

Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record for precommercial thinning, brush and hardwood cutting, girdling, hardwood clump control in the Butte Falls Resource Area

DOI-BLM-OR-M050-2009-0041-CX

Description of Proposed Action

The Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to treat up to 650 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.

This would be accomplished, in units receiving a pre-commercial thinning, by manually (chainsaws or hand tools) cutting conifers under 8" DBH (diameter at breast height), leaving an average 14' by 14' spacing retaining approximately 220 trees per acre, or 16' by 16' spacing retaining approximately 170 trees per acre. 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. Units located in the Timbered Rock fire 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.

The proposed project is located in the Butte Falls Resource Area. See attached maps for exact locations of treatments. This action would occur in fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

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 RROD/RMP. In addition, this project fully complies with

the management objectives, actions, and direction of the resource management plan in place prior to December 30, 2008, which was the 1995 ROD/RMP, as amended (USDI 1995). The design of this project would not have differed under either the 2008 or the 1995 ROD/RMPs. This proposal also complies 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 1995 and 2008 Medford District 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)” (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 72).
- “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).
- “Promote the establishment and survival of commercially desirable coniferous seedling and sapling through stand maintenance and protective treatments” (2008 ROD/RMP, p. 41).
- “Convert lands historically supporting conifer species that are currently growing primarily brush or hardwoods to conifer species suitable to the site unless the hardwoods would produce a higher net monetary return” (2008 ROD/RMP, p. 41).
- “Apply precommercial thinning to forest stands to achieve appropriate stocking levels” (2008 ROD/RMP, p. 41).

Project Design Features

1. All conifers 8” DBH and greater, and all hardwoods 12” DBH and greater, will be reserved in all units.
2. In all units receiving PCT, conifers less than 8” DBH will be thinned on an average 14’ by 14’ spacing retaining approximately 220 trees per acre, or a 16’ by 16’ spacing retaining approximately 170 trees per acre. Dominant conifers will be preferred for retention; species preference will depend on site conditions.
3. In all units that receive brush and/or hardwood cutting in conjunction with PCT, brush and/or hardwoods 6” DBH and less 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.
4. In units located within the Timbered Rock Fire, brush and hardwoods 6” DBH and less will be cut, and hardwoods between 6” and 11.9” DBH will be girdled for a 6-foot radius from the conifer bole around the reserved conifer. Retain 1 stem from each hardwood clump, but retain no more than 2 stems total within the 6-foot radius where brush and hardwoods are cut.

5. Within Riparian Management Areas, 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 will have conifers thinned to the specified spacing (14 or 16 feet) through the riparian area. Hardwoods and brush will be reserved.
6. 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.
7. Seasonally restrict activities from March 1 through June 30 within 200 feet of northern spotted owl nest sites, unless instructed differently by the resource area wildlife biologist. The restriction may be extended up to September 30 if nesting activity is occurring at that time.
8. 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.
9. Pick up all trash and garbage and dispose of properly.
10. Prohibit overnight camping at the project site or in the surrounding area.
11. 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:

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.

The Code of Federal Regulations at 43 CFR 46.205(c) 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 BJB 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 BJB 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 BJB Remarks:

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

Yes No

Initial BJB 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 BJB Remarks:

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

Yes No

Initial SLC 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 JZ 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: Protect plant site with 25' buffer - No T&E sites.

Animals Yes No

Initial DR

Remarks: seasonal restriction March 1 - June 30 33-1W-1NE 1/4 and 33-3E-18S W 1/4

Fish Yes No

Initial JK

Remarks: Adequate Buffers and dist. to listed fish will create No Effect.

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

Yes No

Initial JZ Remarks:

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

Yes No

Initial DZ 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 DZ 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

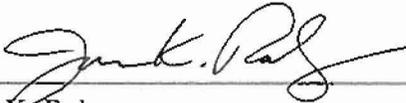
Initial mw Remarks:

Decision

It is my decision to implement the pre-commercial thinning, brush and hardwood cutting, girdling, hardwood clump control, as described in the Proposed Action and as shown on the attached project maps, in fiscal year 2009 and 2010.

