



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Grants Pass Resource Area
2164 N.E. Spalding
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792 (ORM070)
DOI-BLM-OR-M070-2009-0045-EA

DEC 05 2013

Dear Interested Party:

As Field Manager for the Grants Pass Resource Area, I have signed the Decision Record for the Young Stand Management Project. The forest management activities will treat 90 acres for hazardous fuel reduction and 32 acres for young stand management activities within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

The activities covered by the Young Stand Management Project are analyzed under the Fuel Hazard Reduction Project on the Grants Pass Resource Area Environmental Assessment (FHRP EA) DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0009-EA. The EA was made available for public comment from July 30, 2010 to September 1, 2010 for a 30 day comment period. The Bureau of Land Management's responses to substantive public comments are included with the Decision Record. These comments were considered in reaching a final decision for the Young Stand Management Project.

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR § 5003.2(1)), the decision for this project will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the Notice of Decision appears in the Grants Pass Daily Courier.

43 CFR § 5003.3 subsection (b) states, "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail (email) or facsimile (fax) protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Grants Pass Interagency Office will be accepted. The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

You can review the Decision Record at: <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/plans/index.php>, the Medford District's internet site. For additional information contact Michelle Calvert, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at (541)471-6505. Hardcopies of the Decision Record are also available at the Grants Pass Interagency Office at 2164 Spalding Ave, Grants Pass, OR 97526. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:45 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., closed on holidays.

Sincerely,

Allen Bollschweiler
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 GRANTS PASS INTERAGENCY OFFICE
 2164 NE SPALDING AVENUE
 GRANTS PASS, OREGON 97526

YOUNG STAND MANAGEMENT PROJECT DECISION RECORD NEPA# DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0045-EA

I. INTRODUCTION

The Young Stand Management Project will be implemented under the Fuel Hazard Reduction Project on the Grants Pass Resource Area Environmental Assessment (FHRP EA) DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0009-EA.

The Young Stand Management Project will treat 90 acres for hazardous fuel reduction and 32 acres for young stand management activities within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Several decades of fire exclusion in the Project Area has resulted in dense, overcrowded stands of trees and brush. Treatment under this project will decrease the likelihood of high intensity fire behavior that can damage resources, homes, and investments made in young managed stands. Treatments will occur in Matrix (Southern General Management Forest Area), Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA), Late Successional Reserve (LSR), and Riparian Reserve (RR) land use allocations. The treatment objectives will also be to attain healthy and resilient forest stand conditions and to meet land management objectives identified for lands assigned in Matrix, LSR, RR, and the AMA land use allocations.

The hazardous fuel reduction treatment is to cut vegetation, hand pile, and burn the piles on 90 acres over five units. The young stand management treatment is to thin conifers and hardwoods and cut brush, in 32 acres in one unit. There would be no biomass removal in the 90 acres of this project. Trees to be cut would be less than 7 inch diameter at breast height (dbh) for conifers and hardwoods.

Table 1. Young Stand Management Project Treatments from the Fuel Hazard Reduction Project on the Grants Pass Resource Area 2010-2015 Environmental Assessment

Land Use Allocation	Legal Location	Unit Name	Treatment Description	Acres
SGFMA	T35S-R5W-21	Phantom 21-1	Hand Piling and Burning	13
	T38S-R7W-31	Scottish Verbascum 2D		14
AMA/LSR	T39S-R5W-21 & 22	Rocky East Fork		4

Land Use Allocation	Legal Location	Unit Name	Treatment Description	Acres
SGFMA	T39S-R8W-1	Deer Selmac 1-1	Hand Piling and Burning	27
	T39S-R8W-33	Junction Overlook 33-2	Young Stand Management	32
			Hand Piling and Burning	
			Conifer Spacing 18 ft x 18 ft	

Legend

SGFMA=Southern General Forest Management Area AMA=Adaptive Management Area LSR=Late Successional Reserve

Project Design Features identified in the FHRP EA on pages 11-18 have been incorporated in the design of this project.

The Programmatic FHRP EA is intended to streamline the NEPA analysis to more efficiently address high fuel hazards and respond to public requests (EA p.3). The Programmatic FHRP EA and this project meet the objectives and direction of the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP).

Under the FHRP EA, individual projects will each have a decision record (DR) and be tiered to the Environmental Assessment. This is the third of such decision records under this Programmatic EA. The two previous decision records were signed in September 2010 for the West Williams Project and the Takilma-Rockydale Project. Additional DRs under this EA will be signed for a period of up to two years from signing of this DR.

II. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public scoping for the EA began in November 2008. A scoping letter was sent to approximately 90 landowners, federal, state, county agencies, tribal and private organizations, and individuals that requested information concerning projects of this type.

The Programmatic FHRP EA was available for public review from July 30 through September 1, 2010. Comments were received from the American Forest Resource Council, the Siskiyou Project, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, and Oregon Wild. Public comments and associated BLM responses are summarized in Appendix A of the DR. The EA incorporated analysis of the proposed actions; addressed issues raised in public scoping comments, and referenced new information.

The Young Stand Management Project will meet a number of commenters’ requests such as:

- retaining hardwoods greater than 8 inches dbh
- not including biomass removal
- providing site specific information of treatment areas

- retaining overstory conifer shade to reduce sprouting in madrones
- prioritizing treatment of dense young stands
- thinning from below

While all the commenters' requests could not be accommodated for this project, most of the comments were supportive of the Fuels Reduction Project on the Grants Pass Resource Area and the previous Decision Records on this EA did not receive any written protests.

Based on public input, recommendations from the planning team, and careful consideration of the objectives of the laws, regulations, and planning documents and NEPA analysis governing these lands, the following constitutes my decision.

III. DECISION and RATIONALE

Alternative 1, the No-Action Alternative, is not selected because it does not meet the resource management objectives identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan or the objectives for resources detailed in the EA (EA pp. 4-5). The No-Action Alternative would not address or alter many of the existing resource conditions and trends that are of major concern relative to healthy forest conditions and resource protection. The No-Action alternative would perpetuate or promote undesirable resource conditions, and these conditions would not be improved or mitigated. High fire hazard conditions would continue and increase.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives considered and analyzed in detail included the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), which serves as the baseline to compare effects with the Proposed Action (Alternative 2). Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Project Design Features (PDFs) are included in the project's design to ensure compliance with the federal Clean Water Act and higher-level National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, laws and BLM guidelines. The alternative descriptions, BMPs, and PDFs incorporated into the Proposed Action are found on pages 9-18 of the EA.

