United States Department of the Interior

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MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
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PICKETT SNAKE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

DECISION RECORD / RATIONALE / FONSI
(June 2002)

I. INTRODUCTION

The BLM's interdisciplinary planning team has designed the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project based on: (a) current resource conditions in the project area and (b) to meet the objectives and direction of the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan. The proposals presented and evaluated in the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project's Environmental Assessment (EA) reflect what the planning team believed to be the best balance of resource conditions, resource potential and the competing management objectives.

This Decision Record addresses only a portion of the project area and proposals presented and analyzed in the EA: T35S, R7W. (Map DR1-1 shows the full Pickett Snake Landscape Management project area and Map DR1-2 shows the area addressed in this Decision Record.) Decisions regarding the proposed treatments in the remainder of the project area will be made in the future and documented in a separate Decision Record(s). Separation of the project area in this manner is largely due to budget constraints that have limited special status plants and animals surveys to the smaller area and the desire to address all of the proposals within a subwatershed or section where possible.

II. DECISION

It is my decision to implement the actions proposed in the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project Environmental Assessment (EA #99-18, June 1999) as outlined below. The decision is primarily to implement Alternative 2, although many of the actions are common to both Alternative 2 and 3. To facilitate presenting and understanding the different elements of this decision, this decision record addresses the proposal sequentially in the order they are discussed in the EA.

1. Recreation Trail Management (EA, p. 4)

The decision is to implement the Buckhorn Ridge Trail (see Map DR1-2) as proposed and including the project design feature regarding recreation resource protection features (p. 22). The full length (6.5 miles) option will be implemented if a partnership with the State of Oregon can be mutually agreed upon. If not, the shorter option will be implemented.

2. **Riparian Reserve Treatments** (EA, p. 5)

All trees 8"DBH and greater in Riparian Reserves will be reserved from cutting as proposed. Vegetation treatments within riparian reserves will be limited to stand development work in early and mid seral stage stands only.

The proposed no treatment areas within the riparian reserves and immediately adjacent to streams will be implemented as described.

The Pickett Creek log weir work will be implemented as proposed.

Logs and boulders will be placed in Pickett Creek as proposed. Sites selected for placement will be restricted to those within segments of Pickett Creek that pass through units where harvesting / overstory treatments or fuel treatments are prescribed and which have all special status species surveys completed and recommended management guidelines implemented. Placement will be done in a manner such that any matrix or riparian reserve ground disturbance is restricted to within these units / areas. The logs used for this will be obtained from units proposed for older seral stage stand harvesting where all requisite special status species surveys have been completed. Selection of the needed trees will be done in a manner consistent with the silvicultural prescription and project objectives for the unit from which they are obtained.

The indicated culvert on Road #35-7-27 will be replaced or repositioned in a manner that will not impede fish passage on Pickett Creek.

3. **Noxious Weed Control** (EA. p. 6)

The decision is to implement the noxious weed control work as proposed. If other sites for these noxious weeds are identified during implementation of the Pickett Snake project, they will be included in the control work as well.

4. **Special Forest Products** (EA, p. 7)

Opportunities for special forest product harvesting / collecting will be provided in all units identified for vegetation treatment, timber harvesting or fuel hazard reduction work in this decision (*i.e.*, not strictly the timber harvest units as the EA states) (See Map DR1-3). In timber harvest units, harvesting / collecting will be done in a manner that is consistent with the identified silvicultural stand management objectives and may occur before or after the overstory thinning / timber harvest work.

5. **Young Stand Treatments / Forest Development** (EA, p. 7)

The decision is to implement the young stand treatments as proposed for the units in T35S,R7W as listed in Table DR1-1 and shown on Map DR1-3. All requisite special status species surveys have been

completed for these units as of the date of this decision, or it has been determined that surveys are not needed based on a consideration of habitat conditions and the proposed actions. As additional units proposed for young stand treatment are fully surveyed, separate decisions / decision records will be prepared after considering the findings of these surveys.