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

7/2/09

Date

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

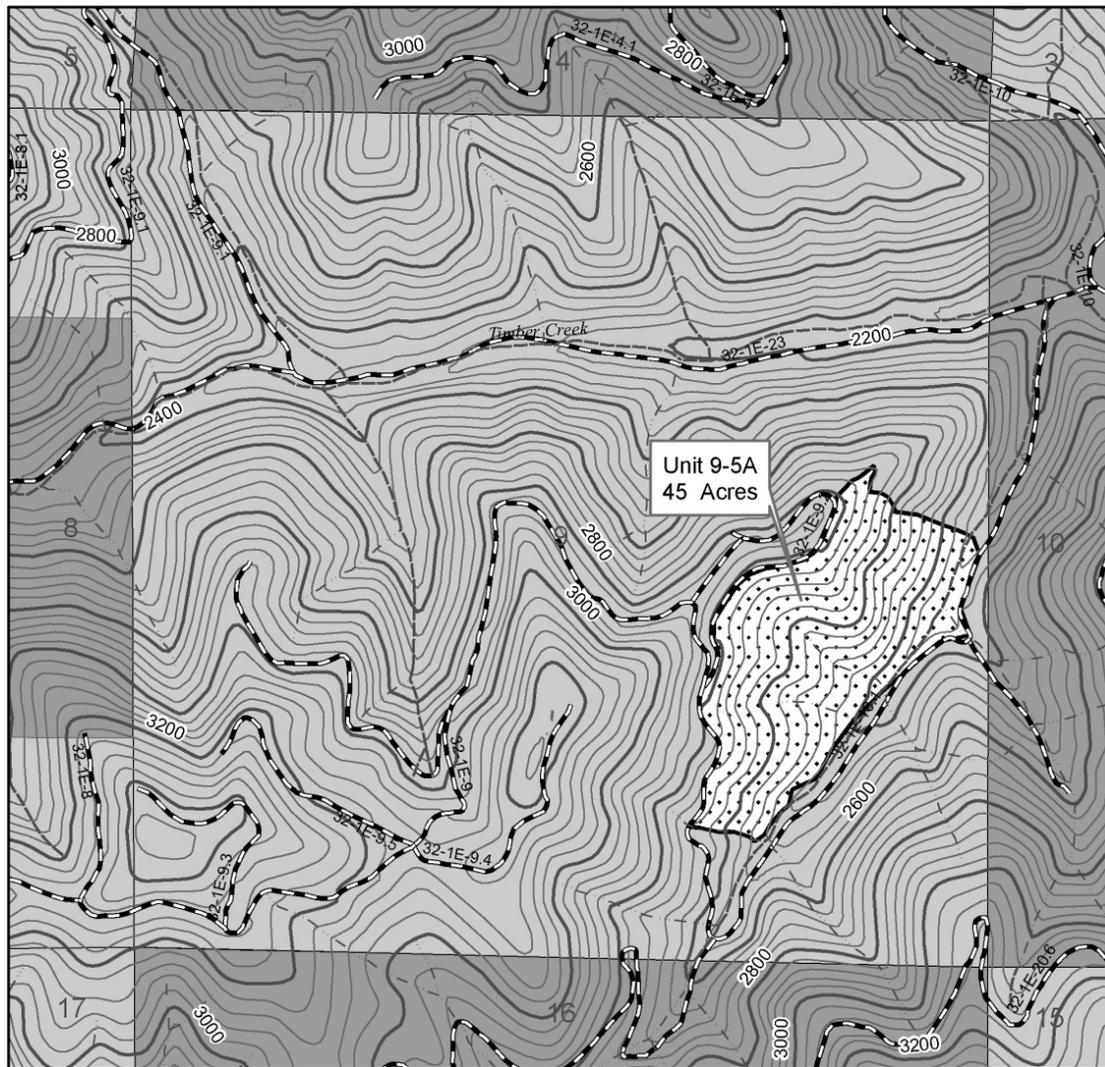
Notice of the forest management decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the Medford District internet website. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land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

Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:

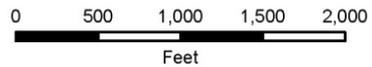
Name	Title	Date	Initials
Robyn Wicks	NEPA Coordinator	6/19/09	RW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	6/25/09	mw
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	6/17/09	DR
Steve Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	6/18/09	SL
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	6/16/09	SS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	6/15/09	K.V.
Al Mason	Fire/Fuels Specialist	6/15/09	AM
Lisa Brennan	District Archaeologist	6/19/09	LB
Randy Bryan	Engineer	6/19/09	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/15/09	TL
Doug Stewart	Silviculturist	6/18/09	DS

Timbered Rock Fire

T32S R1E Sec 9



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



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164788	1-O	9-5A	45	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
			45	

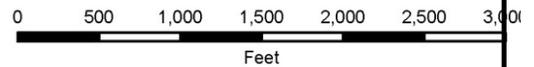
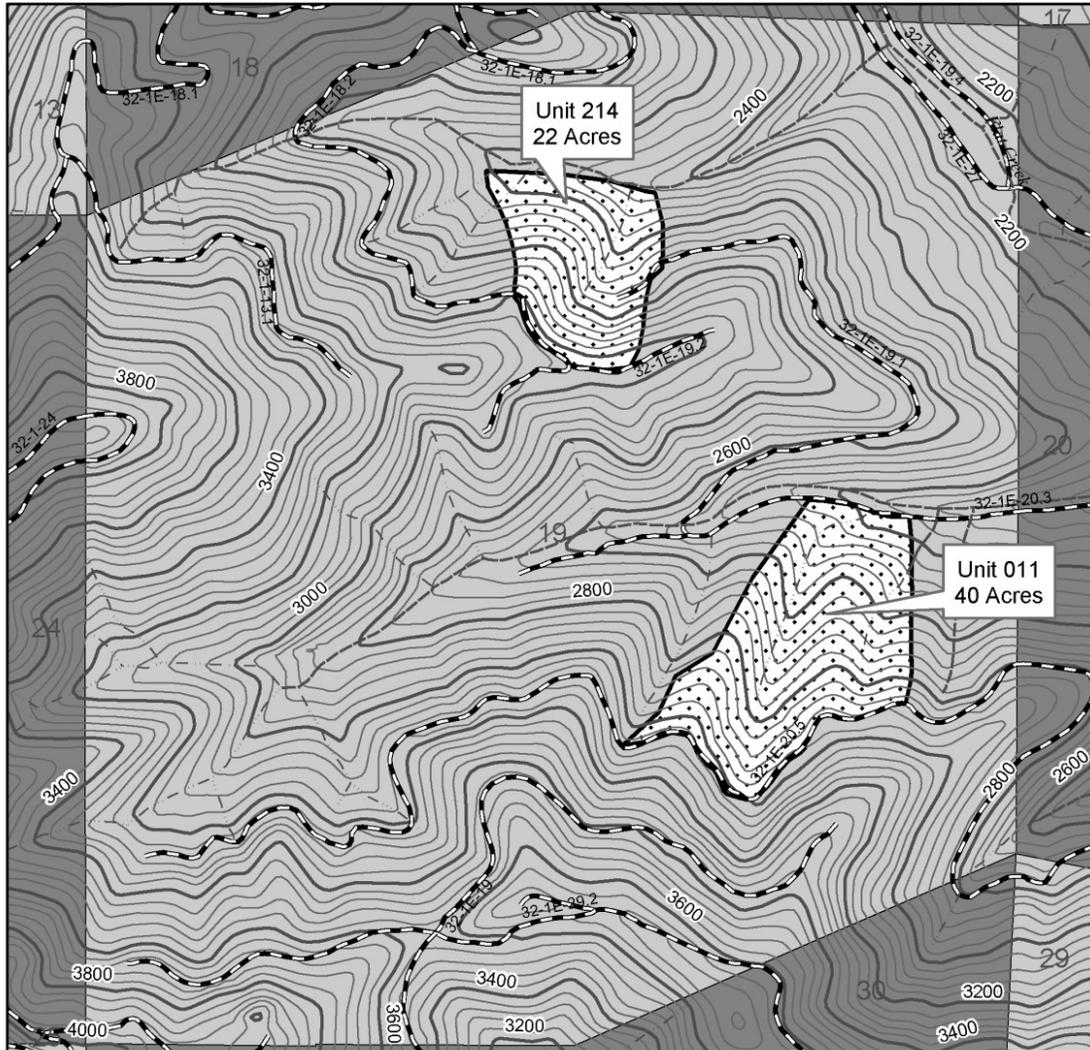
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MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

