

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-M050-2011-0003-CX

Description of Proposed Action

The Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to treat up to 350 acres with precommercial thinning, brush and hardwood cutting, and hardwood clump control and girdling. 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. Hardwoods 12 inches DBH and greater would be reserved along with all conifers.

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, sections 9, 19, 30

Township 33 South, Range 3 West, sections 8, 9, 15, 27

Township 34 South, Range 3 East, section 35

Township 34 South, Range 3 West, section 1, 23, 27

The proposed project is located in the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM, Jackson County. Project units are situated in matrix, riparian reserve, and late-successional reserve land use allocations within the Evans Creek, Elk Creek, and Big Butte Creek fifth field watersheds. See attached unit list and maps for exact locations of project units.

Plan Conformance Review

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 will have conifers thinned to the specified spacing (14 or 16 feet) through the riparian area. Hardwoods and brush will 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 JJA 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 JJA 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 JJA Remarks:

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

Yes No

Initial JJA 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 RJM 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:

Seasonal Restriction 33-3w-15 03/01-
34-3E-35

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 RW 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

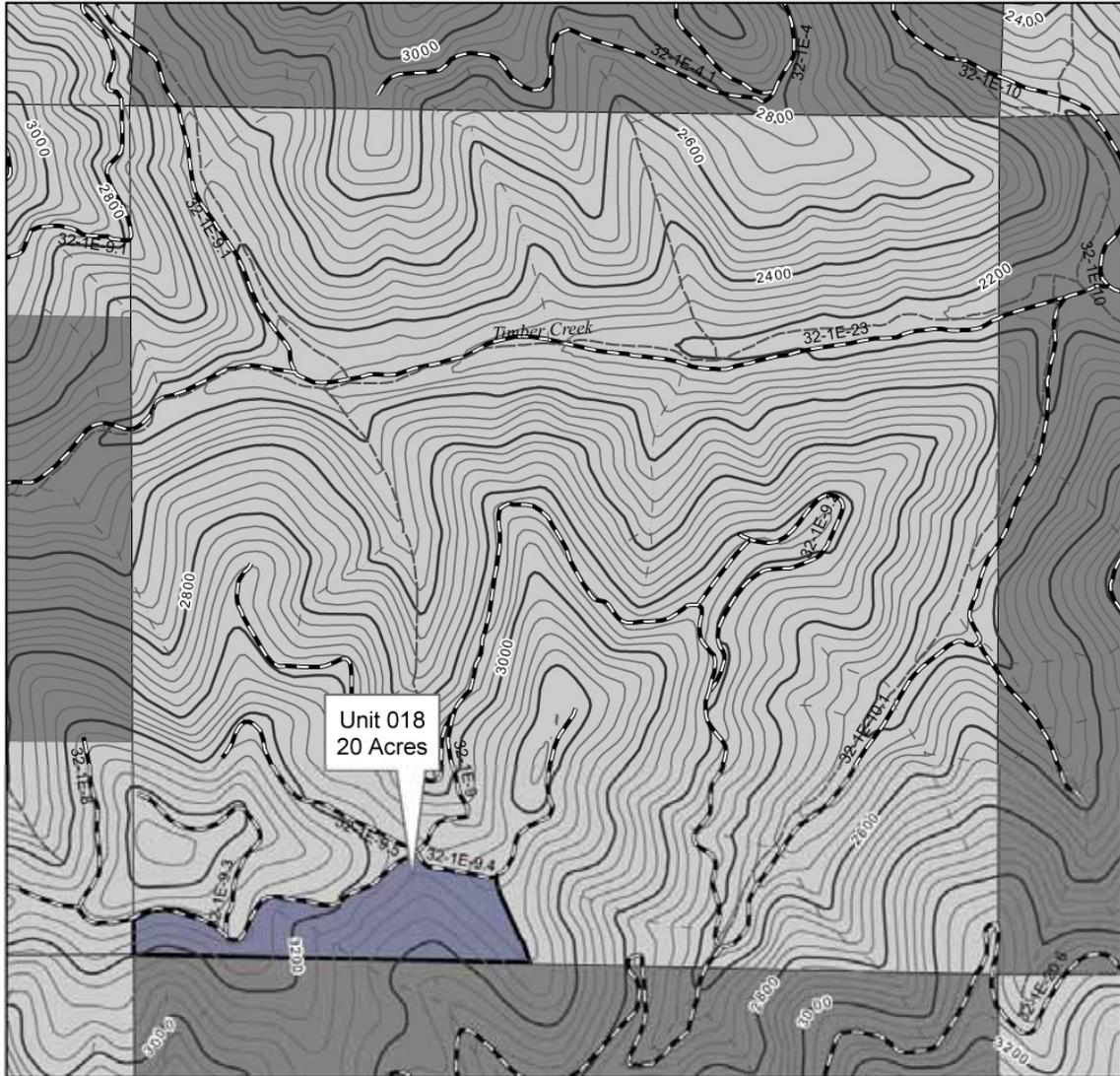
Initial mw Remarks:

Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:

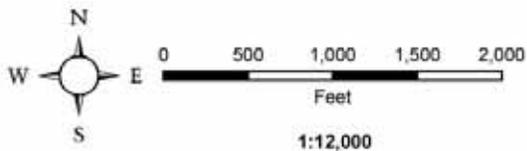
Name	Title	Date	Initials
Robyn Wicks	NEPA Coordinator	1/31/11	RW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	1/26/11	MW
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	1/18/11	DR
Angela San Filippo	Fisheries Biologist	1/19/11	AS
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	1/31/11	SLS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	1/31/11	KBV
Al Mason	Fire/Fuels Specialist	1/13/11	AM
Ron Gregory	Archaeologist	1/19/11	RJG
Randy Bryan	Engineer	1/24/11	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	1/14/11	PLZ
STEVE SLAVIK	RANGE MGT.	1/26/11	SS

