

# Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record for the Vine Maple Blowdown Salvage Project

DOI-BLM-OR-M050-2015-017-CX

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## A. Background

**BLM Office:** Butte Falls Resource Area

**Document Number:** DOI-BLM-OR-M050-2015-017-CX

**Proposed Action:** Blowdown Salvage

**Location of Proposed Action:** The project is located in the South Fork Rogue River Fifth Field watershed in Township 33 South, Range 2 East, section 25, SE¼NE¼ Willamette Meridian, Jackson County, Oregon.

### **Proposed Action:**

On February 6, 2015, a wind storm blew over a large number of trees scattered throughout the east side of the Butte Falls Resource Area. The Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to salvage harvest 15 acres (approximately 30 trees) of blowdown trees and standing hazard trees in the Project Area (see Maps).

Salvage harvest would recover the economic value of trees blowdown during the wind storm and eliminate the safety hazards presented by trees leaning over roads within the Project Area.

Trees would be harvested with a tracked or rubber-tired skidder using existing skid trails. Trees would be yarded to existing landings. Logging residue would be lopped and scattered. Logging and timber hauling would occur during dry conditions. No temporary or permanent roads would be constructed.

The trees are located within a previously harvested commercial thinning unit in the Vine Maple Timber Sale.

### **Project Design Features:**

#### *Common to All Project Activities*

- Suspend project-related activities if conditions develop that cause a potential for sediment-laden runoff to enter a wetland, floodplain, or waters of the state.
- Cover or otherwise temporarily stabilize areas of exposed soil on landings, yarding corridors, and skid trails prior to season-ending wetting rains.
- Complete rehabilitation activities during the same operating season as harvest operations.
- Install sediment-trapping devices in order to hydrologically disconnect sites. Operations may resume when sediment control devices are in place and conditions allow turbidity standards to be met.
- Ensure hay, straw, and mulch are certified as free of prohibited noxious vegetation parts, seeds, or both. Straw or hay must be obtained from the BLM or purchased from growers certified by Oregon Department of Agriculture's Weed Free Forage and Mulch Program. If hay is used, it must be from native grasses only.

### *Harvest Operations*

- No harvest activities within the riparian reserve. The riparian reserve width is 190 feet on both sides and above perennial and intermittent streams. Use of existing roads within and crossing the riparian reserve will be allowed as long as project design features are followed.
- Restrict tractor yarding operations to the dry season, generally mid-May to mid-October or when soil moisture is less than 25%. The dry season may be extended if wetting winter rains have not occurred, the weather forecast is monitored daily, and all winterization actions can reasonably occur prior to season-ending storms.
- Use only designated skid trails used in the Vine Maple timber sale, and after use skid trails will be rehabilitated (ie., waterbarred, place slash and or logs on trails).
- Block skid trails that intersect roads with barricades to prevent off-highway vehicle access.
- Limit ground-based skidding trails to slopes less than 35%.
- Use tractors equipped with an integral arch to minimize soil disturbance.
- Require partial suspension, at a minimum, during ground-based yarding to minimize soil disturbance.
- To minimize soil disturbance, do not allow the use of blades during tractor yarding.
- To minimize soil disturbance and compaction, limit tractors to less than 9 feet wide. Skid trails, including turning points, will be 12 feet wide on average.

### *Landings*

- Restrict landing rehabilitation to the dry season, generally mid-May to mid-October. The season may be extended if wetting winter rains have not occurred, the weather forecast is monitored daily, and winterization actions can reasonably occur prior to season-ending storms.
- Landings used during dry conditions within the wet season (generally mid-October through mid-May) that have the potential to release sediment into a stream or wet area via ditch lines or other means will have silt fencing or other sediment control measures in place if they are hydrologically connected<sup>1</sup> to streams. Disposal of captured sediment will occur outside of riparian reserves.
- Remove merchantable sawlogs at landing sites; remaining slash will be used for public firewood or piled and burned.
- To minimize scorch and mortality, do not place landing piles adjacent to or within 15 feet of leave trees. Landing piles would be as free of dirt as reasonably possible to facilitate desired consumption.