Timbered Rock Fire

T32S R1E Sec 19



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
160346	1-O	011	40	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
164177	1-O	214	22	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
	1-O	Total	62	

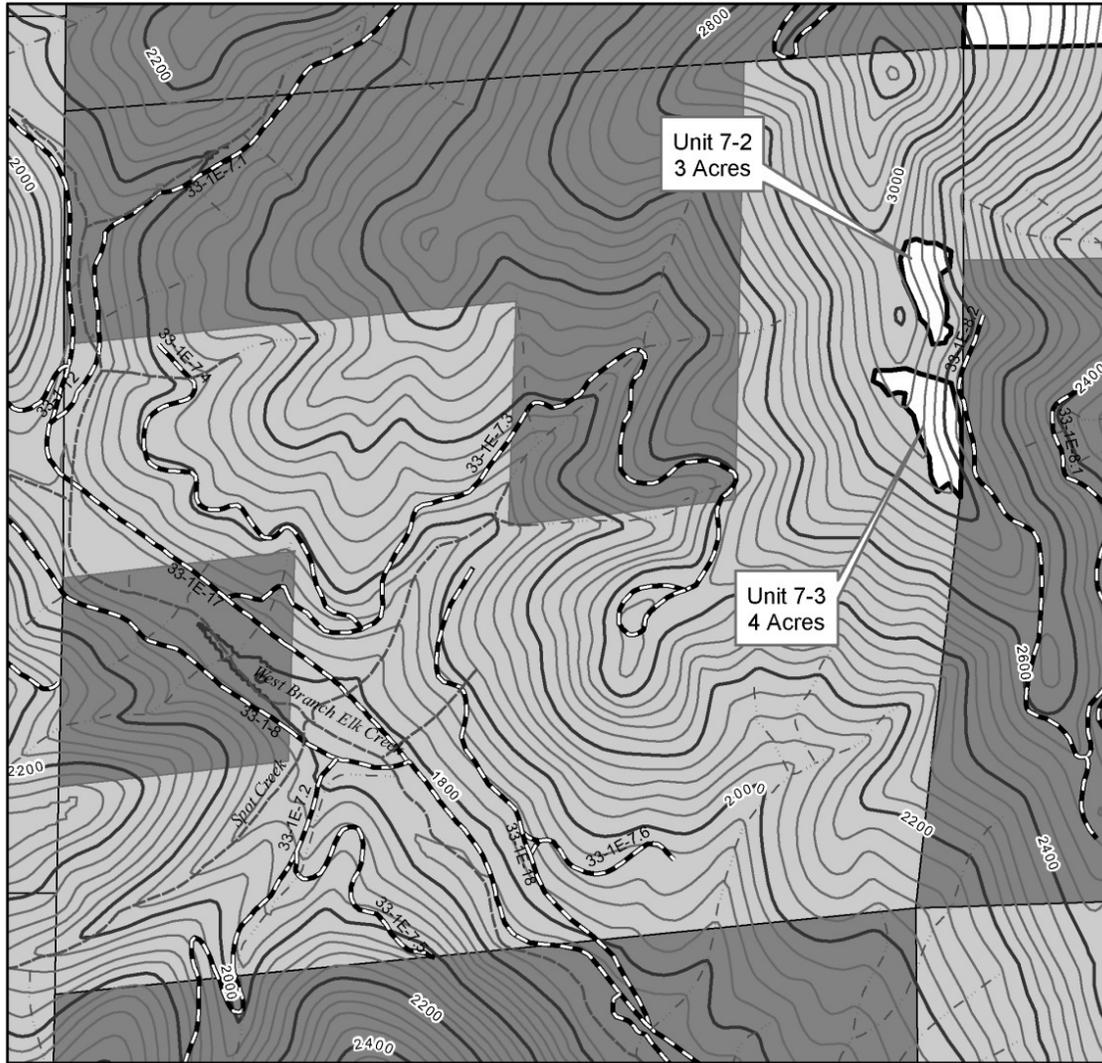
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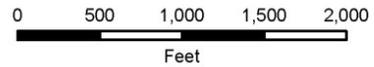
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