Map 1. Timbered Rock

T32S R1E Sec 9



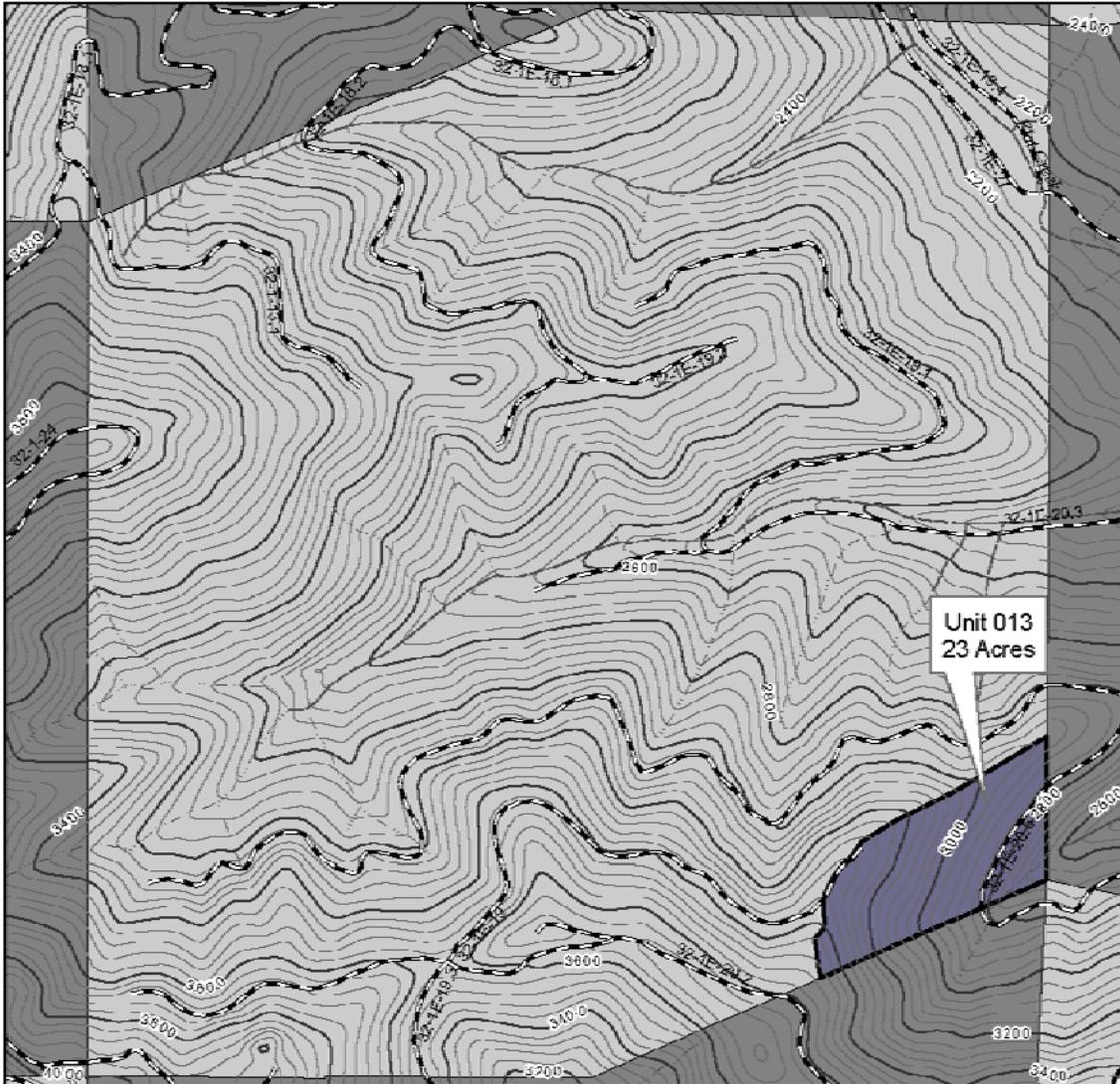
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162245	1-O	018	20	Brush & Hrdwd Clmp Control



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Medford District
January 2011

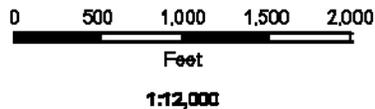
Map 2. Timbered Rock

T32S R1E Sec 19



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

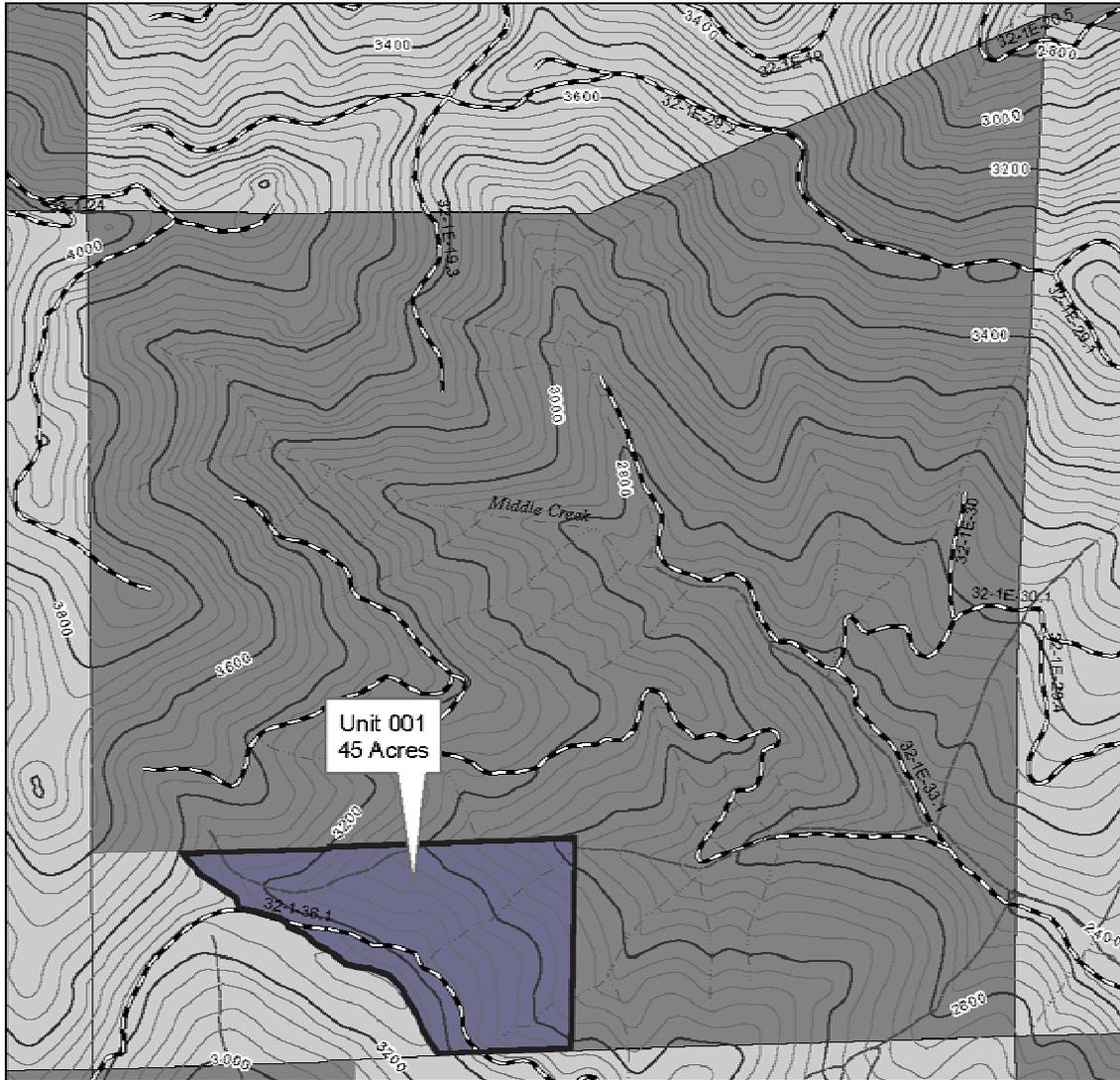
FOI Key	Bld Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162570	1-0	013	23	Brush & Hrdwd Clmp Control