Substantive public requests that were within the purpose and need for this project were evaluated for project modification. Some public requests have been a part of the project's development since its beginning stages (see section II above). The environmental effects of taking no action are analyzed in the FHRP EA. The alternative action requests made by the public were not substantially different than the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) or the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1); therefore, these alternatives were considered but eliminated from further analysis.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is attached. The implementation of this project will not have significant environmental effects beyond those already identified in the 1995 Final EIS/Proposed RMP or its amendments. The Young Stand Management Project does not constitute a major federal action having significant effects on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared (see attached Finding of No Significant Impact).

A. Rationale

Decision: It is my decision to implement a portion of Alternative 2 for the Programmatic FHRP EA referred to hereafter as the Selected Action. The Selected Action includes treating approximately 90 acres for hazardous fuel reduction and young stand management within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The Selected Action includes all Project Design Features (PDFs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in the EA (p.11-18). There would be no road maintenance associated with this project. Slash from one inch to six inches in diameter would be piled and burned. No vegetation would be cut within 50 feet of streams.

Rationale: The Young Stand Management Project Area is in an area of higher fuel loading due to several decades of fire exclusion which has resulted in dense, overcrowded stands of trees and brush. Treatment under this project will ensure the likelihood of retaining ponderosa pine as a dominant species and decrease the likelihood of high intensity fire behavior that can damage resources, homes, and investments made in this young silvicultural stand.

B. BLM Strategic Plan

The Decision will implement activities that will promote goals of the Oregon/Washington BLM's 2015 Strategic Plan:

Strategic Theme Area 3: Healthy Land—Forests

- Promote resilient forest landscapes, conserve terrestrial and aquatic species, support sustainable communities, and provide for communities' health and safety.

National Fire Plan

The National Fire Plan, a culmination of various reports, (e.g., Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment, Integrating Fire and Natural Resource Management – A Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People by Restoring Land Health), budget requests, Congressional direction, and resulting strategies, plans, projects, and other activities have set the stage and provided direction for an increased application and management of prescribed fire and other fuel treatments on federally-managed lands. This is further reinforced by the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy along with its accompanying 2001 review and update.

Much of the project area has high risk fire regimes and is classified as fire condition classes two and three under the Department of the Interior's "Cohesive Strategy." The fire regimes in these fire condition classes have been moderately to significantly altered from their historical range of fire frequency. To restore them to their historical fire regimes, these lands require some level of manipulation through mechanical and prescribed fire treatments (Integrating Fire and Natural Resource Management – A Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People by Restoring Land Health, DOI, March 2001 Draft). The Young Stand Management Project includes management actions directed at this restoration and at reducing the high wildfire risk on federal lands.

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, consultation was completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The BLM completed a Biological Assessment in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assess the impacts to northern spotted owls in compliance of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. A Letter of Concurrence (LOC) was received July 2010 (#13420-2010-I-0178).

The Young Stand Management Project will result in no effect to Southern Oregon/Northern California (SO/NC) coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) or coho critical habitat (CCH) under the Endangered Species Act and no adverse effect to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. A minimum of a 50 foot no treatment buffer will maintain water temperatures and prevent sediment from reaching streams. Riparian treatments outside the no treatment buffer will expedite development of large trees, increasing future large woody debris recruitment potential. With a no effect determination to coho, CCH, and EFH, informal or formal consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service is not required.

The project is within the range of the federally endangered *Lomatium cookii* and *Fritillaria gentneri*. Surveys of the Young Stand Management Project units have been completed and no threatened or endangered plants were found.

The project will not adversely impact cultural or historical sites. Proposed project activities are considered an exempt undertaking according in our working Protocol with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) (Appendix E, Other, #8).

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and the Grande Ronde were notified of this project during scoping and the EA's public comment period. Josephine County Commissioners and the Josephine County forestry department were also contacted.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Plan Consistency

Based on the information in the Fuel Hazard Reduction Project on the Grants Pass Resource Area Environmental Assessment, project record, and from the letters and comments received from the public about the project, I conclude that this decision is consistent with the:

- *Final EIS and ROD for the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1995)*
- *Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (1994)*
- *ROD for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its attachment A entitled the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NWFP) (1994)*
- *Final SEIS for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (2000), and the ROD and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (2001)*
- *Medford District Noxious Weed Environmental Assessment (1998)*
- *ROD for Management of Port-Orford Cedar in Southwest Oregon (2004)*

The Fuel Hazard Reduction 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.

On December 17, 2009, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington issued an order in *Conservation Northwest, et al. v. Rey, et al.*, No. 08-1067 (W.D. Wash.) (Coughenour, J.), granting Plaintiffs' motion for partial summary judgment and finding a variety of NEPA violations in the BLM and U.S. Forest Service 2007 Record of Decision eliminating the Survey and Manage mitigation measure. Judge Coughenour deferred issuing a remedy in his December 17, 2009 order until further proceedings, and did not enjoin the BLM from proceeding with projects. Plaintiffs and Defendants entered into settlement negotiations that resulted in the 2011 Survey and Manage Settlement Agreement, adopted by the District Court on July 6, 2011.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion on April 25, 2013, that reversed the District Court for the Western District of Washington's approval of the 2011 Survey and Manage Settlement Agreement. The case is now remanded back to the District Court for further proceedings. This means that the December 17, 2009, District Court order which found National Environmental Policy (NEPA) inadequacies in the 2007 analysis and records of decision removing Survey and Manage is still valid.

Previously, in 2006, the District Court (Judge Pechman) had invalidated the agencies' 2004 RODs eliminating Survey and Manage due to NEPA violations. Following the District Court's 2006 ruling, parties to the litigation had entered into a stipulation exempting certain categories of activities from the Survey and Manage standard (hereinafter "Pechman exemptions").