Timbered Rock Fire

T33S R1E Sec 7



- 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
160444	1-0	7-2	3	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
160706	1-0	7-3	4	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
		Total	7	

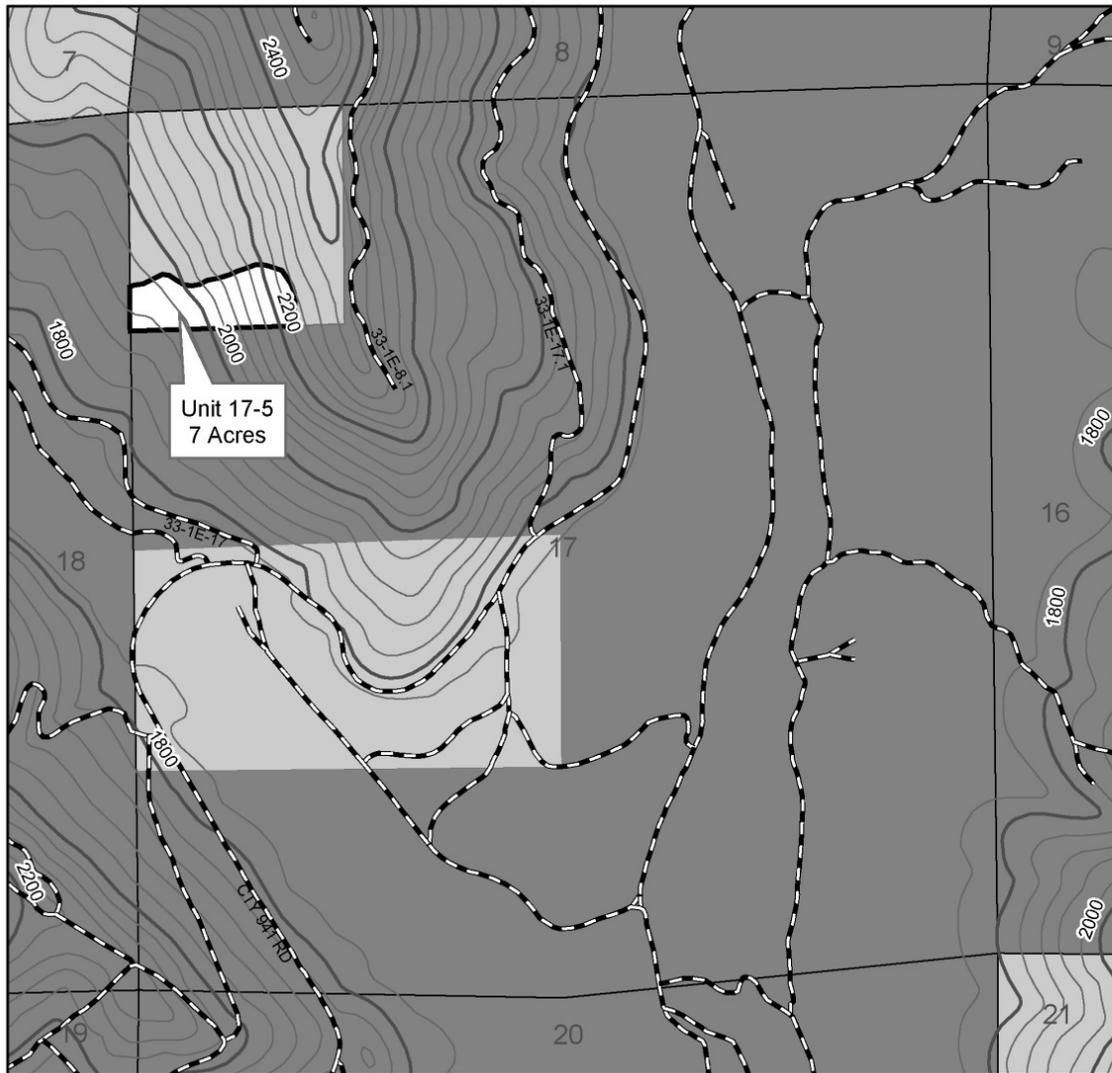
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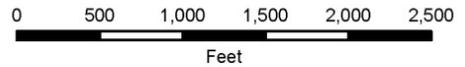
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
February 2009

Timbered Rock Fire

T33S R1E Sec 17



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



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
160758	1-O	17-5	7	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
		Total	7	