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

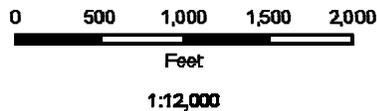
Map 3. Timbered Rock

T32S R1E Sec 30



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

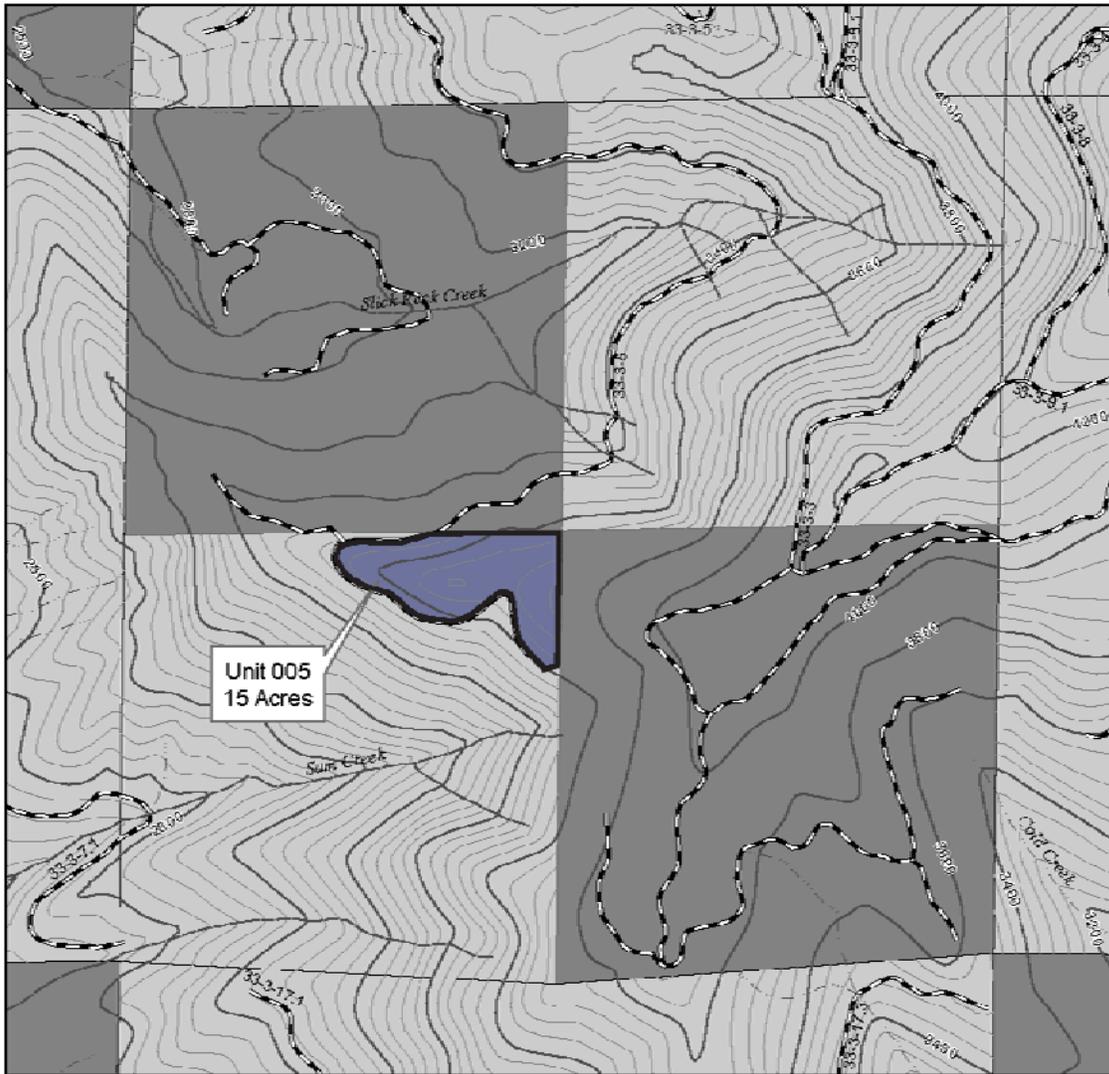
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
162283	1-0	001	45	Brush & Hrdwd Clmp Control



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Medford District
January 2011

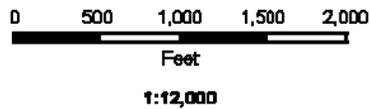
Map 4. Slick Skeleton

T33S R3W Sec 8



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

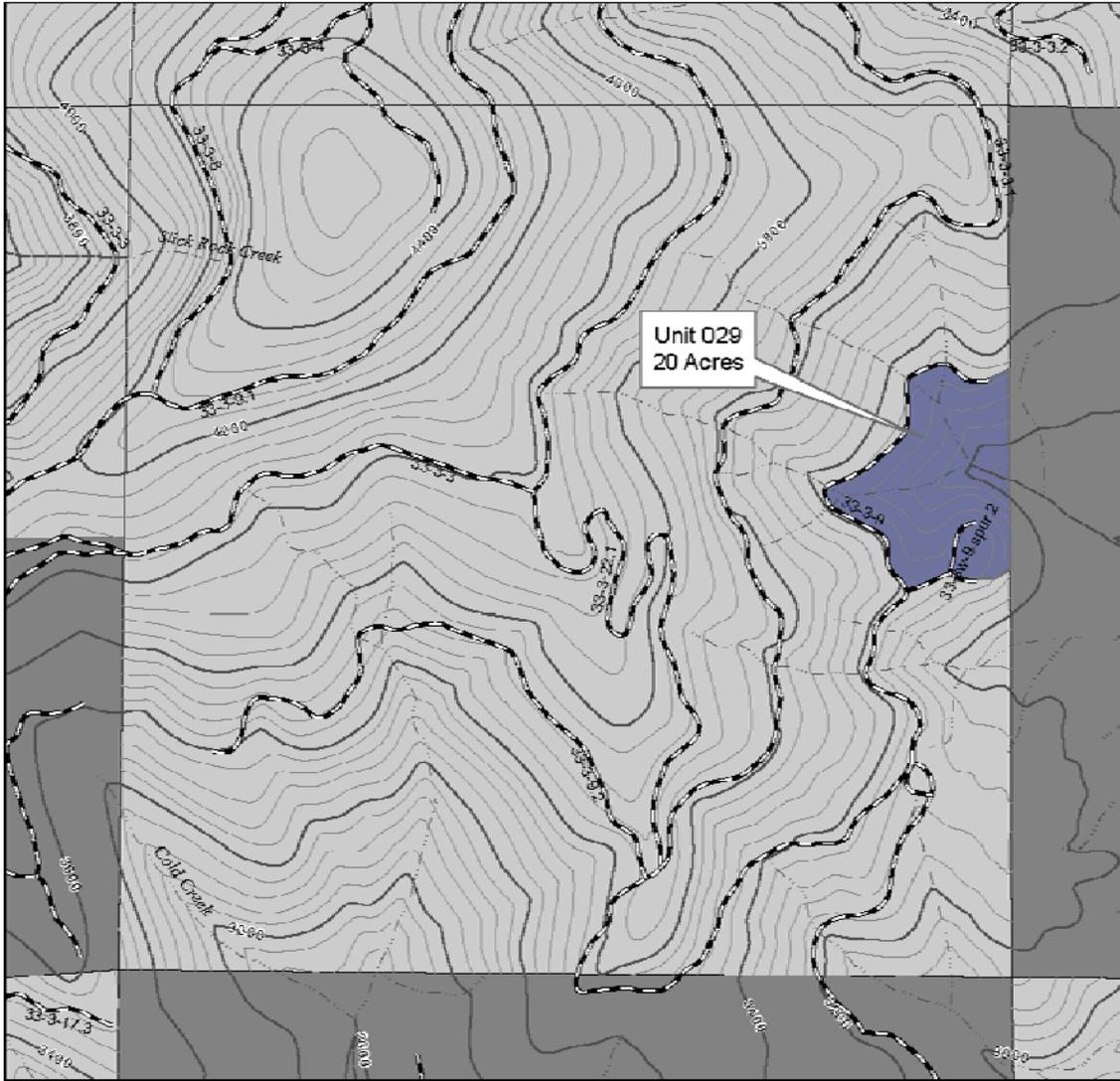
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
156221	1E	005	15	PCT (16x16)



