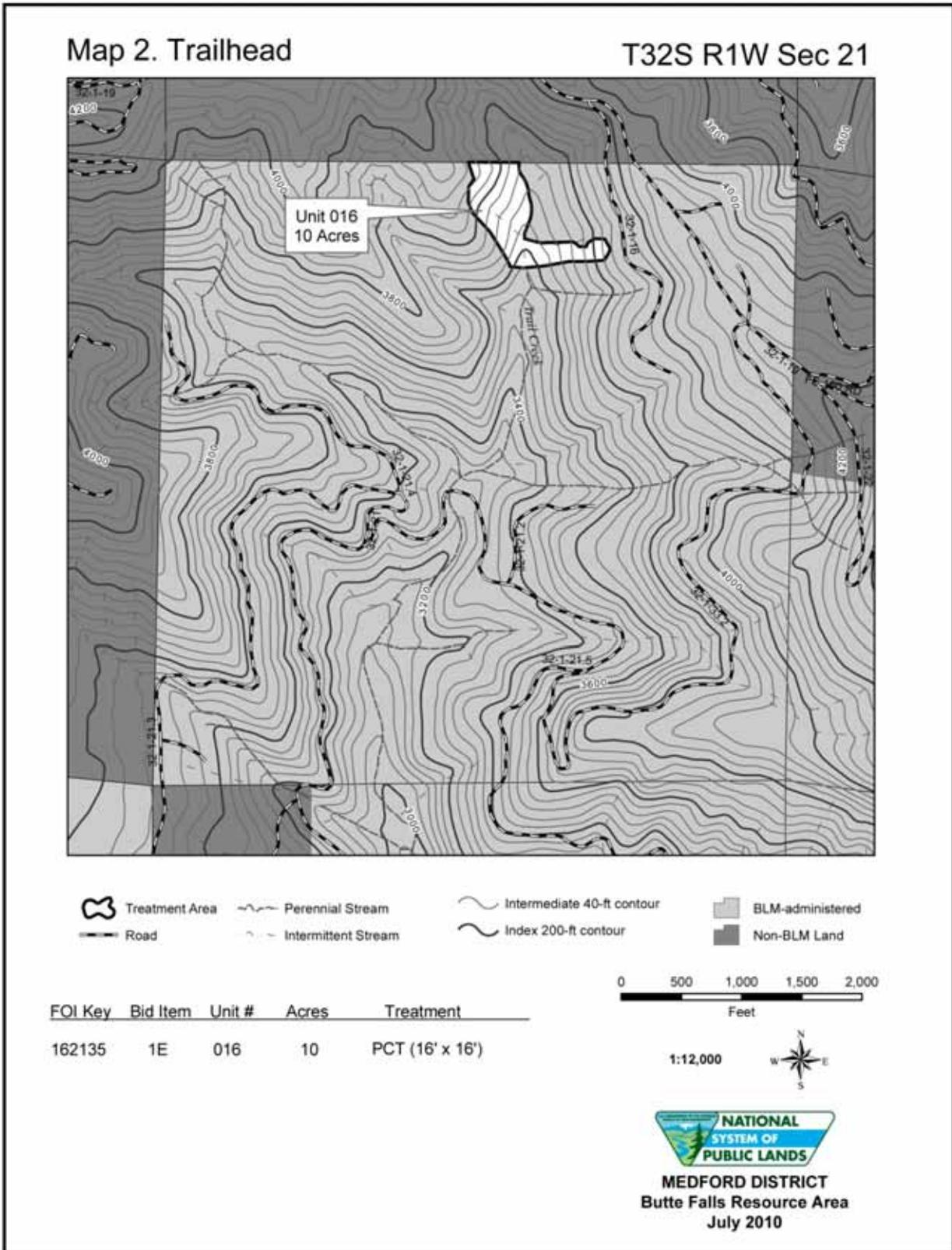
- Treatment Area
- 40 ft Contour
- Perennial Stream
- BLM-administered
- Road
- 100ft Contour
- Intermittent Stream
- Non-BLM Land



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
161900	1-O	33-1a	73	Brush & Hrdwd Clmp Cntrl
160382		Total	73	