After the young stand treatment is completed for a unit, a separate and unit specific fuel / fire hazard assessment will be conducted and documented. The fuel treatment proposals noted in the EA will be adjusted as needed to insure that the best site-specific hazard reduction treatments are implemented. If changes are made, it is anticipated that they will be relatively minor in overall scope and will be within the scope of the types of manual fuel treatments described in the EA and the impacts considered in this assessment.

6. Stand Harvest Treatments in the older Seral Stages (EA, p. 8)

The decision is to implement stand harvest treatments in older seral stage stands per Alternative 2 except as noted below. These units are identified on Map DR1- 3. Thinning and harvesting will be accomplished through a standard advertised timber sale. In instances where low harvest volume per acre, high logging costs, and / or the distribution of riparian reserves and S&M buffers preclude inclusion of the units in a near term advertised timber sale contract, harvesting may be deferred for a future sale or the thinning may be accomplished via other means.

Where overstory thinning / harvesting is precluded as noted above, the proposed understory work will proceed as proposed.

Due to relatively low potential harvest volume and high logging costs, the thinning treatment proposed for Unit 35-7-33 (006) will be changed as follows: If suitable access can be obtained, the proposed thinning / density reduction and fuel hazard reduction work will be implemented in the lower diameter classes (up through 16" DBH) with a slashbuster machine as described in the June 7, 2002 EA addendum. Thinning of overstory trees with the slashbuster may occur within this diameter class limitation. On those areas that are not suitable for slashbuster use per the project design features enumerated in the addendum, the stem density reduction and fuel hazard reduction work will be done using hand tools / equipment as proposed.

The post harvest treatments (EA, p. 10) will be implemented as proposed for all harvest units. As in the case in young stand treatments noted above, a post treatment fuels evaluation will be made after harvest work is completed. This is to insure that the proposed followup treatment is still optimum and required (see the qualifier on the fuel hazard reduction treatments below). If appropriate, the fuel treatment proposals in the EA will be adjusted to insure up to date site specific post harvest treatments are implemented. It is anticipated that treatment adjustments are needed, they will be relatively minor in overall scope and will be within the scope of the types of fuel and vegetation treatments described in the EA and within the scope of the impacts identified and considered in this assessment.

Implement Alternative 2's VRM based prescription adjustments (EA, p. 11).

Modify the harvest treatments as needed to be consistent with special status management guidelines.

7. Fuel Hazard Reduction Treatments (EA, p. 12; EA Addendum - Fuel Reduction Treatments)

The decision is to implement the proposed fuel hazard reduction treatments in T35S,T7W (See Map DR1-4) except as follows:

a) Fuel reduction treatments proposed for units within the Congressional designated boundaries of the Rogue Wild & Scenic River will not be implemented at this time. A decision regarding these proposed treatments is deferred until all special status species surveys have been completed and the information and appropriate management recommendations can be considered as a part of the decision making process.

b) Implement the slashbuster treatments described and evaluated in the June 7, 2002 EA addendum. This changes some of the manual fuel hazard reduction treatments from that initially proposed. All of the project design features listed in the EA Addendum will be implemented. If minimally suitable access for the slashbuster machine cannot be obtained, the initially proposed hand slash treatments will be implemented instead.

c) *Fritillaria gentneri*, a federally listed species, has been located at five sites in T35S,R7W, Section 32 (Unit 003 and edge of Unit 005) and one site in T35S,R7W, Section 28 (Unit 007) since preparation of the EA. All proposed prescribed fire treatments in these units will be deferred pending the development of a specific experimental burn plan, separate NEPA documentation, and project specific consultation with the USFWS.