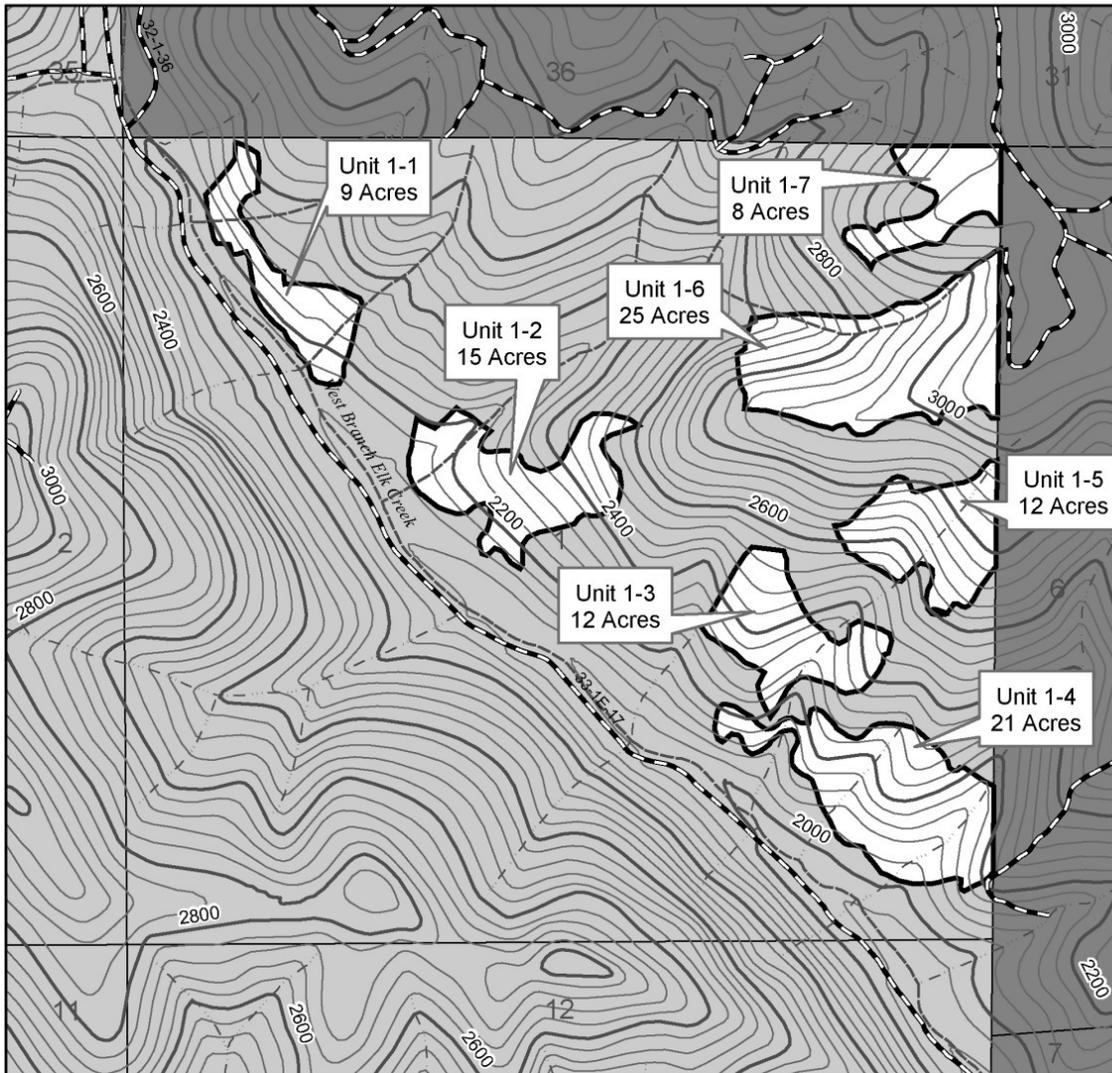
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MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

Timbered Rock Fire

T33S R1W Sec 1



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
165001	1-O	1-1	9	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
165007	1-O	1-2	15	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
164454	1-O	1-3	12	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
164447	1-O	1-4	21	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
164448				
165006	1-O	1-5	12	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
165004	1-O	1-6	25	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
165002	1-O	1-7	8	Brush + Hrwd Clump Ctrl
		Total	102	