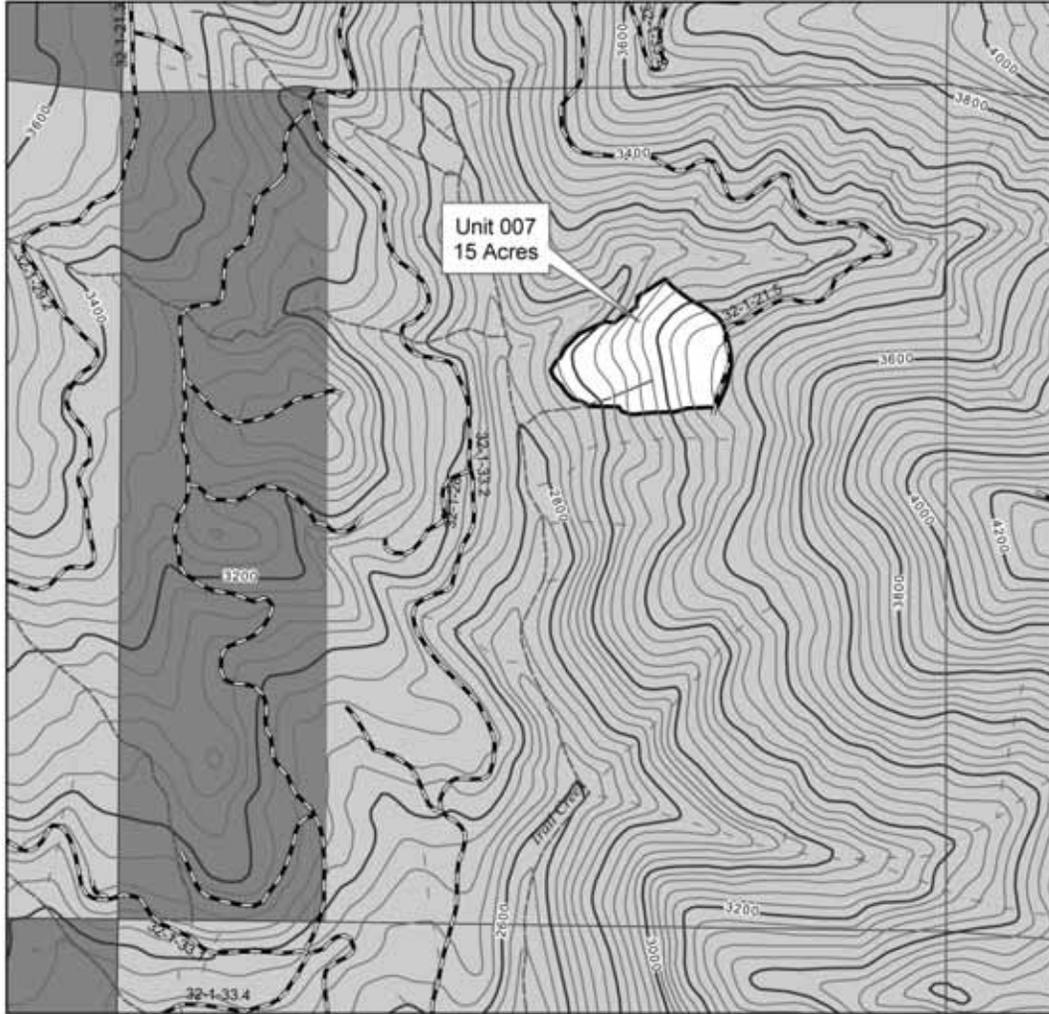


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July 2010



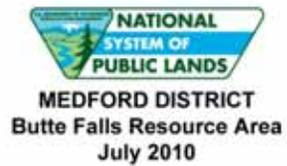
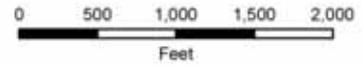
Map 3. Trailhead