Qualifier: All units that receive any type of vegetation treatment (*e.g.*, precommercial thinning, brushing, commercial thinning, harvesting, slashing, etc.) will be evaluated using the BLM's Fuel Hazard/Risk Assessment and Treatment Recommendations analysis process after treatment and prior to implementing fuel reduction treatments. This review is to insure that the appropriate fuel reduction treatments are applied to meet the fuel loadings and fire hazard reduction goals and other resource and safety goals. Based on this review and analysis, the proposed fuel reduction treatments may be modified, adjusted or dropped so as to better accomplish silvicultural objectives, resource protection objectives within the implementation considerations and opportunities. Substantial changes to the proposed treatments are not anticipated. Those changes that are made will be consistent with the descriptions, overall extent and impacts addressed in the EA and its range of fuel treatments alternatives. In some instances, for example, hand piling of slash and pile burning will be utilized when prescribed under burning is not feasible or where high surface fuel loadings exist and/or it is operationally impractical to implement because of significant risk to ecological processes, resource values, and private property and rural residences. Any changes that do occur will be within the scope of overall effects anticipated in the EA's analysis and it is not anticipated that any additional NEPA analysis / documentation will be necessary or undertaken as a part of these changes.

8. Wildlife Habitat Restoration and Enhancement (EA, p. 13)

The wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement prescribed burns (oak-woodland, chaparral and Jeffery pine savannah treatments) will be implemented as proposed in the following units in T35S,R7W: Section 9 (007, 003), Section 10 (009), Section 15 (002, 005), Section 21 (001, 003) and Section 28 (013). (See Maps DR1-2 and DR1-4).

Fritillaria gentneri, a federally listed species, has been located at five sites in T32S,R7W, Section 32 (Unit 003 and edge of Unit 005) and one site in T32S,R7W, Section 28 (Unit 007) since preparation of the EA. All prescribed fire treatments in these units will be deferred pending the development of a specific experimental burn plan, separate NEPA documentation, and project specific consultation with the USFWS.

9. Roads and Transportation Management (EA, p. 14)

The decision is to implement the proposed road work to the extent necessary to support the Pickett Snake timber sale with the following changes:

– Road 35-7-27.3B will be surfaced with crushed aggregate from its intersection with 35-7-22 to the intersection of road 35-7-22.1.

– Road 35-7-22.1 was previously decommissioned but has been "reopened" as a result of casual public use. The portion of this road from the intersection of road #27.3 to the pond will be redesigned and reconstructed to support the timber harvesting. It will be decommissioned after all of the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project work (including prescribed fire) that needs this road is completed.

10. Road Management Around Trowbridge Ponds (EA, p. 15)

Implement the actions as proposed to support the timber sale and casual recreation use. More detailed plans for the management of Trowbridge Ponds for recreational use will be addressed in a separate comprehensive proposal in the future.

11. Project Design Features (EA, p. 15)

The project design features described in the EA are to be treated as integral parts of the proposed action and are to be implemented, ***except*** as modified by or added to as noted below:

a. Where the species and protection measures for special status and S&M plant and animal species outlined in the EA are different from the species and protection measures set forth in the January 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* and subsequent modifications, the latter document(s) will take precedence.

b. Seed mixes for erosion control work (EA, p. 16) will be limited to a combination of native

grasses and annual or cereal ryes. The annual or cereal ryes are necessary for immediate erosion control because they germinate immediately, but do not persist. The native seed used will be from sources in Southwest Oregon/Northwest California to the greatest extent possible. Recognizing that the availability of appropriate seed from this geographic area may be limited, the geographic source may be broadened to include species native to the Pacific Northwest or the Intermountain region, if necessary.

c. The seasonal operating constraints (EA, p. 17) restricting activities around known northern spotted owl nest sites will be March 1 to June 30 (changed from March 1 to June 15). This change is based on the mandatory project design criteria (PDC) included in the USFWS's October 12, 2001 Biological Opinion for FY02-03 timber sales.

d. The seasonal operating constraint (EA, p. 17) restricting activities around bald eagle sites will be January 1 to August 30 (changed from January 1 to August 15). These changes are necessary based on the requirements of the October 12, 2001 USFWS biological opinion (#1-7-01-F-032, an updated biological opinion from that referenced on page 1 of the EA).