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<sup>1</sup>Hydrologically connected—drainage features are connected to stream channels via surface water flow routes, including headwater springs. This determination is made with project-specific, field-verified stream surveys to identify where sediment has the potential to be carried to streams; where precipitation and subsurface flows on impermeable road surfaces may be intercepted, concentrated, and carried to stream channels; and where ditch lines are increasing the stream network.

- After final disturbance, rip, seed, and mulch landings. Block skid trails originating from landings with barricades to prevent off-highway vehicle access. Use native seed and weed-free straw, per specifications provided by the project botanist.

### ***Hauling and Road Maintenance***

- Do not haul timber on hydrologically connected, natural surface, or rocked roads when water is flowing in the ditch lines, or during conditions that would result in any of the following: surface displacement such as rutting or ribbons, continuous mud splash or tire slide, fines being pumped through road surfacing from the subgrade and resulting in a layer of surface sludge, road drainage causing a visible increase in stream turbidities, or any condition that results in water being chronically routed into tire tracks or away from designed road drainage during precipitation events.
- Inspect and maintain culvert inlets and outlets, drainage structures, and ditches before and during the wet season to diminish the likelihood of plugged culverts and the possibility of washouts.

### ***Activity Fuels Treatments***

- Do not mechanically pile slash off of landings.
- Clear a minimum 10-foot area on the ground around each landing pile of slash and other vegetation, litter, and debris to prevent escaped fire. Cover each landing pile with at least a 4 mil black plastic (generally 10 feet by 10 feet) to facilitate rapid ignition and fuel consumption to minimize residual smoke.
- Burn piles in the fall to spring after one or more inches of precipitation have occurred. Burning piles will be patrolled and mop-up will occur when needed to prevent treated areas from reburning or becoming an escaped fire.
- Manage prescribed burning in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Oregon Smoke Management Plan administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry and the regulations established by the Air Quality Division of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.
- Complete prescribed fire burn plans and obtain smoke clearance before ignition to minimize impacts on air quality.

### ***Hazardous Materials***

- Ensure hydraulic fluid and fuel lines on heavy mechanized equipment are in working condition to minimize potential for leakage into streams. Do not refuel heavy equipment within 190 feet of streams or stream crossings. Absorbent materials are required to be on site to allow for immediate containment of any accidental spills.
- Refuel chainsaws and heavy equipment at least 190 feet from streams or wet areas. If a spill does occur, hazardous materials will be removed from the site and disposed of at an approved disposal site.

### ***Northern Spotted Owl***

- Retain a total of 4 snags per acre 16 inches in diameter at breast height or greater.
- Retain existing coarse woody debris.
- Seasonally restrict salvage harvest activities from March 1 to September 30 according to the buffer distances in Table 1. The seasonal restriction will be waived if nonnesting is

determined. If any new owls are discovered in harvest units following the sale date, activities will be halted until mitigation options are determined.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Buffer Distance</b>
Heavy Equipment (including nonblasting quarry operations)	105 feet
Chain saws	195 feet
Commercial Timber Harvest	0.25 mile
Prescribed fire/Activity fuel burning	0.25 mile

### ***Noxious Weeds***

- Require equipment that will travel off system roads to be washed prior to entry onto BLM lands to remove mud, dirt, and plant parts.

### ***Cultural***

- If, during project implementation, the contractor encounters or becomes aware of any objects or sites of cultural value on Federal lands, such as historical or pre-historical ruins, graves, grave markers, fossils, or artifacts, the contractor shall immediately suspend all operations in the vicinity of the cultural value and notify the Contract Officer Representative so the site can be evaluated by a BLM archaeologist.

## **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

**Land Use Plan:** Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan. Approved June 1995.

The proposed action is in conformance with the Medford District RMP (p. 72) because it is specifically provided for in the following RMP objective: 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.