T32S R1W Sec 28



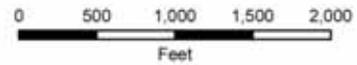
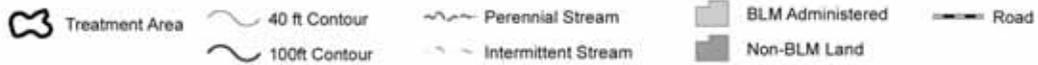
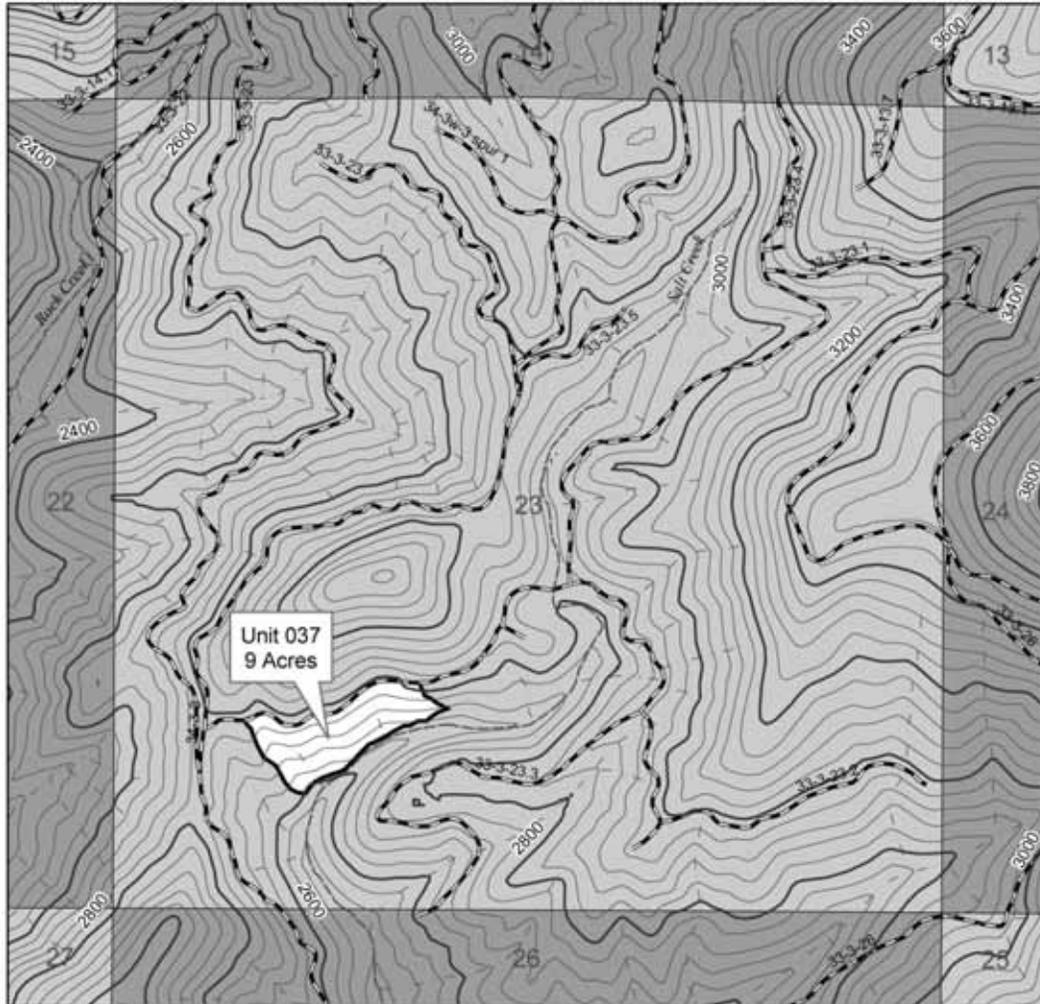
-  Treatment Area
-  Perennial Stream
-  Intermediate 40-ft contour
-  BLM-administered
-  Road
-  Intermittent Stream
-  Index 200-ft contour
-  Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162269	1E	007	15	PCT (16' x 16')