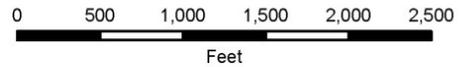
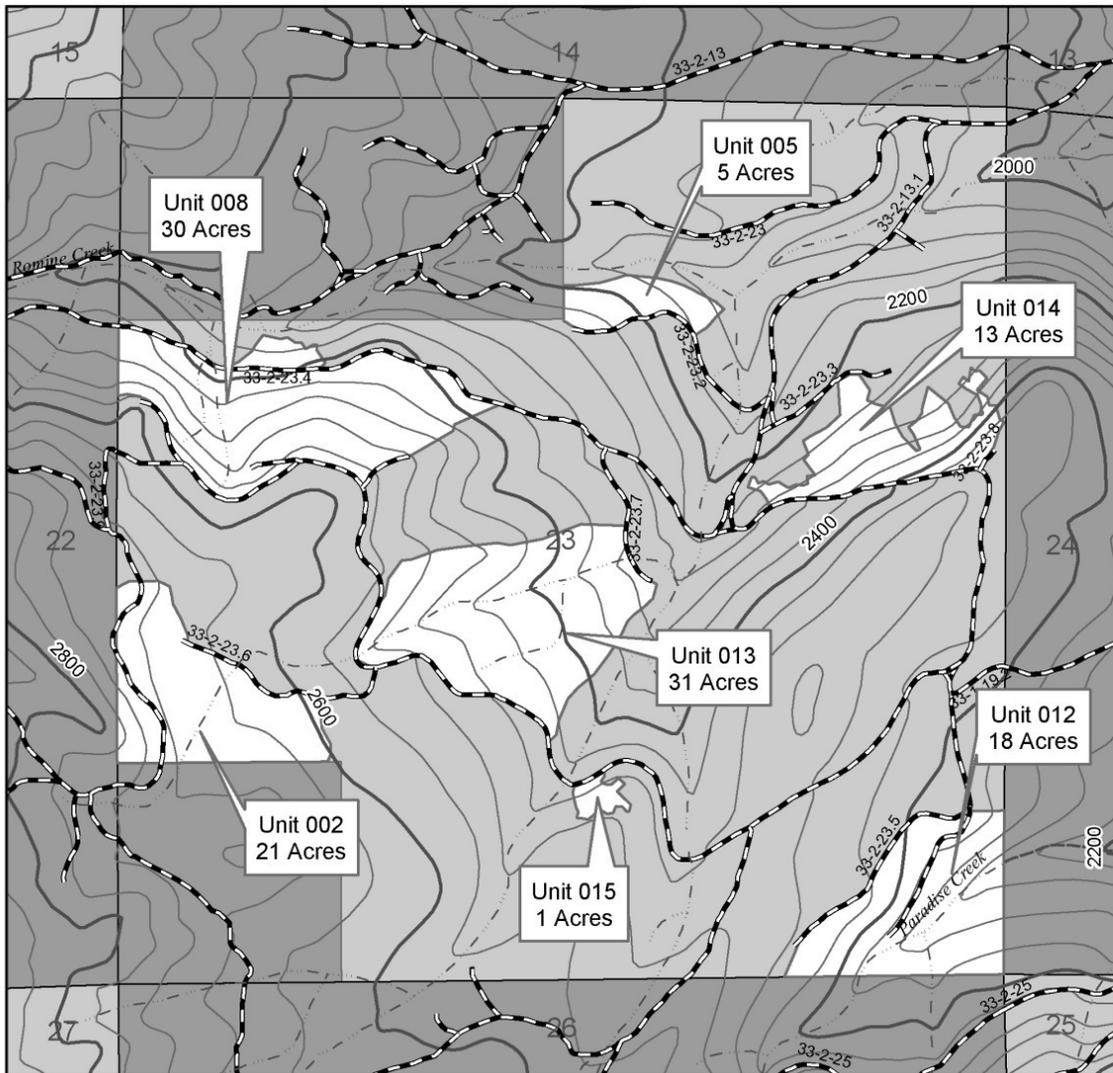
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MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

Rocky Paradise

T33S R2W Sec 23



FOI Key	Ol#	Bid Item	Acres	Treatment
160638	002	1-C	21	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
162447	005	1-C	5	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
162450	008	1-C	30	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
162454	012	1-C	18	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
164209	013	1-C	31	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
164210	014	1-C	13	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
164211	015	1-C	1	PCT + Hrdwd Cntrl
Total			119	

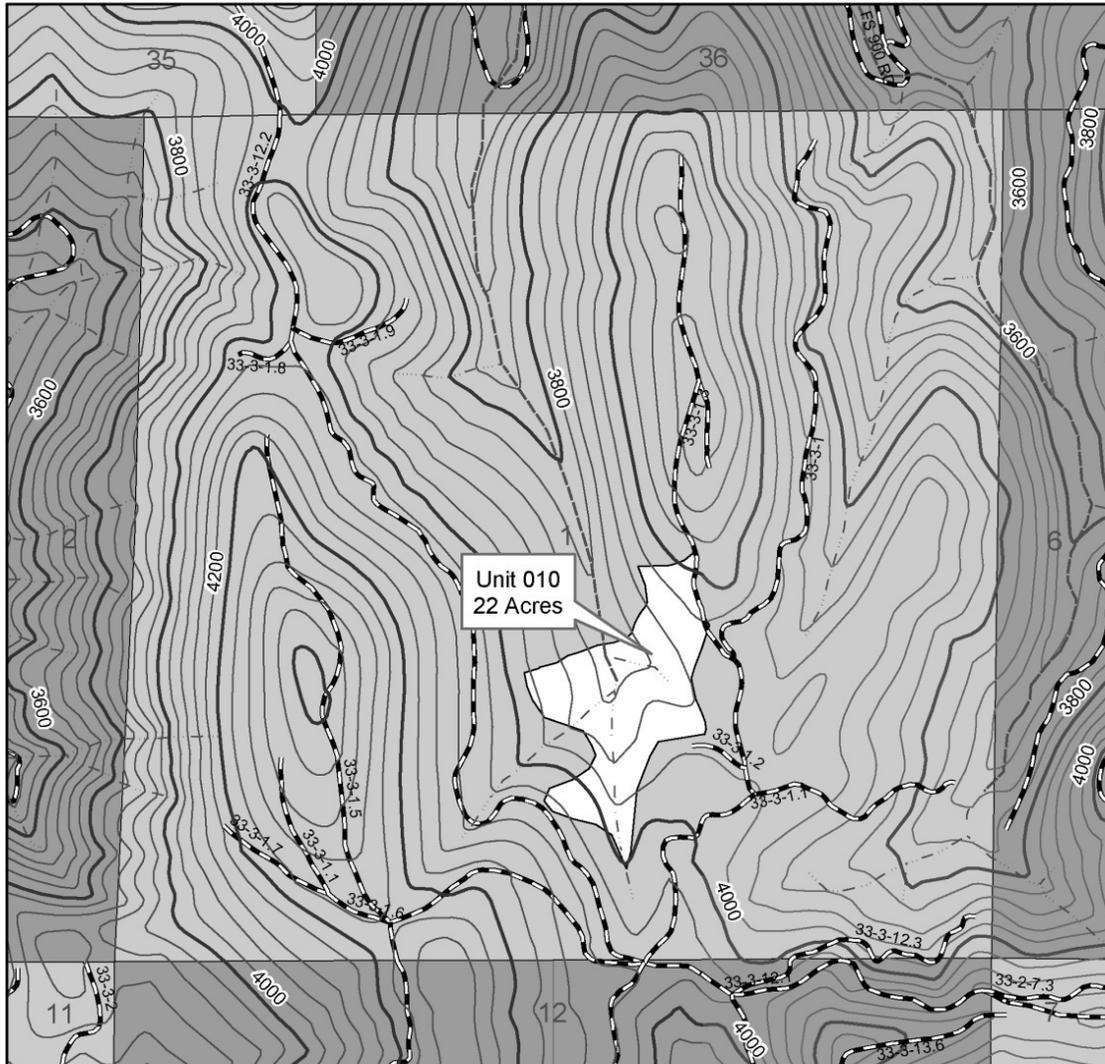
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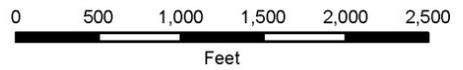
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