e. An additional project design feature is added pertinent to the protection of bald eagle nest sites. This addition incorporates Project Design Criteria in the USFWS's October 12, 2001 Biological Opinion (#1-7-01-F-032):

> 1) "activities that cause noise disturbance within 1/4 mile or within ½ mile line-of-site are not allowed" during nesting season.
> 2) No potential eagle perches (snags) within ½ mile of a known site will be cut (except for human safety).
> 3) Any proposed silvicultural treatments or fuel hazard reductions projects will be restricted during the identified seasonal operation restriction for all projects within 1/4 mile of a known nest. Fuel management projects greater then 1/4 mile, but which have potential for smoke drift through the sites need to follow the identified seasonal restrictions.
>
> This PDF is specifically applicable to the Brushy Chutes site which is located within ½ mile of T35S-R7W-Sec 26 (003) and T35S-R7W-Sec 35 (003).

f. The Del Norte salamander site buffers (EA, p. 22) will be implemented to meet the requirements of the January 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, not the one site tree no-treatment buffer noted in the EA. Per the new guidelines, timber harvest is permitted within the site and surrounding buffer as long as a minimum of 40% canopy closure is maintained and harvest methods do not disrupt the surface talus layer. Potential harvest methods include helicopters or cable systems.

g. In units where a slashbuster is used, no mechanical treatment will take place within 50' of the edge of the drip line of trees identified as being occupied by RTVs. Slash within the buffers will be

treated by hand either by loping and scattering, by pulling slash back from these areas or by piling but not burning of any pile that has the potential to "smoke out" or "heat up" trees identified as occupied will be left unburned.

h. The following PDF is added: All cultural sites will be protected as required by the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979. Protection measures to retain a site's integrity will consist of buffering and precluding treatments within the buffers.

12. Proposed Mitigating Measures

The decision is to implement the proposed mitigating measures as follows:

a. Proposed mitigating measure #1 (EA, p. 31): Accept with the stipulation that the fuels and burning work accessed by these roads is completed first.

b. Proposed mitigating measure #2 (EA, p. 31): Accept. Temporary road barriers will be located on Road #37-5-22.1 at mile 1.53 and at the intersection of roads #37-5-27.3 and -22.0.

c. Proposed mitigating measure #3 (EA, p. 32): Accept

d. Proposed mitigating measure #4 (EA, p. 33): Accept with the following modification: canopy closure would be maintained in the 40 - 70% range in harvest units within the transient snow zone. The Transient Snow Zone (TSZ) has 79 acres of no-treatment buffers within harvest units. This amounts to 51% of all treatment units within the TSZ. Establishment of no-treatment buffers is a result of requirements for located Survey and Manage species. The remaining portion of harvest units will receive harvest treatment described above (40 to 70% canopy closure after treatment). This will result in an effect of a small short term increase in stream peak flows during rain-on-snow events. This effect will be minimal because (1) Creation of openings will be less than half that indicated in the EA, and (2) The created openings will be small and canopy closure will return to pretreatment conditions within five to ten years. There will be no measurable long term hydrologic effect.

EA correction: The transient snow zone is between 3,000 and 4,500' (not 3,000 to 3,500' as stated in the EA).

e. Proposed mitigating measure #5 (EA, p. 39): Accept with the change to a radius of at least 100' and to be determined on a case by case basis by the Area botanist. (100' is consistent with District Guidelines)

f. Proposed mitigating measure #6 (EA, p. 39): Accept

g. Proposed mitigating measure #7 (EA, p. 39): Reject. *Allotropa* is no longer a Survey and Manage species and the protection requirements in effect at the time of the EA's preparation are no longer applicable.

h. Proposed mitigating measure #8 (EA, p. 40): Reject. Populations of the *Cypripedium* will be buffered in accordance with the current management guidelines. Deferral of structural retention harvesting in Units 15(005), 27(02) and 27(021) is therefore not needed. As noted above, the Survey and Manage status of *Allotropa* has changed and protection buffers are no longer required.

