

Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record for Conifer Limb Pruning in the Butte Falls Resource Area.

DOI-BLM-OR-M050-2009-0044-CX

Description of Proposed Action

The Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM), proposes to prune limbs on conifer trees on approximately 250 acres. Within the treatment units, approximately 70 conifers per acre would be pruned on an average 25 foot by 25 foot spacing. Priority for treatment would be the dominant conifer trees and species preference for treatment would be sugar pine, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine in that order. Good tree condition and dominance in the stand would determine the preferred trees for pruning over even spacing with overall pruning of 70 trees per acre. The proposed activities would occur in stands dominated by conifers generally under 30 years of age and less than 10 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).

Conifers would be pruned using hand tools such as hand pruning saws, loppers, or hand shears to a height of 9 feet, or half the height of the tree if the tree is less than 18 feet high, removing all limbs to that height. Prune trees between 4" and 12" DBH. Prune limbs so that limb stubs after pruning are no more than 0.25 inches from the bole of the tree.

The objective of the proposed treatment is to improve wood quality on selected conifers, reduce susceptibility to blister rust on pruned sugar pine, and reduce continuity of ladder fuels on pruned conifers.

All treatments would occur in the Butte Falls Resource Area, Jackson County, Oregon in fiscal years 2009 and 2010. See attached maps for exact locations of project units and specific treatments.

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 Environmental Impact Statement for the Revision of the Resource Management Plans of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management and Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan for the Medford District* (EIS, 2008 and ROD/RMP, 2008)
- *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)

This proposal conforms to the Medford District's 2008 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP) (USDI 2008). This project complies with the Management Objectives and Direction of the 2008 ROD/RMP. In addition, this project fully complies with the management objectives, actions, and direction of the 1995 ROD/RMP, as amended (USDI 1995). 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 1995 and 2008 ROD/RMPs 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, p. 185)” (USDI 1995 ROD, p. 72).
- “Apply pruning to enhance timber value and for fuels and disease management.” (USDI 2008 RMP, p. 41).

Project Design Features

1. Use hand tools such as pruning saws, shears, or loppers. Power equipment such as chain saws will not be allowed.
2. Leave severed conifer limbs on the ground, not leaning against the tree, or pile with slash if the unit pruned had also been precommercially thinned and piled at the same time.
3. Allow no ground disturbing activities associated with the pruning on any of the units treated.
4. Seasonally restrict pruning within 200 feet of northern spotted owl (NSO) nest sites or NSO activity centers from March 1 through June 30 of a given year. This may be extended up to September 30 if nesting activity is occurring at that time.
5. Within Riparian Management Areas, do not prune within 35 feet slope distance (each side) of intermittent streams and within 60 feet slope distance (each side) all perennial streams.
6. Pick up all trash and garbage and dispose of properly.
7. No overnight camping will be allowed at the site or in the surrounding area.
8. Operate vehicles 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”.

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:**

The BLM proposes to prune the limbs from young conifers using nonmotorized hand tools on approximately 200 acres. All limbs would be removed up to 9 feet high or half the height of the tree if the tree is less than 18 feet tall.

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 MS 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 SSA Remarks:

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

Yes No

Initial SSA 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 SSA Remarks:

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

Yes No

Initial SSA 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 AK 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: *no ground disturbance no branches cut on trees > 30 yrs.*

Animals Yes No

Initial DR Remarks:

Fish Yes No

Initial SL Remarks: *streams will be buffered*

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 DR 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

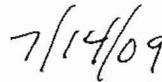
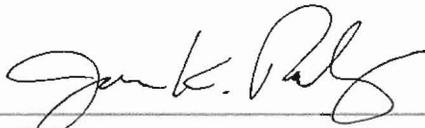
Initial mw Remarks: *no ground disturbance, no change in canopy closure*

Decision

It is my decision to implement conifer limb pruning, as described in the Proposed Action.

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.



