ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

Spalding & Son, Inc.
Iron Creek Amendment Application and Road Construction

EA# OR-117-04-11

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: Grants Pass EA Number OR-117-04-11
ACTION/TITLE: Spalding & Son, Inc. Iron Creek Amendment Application and Road Construction Project
LOCATION: T37S, R6W, Section 26, Josephine Co., Oregon, Willamette Meridian

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1.0 Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) will assist in the decision making process by assessing the environmental and human effects resulting from implementing the proposed project or alternatives. This EA will also assist in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This EA tiers to or is consistent with the following documents:

1. *Final EIS and Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (June 1995)
2. *Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (February 1994)
3. *Record of Decision 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 *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (NFP)(April 1994).
4. *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January 2001)
5. *Record of Decision Amending Resource Management Plans for Seven Bureau of Land Management Districts and Land and Resource Management Plans for Nineteen National Forests within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Decision to Clarify Provisions Relating to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.* (March 2004)
6. *Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Document within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*. (March 2004); and
7. *Final Supplemental EIS* (December 2003), *ROD and Resource Management Plan Amendment for Management of Port-Orford Cedar in Southwest Oregon, Coos Bay, Medford, and Roseburg Districts* (May 2004).

Planning and biological surveys for this project began prior to the March 2004 ROD that changed the Survey and Manage program. The ROD (p. 8) does allow such a project to be completed under the S&M standards and guidelines. This project is designed in accordance with these standards and guides.

1.1 Purpose of and Need for Action

Spalding & Son, Inc. have asked to amend their agreement with the BLM for hauling forest products using existing BLM roads. They want to construct a road across BLM land to connect two existing roads to allow access to their land. This will allow Spalding to access and manage their lands through harvesting timber and other forest management projects. The Spalding parcels are isolated, surrounded by BLM and private lands.

1.2 Project Location

Project area maps are in Appendix A.

1.3 Land Use Allocation Objectives

The project is located in the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA). Management objectives for the different land use allocations are in the NFP and the Medford District RMP.

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Alternative 1: No Action

The no action alternative is defined as not implementing the proposed action, thus denying the permit application of Spalding & Son, Inc. This would deny Spalding permission to construct a road on BLM land and use certain existing BLM roads to haul timber from their lands.

The no action alternative serves as a baseline for evaluating the environmental effects of the action alternative. Inclusion of this alternative is done without regard to whether or not it is consistent with the Medford District RMP. The no action alternative is a continuation of current environmental conditions and trends.

2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action is to grant Spalding a permit to construct approximately 624' of road across BLM (see Appendix A). The new road would be constructed to BLM standards.

The road would traverse a ridge with a maximum grade of 15%. The road would have a 16' wide subgrade (14' running width), natural surface, and a 2% outslope for drainage. Vegetation would be cleared 5' vertically and horizontally from the road/road edges. The road would be blocked at the junction with road #37-6-22 after use. Downspouts (half rounds) would be added to two existing culverts to reduce erosion and sediment input into the stream. The right-of-way would be 35' wide.

Spalding would also use the following BLM roads to haul forest products from their lands. These roads would be bladed, the ditches and culverts would be cleaned and some brushing may occur. Two new 18" culverts would be installed in ephemeral draws (See Appendix A, Overview Map).

Table 1: BLM Haul Roads

Road No.	Surface Type	Length (miles)
37-6-22	Natural	1.40
37-6-26	Natural	0.15
37-6-26.1	Natural	0.08
37-6-26.2	Natural	0.18
37-6-26.3B	Natural	0.60
37-5-14	Surfaced (PRR)	2.10

2.3 Project Design Features

The following project design features (PDFs) are included in the proposed action to avoid potential adverse environmental impacts which might stem from the implementation of the proposed action:

- Do not use haul roads when they are wet. Do not construct the road when conditions are wet or during the wet season (October 15-May 15).
- Outslope the road and install standard BLM cross dips with protected (armored) outlets.
- Slash due to clearing activities would be placed in a wind row along the road within the right-of-way in order to help capture any road related sediment.
- After construction is finished, protect and stabilize bare soil with seeding and mulching prior to fall rains.
- Confine preliminary equipment access to the roadway construction limits.
- Clear construction debris from ditches and culverts prior to fall rains.
- Cultural surveys have revealed no sites. If cultural sites are found during project implementation, activities around the site would halt until a BLM archaeologist reviewed the site and determined appropriate protection measures.