Map 4. Old Salt

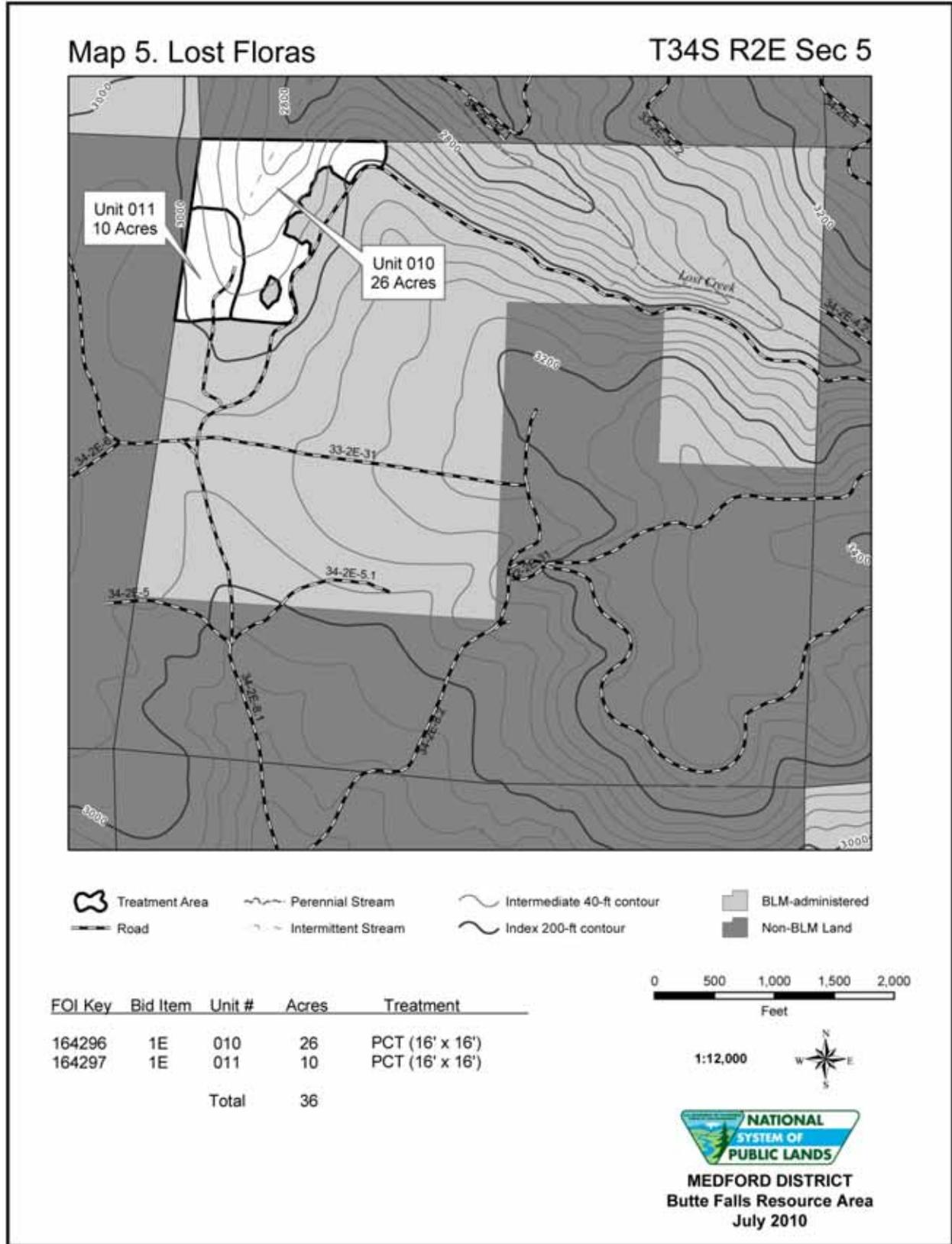
T33S R3W Sec 23



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164390	1-F	037	9	PCT (16x) & Hdwd Control
		Total	9	