Jon K. Raby
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

Date

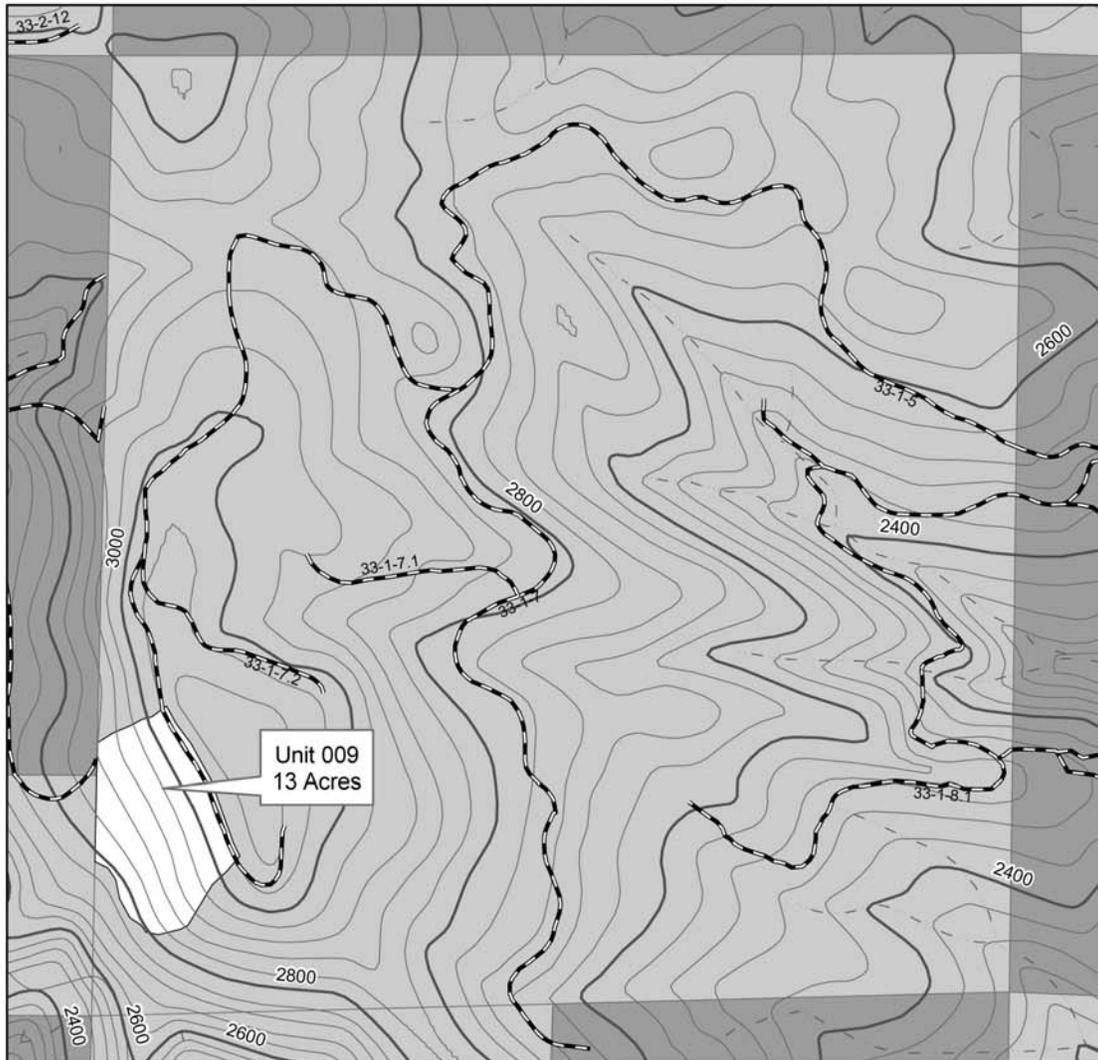
Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

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.

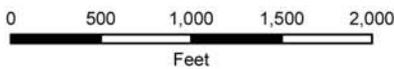
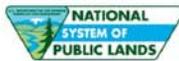
Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Robyn Wicks	NEPA Coordinator	7/14/09	RW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	7/13/09	mw
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	7/13/09	DR
Steve Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	7/1/09	SL
^{Alejandro B. Cruz} Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	7/6/09	CS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	7/13/09	KV
Al Mason	Fire/Fuels Specialist	6/30/09	APM
Lisa Bronner	Archaeologist	7/1/09	LB
Randy Bryan	Engineer	7/9/09	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	7/1/09	TL