Judge Pechman's Order from October 11, 2006 directs: "Defendants shall not authorize, allow, or permit to continue any logging or other ground-disturbing activities on projects to which the 2004 ROD applied unless such activities are in compliance with the 2001 ROD (as the 2001 ROD was amended or modified as of March 21, 2004), except that this order will not apply to:

- A. **Thinning projects in stands younger than 80 years old:**
- B. Replacing culverts on roads that are in use and part of the road system, and removing culverts if the road is temporary or to be decommissioned;
- C. Riparian and stream improvement projects where the riparian work is riparian planting, obtaining material for placing in-stream, and road or trail decommissioning; and where the stream improvement work is the placement large wood, channel and floodplain reconstruction, or removal of channel diversions; and
- D. The portions of the project involving hazardous fuel treatments where prescribed fire is applied. Any portion of a hazardous fuel treatment project involving commercial logging will remain subject to the survey and management requirements except for thinning of stands younger than 80 years old under subparagraph a. of this paragraph."

Following the District Court's December 17, 2009 ruling, the Pechman exemptions still remained in place. The BLM's interdisciplinary team reviewed the Young Stand Management Project in consideration of both the December 17, 2009 partial summary judgment and Judge Pechman's October 11, 2006 order. Because the this project includes no regeneration harvest and includes thinning only in stands less than 80 years old, this project meets Exemption A of the Pechman Exemptions (October 11, 2006 Order), and therefore may still proceed even if the District Court sets aside or otherwise enjoins use of the 2007 Survey and Manage Record of Decision since the Pechman exemptions would remain valid in such case.

The ACS Consistency Review (EA pp. 42-45) found that the project is in compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy as originally developed under the Northwest Forest Plan.

This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act; the Native American Religious Freedom Act; other cultural resource management laws and regulations; Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice; and Executive Order 13212 regarding potential adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution. The project will not adversely impact any sites of cultural or historical significance. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was informed of the BLM's finding in accordance with 36 CFR 800.5(b).

This document complies with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and the Department of the Interior's regulations on the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (43 CFR Part 46) as well as the BLM specific NEPA requirements in the Departmental Manual (516 DM 11).

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision under 43 CFR 5003.1, and is effective upon publication of a notice in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Administrative remedies are available to those who believe that they will be adversely affected by this Decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulations and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR § 5003.2 (a & c), the effective date of this decision will be the Notice of Decision's date of publication in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of this notice establishes the date initiating the protest period provided in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3. Any protest of this decision should state specifically which part of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.

To protest a forest management decision, a person must submit a written and signed protest to the Grants Pass Field Manager, 2164 NE Spalding Avenue, Grants Pass, OR 97526 by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) not more than 15 days after publication of the Notice of Decision. The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and why it is believed to be in error, as well as cite applicable regulations. Faxed or emailed protests will not be considered.

VII. CONTACT PERSON

For additional information contact either Allen Bollschweiler, Grants Pass Field Manager, 2164 NE Spalding Avenue, Grants Pass, OR 97526; telephone 541-471-6653 or Michelle Calvert, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, 541-471-6505.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no protest is received by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) within 15 days after publication of the Notice of Decision, the decision will become final. The Notice of Decision is expected to be published December 11, 2013. If a timely protest is received, the decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and a final decision will be issued in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3.

IX. CONTACT PERSON

For additional information contact either Allen Bollschweiler, Grants Pass Field Manager, 2164 NE Spalding Avenue, Grants Pass, OR 97526; telephone 541-471-6653 or Michelle Calvert, Environmental Planner, 541-471-6505.



Allen Bollschweiler
Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

12 / 14 / 13

Date

APPENDIX A. PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO THE FUEL HAZARD REDUCTION PROJECT ON THE GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0009-EA).

Comment and Response Summary

1. *Comment:* What is the prioritization process regarding this fuels reduction project?

Response:

- a. Treated areas would occur in fire regimes 1 and 3, and condition classes 2 and 3.
- b. The project would focus on treating ground fuels and ladder fuels, removing small material that is the most fire prone while leaving a diversity of species and size categories.
- c. Mechanical fuel reduction such as thinning would be combined with prescribed burning as research demonstrates that thinning alone (without subsequent treatment of activity fuels and maintenance treatments) actually increases fire hazard in both the short- and long-term.
- d. The project area is entirely in the Wildland Urban Interface.

2. *Comment:* There is concern about the impacts of yarding biomass.

Response: There would be no biomass extraction for the Young Stand Management Project.

3. *Comment:* Ensure that yarding biomass will not interfere with achieving aquatic conservation objectives.

Response: Please see response to #2 above and the project will incorporate a 50 foot no-treatment buffer from streams.

4. *Comment:* Do not burn plastic in burn piles.

Response: As stated on page 25 of the Grants Pass Resource Area FHRP EA: The use of polyethylene plastic sheeting would follow guidance from DEQ and Oregon Department of Forestry Smoke Management Plan. OAR 629-048-0210 (a) Only polyethylene may be used. All other plastics are prohibited; (b) the size of each polyethylene cover must not exceed 100 square feet.”

5. *Comment:* Retain bird habitat

Response: In treatment units exceeding 10 acres, 10% of the unit would remain untreated (EA p. 11). Cutting would be accomplished during the winter months, minimizing effects on nesting birds.

6. *Comment:* OHVs are a problem and could be exacerbated by the project.

Response: In the short term, the project may minimally increase dispersed recreation by partially opening up the understory. However, the reduction in fuel loads and associated decreased chances for large-scale wildfires and disease spread would help protect recreation facilities and the aesthetic forested experience sought by many recreationists. Additionally, Project Design Features identified previously (Section 2.3), such as blocking firelines and skid roads, would reduce the effects of increased user-created trail construction and use. Leaving a buffer along existing trails of more lightly treated vegetation would reduce the chances of travel off designated trails and would provide a visually pleasing canopy.

7. *Comment:* Retain leave patches and encourage variable thinning instead of even spacing.