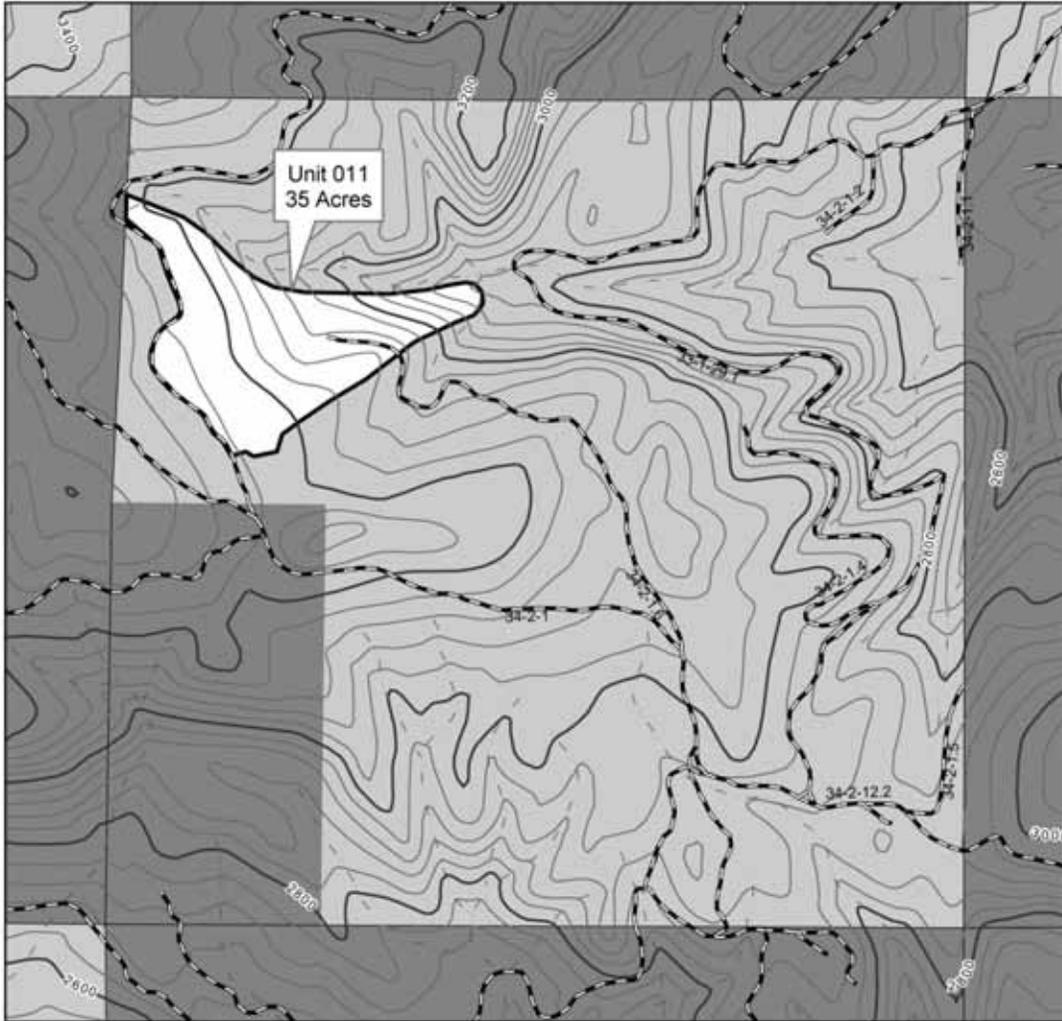


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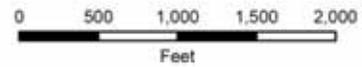


Map 6. Cabin Board

T34S R2W Sec 1



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



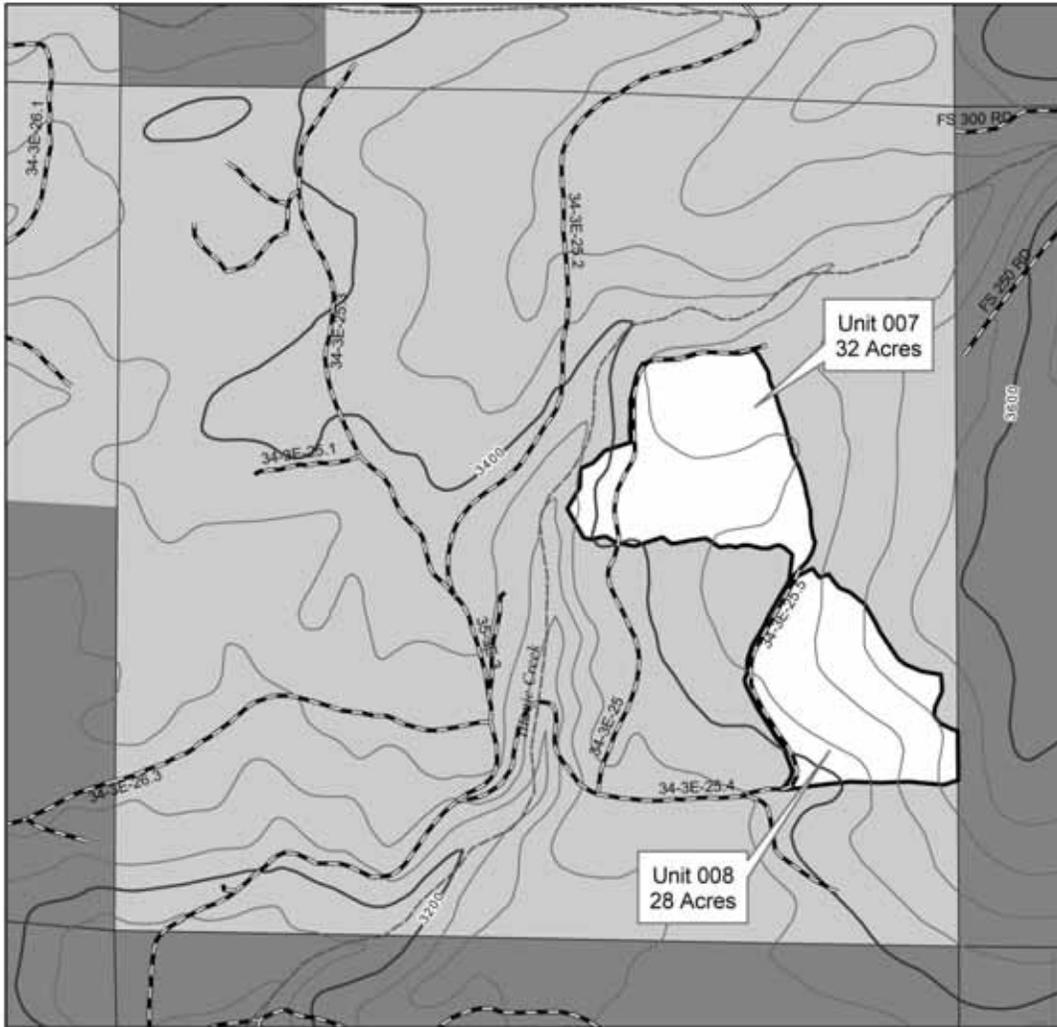
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164266	1F	011	35	PCT (16x) & Hdwd Control