Map 1. Old Ben - T33S, R1W, section 7



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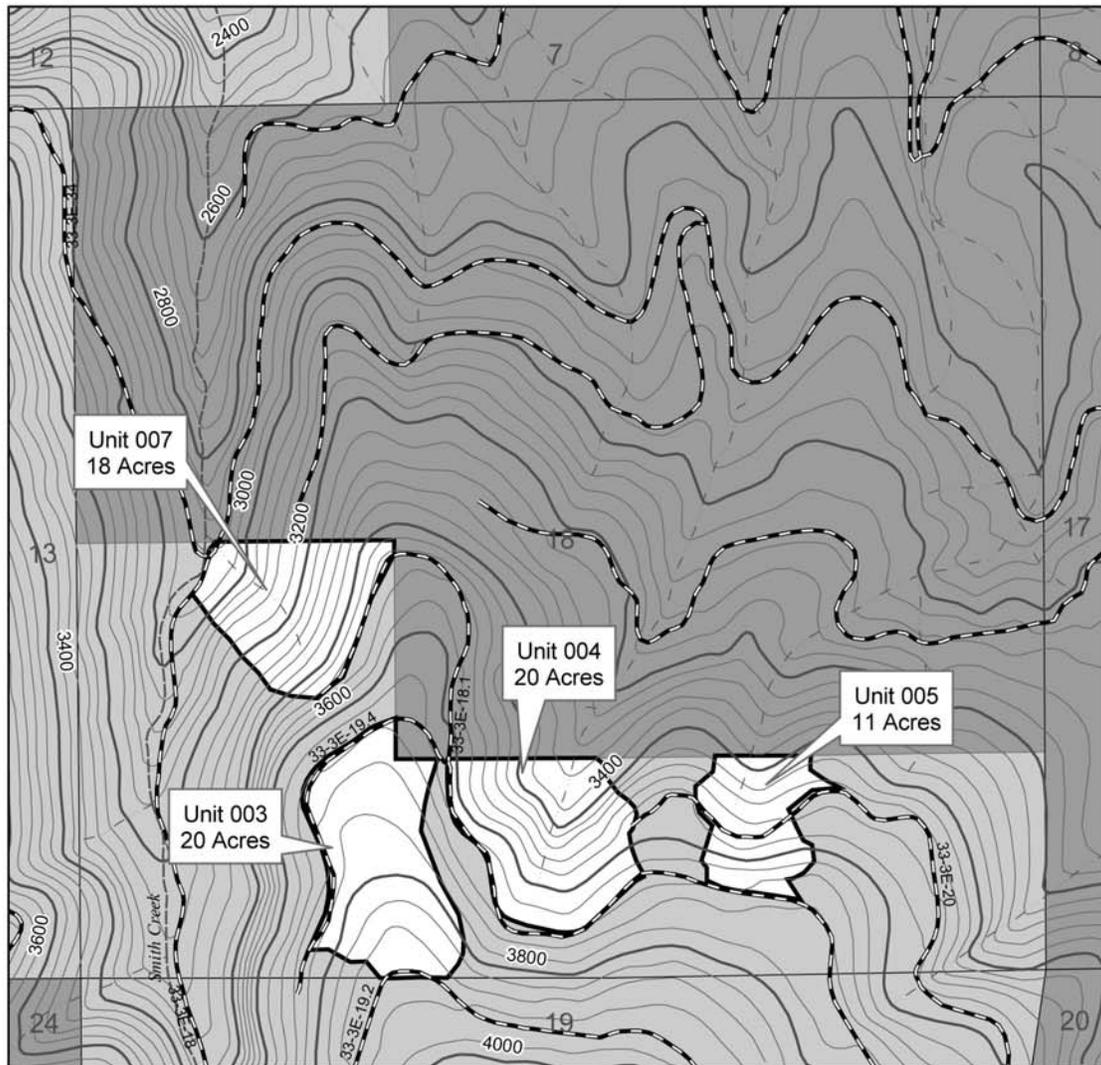
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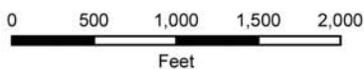
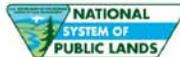
	Treatment Unit		Perennial Stream
	Road		Intermittent Stream
	40-foot Contour		BLM-administered Land
	100-foot Contour		Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162138	1-A	009	13	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
		Total	13	