This project is consistent with the 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, as incorporated into the Medford District RMP. This project uses the December 2003 species list. This list incorporates species changes and removals made as a result of the 2001, 2002, and 2003 Annual Species Reviews with the exception of the red tree vole. For the red tree vole, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *KSWC et al. v. Boody et al.*, 468 F3d 549 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006) vacated the category change and removal of the red tree vole in the mesic zone, and returned the red tree vole to its status as existed in the 2001 Standards and Guidelines, which makes the species Category C throughout its range.

### **C. Compliance with NEPA**

This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 C(8) as follows:

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

- (a) May include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.
- (b) May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and
- (c) Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment, by artificial or natural means, of vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.
- (d) For this CX, a dying tree is defined as a standing tree that has been severely damaged by forces such as fire, wind, ice, insects, or disease, and that in the judgment of an experienced forest professional or someone technically trained for the work, is likely to die within a few years.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- (i) Harvesting a portion of a stand damaged by a wind or ice event.
- (ii) Harvesting fire damaged trees.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment, as documented in the following review.

**D. Categorical Exclusion Review**

The BLM has reviewed the proposed action and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR § 46.215 rise to the level of significance. A summary of the extraordinary circumstances is listed below. The action must have a significant or a disproportional effect on the listed categories to warrant further analysis and environmental review.

The proposed Categorical Exclusion action will:	YES	NO
<b>2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Rationale:</b> Salvage operations will follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards designed to prevent job-related illness or injuries. Salvage will remove or fell trees that currently represent a hazard to workers and the public.	<b>Initials</b>	
	<i>AFK</i>	
<b>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.</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Rationale:</b> This project was designed to avoid the natural resources and unique geographic areas listed above. The trees salvage sites are not located in park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; floodplains; national monuments; and ecologically significant or critical areas. The BLM conducted appropriate cultural resource surveys in accordance with the current protocol.	<b>Initials</b>	
	<i>AFK</i>	
<b>2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Rationale:</b> The project’s interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the project and did not identify any highly controversial effects or unresolved conflicts concerning this project.	<b>Initials</b>	
	<i>AFK</i>	
<b>2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Rationale:</b> The BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the project and determined there is no threat of significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks.	<b>Initials</b>	
	<i>AFK</i>	

<p><b>2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.</b></p>		<p>X</p>	
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Salvage operations have occurred on the Medford District in the past and are likely to occur in the future. Each 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. This action does not represent a decision in principle about the future actions with potentially significant effects.</p>	<p>Initials <i>AFIC</i></p>		
<p><b>2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</b></p>		<p>X</p>	
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The proposed salvage in T33S, R2E, section 25 is located within an area which was harvested in 2013 as part of the Vine Maple Timber Sale. The additional salvage of approximately 30 blowdown trees scattered over 15 acres would not lead to significant cumulative effects.</p>	<p>Initials <i>SLS</i> <i>AFIC</i></p>		
<p><b>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.</b></p>		<p>X</p>	
<p><b>Rationale:</b> There would be no significant impacts to properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. No National Register Listed sites, or sites eligible for listing, were identified in areas of potential effect during archaeological surveys or extensive background research.</p>	<p>Initials <i>AE</i></p>		
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<p>Plants</p>		<p>X</p>
	<p>Wildlife</p>		<p>X</p>
	<p>Fish</p>		<p>X</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b>   <b>Plants:</b> Required plant surveys have been completed. No sites would be disturbed by the salvage of the identified trees. <i>because they would be buffered from impacts.</i>  <b>Wildlife:</b> Salvage of 30 individual dead or down trees would not change the function of northern spotted owl habitat and project design features provide for seasonal restrictions if owls are found to be nesting in a known northern spotted owl site.   <b>Fish:</b> No trees would be salvaged near streams containing Southern Oregon/Northern California Coastal Coho critical habitat or essential fish habitat.</p>		<p>Initials</p> <p>Plants <i>mw</i></p> <p>Wildlife <i>J.R.</i></p> <p>Fish <i>ASA</i></p>	