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

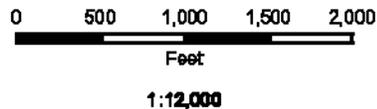
Map 5. Broken Skeleton

T33S R3W Sec 9



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

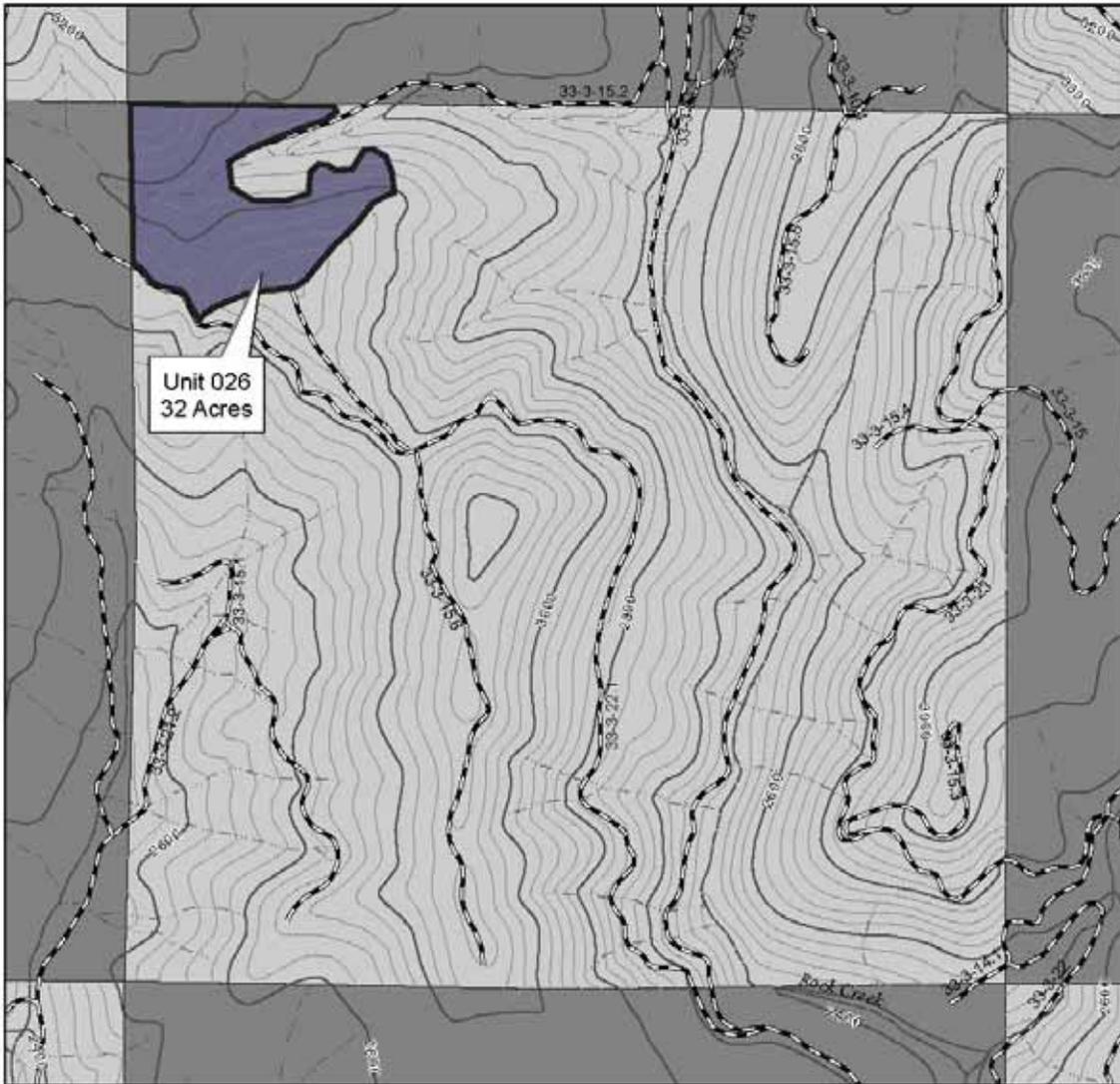
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164366	1E	029	20	PCT (16x16)



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

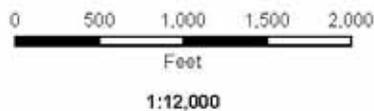
Map 6. Pop Rock BO

T33S R3W Sec 15



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

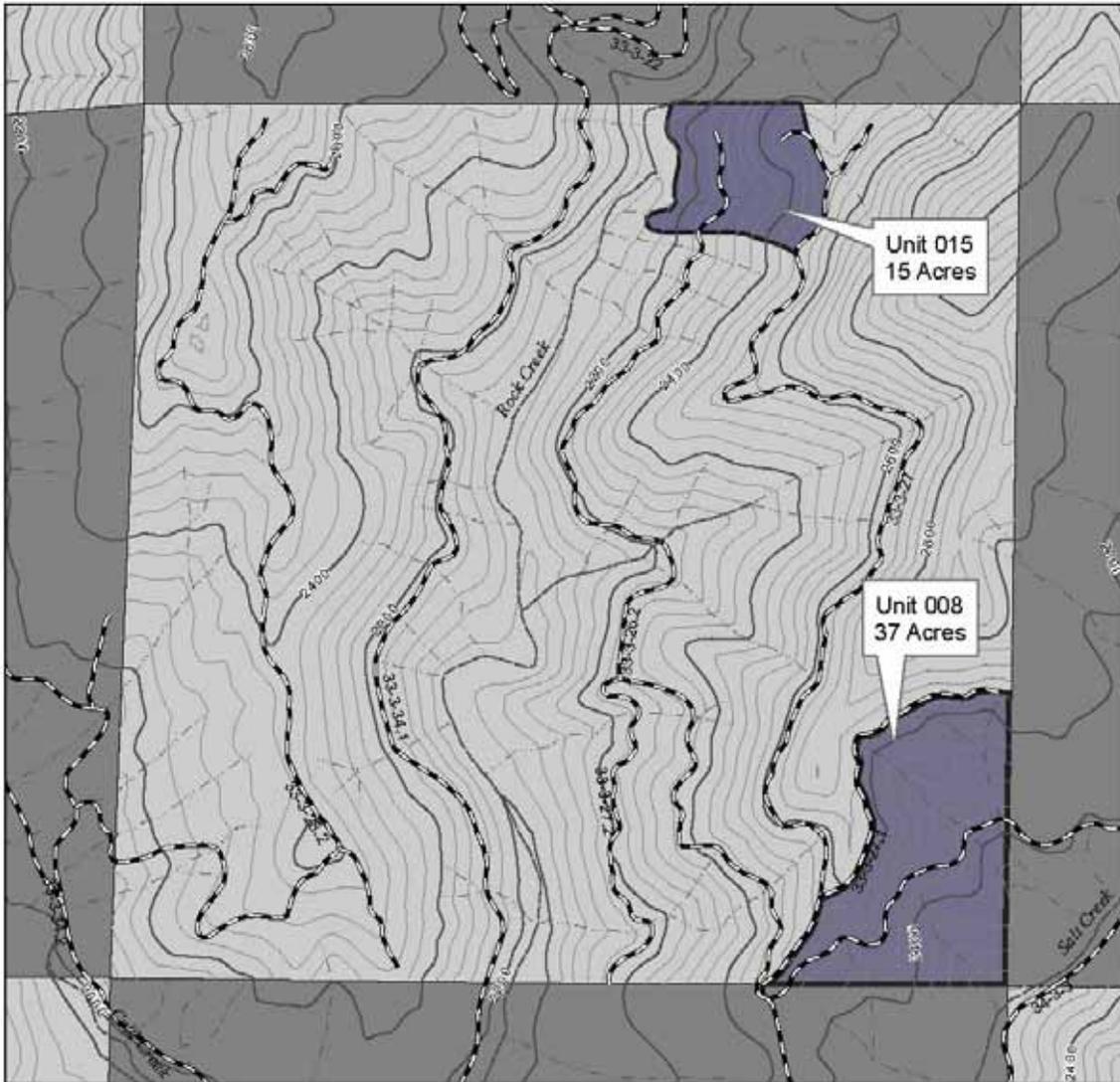
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164234	1E	026	32	PCT (16x16)