Map 2. 14 Stings - T33S, R3E, section 18



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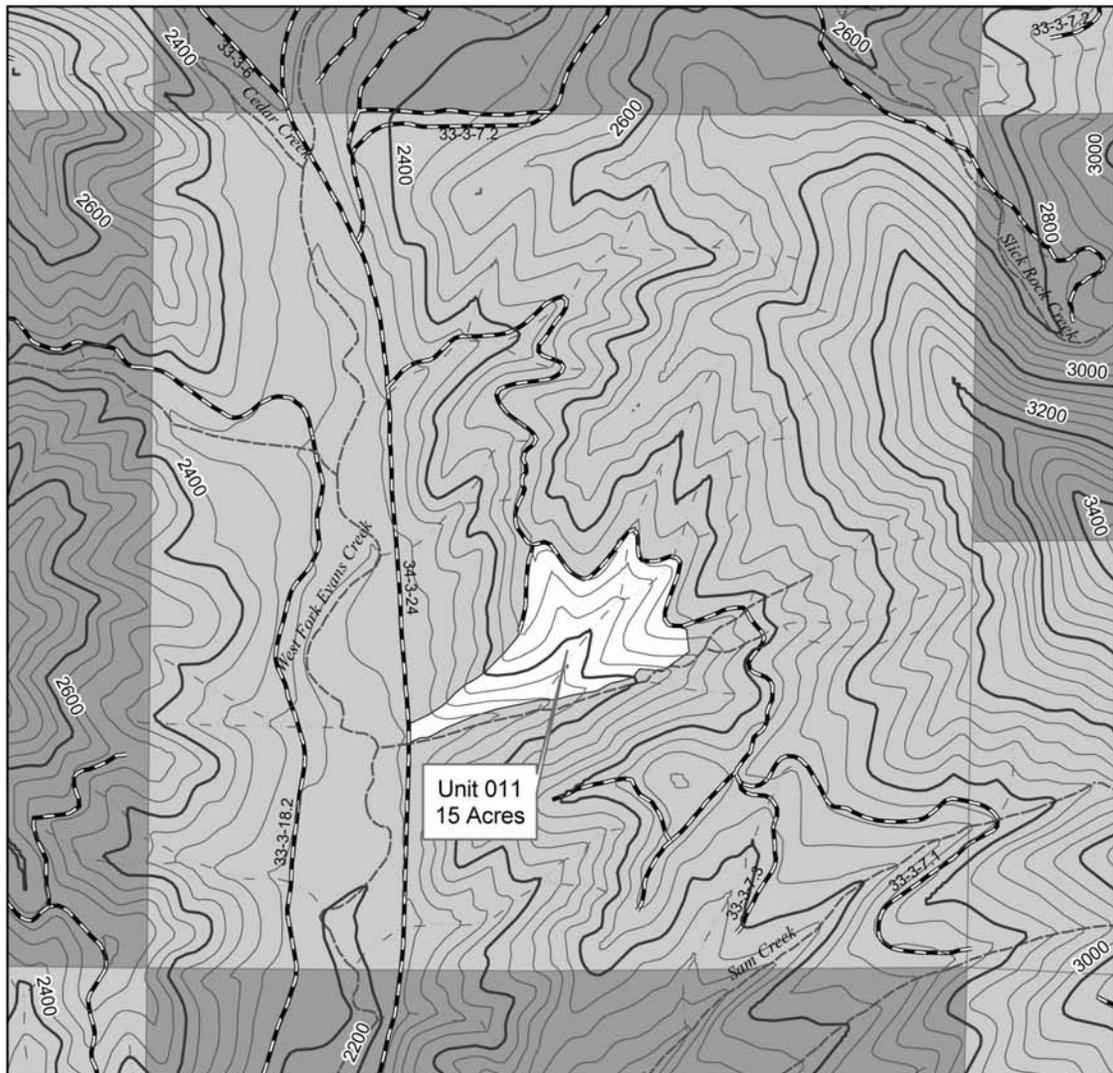
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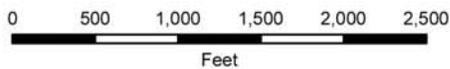
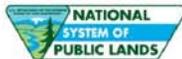
	Treatment Unit		Perennial Stream
	Road		Intermittent Stream
	40-foot Contour		BLM-administered Land
	100-foot Contour		Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
163220	1-A	003	20	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
163221	1-A	004	20	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
163222	1-A	005	11	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
163224	1-A	007	18	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
Total			69	