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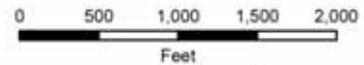
Map 7. Frozen Titanic

T34S R3E Sec 25

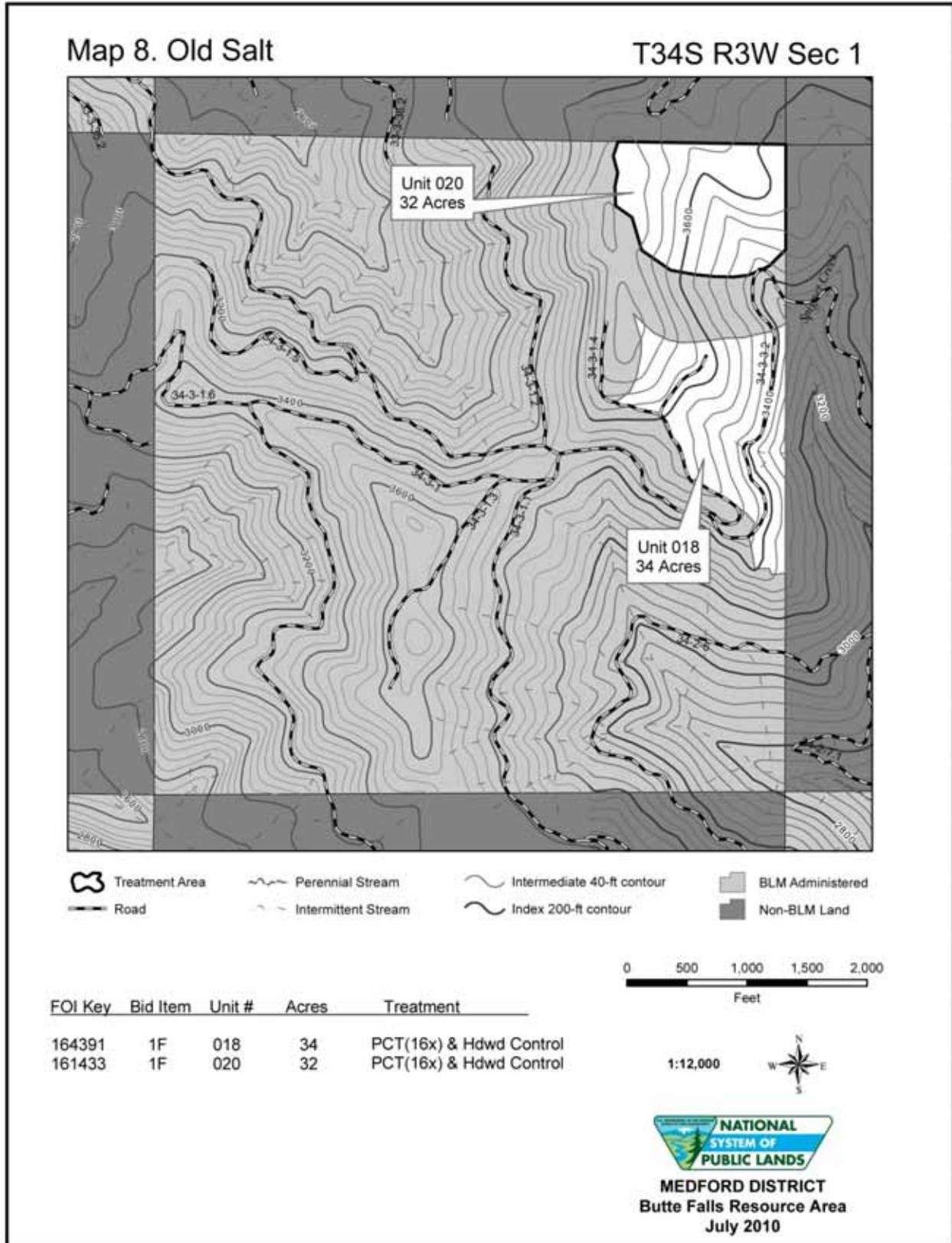


-  Treatment Area
-  Perennial Stream
-  Intermediate 40-ft contour
-  BLM-administered
-  Road
-  Intermittent Stream