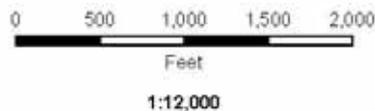
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Medford District
January 2011

Map 7. Pop Rock BO

T33S R3W Sec 27



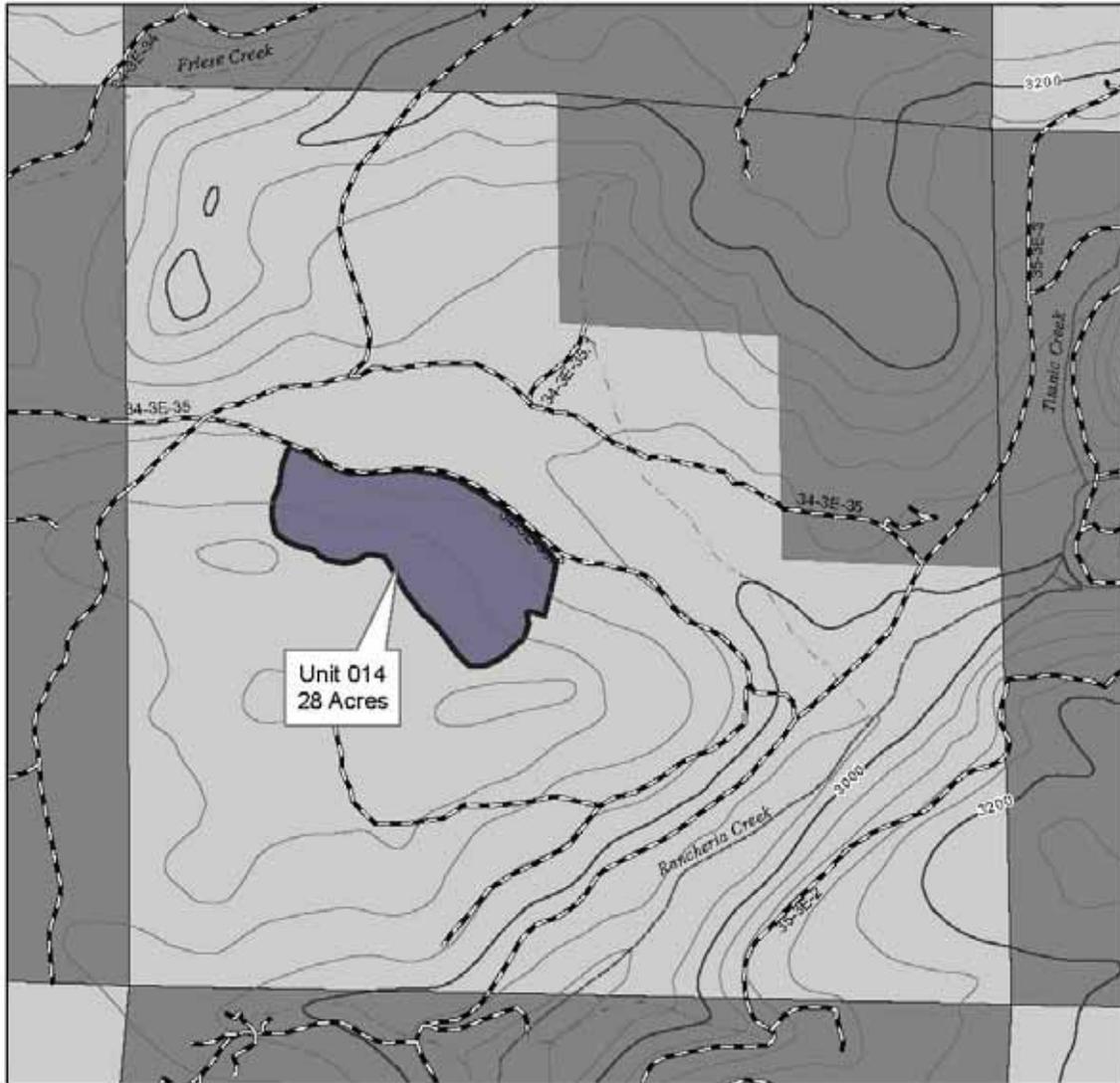
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
158231	1E	008	37	PCT (16x16)
164237	1E	015	15	PCT (16x16)



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

Map 8. Frozen Titanic

T34S R3E Sec 35



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

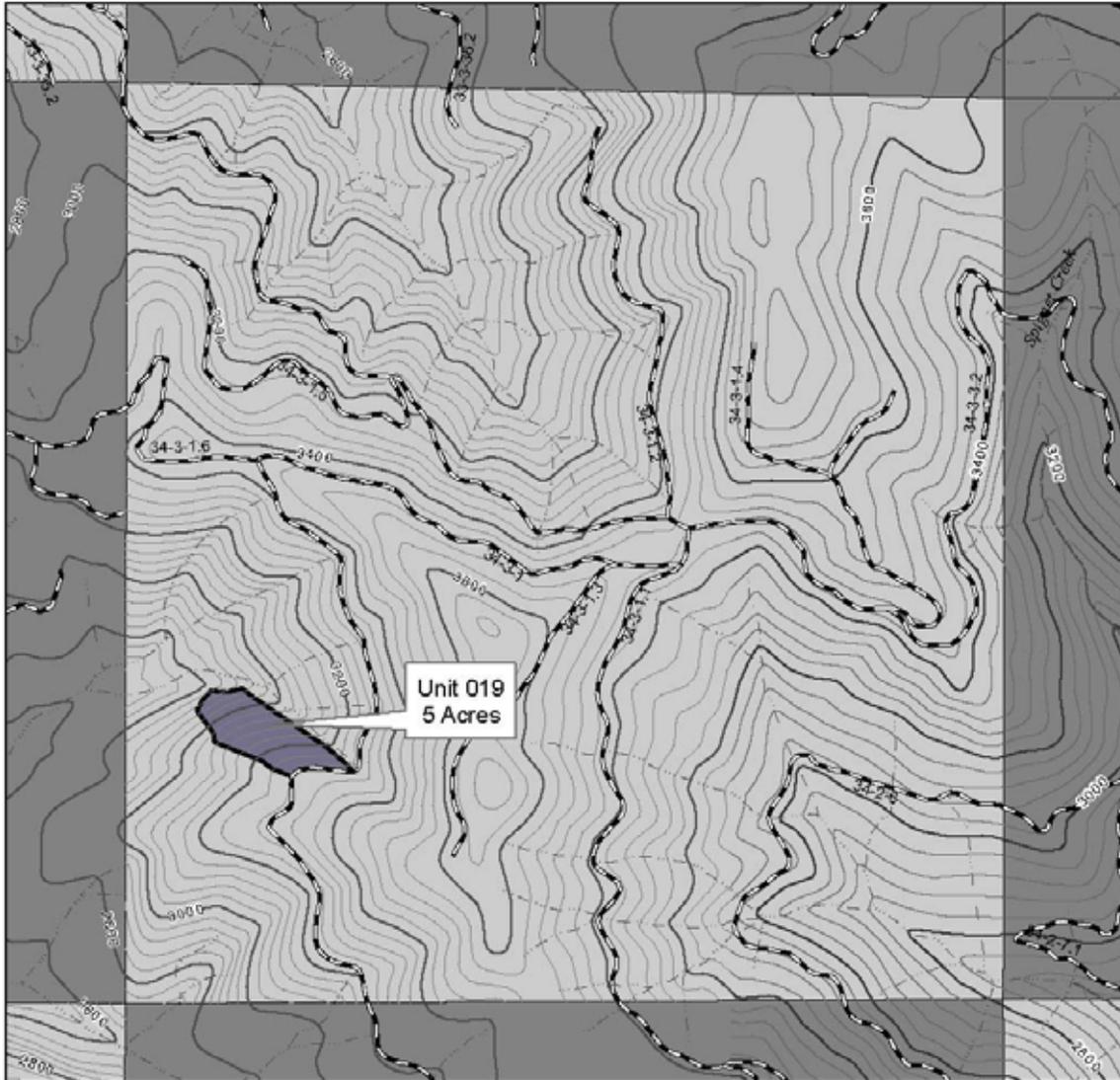
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164314	1E	014	28	PCT 16x16