Map 3. Slick Skeleton - T33S, R3W, section 7



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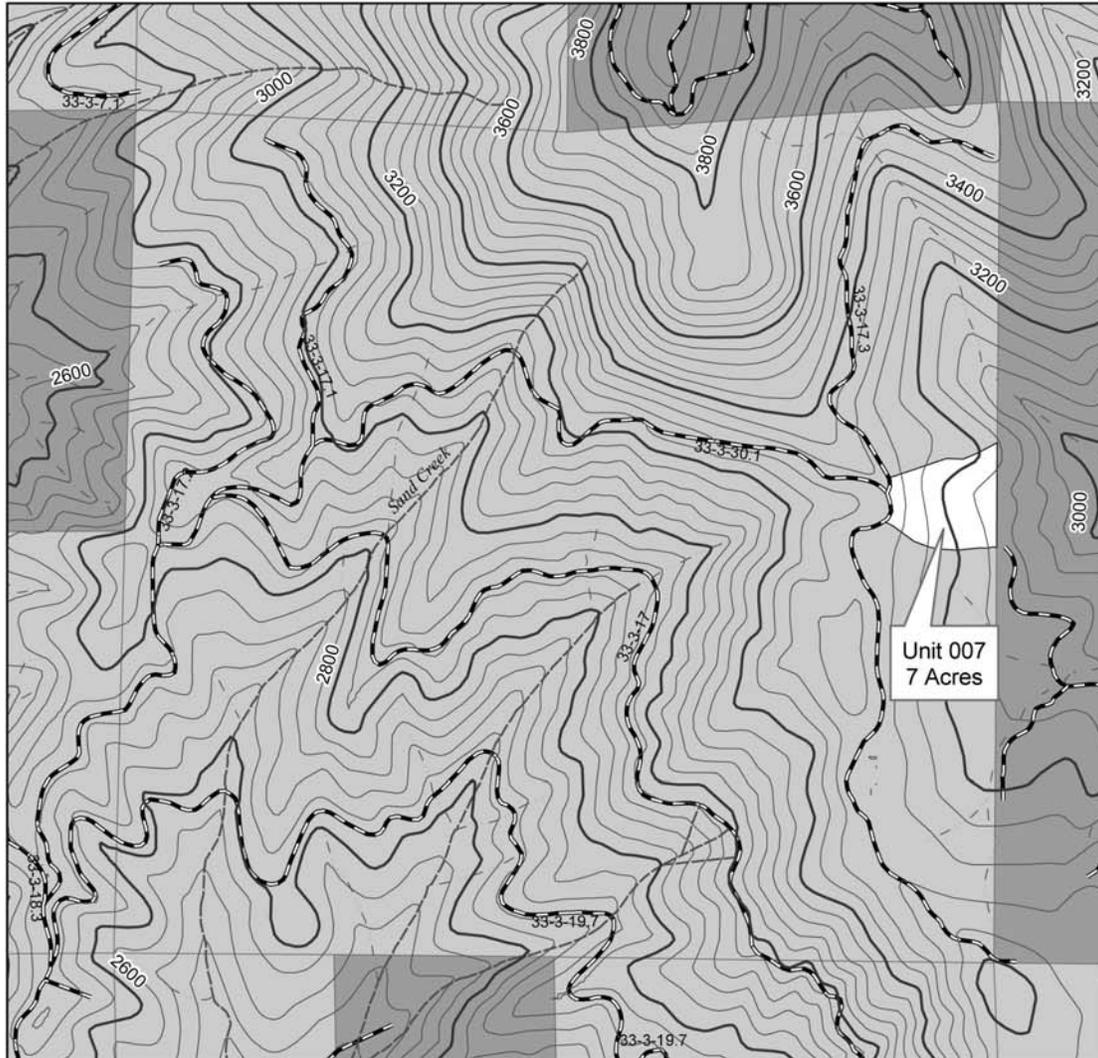
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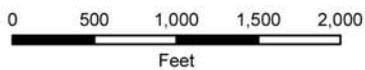
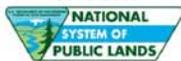
- Treatment Unit
- Road
- 40-foot Contour
- 100-foot Contour
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- BLM-administered Land
- Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
155839	1-A	011	15	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
		Total	15	