3.0 Environmental Consequences

Only substantive site specific environmental changes caused by implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered effects to that component and found that the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no effects. In addition, unless addressed specifically, the following were found to be unaffected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), cultural and historical resources, Native American religious sites, recreation, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, endangered, threatened or sensitive plant, animal or fish species, water quality, wetlands/riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers and wilderness areas. Port-Orford cedar does not occur in the project area.

3.1 Soils and Hydrology

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The project area is in the Applegate-Murphy 6th field watershed and the Murphy 5th field watershed. According to the Josephine County Soil Survey, the soil type in the project area is 1D-Abegg gravelly loam, 12-20% slopes. The typical landscape is dissected high terrace.

3.1.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no action alternative, soils and streams would remain in their present condition.

3.1.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed road construction is partially located in a riparian zone of Packer's Gulch. But because the road would be built when the intermittent creek is dry and all exposed soil surfaces would be seeded and mulched, only a minimal, inconsequential amount of sediment would likely reach the creek. The new road is expected to contribute only minimally to overland water flow due to its outsloped design.

3.2 Botany

The project area is within the range of *Fritillaria gentneri* and *Lomatium cookii,* federally endangered species. Botany surveys were completed in spring, 2003 and no Bureau endangered or sensitive plant species were discovered, although there is a small amount of suitable habitat. Therefore, the project would not affect any of these species.

3.3 Fisheries

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The new road construction is proposed above Packers Gulch and is partially within the riparian area. Packers Gulch, a non-fish bearing intermittent stream, drains into the Applegate River which contains chinook, coho, steelhead, and cutthroat.

The existing haul roads would cross Packer's Gulch and two ephemeral draws that drain into Panther Creek. Panther Creek is a non-fish bearing intermittent stream that drains into the Applegate River. Neither the new road nor the haul roads cross any fish bearing streams.

3.3.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no action alternative, condition trends in Packers Gulch, Panther Creek, and the Applegate River would remain unchanged.

3.3.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Approximately 150' of the proposed road would go through the riparian zone but would not cross any perennial or intermittent streams. Fish are located 0.5-0.75 miles from activities. It is highly unlikely that sediment due to project activities would reach the Applegate River (see soils and hydrology effects, above). Therefore, no effects to fish or fish habitat are expected.

3.4 Wildlife

3.4.1 Affected Environment

The proposed new road construction would occur within a mature mixed conifer stand dominated by Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine and sugar pine in the 21+" DBH size class. The project area is within suitable spotted owl foraging habitat. No suitable spotted owl nesting habitat occurs within or adjacent to the project area. There are no known listed threatened or endangered (T&E) species within or adjacent to the project area.

Mollusk surveys were completed in the spring of 2002 and no Survey & Manage (S&M) mollusks were detected. There is marginal red tree vole habitat within the project area. Red tree vole surveys were completed in the spring of 2002 and no RTV nests were located.

The project area is not suitable great gray owl habitat.

No formal surveys for special status species have been conducted in the project area. Some special status species habitat may occur within the proposed road route, such as down logs and snags.

3.4.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Stand conditions along the proposed road route would remain the same and no habitat modifications would occur. There would be no effects to T&E, S&M, or special status wildlife species.

3.4.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Because there are no known T&E or S&M species in the project area, no effects are anticipated to individuals. A small amount of potential habitat for special status species and neotropical birds may be removed. However, this loss would be negligible due to the large amounts of suitable habitat to be retained on BLM land nearby. Project activities would also occur outside of the critical nesting period for neotropical birds, further reducing potential impacts. The proposed actions may disrupt some individuals of sensitive species and could cause habitat loss in some cases. However, this alternative is not expected to affect long term population viability of any species known to be in the area or lead to the need to list sensitive wildlife species due to the abundance of habitat nearby.

4.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted

The Oregon Water Resources Board was consulted during the planning of this project.

Copies of the EA will be available for public review in the BLM Medford District Office and online at *www.or.blm.gov/Medford/planning*. A formal 15 day public comment period will be held following an announcement in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Written comments should be addressed to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area, at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. Emailed comments may be sent to *or110mb@or.blm.gov*.