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

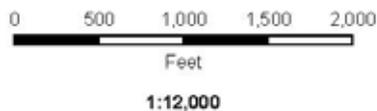
Map 9. Old Salt

T34S R3W Sec 1



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

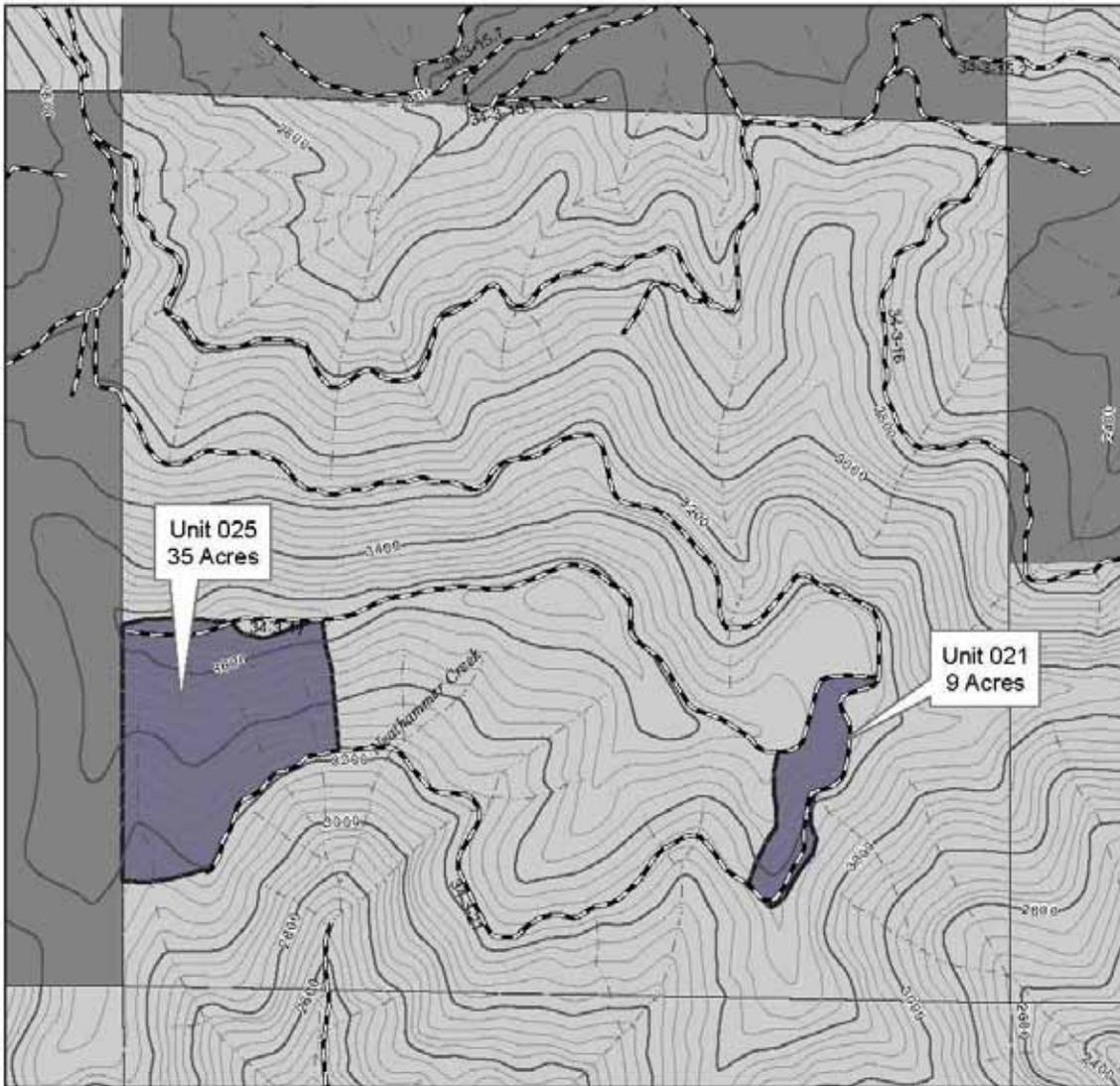
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
161432	1F	019	5	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



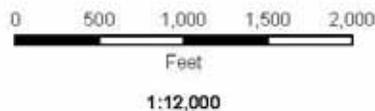
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Medford District
January 2011