Map 4. White Rock - T33S, R3W, section 17



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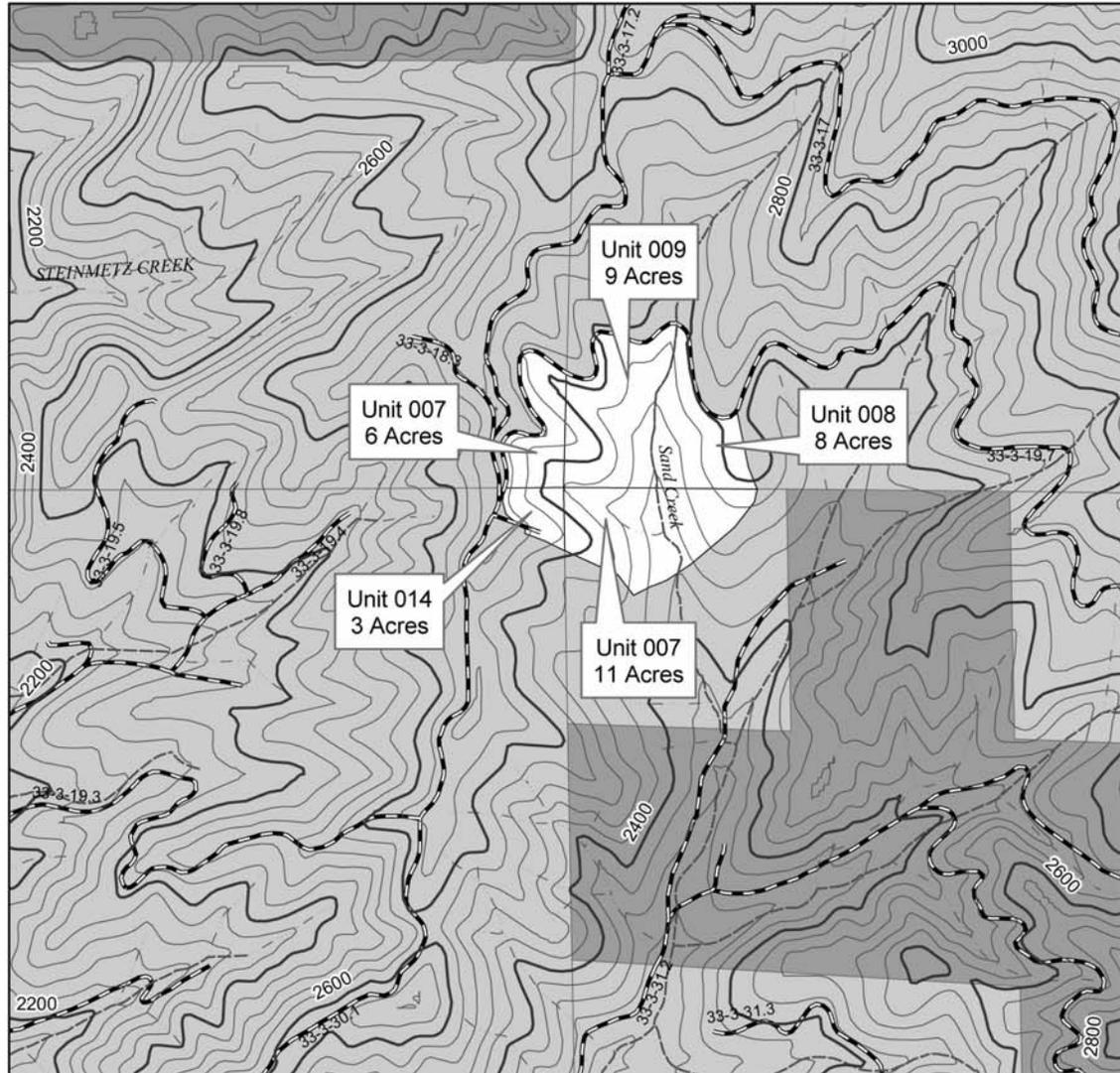


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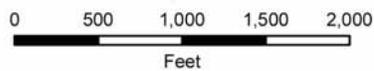
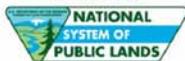
LEGEND	
	Treatment Unit
	Road
	40-foot Contour
	100-foot Contour
	Perennial Stream
	Intermittent Stream
	BLM-administered Land
	Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
157311	1-A	007	7	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
		Total	7	

Map 5. White Rock OSR - T33S, R3W, sections 17, 18, 19, 20



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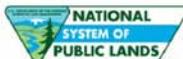
	Treatment Unit		Perennial Stream
	Road		Intermittent Stream
	40-foot Contour		BLM-administered Land
	100-foot Contour		Non-BLM Land

FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
157312	1-A	008	8	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
157313	1-A	009	9	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
156710	1-A	007	6	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
156909	1-A	014	3	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
157087	1-A	007	11	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
			Total	37