i. Proposed mitigating measure #9 (EA, p. 40): Reject. Located sites of the Survey and Manage lichen species *Dendriscocaulon intricatulum* will be buffered in accordance with the current management recommendations. Deferral of the these units in their entirety is not selected because much of the acreage in these units are included in other S&M species (RTV) buffers which will provide additional habitat protection and in consideration of the harvest volume reduction from these matrix land allocation units that would result if they were deferred.

j. Proposed mitigating measure #10 (EA, p. 45): Accept.

k. Proposed mitigating measure #11 (EA, p. 46): Accept

l. Proposed mitigating measure #12 (EA, p. 47): Accept

13. Potential Monitoring

The EA includes three special monitoring efforts as a part of the project. With regard to each:

a. *Special status plants / fire impacts monitoring* (EA, p. 39): Accept and, prior to conducting any of the prescribed fire work in Sections 9 and 10, develop and implement a monitoring plan / program to evaluate and track the effects of prescribed burning (including intensity) on special status species survival and viability.

b. *Bald Eagle monitoring* (EA, p. 52): Accept and continue monitoring the known eagle locations and the two inactive sites in the project area until the project is fully implemented.

c. *Spotted Owl Monitoring* for 5 years (EA, p. 53): Reject. Monitoring will be limited to the two known locations within the project area and to the year of harvest to ensure the proposed action does not disrupt nesting success. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, surveys conducted during the past 2 years have shown that the sites within the Pickett Snake project area are inactive. Secondly, it is necessary to prioritize spotted owl monitoring in the resource area on an annual basis taking into consideration staffing and workload requirements. A five-year monitoring commitment is not possible. Rather, this spotted owl monitoring will be meshed into the annual determination of "most needed" site monitoring to be determined by the resource area's wildlife biologist.

14. OTHER

It is recognized that additional changes from the EA have and will continue to occur as a part of the continual refinement of the Pickett Snake project throughout the implementation aspects of the project. Such changes and refinements are a normal part of the implementation of projects of this nature. These changes reflect the BLM's ongoing effort to reduce potentially adverse environmental impacts to levels below those anticipated in the initial assessment of proposed action while meeting the blend of objectives outlined in the EA. It also reflects the incorporation of and response to new information that arises during project implementation. For example, since the EA was prepared much refinement of the timber harvest / thinning acreage has occurred as a result of the on-the-ground implementation of the riparian reserves and Survey and Manage species buffers. Some stands proposed for thinning and harvesting have had the overstory treatment changed to no treatment based on further evaluation and the conclusion that the potential harvest volume and the economics of logging it rendered the activity uneconomical. Harvest volume has also declined from the initial proposal.

III. DECISION RATIONALE

A. Project Level and Resource Management Plan Contexts

Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, is rejected because it does not meet the resource management objectives identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan. It 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. With the No Action, these conditions would not be improved or mitigated; certain undesirable ecological trends would continue unchanged and, in some cases, would be exacerbated with the passage of time. For example, high fire hazard conditions would continue and grow, stand vigor and forest health would continue to decline, and existing erosion problems would continue uncorrected.

Alternative 2 is selected because it implements the Medford District RMP and the Northwest Forest Plan. It will also meet the purpose of and needs for action and the objectives as outlined in the EA.

Alternative 3 would also have implemented the RMP, although it would have placed a greater emphasis on higher residual canopy closure levels for wildlife benefit than is the case for Alternative 2. It was not selected, however, because during project planning work and special status survey work subsequent to the EA's preparation, many of the goals of Alternative 3 would be met as a result of the protective buffers (extent and distribution) that have been implemented.

The primary goal of Alternative 3, maintenance of a higher level of late-successional forest for habitat and connectivity, will be met by implementing Alternative 2 with the overlay of the Survey and Manage species buffers and riparian reserve. Alternative 3 identified 580 acres to be managed with a minimum of 50% canopy closure or greater. These stands were chosen in a "stepping stone" pattern across the project area to maintain a high degree of connectivity. The Survey and Manage buffers under Alternative 2, in

particular the RTV buffers, will exceed the level of late-successional habitat and connectivity identified in Alternative 3. There are approximately 628 acres of RTV buffers, with an additional 117 acre unit dropped due to RTVs distributed across the project area. It is anticipated that these buffers along with plant buffers, riparian reserves and bat site buffers will provide a high level of late-successional habitat connectivity, while at the same time meet the other resource needs identified in this document.