<p><b>2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.</b></p>		<p>X</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The BLM’s interdisciplinary team for the Blowdown Salvage Project reviewed the project to ensure compliance with applicable laws including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Archaeological Resources Protection Act, among others. The resource specialists found the project conforms to the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District RMP, which complies with all applicable Federal and State law.</p>	<p>Initials</p> <p>AFK</p>	
<p><b>2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).</b></p>		<p>X</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Based on past projects in the Butte Falls Resource Area, the project would provide job opportunities for communities in the southern Oregon region. The project would not have a disproportionately high or adverse effect to low income or minority populations.</p>	<p>Initials</p> <p>AEK</p>	
<p><b>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).</b></p>		<p>X</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The removal of scattered trees from along or within roads would not limit access to or use of Indian sacred sites. The project archaeologist conducted a cultural survey for this project and no such sites were identified that could be affected by this project.</p>	<p>Initials</p> <p>AE</p>	
<p><b>2.12 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).</b></p>		<p>X</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The ongoing treatment of noxious weeds in the project area would reduce the risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds. Existing and likely continuing activities including, but not limited to, motor vehicle traffic, recreation use, rural and urban development, road construction, timber harvest, and natural processes can contribute to the introduction, existence, and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species. Vehicles accessing the project area would stay on existing roads (no additional permanent or temporary roads are proposed), reducing the potential for picking up and dispersing noxious weeds or seed. <i>Equipment that would go off the main roads would be washed prior to entering the harvest unit.</i></p>	<p>Initials</p> <p>mw</p>	

*Equipment that would go off the main roads would be washed prior to entering the harvest unit.*

**E. Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:**

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Jean Williams	NEPA	9-29-15	 <small>FOR JEAN WILLIAMS</small>
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	7/27/15	mw
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	9/18/15	D.R.
AJ Donnell	Fisheries Biologist	7/24/15	AJD
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	7/29/15	SLS
Amy Meredith	Soil Scientist	7/24/15	ACM
Al Mason	Fire/Fuels Specialist	7/27/15	ADM
Aaron Ennis	Archaeologist	7/29/15	AE
Jeff Brown	Engineering	7/29/15	JAB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Specialist	7/23/15	TL

**F. Decision and Rationale**

BLM staff (listed in section E) has reviewed this project for potential impacts and provided project design features that will be incorporated into this proposal. I have considered the Vine Maple Blowdown Salvage project and the required project design features listed in this categorical exclusion documentation in section A. Based on the categorical exclusion review documented in section D, I have determined the proposed action represents no significant impact to the human environment and no further analysis is required.

It is my decision to authorize implementation of the Vine Maple Blowdown Salvage project. This project will salvage harvest on 6 acres of land located in Township 33 South, Range 2 East, section 25, SE¼NW¼.

  
Teresa J. Trulock  
Field Manager  
Butte Falls Resource Area

9/30/15  
Date

### **G. Administrative Remedy**

The forest management decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion is subject to protest under 43 CFR subpart 5003. Under 43 CFR 5003.2 (c), a notice of decision will be published in the local newspaper. Under 43 CFR 5003.3 (a), protests may be filed with the Authorized Officer within 15 days of the publication date of the notice of timber sale advertisement. Under 43 CFR 5003.3 (b), a protest filed with the Authorized Officer shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. A decision on this protest would be subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals; although, filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of a decision governing or relating to forest management under 43 CFR 5003.2 or 5003.3.