Response: There would be no treatment within 50 ft of streams for this project (DR p. 2). Though a variable density thinning treatment is not prescribed for this project per se, after treatment the stand have variable density. This will be accomplished by retaining the following: all conifers and hardwoods larger than 7 inches dbh, smaller conifers within the 18 ft x 18 ft spacing, and smaller hardwoods within the 30 ft x 30 ft spacing. Additionally, no vegetation over 7 inches dbh would be cut. In treatment units exceeding 10 acres, 10% of the unit would remain untreated (EA p. 11).

8. *Comment:* Hardwoods over 8 inches dbh should be retained.

Response: Hardwoods above 7 inches would be retained (EA p. 10).

9. *Comment:* Do not cut any white oak, maple, dogwood, willow, elderberry, yew, alder, or cottonwood.

Response: Some white oaks would be cut. Maples, dogwood, willows, elderberry, yew, alder, and cottonwood are not targeted in the project.

10. *Comment:* Limit burn piles to minimum diameters and fuels in the burn piles to less than three inches in diameter.

Response: Handpiles are typically five feet high by five feet wide. Size of materials in piles will generally be ≤ 6 inches dbh (EA p. 11).



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2164 NE SPALDING AVENUE
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YOUNG STAND MANAGEMENT PROJECT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT NEPA# DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0045-EA

I. INTRODUCTION

The Young Stand Management Project will be implemented under the Fuel Hazard Reduction Project on the Grants Pass Resource Area Environmental Assessment (FHRP EA) DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0009-EA. The Programmatic FHRP EA is intended to streamline the NEPA analysis to more efficiently reduce high fuel hazards and respond to public requests (EA p.3). The Programmatic FHRP EA and this project meet the objectives and direction of the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP).

The Selected Action is to treat 90 acres for hazardous fuel reduction and 32 acres for young stand management activities within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Several decades of fire exclusion in the Project Area has resulted in dense, overcrowded stands of trees and brush. Treatment under this project will decrease the likelihood of high intensity fire behavior that can damage resources, homes, and investments made in young managed stands.

The hazardous fuel reduction will hand pile and burn the piles on 90 acres over five units, and the young stand management treatment will thin conifers and hardwoods and cut brush, in 32 acres in one unit. There would be no biomass removal for the 90 acres of this project. Trees to be cut will be less than 7 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) for conifers and hardwoods.

II. DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the analyzed actions and is within the context of local importance. Chapter 3 of the EA details the effects of Alternative 2. None of the effects identified, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects, are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the Medford District Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (June 1995). The environmental effects of Alternative 2 do not meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Context. The Young Stand Management Project covers site-specific actions directly involving 90 acres of BLM (Bureau of Land Management) administered land that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide, or state-wide importance. The Selected Action is located within the Matrix, LSR, RR, and AMA land use allocations under the Medford District's 1995 Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Young Stand Management Project is within the boundaries of the 5th field Hydrologic Unit Condition (HUC 5) of the Williams, Jumpoff Joe, Deer Creek, Josephine Creek-Illinois River, and West Fork Illinois River Watersheds.

The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended actions and is within the context of local importance. Chapter 3 of the EA details the effects of the Selected Action. None of the effects identified, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects, are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the *Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (1994 PRMP/EIS)*.

Intensity. The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27.

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse. Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Project Design Features (PDFs) are included in the project's design to ensure compliance with the federal Clean Water Act and higher-level National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, laws and BLM guidelines. There are no significant effects expected from project activities. The following is a synopsis of the effects expected from implementation of activities detailed in the Decision Record.

Riparian functions of streamshade and large wood recruitment will be maintained or improved. There will be no increase in peak flows, no increase in erosion due to compaction, and no alterations in channel form or processes. Therefore, there will be no measurable adverse changes to aquatic habitat or fish at the 6th or 5th field watershed scales (EA p. 42). There will be no treatment within 50 ft of streams for this project (DR p. 2).

It can be expected that extreme fire behaviour would be moderated in thinned only stands and overstory mortality may be reduced by as much as 60% as compared to untreated stands (EA p. 23).

No effects are expected to cultural resources (EA p. 65).

Cumulative effects on soil erosion at the sixth field watershed or larger scale would be undetectable (EA p. 38).

Activities under this project would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, or fisher (EA pp. 49-53). Project activities are not expected to affect the long term population viability of any bird species known to be in the area or lead to the need to list these or other species as Threatened & Endangered. Treatments are limited, and

separated spatially and temporally, precluding major effects to species habitats or disturbance during breeding seasons (EA pp. 54, 55).

Effects of treatments on special status wildlife species would generally be negligible due to the limited impact the proposed fuels treatments would have on bureau sensitive species habitat, and the large amounts of suitable habitat that would remain untreated across the project area (EA pp. 53-55).

The Young Stand Management Project were surveyed for federally endangered plant species and none were found.

Visual resource management objectives will be met, as proposed prescriptions will incorporate PDFs to minimize visual impacts (EA p. 69).

In the short term, the project may minimally increase dispersed recreation by partially opening up the understory. However, the reduction in fuel loads and associated decreased chances for large-scale wildfires and disease spread would help protect recreation facilities and the aesthetic forested experience sought by many recreationists.

2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* The project has not been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. Fuel hazard reduction will benefit public health and safety, particularly in the WUI (EA p. 23) by reducing fire intensity and severity. Implementation of prescribed burning will produce smoke, but should result in reduced smoke emissions from wildfire. Prescribed burning would be administered in accordance with the Oregon Smoke Management Plan administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry and the regulations established by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The impact of smoke on air quality is expected to be localized and of short duration. Particulate matter would not be of a magnitude to harm human health, affect the environment, or result in property damage. All burning activities will comply with the national ambient air quality standards for particulates (EA p. 23) and would be consistent with the provisions of the Federal Clean Air Act.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.* There are no park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, or ecologically critical areas in the Selected Action. The Grayback Mountain Trail is present within the Project Area but project activities would not affect the trail. The area is open to dispersed recreation use, as is most of the Grants Pass Resource Area. The Selected Action would have a neutral effect on dispersed recreation in the Resource Area.

A cultural resource survey was completed for the FHRP EA Project Area. Proposed project activities are considered an exempt undertaking according in our working Protocol with the State Historic Preservation Office (Appendix E, Other, #8). No cultural sites have been recorded in any of the units. If unrecorded cultural sites are found during project implementation, a cultural

resource specialist would be informed and provide appropriate protection measures based on recommendations from the Resource Area archaeologist with concurrence from the Field Manager and State Historic Preservation Office.