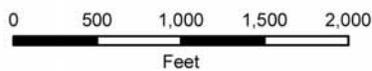
Map 6. Ash Flat - T33S, R3W, section 19



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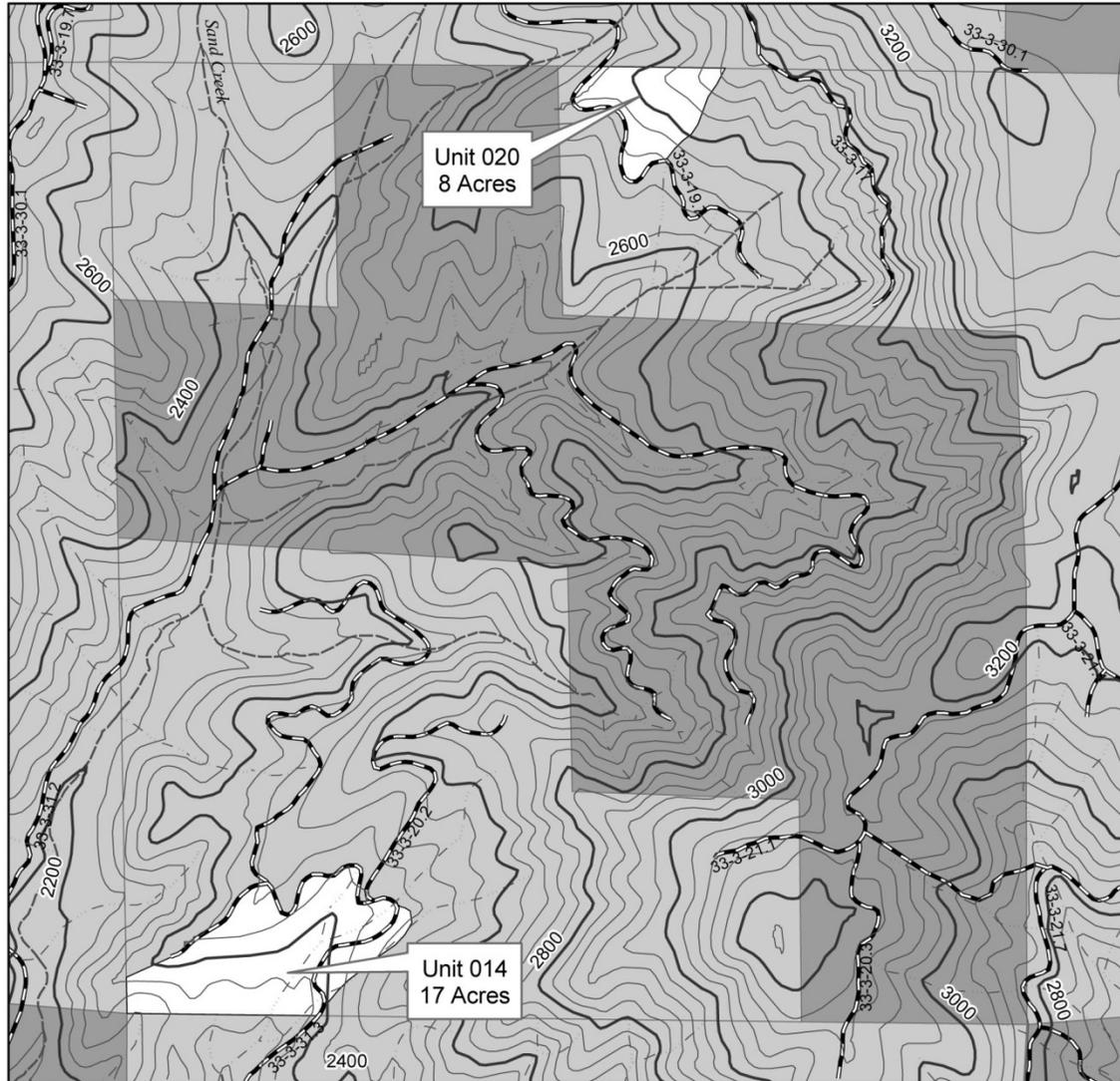
LEGEND	
	Treatment Unit
	Road
	40-foot Contour
	100-foot Contour
	Perennial Stream
	Intermittent Stream
	BLM-administered Land
	Non-BLM Land



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FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
156904	1-A	009	10	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
		Total	10	

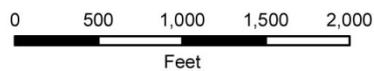
Map 7. White Rock OSR - T33S, R3W, section 20