Alternative 2 also produces a higher level of harvest volume to meet the timber production objectives of the RMP and BLM strategic plan than would be produced by Alternative 3. Thus both goals are met to a greater extent.

As noted in the above decision regarding overstory thinning treatments, some of the thinning work may not be accomplishable through standard advertised timber sale contracts. This is due to volume per acre and logging economic considerations. This in no way diminishes the need for thinning and treating these stands or for reducing fuel hazard in them. For this reason, understory fuel hazard reduction work will proceed without the overstory treatments where necessary or it will be pursued using other methods where possible (*e.g.*, slashbuster, service contracts, negotiated thinning sales).

In general, the road work that is to be implemented is that which is necessary to support the Pickett Snake timber sale. It will also provide additional benefit for other users and for correcting road problems and conditions that are currently contributing to sedimentation and adverse impacts to streams.

The road work changes at the Trowbridge Pond area are necessary to make them able to withstand extended season use. Both of the roads are natural surfaced built through erosive granitic soils. The roads access units prescribed for harvesting with subsequent slash reduction work, and areas that are proposed for wildlife habitat restoration work. Some of this work (fuels work) may take place after the rainy season begins. These roads also access the Trowbridge Pond area which has been identified with roads to be decommissioned. This area is locked behind a gate, however, it has been impossible to keep the gate locked. Surfacing will reduce the amount of road damage that results from this use. The area is used by fishermen, hikers, overnight campers and horsemen.

The decision will not have any impact on Port-Orford Cedar or the potential spread of *Phytothophora lateralis*.

B. BLM's Strategic Plan Context

The Decision will implement a range of activities that will promote a number of the goals of the BLM's Strategic Plan for FY2000 to FY2005:

- *Goal 1.2: Provide opportunities for environmentally responsible commercial activities*;

- *1.2.3: By FY2005, consistent with established health standards, annually offer for sale, on a decadal average, 211 million board feet of timber in western Oregon (Oregon and California Grant Lands).*

The Pickett Snake project will, as a result of this decision, provide an estimated 7 - 8 MMBF of timber to the local economy while thinning stands to create more vigorous and healthy stand conditions or to begin a stand regeneration process in conjunction with maintaining high levels of stand diversity.

- Goal 1.4: Reduce threats to public health, safety and property.

All of the areas to be thinned include fuel treatments to reduce the fuel hazard levels and in turn provide better protection of public property / resources. There are other areas where fuel and fire hazard reduction is a primary objective. Fire behavior and suppression difficulties experienced in recent fires in southwest Oregon (*e.g.*, the Quartz Fire) clearly demonstrate the fuel hazard conditions in local forests and the need for proactive fuel hazard reduction work that will reduce threats to public health, safety and property. This is part of the Pickett Snake project's objectives.

- 1.4.2: Assess the condition of BLM-maintained roads to identify public and administrative access needs, maintenance requirements to resolve public safety and environmental concerns, and prospective road closures.

Preparation of the Pickett Snake project included road assessments of all of the roads in the project area. Maintenance and repair needs were identified. Roads were evaluated for closure opportunities. Road side brushing and pruning will be done as needed during maintenance work to enhance public safety. Approximately 0.25 miles of temporary roads constructed under the project will be decommissioned upon the conclusion of their use under this portion of the Pickett Snake Project.

- Goal 2.2: Restore at-risk resources and maintain functioning systems

- 2.2.2: Achieve proper functioning condition or an upward trend on BLM-administered land.

The Pickett Snake Project will result in an overall reduction in fuel loadings and stand densities moving them closer to historical levels. Roads will be repaired, maintained or decommissioned which will contribute to the attainment of the ACS objectives and toward maintaining properly functioning systems. The project will also restore and reinvigorate a variety of habitats (e.g., oak woodlands and chaparral).