There is are no eligible or suitable Wild and Scenic River segments present within the 90 acres of Young Stand Management Project.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects.* The effects of this project are similar to those of many other projects that are implemented within the scope of the RMP and Northwest Forest Plan. Substantive public comments on the EA (DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0009-EA) were analyzed by the FHRP EA interdisciplinary team and the BLM responded to those comments in Appendix D of the EA. There are no highly controversial effects from the Selected Action. A complete disclosure of the predicted effects is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* The effect of the Selected Action is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience with hazardous fuel reduction and young stand management projects and have found the effects to be reasonably predictable. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in Chapter 3 of the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Public scoping and comments received on the FHRP EA (DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2009-0009-EA) did not identify unique or unknown risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* The Selected Action does not set a precedent for future actions that might have significant effects nor does it represent a decision in principle about future consideration. The Proposed Action would meet the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) to “Reduce both natural and activity based fuel hazards through methods such as prescribed burning, mechanical or manual manipulation of forest vegetation and debris, removal of forest vegetation and debris, and combinations of these methods” (p.91). Any future projects would be evaluated through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and would stand on their own as to environmental effects.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* The interdisciplinary team evaluated the Selected Action in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects outside those already disclosed in the *Medford District Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (1995)* are not predicted.

There are no cumulative effects on soils or hydrology (EA p. 38) within the watershed. As no cumulative effects were identified in the analysis of impacts to soil and water, there will be no cumulative effects to fish or aquatic habitats in the project area, 6th, or 5th field watershed scales (EA p. 42). Wildland firefighter and public safety will increase in treated areas and direct

strategies and tactics could be used to control fire, resulting in fewer acres burned and less threat to private property within the watershed and the region. All prescribed fire smoke emissions will comply with state air quality standards (EA p. 23) and the Federal Clean Air Act. There will be no project level or cumulative effects on botanical species (EA pp. 58-61).

Project activities will maintain spotted owl habitat; negative effects are not anticipated to any Bureau Sensitive or Survey and Manage wildlife species because of the small scope of the proposed action compared to the available habitat, riparian reserves, late successional reserves, untreated areas, and maintenance of suitable spotted owl habitat (EA pp. 49-53). There are no expected cumulative effects to cultural resources (EA p.65). The project design features ensures that the change in the vegetative character within the landscape area is consistent with VRM class objectives as identified in the RMP (USDI 1995) (EA p. 69).

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* Proposed project activities are considered an exempt undertaking according in our working Protocol with the State Historic Preservation Office (Appendix E, Other, #8). There are no cultural sites recorded in any of the units. The Selected Action would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would the Proposed Action cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* Project design features will reduce potential adverse impacts on ESA listed species.

Consultation for the Endangered Species Act with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is not required as the Selected Action would not affect listed species or their habitat. Consultation is not needed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as there is no adverse effect to Essential Fish Habitat for coho and Chinook within the Rogue River Basin.

The Junction Overlook (33-2) unit is covered under a biological assessment completed in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (July 2010 NLAA LOC TAILS# 13420-2010-I-0178) to assess the impacts to spotted owls in compliance of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS concluded the actions are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Northern Spotted Owls or any other T&E species because habitat would be maintained post-treatment (EA pp. 50-51). The remaining units for the Young Stand Management Project are non-spotted owl habitat.

There are no Critical Habitat Units for the federally endangered plant Cook's desert parsley (*Lomatium cookii*), and no sites of the federally endangered plants Cook's desert parsley (*Lomatium cookii*) or Gentner's fritillary (*Fritillaria gentneri*) within the Young Stand Management Project Area.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.

The Selected Action does not violate any known federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Furthermore, the Proposed Action is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs (EA, Chapter 1.5).

III. FINDING

I have determined that the Selected Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of the impacts described in the EA, and on my understanding of the project, review of the project analysis, and consideration of public comments. As previously noted, the analysis of effects has been completed within the context of the Medford District's Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan. This conclusion is consistent with those plans and the anticipated effects are within the scope, type, and magnitude of effects anticipated and analyzed in those plans. The analysis of project effects has also occurred in the context of multiple spatial and temporal scales as appropriate for different types of impacts and the effects were determined to be insignificant.