Map 10. May Fly Salvage

T34S R3W Sec 21



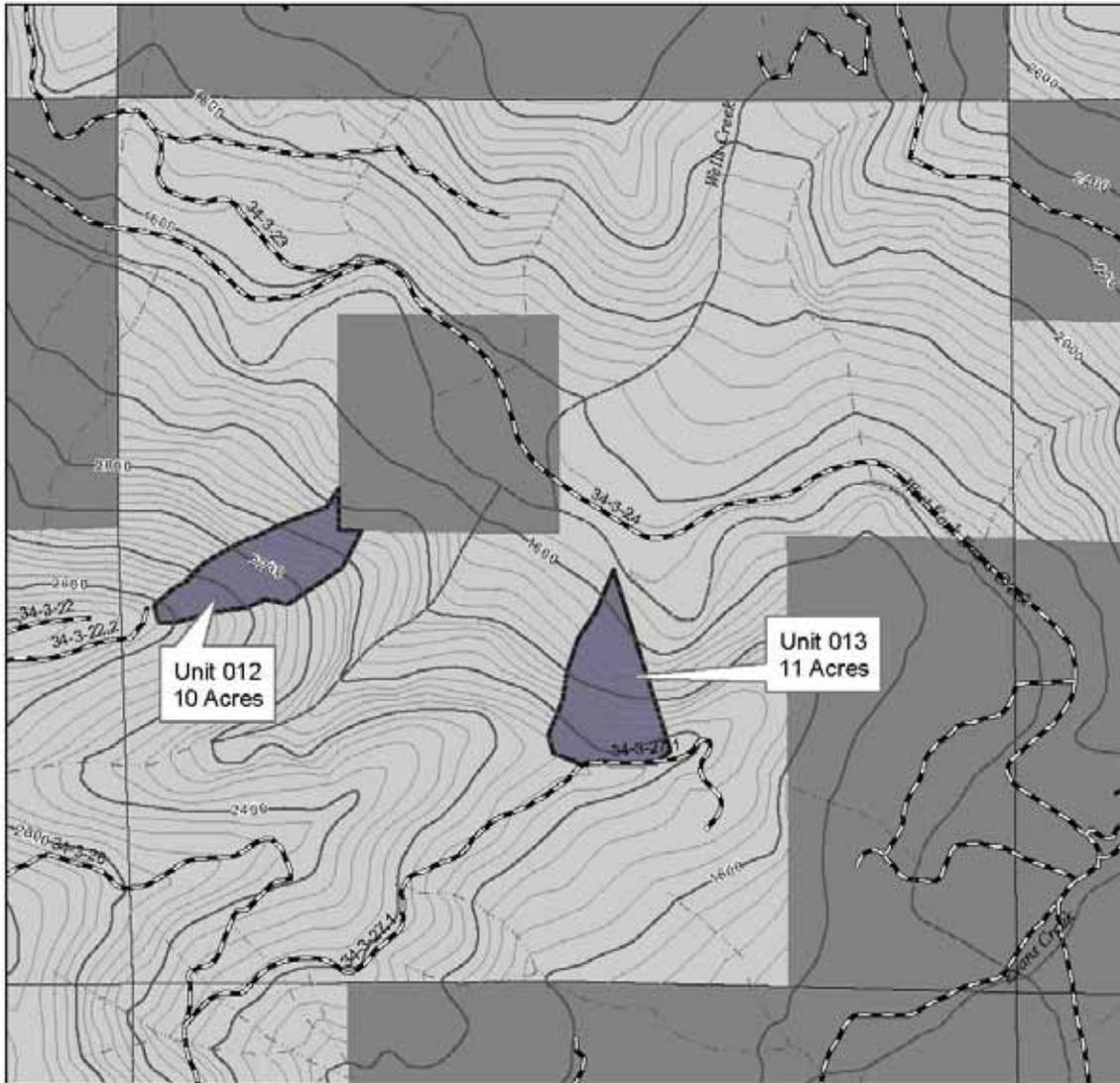
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164342	1F	025	35	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control
155389	1F	021	9	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



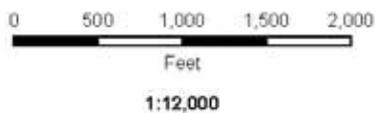
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Medford District
January 2011

Map 11. Ash Tin

T34S R3W Sec 23



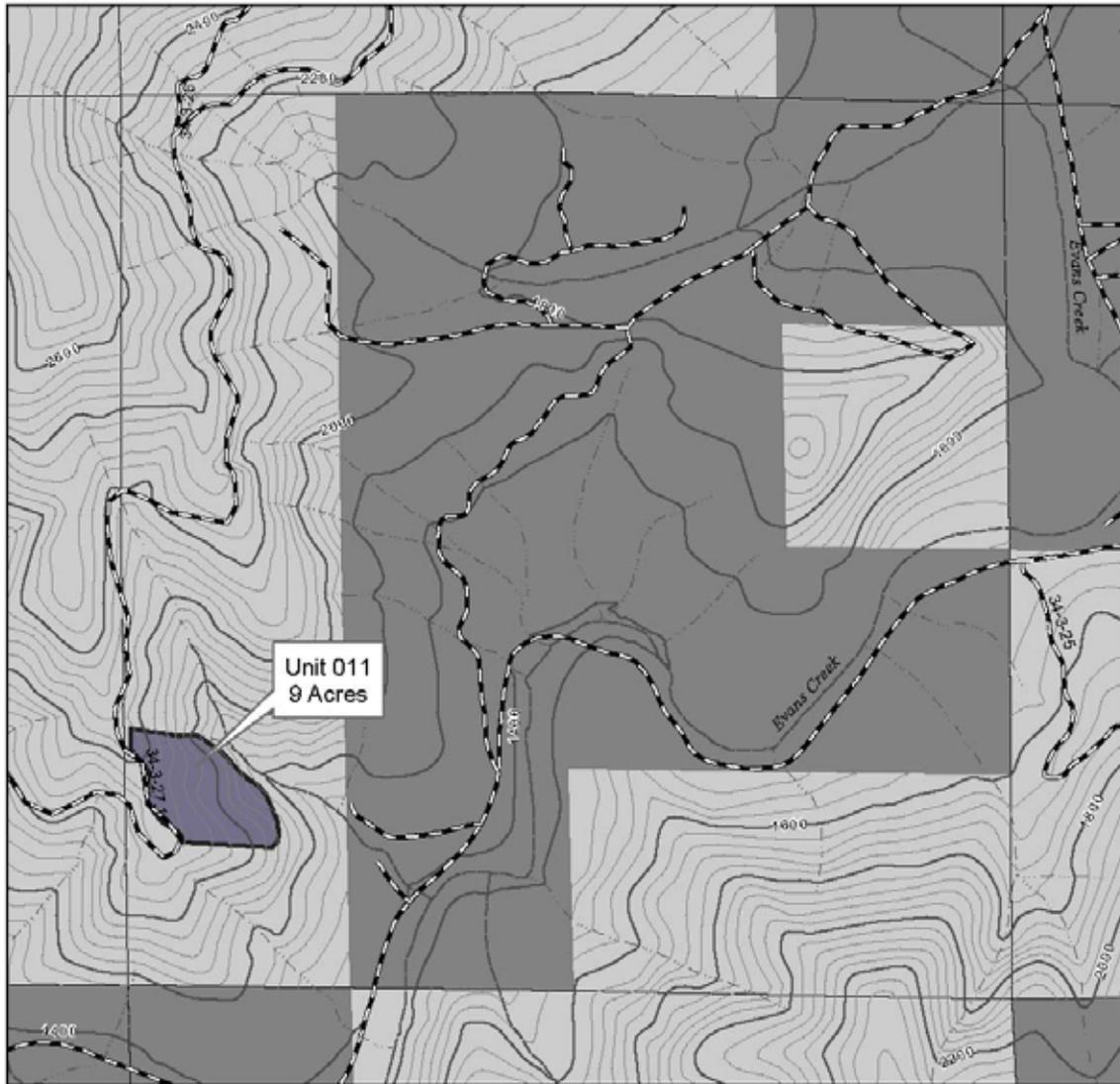
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164268	1F	012	10	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control
164269	1F	013	11	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