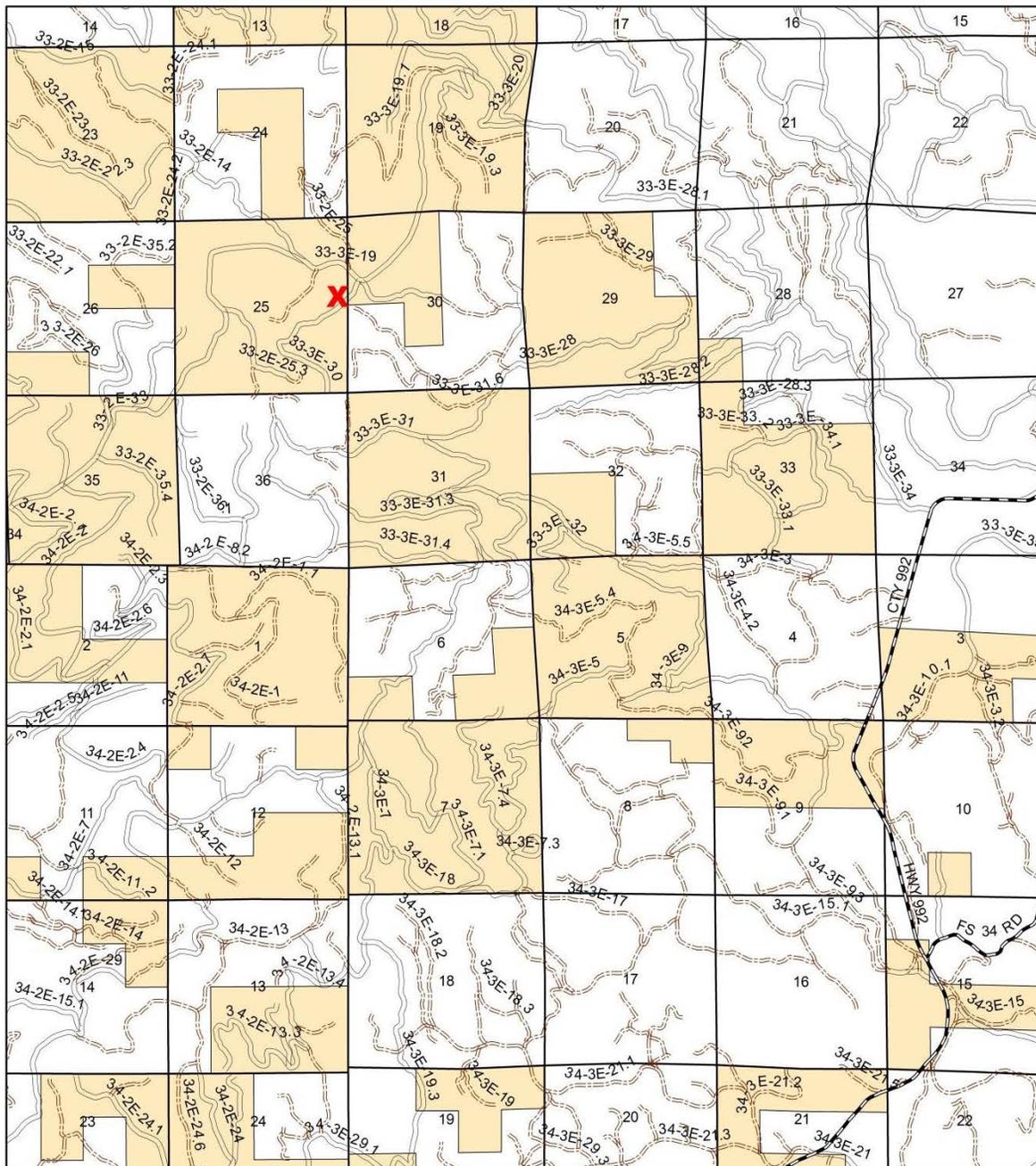
The 15-day protest period will begin when the timber sale notice for this project is published in the Medford Mail Tribune newspaper. Only written and signed hard copies of a protest received by the BLM within 15 days of the timber sale notice publication will be considered. Electronic (e-mail) or facsimile protests will not be accepted.

Protests may be delivered or mailed to the Bureau of Land Management, Butte Falls Resource Area Field Manager, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon 97504. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed holidays.

### **H. Contact**

For additional information concerning this categorical exclusion review, contact Dave Orban, Forestry Technician, Butte Falls Resource Area at 541-618-2368.