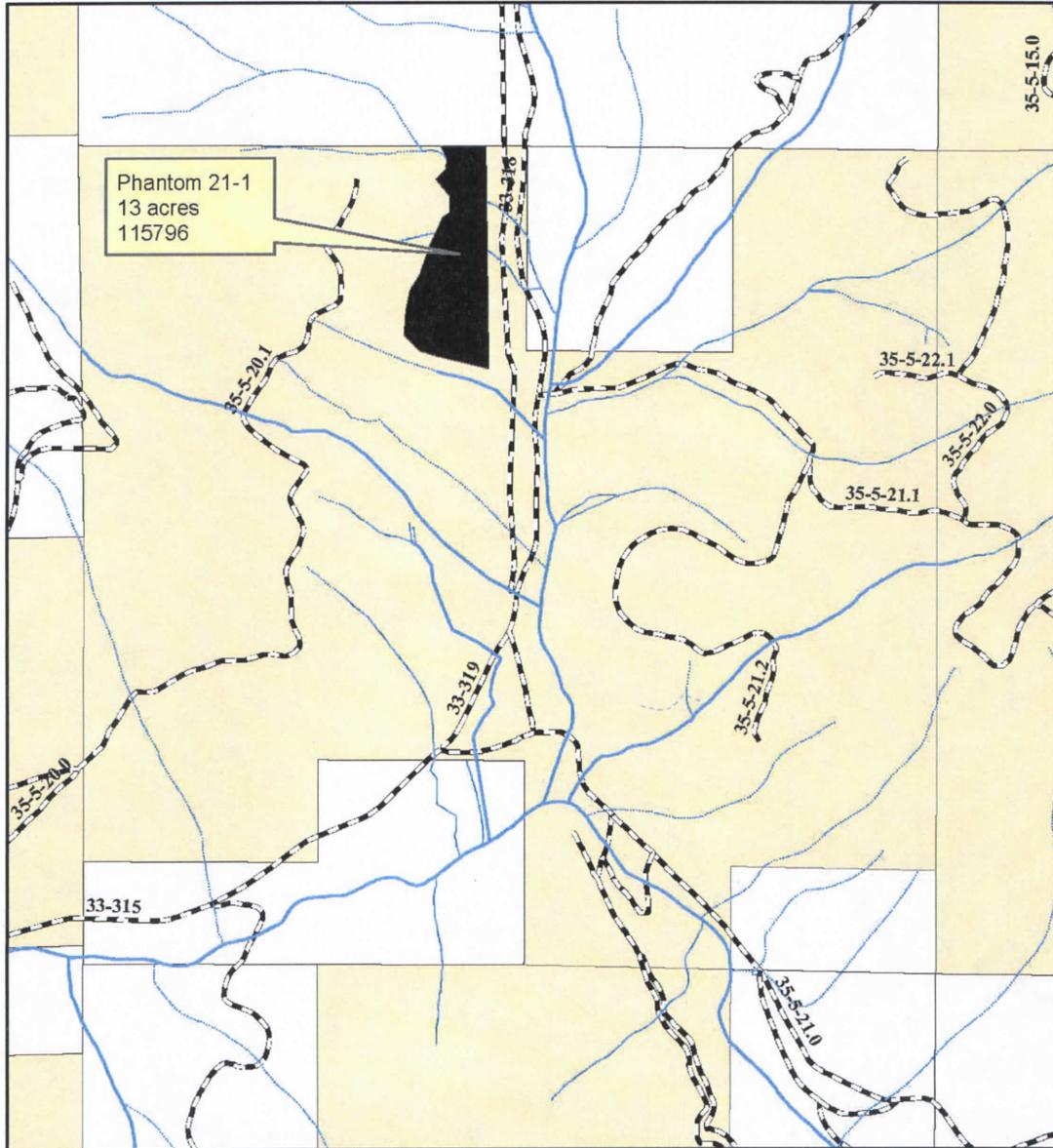


Allen Bollschweiler
Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

12 / 4 / 13

Date

General Vicinity Map T.35S.R.05W.Sec.21



Legend

-  Treatment Area
-  BLM
-  Private
-  State

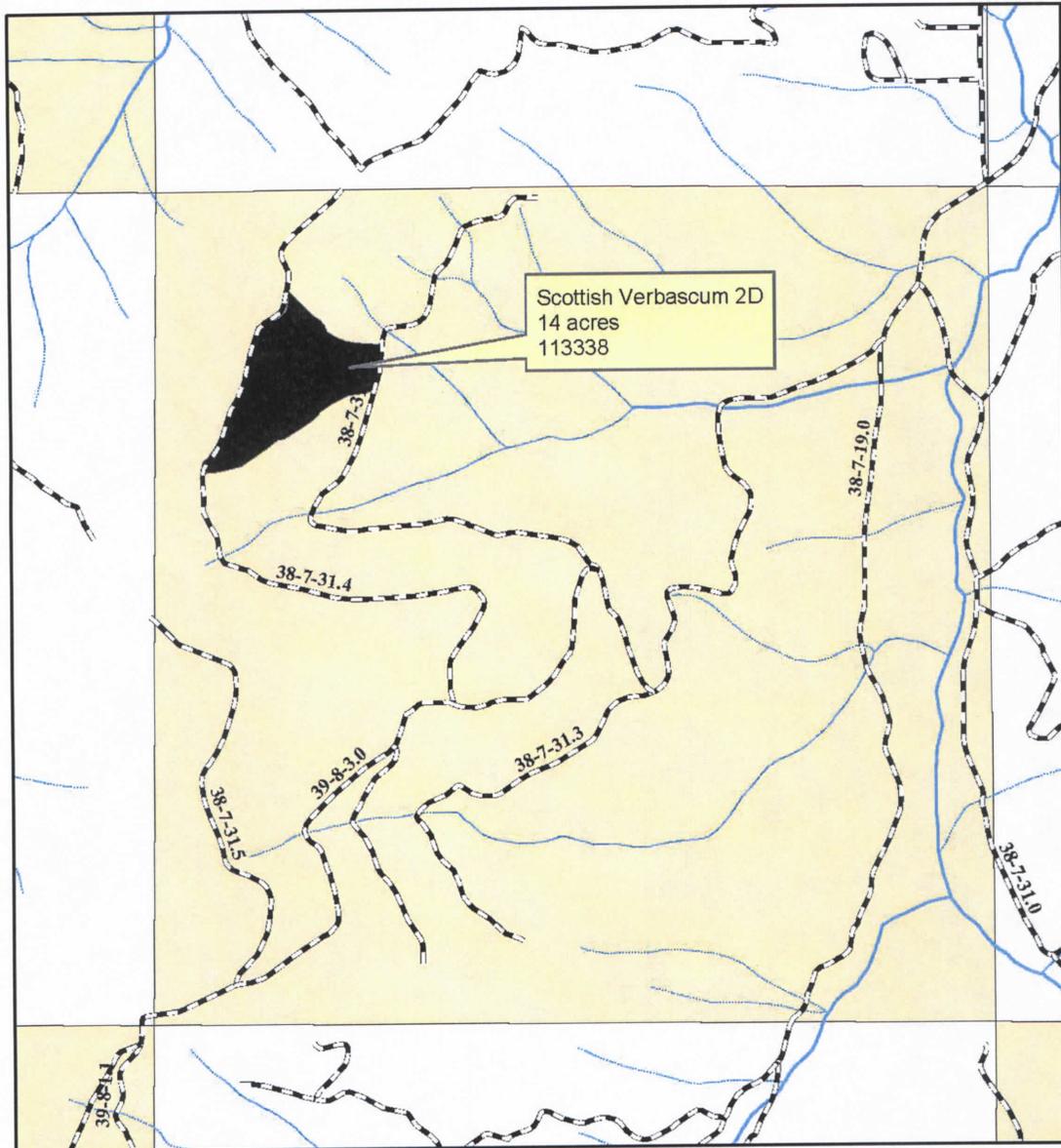
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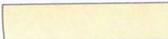
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General Vicinity Map T.38S.R.07W.Sec.31