ATTACHMENT A
VICINITY MAP
IRON CREEK PROJECT
SEC. 23 &26, TWP. 37S.,
RNG. 6W.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

NATURAL

PAVED

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

BLM O&C OWNERSHIP

ROCKED

962 COUNTY ROAD

BLM PD OWNERSHIP

NATURAL

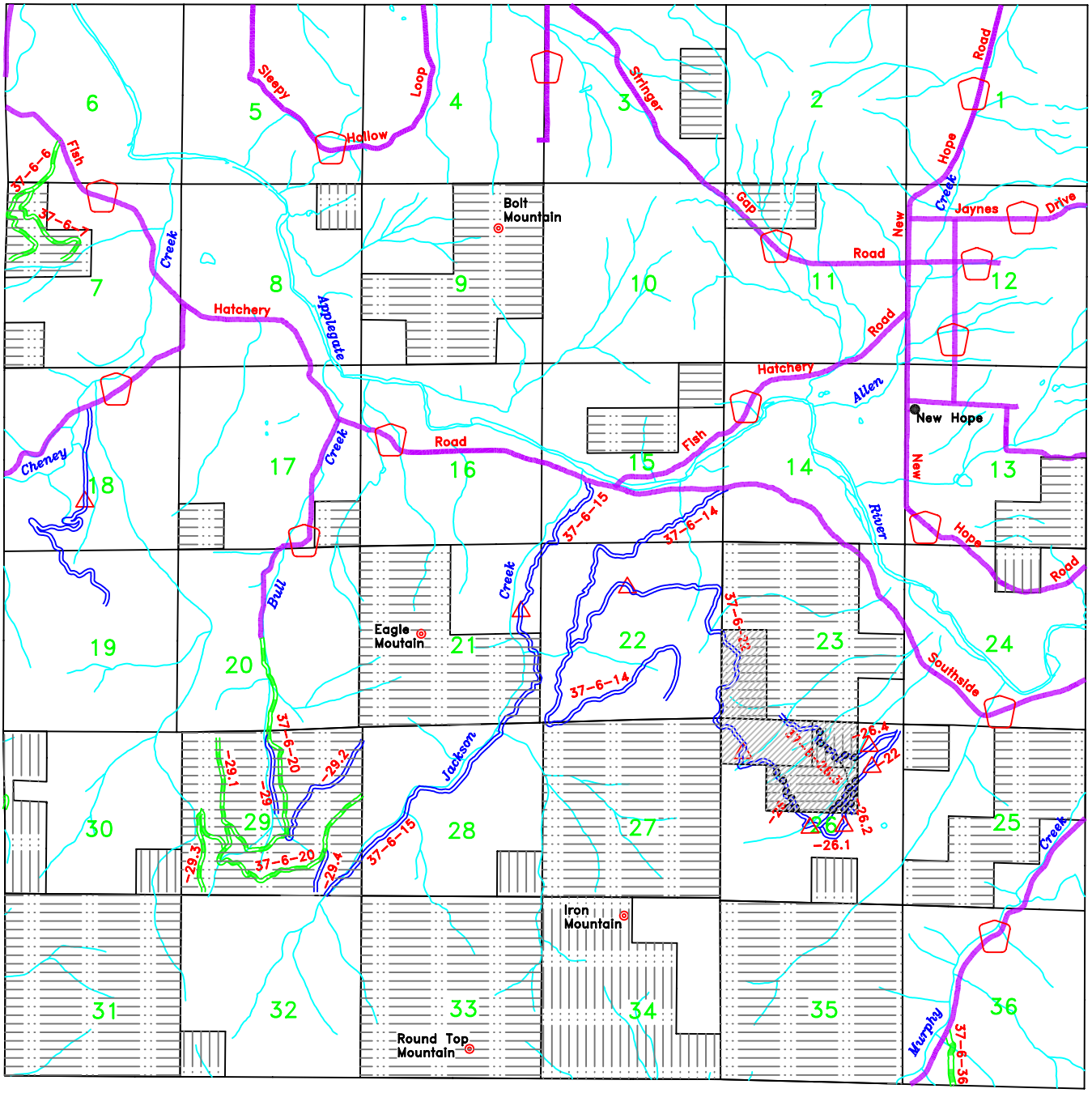
66 STATE ROAD