Vine Maple Blowdown



Legend

- ==== Skeleton\_Temp\_Roads
- <all other values>
- BLM
- Paved
- Gravel or Rock
- Natural
- Section

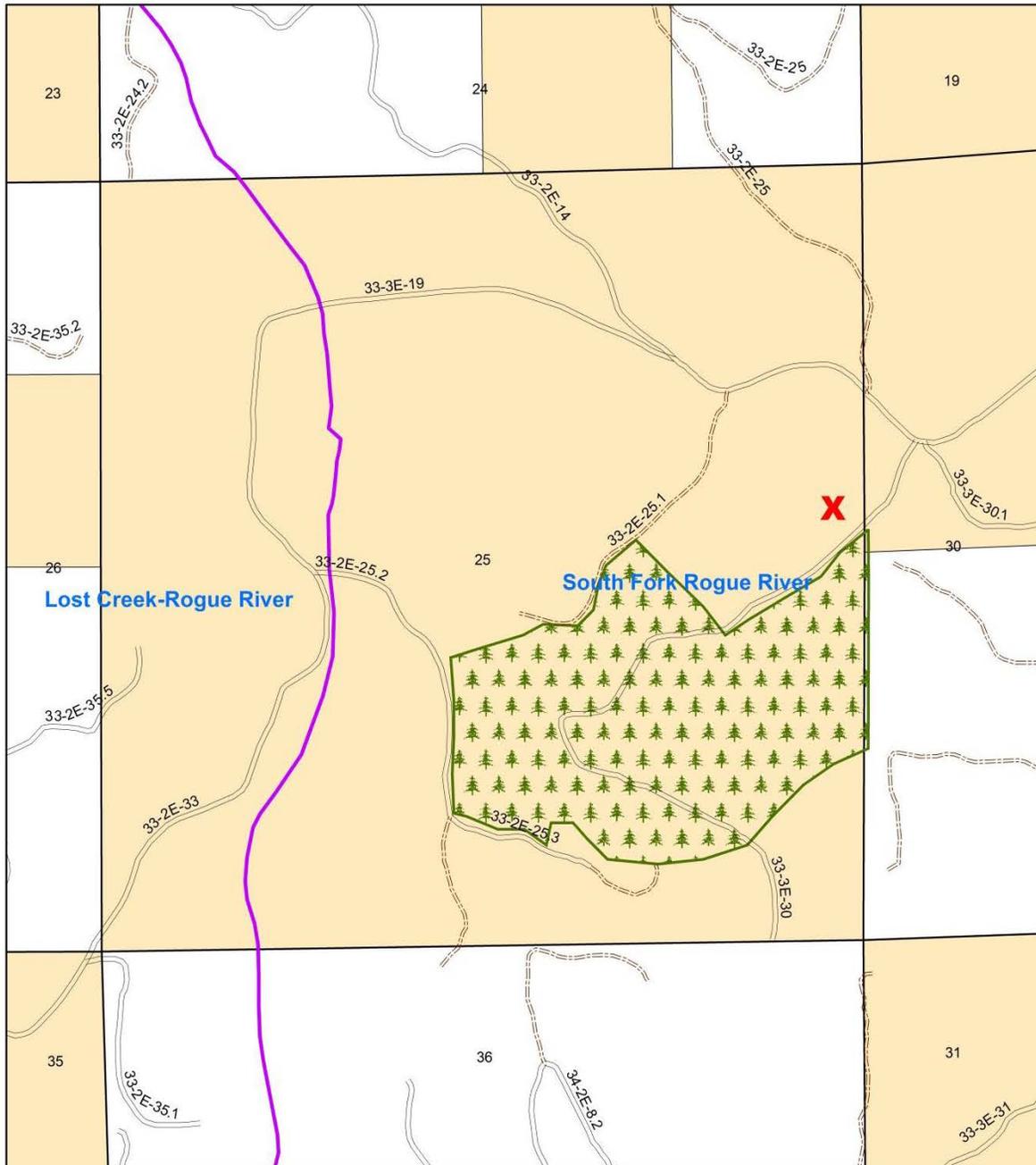


**T.33S R.02E Sec.25**



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

Vine Maple Blowdown Exhibit A



- Legend**
- Section
  - BLM
  - OwlActivityCenter
  - BF\_HUC5
  - Section
  - OwlActivityCenter
  - <all other values>
  - Paved
  - Gravel or Rock
  - Natural

**X = Blowdown Project Location**



**T.33S R.02E Sec.25**



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