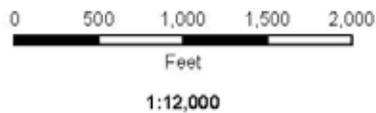
Map 12. Ash Tin

T34S R3W Sec 26



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

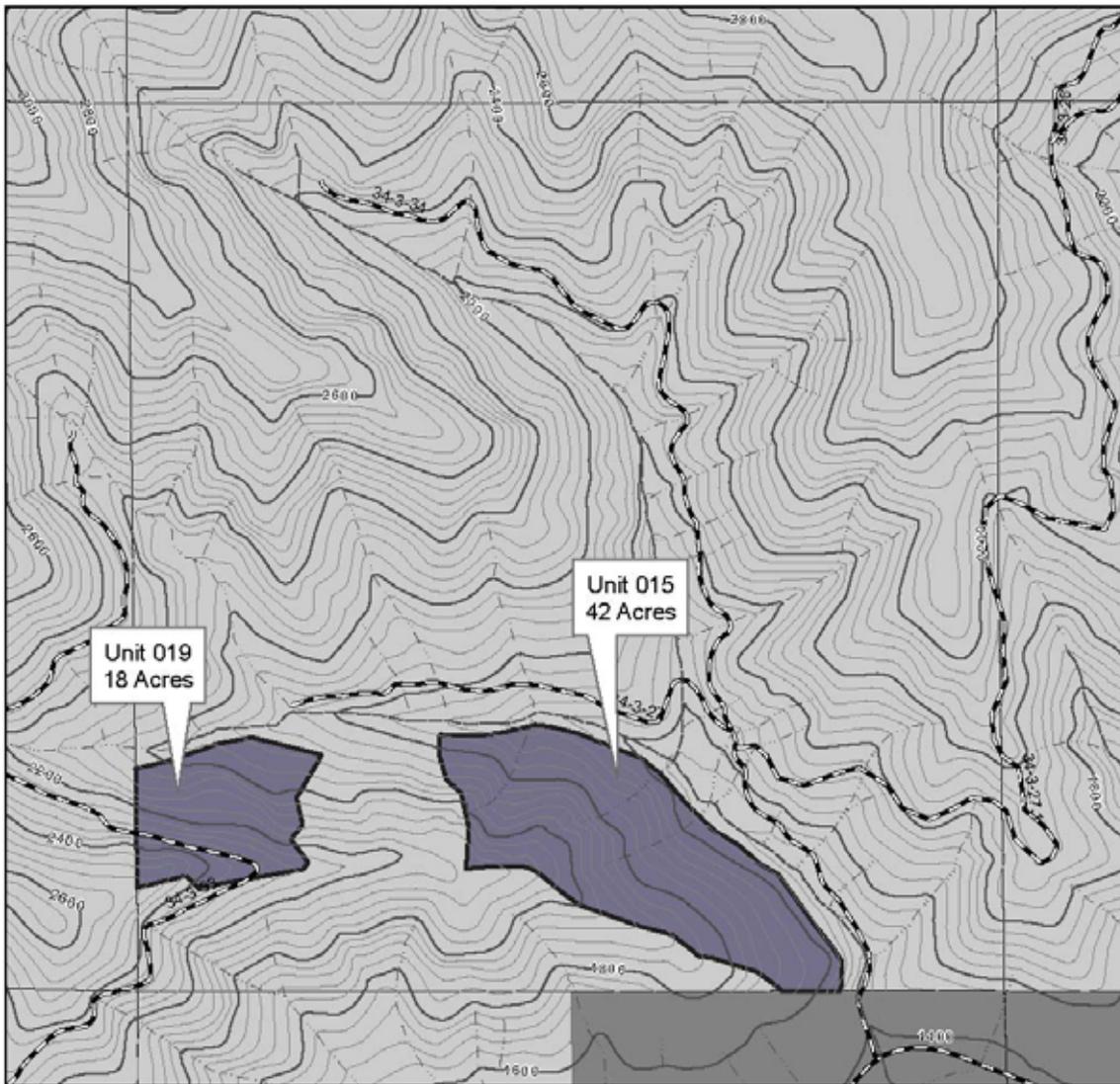
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
164270	1F	011	9	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011

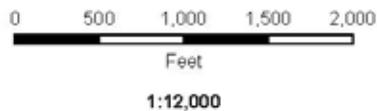
Map 13. May Fly Fire Salvage

T34S R3W Sec 27



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

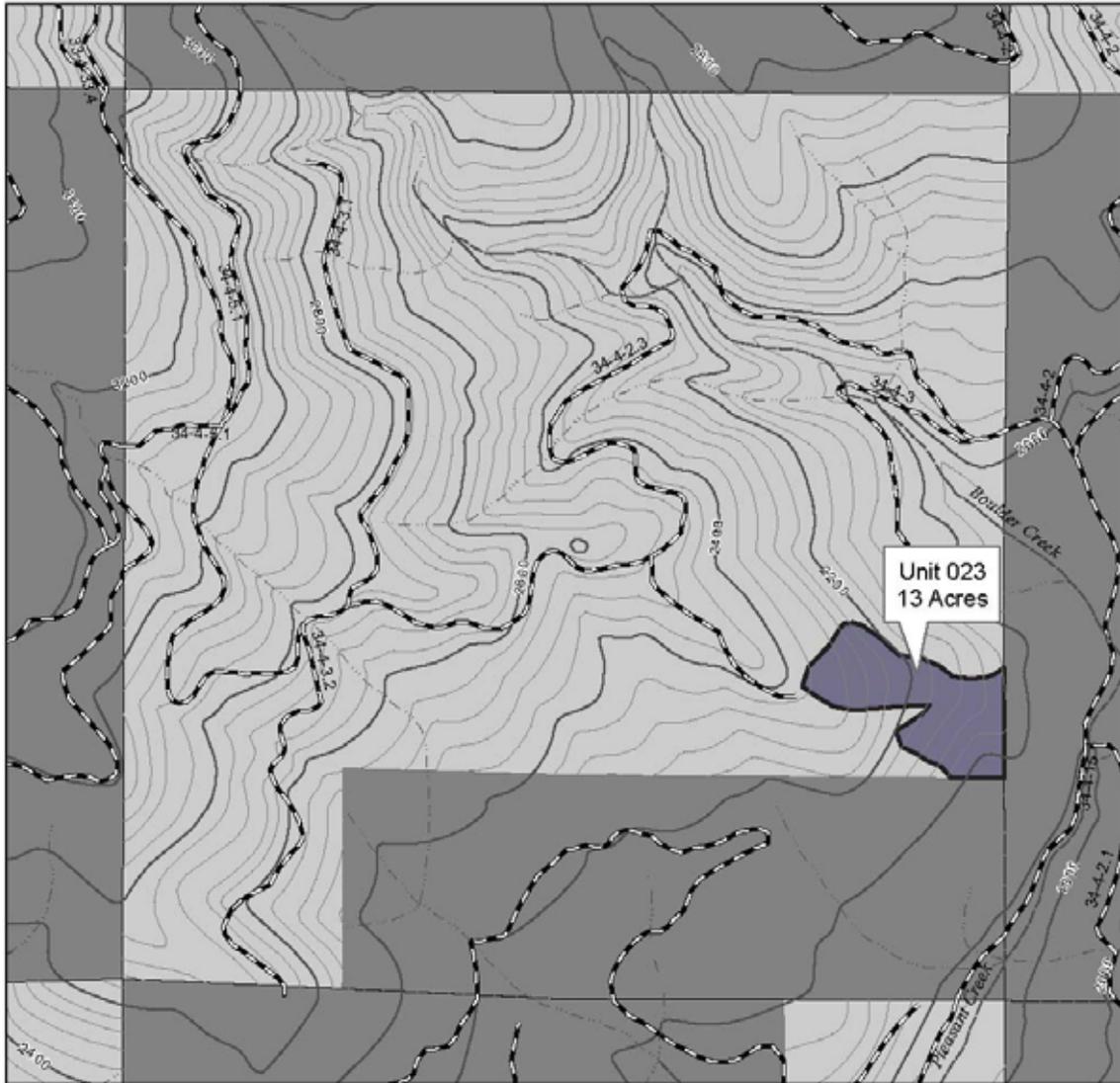
FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
155447	1F	015	42	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control
164257	1F	019	18	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



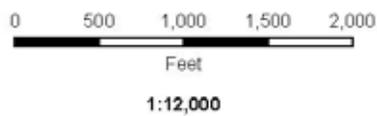
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Medford District
January 2011

Map 14. Pleasantly Hot

T34S R4W Sec 3



FOI Key	Bid Item	Unit #	Acres	Treatment
155614	1F	023	13	PCT(16x) & Hdwd Control



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Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
January 2011