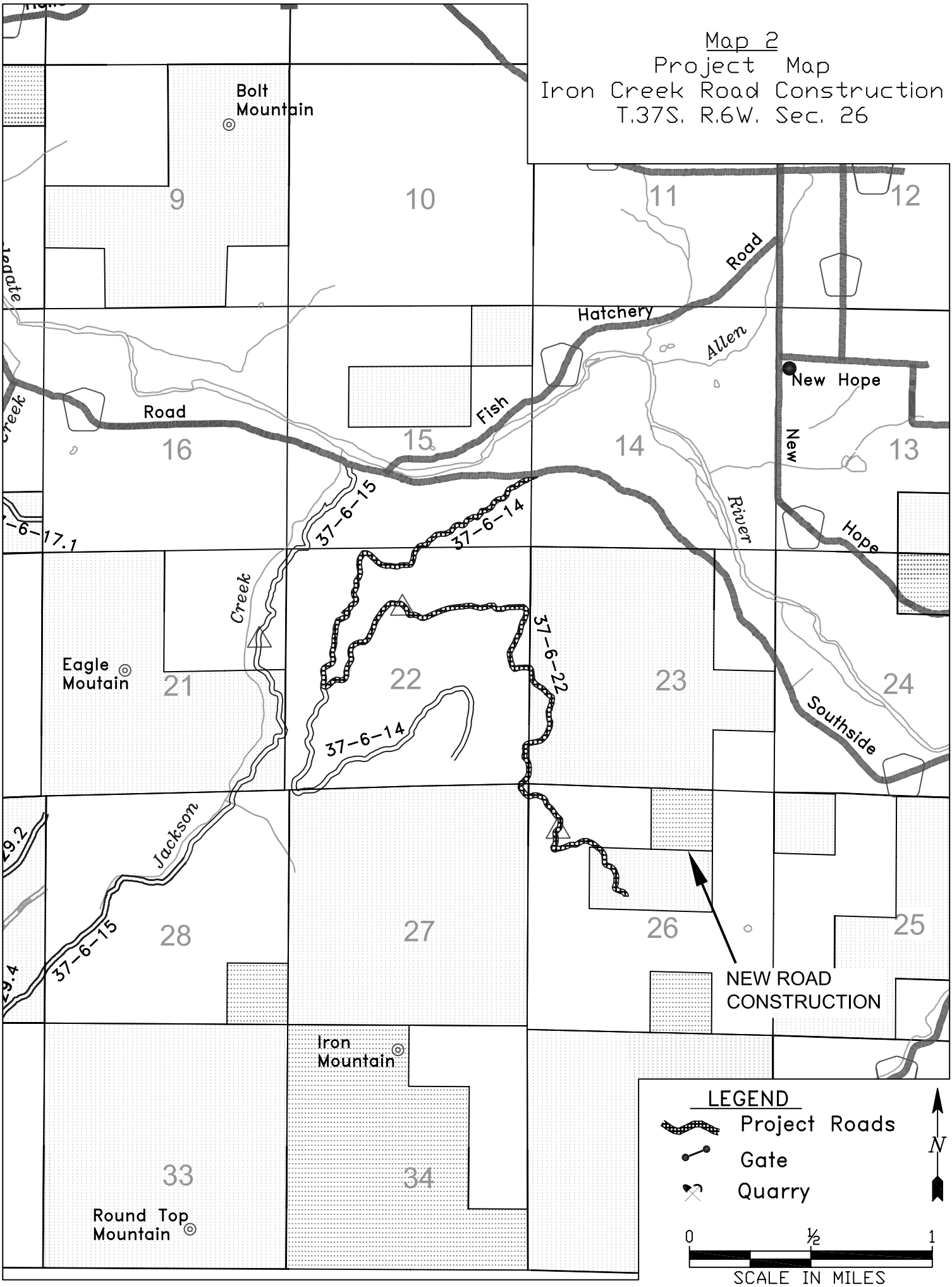
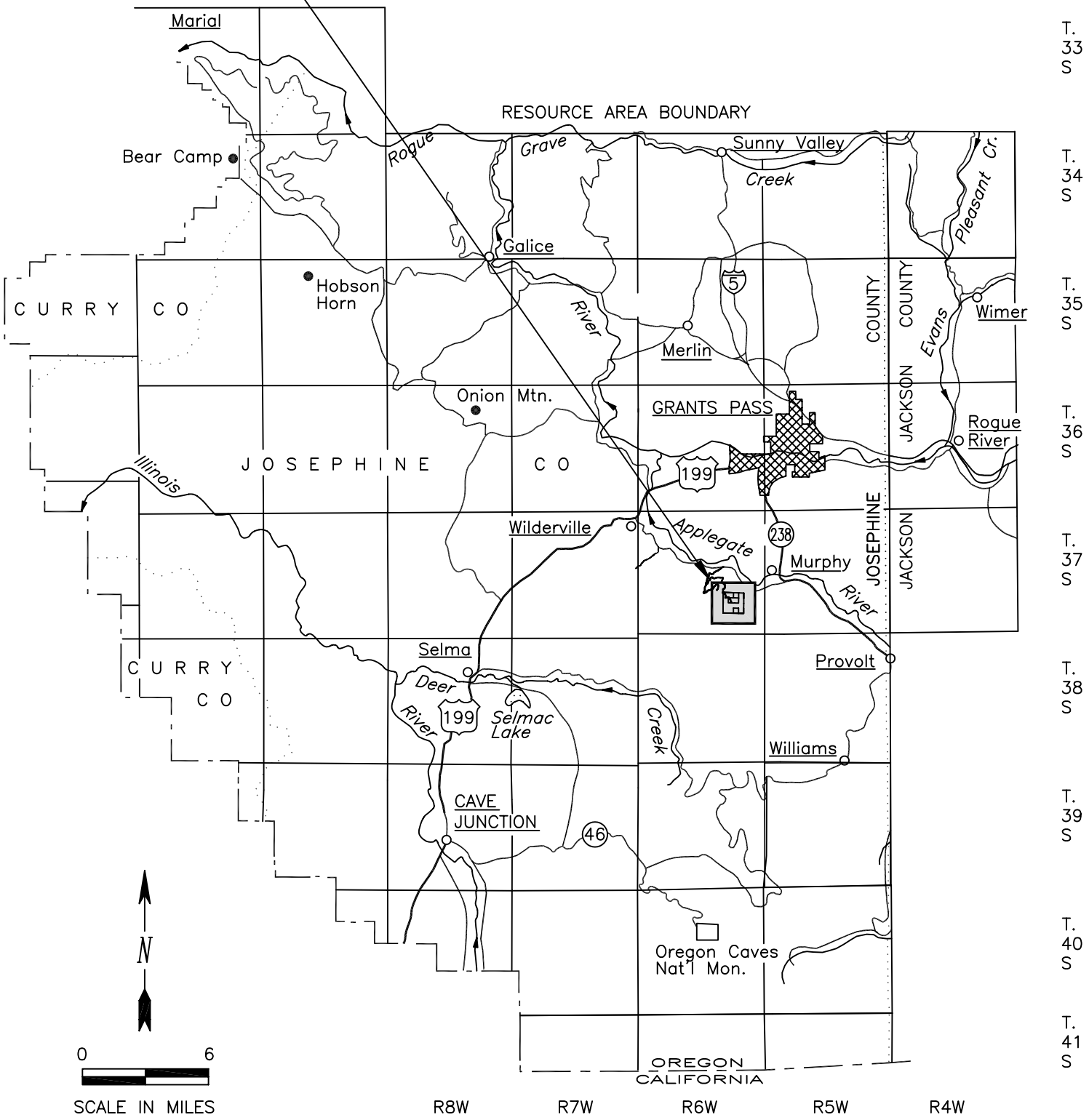
RESOURCE AREA BOUNDARY

PROJECT AREA

PRIMITIVE

COUNTY LINE




Map 2
Project Map
Iron Creek Road Construction
T.37S. R.6W. Sec. 26
Bolt Mountain
9
10
11
12
Hatchery
Road
Allen
New Hope
Road
Fish
16
15
14
13
New
Hope
River
37-6-15
37-6-14
37-6-17.1
Creek
Eagle Moutain
21
22
23
24
37-6-22
37-6-14
Southside
Jackson
29.2
28
27
26
25
37-6-15
29.4
NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION
Iron Mountain
33
34
Round Top Mountain
LEGEND
Project Roads
Gate
Quarry
N
0
½
1
SCALE IN MILES

Map 1
Project Vicinity Map
Iron Creek Road Construction
T.37S. R.6W. SEC. 26