Flaming Angel

T33S R3W Sec 1



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



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162500	1-C	010	22	PCT (14x14) & Hwd Control
		Total	22	

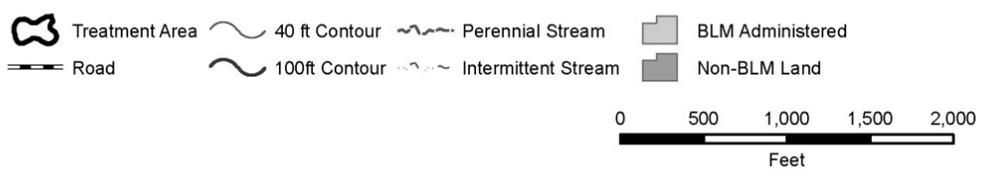
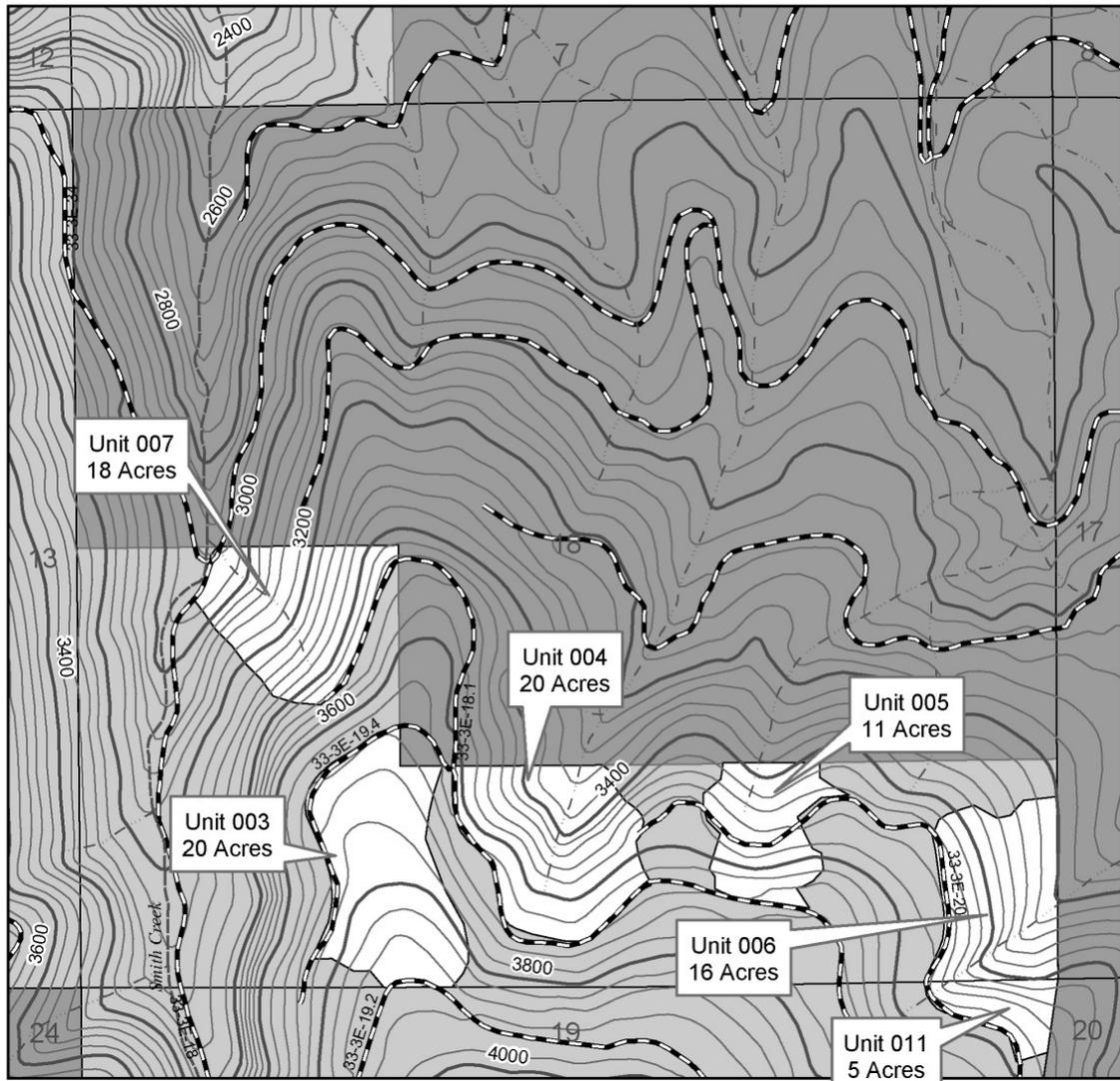
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MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