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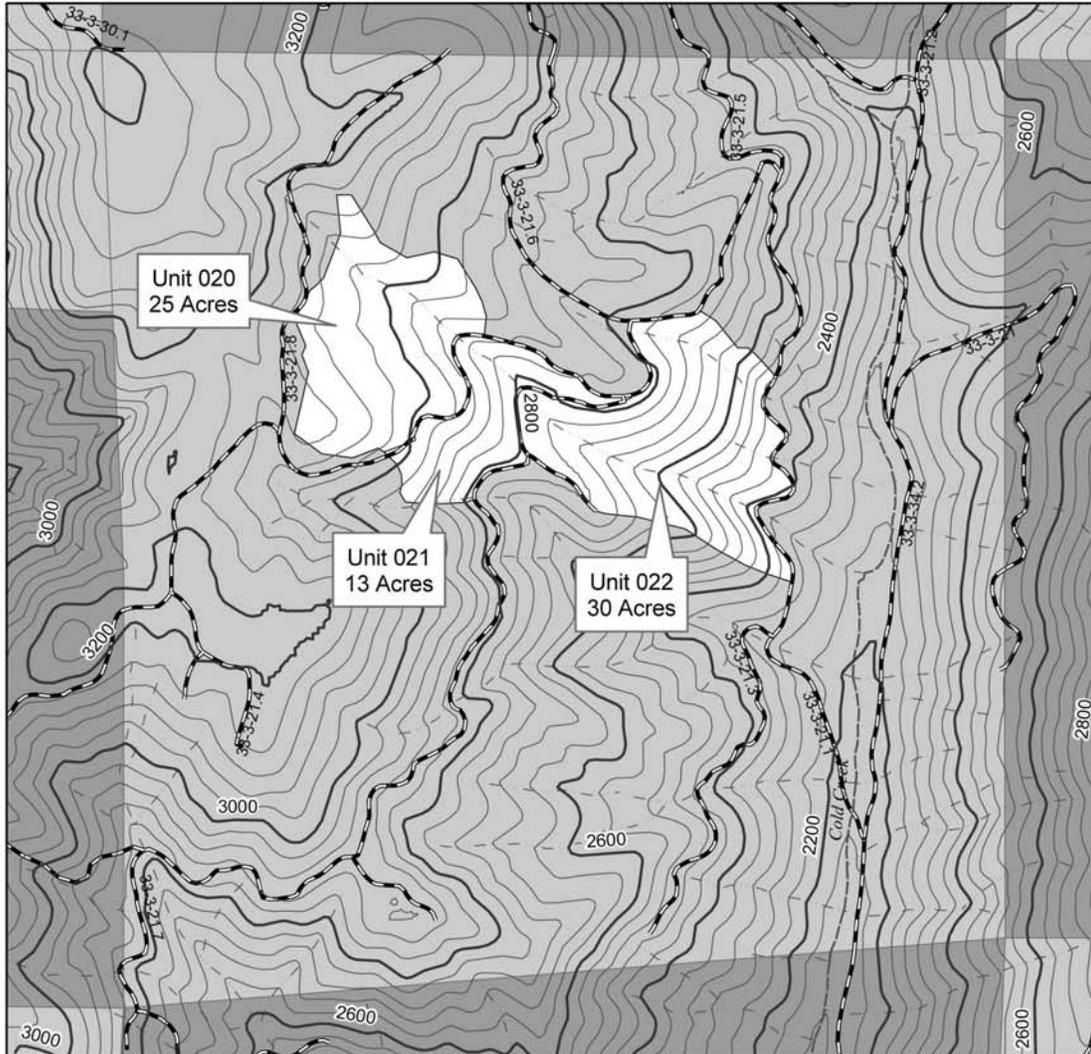
LEGEND	
	Treatment Unit
	Road
	40-foot Contour
	100-foot Contour
	Perennial Stream
	Intermittent Stream
	BLM-administered Land
	Non-BLM Land



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FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
157094	1-A	014	17	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
157100	1-A	020	8	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
		Total	25	

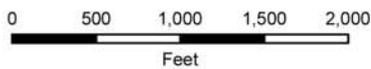
Map 8. Cold Creek - T33S, R3W, section 21



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LEGEND	
	Treatment Unit
	Road
	40-foot Contour
	100-foot Contour
	Perennial Stream
	Intermittent Stream
	BLM-administered Land
	Non-BLM Land



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FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
158198	1-A	020	25	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
158199	1-A	021	13	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
158200	1-A	022	30	Conifer Limb Pruning (9')
		Total	68	