Legend

-  Treatment Area
-  BLM
-  Private
-  State

1:12,000

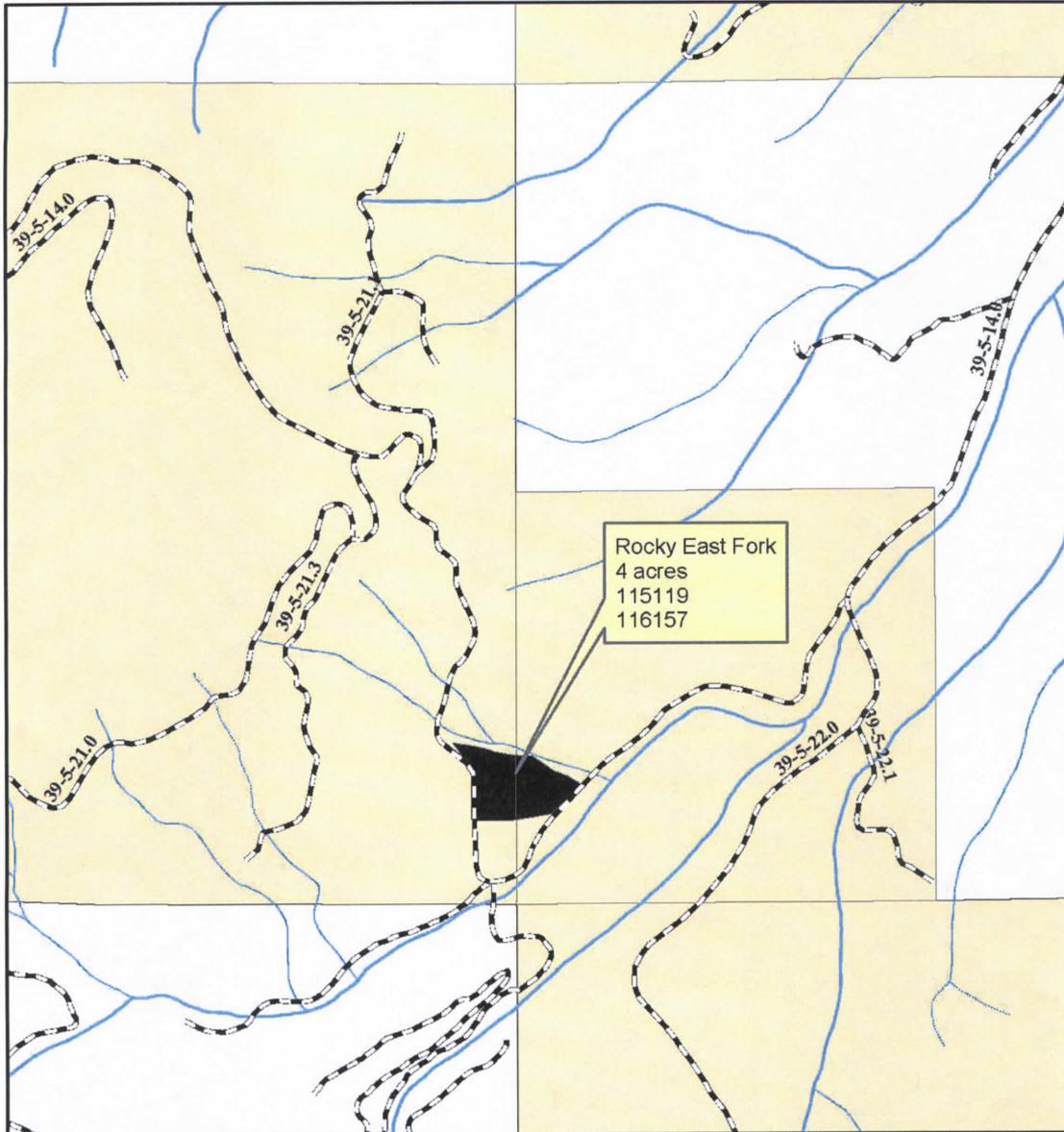
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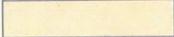
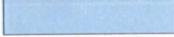