-  Index 200-ft contour
-  Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164310	1E	007	32	PCT (16' x 16')
164311	1E	008	28	PCT (16' x 16')
		Total	60	

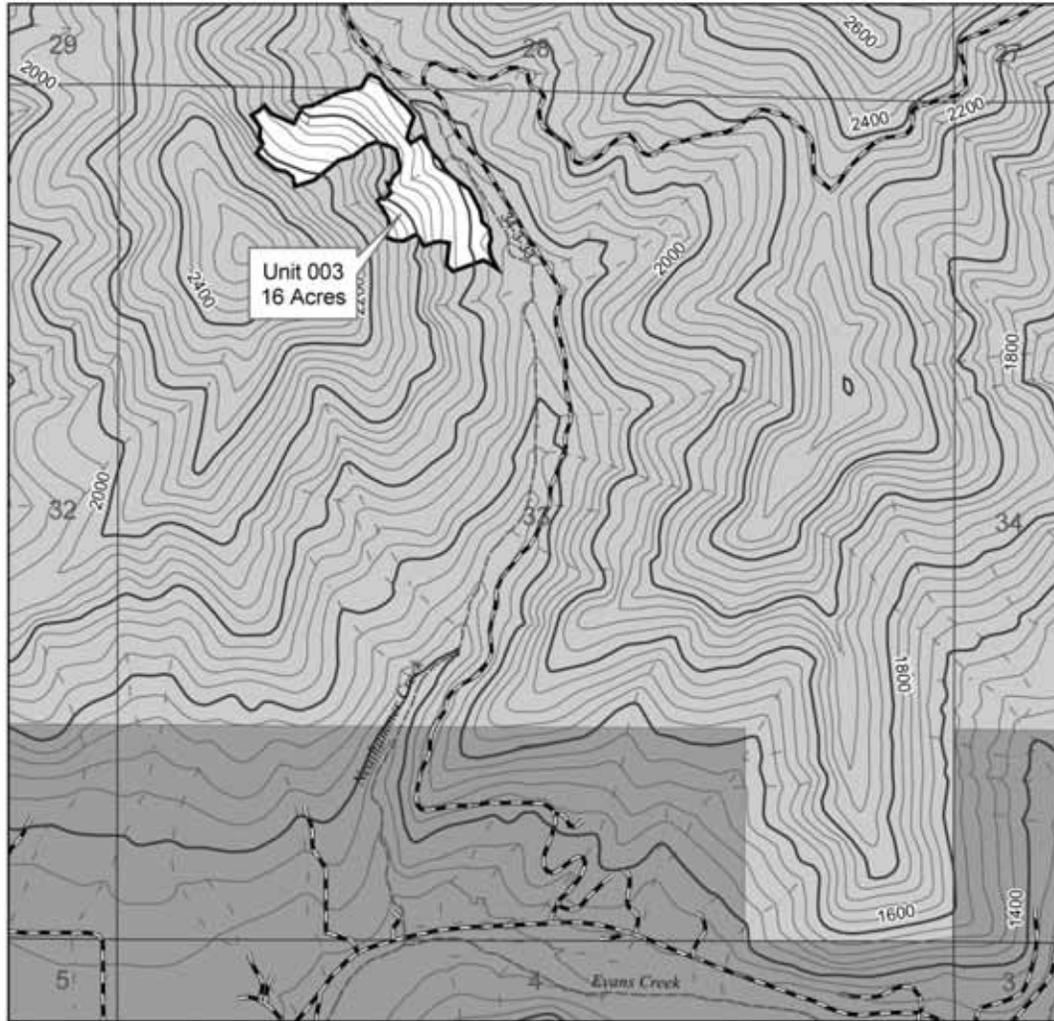


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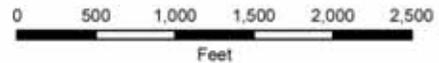