14 Stings

T33S R3E Sec 18



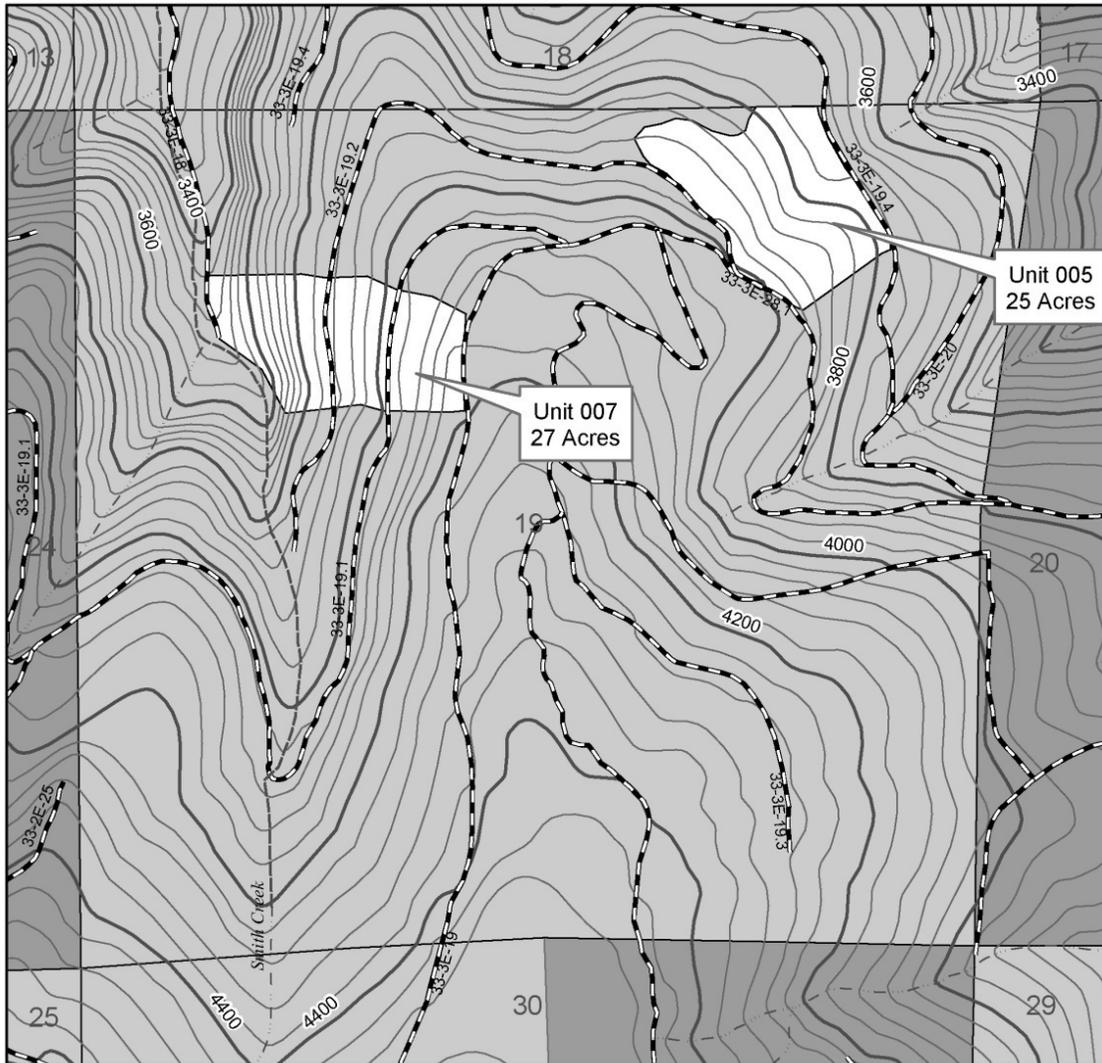
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
163220	1-E	003	20	PCT (16x16)
163221	1-E	004	20	PCT (16x16)
163222	1-E	005	11	PCT (16x16)
163223	1-E	006	16	PCT (16x16)
162195	1-E	011	5	PCT (16x16)
163224	1-E	007	18	PCT (16x16)
Total			90	

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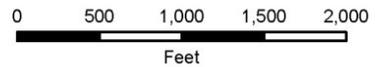
MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009

Smith Creek

T33S R3E Sec 19



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



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162180	1-E	007	27	PCT (16x16)
162175	1-E	005	25	PCT (16x16)
		Total	52	

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MEDFORD DISTRICT
Butte Falls RA
May 2009