General Vicinity Map

T.39S.R.05W.Sec.21 and Sec.22



Legend

-  Treatment Area
-  BLM
-  Private
-  State

1:12,000

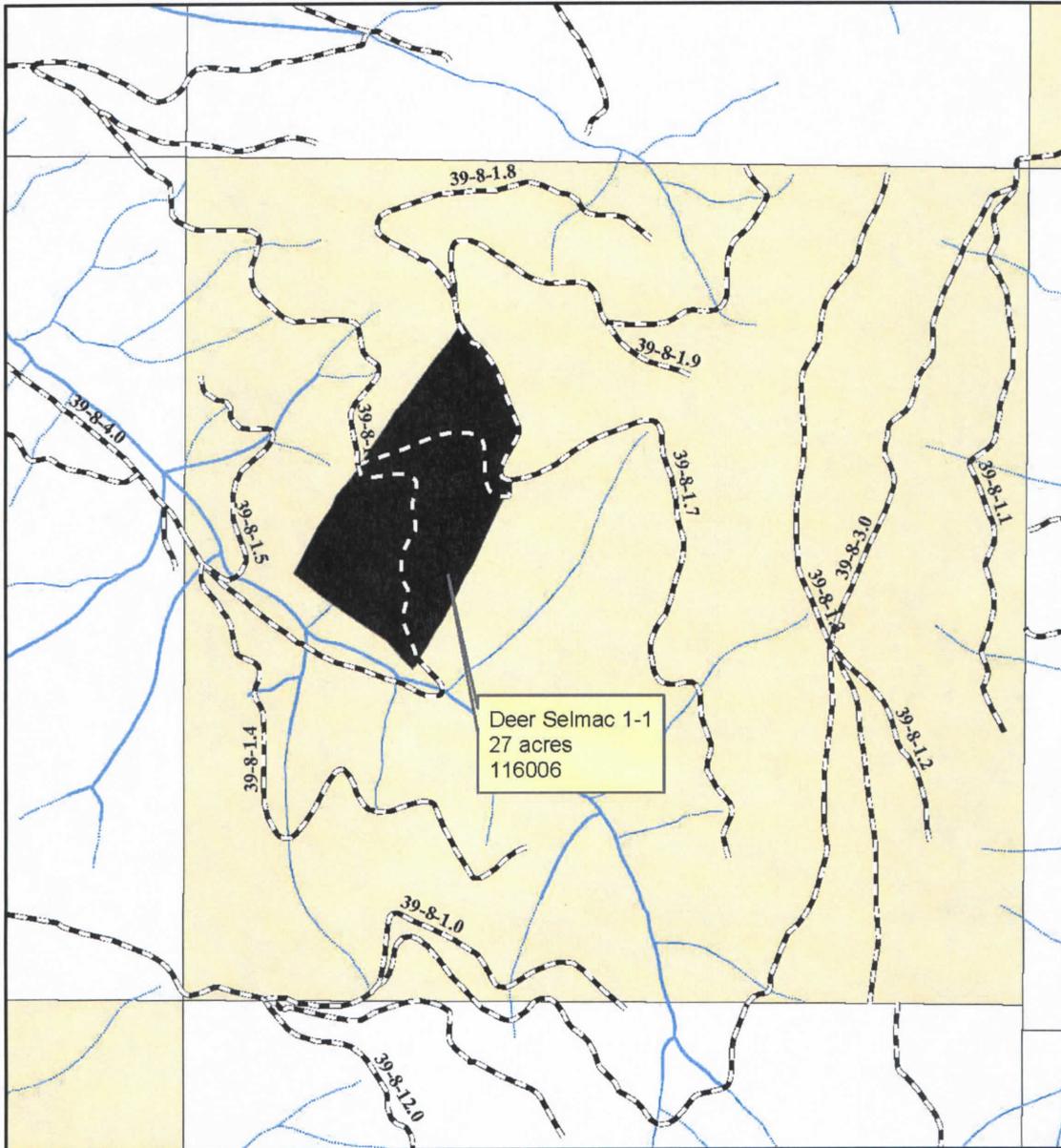
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General Vicinity Map

T.39S.R.08W.Sec.01



Legend

- Treatment Area
- BLM
- Private
- State

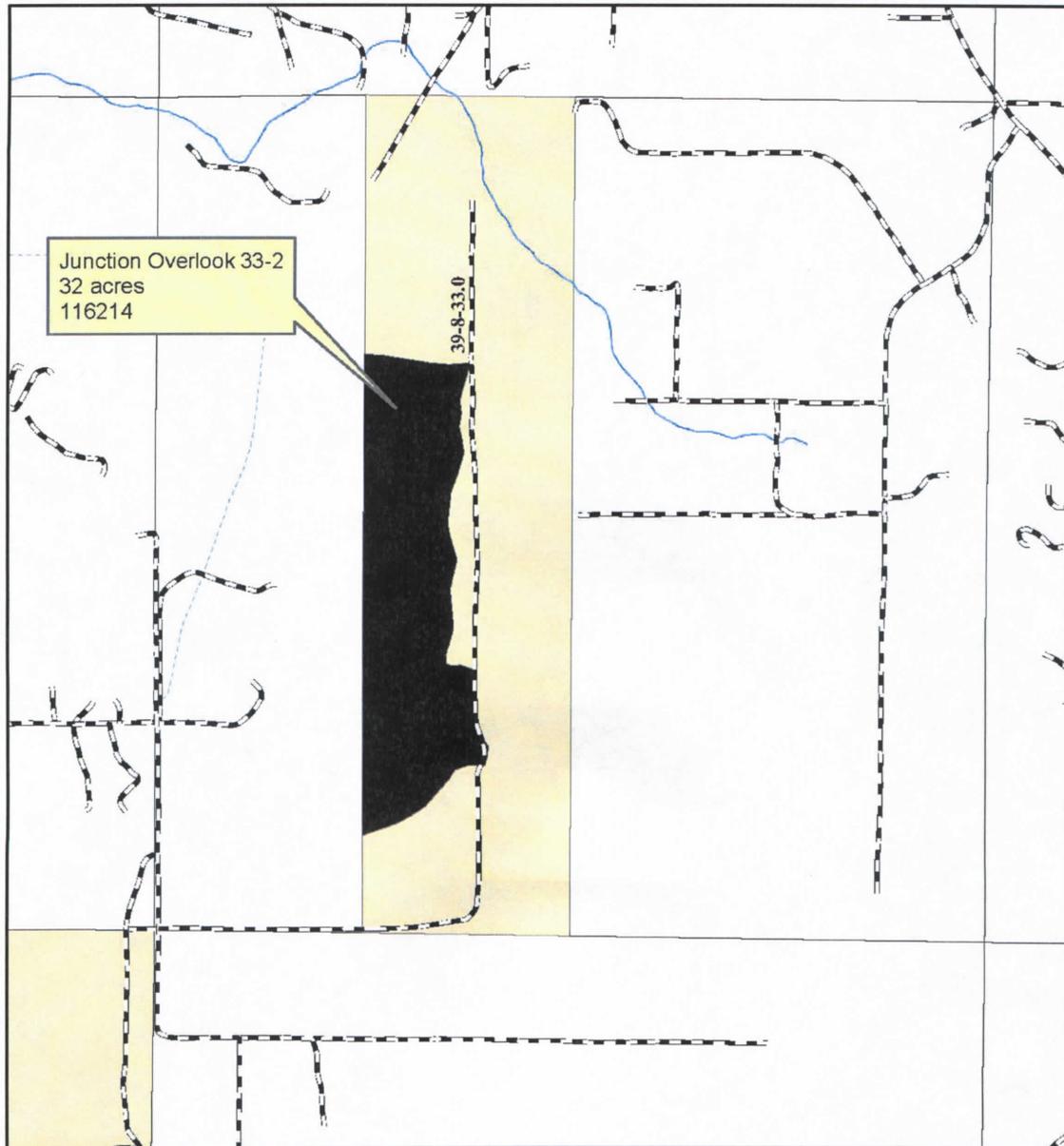
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General Vicinity Map T.39S.R.08W.Sec.33



Legend

- Treatment Area
- BLM
- Private
- State

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