Map 9. Neathammer Gulch

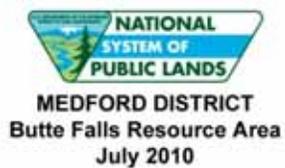
T34S R3W Sec 33



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

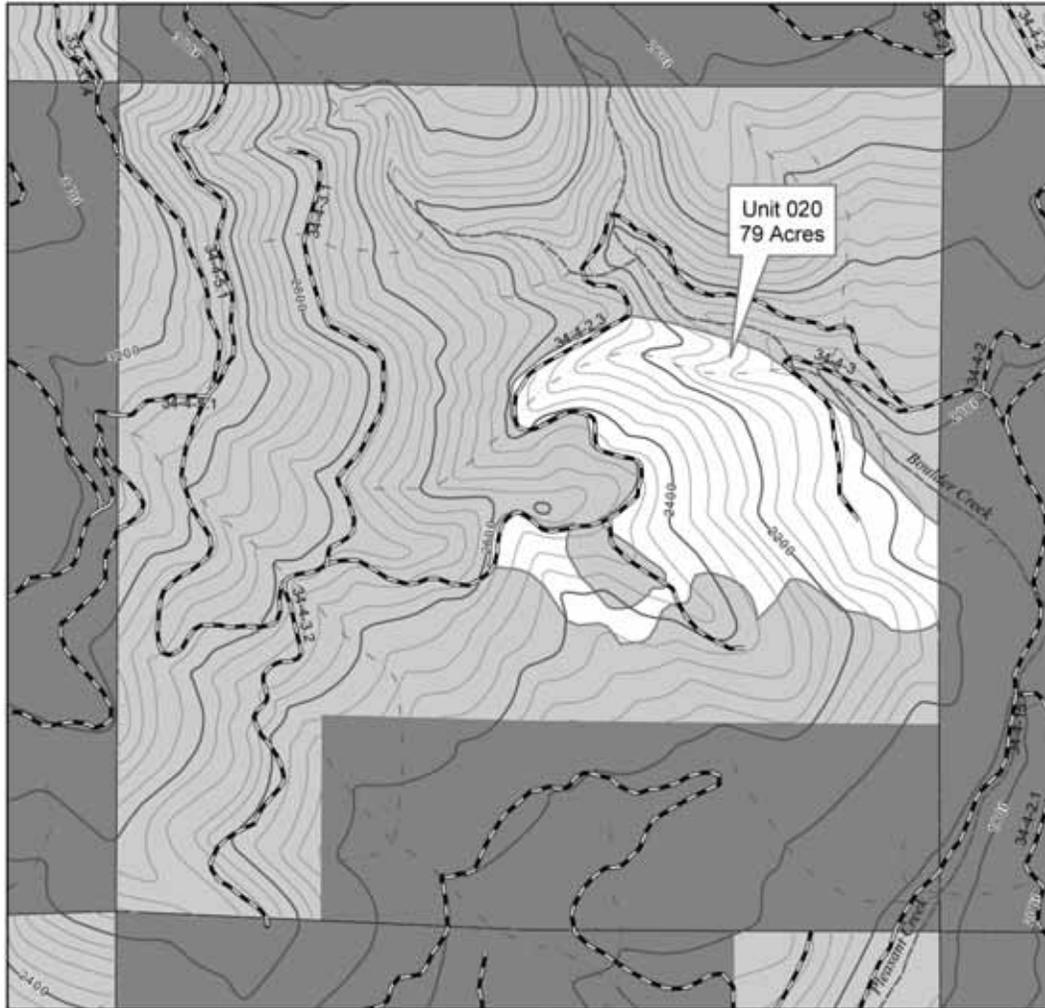


FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
155507	1-F	003	16	PCT (16x) & Hdwd Control
		Total	16	

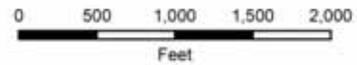


Map 10. Pleasantly Hot

T34S R4W Sec 3



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



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
155597	1F	006	79	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



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