C. National Fire Plan Context

The National Fire Plan, a culmination of various reports, (*i.e.*, 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), accompanying 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 various 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.

The eastern portions of the Pickett Snake project encompass areas of wildland/urban interface that fall into a "Community at Risk" designation (under the National Fire Plan (Federal Register Vol. 66, No. 3). The project area is within the Merlin Community at Risk and adjacent to the Galice Community at Risk. Consequently, special regional and national level attention is placed on this area as a wildland/urban interface community within the vicinity of Federal lands that are at high risk from wildfire. This emphasis extends 1½ miles beyond the Communities at Risk boundary.

Much of the project area has high risk fire regimes and is classified as fire condition classes two or 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 restoration 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 Pickett Snake project includes a range of management actions directed at this restoration and at reducing the high wildfire risk on Federal lands.

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Pursuant with the Endangered Species Act, consultation was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The USFWS's October 12, 2001 Biological Opinion (log # 1-7-01-F-032) addresses timber sale projects for FY02-03 and therefore includes the Pickett Snake timber sale which will be based upon the current decision. The Service has stated its opinion that the proposed action would not jeopardize the continued existence of ESA listed species. The present decision regarding the Pickett Snake project's timber sale is consistent with all of the mandatory terms and conditions identified in this biological opinion. It also incorporates and meets all of the identified recommended conservation measures.

The Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project was initially consulted on with the National Marine Fisheries Service in March 2001 in accordance with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act. In their November 8, 2001 Letter of Concurrence, the Service state that "the NMFS believes there is less than a negligible likelihood of adverse effects of incidental take of SONS coho salmon occurring due to this action." They further stated that it was not likely to adversely affect designated Effective Fish Habitat.

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).

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and of the Grande Ronde were notified of this project during the scoping and / or the EA's public comment period. Josephine County Commissioners and the Josephine County forestry department were also contacted. No responses were received.

V. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public notification and involvement for the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project was initiated in December 1998 with the mailing of a scoping notice to 223 individuals and organizations which had previously requested to be notified of such projects, Josephine County officials, native American Tribes, and landowners of record (county tax rolls) for private land adjacent to the project area. Notice was also made in the local newspaper and on the BLM's Medford District web site. Scoping responses were received from two organizations and one individual.

A formal public comment period for the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project's EA was provided during June - July 1999. The public was notified of this via newspaper notice, letters to 44 individuals, Tribes, organizations and government entities. Letters of comment were received from five organizations and a telephone call from one individual. One letter was supportive of the project based on its consistency with the Northwest Forest Plan and multiple use proposals. Alternative 3 was the alternative preferred although noting that more aggressive thinning in some of the stands would be beneficial. Letters from four of the organizations opposed virtually all aspects of the project proposal and project analysis. They opposed many aspects of the Northwest Forest Plan including commercial timber harvest, road construction or any vegetation treatments that cut larger trees or that might impact special status species.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

A. Plan Consistency

Based on the information in the Picket Snake Landscape Management Project's EA, in the record, and from the letters and comments received from the public about the project, I conclude that the decisions in this Decision Record are consistent with the Medford District Resource Management Plan, the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and, the 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). They are also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations. They are also consistent with Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice).

This decision will not have any adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

B. Finding of No Significant Impact

On the basis of the information contained in the environmental assessment and a consideration of the comments received from the public regarding the Pickett Snake Landscape Management Project, it is my determination that the decision stated above will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment beyond the range of impacts and effects addressed by the Medford District Resource

Management Plan, the Northwest Forest Plan, their EIS documents and their respective Records of Decision. Thus, the Pickett Snake project does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement (EIS) (or supplement to the existing EISs) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This conclusion is based on my consideration of the CEQ's criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA and based on my understanding of the project. As noted above, the analysis of effects has been completed within the context of the Medford District's Resource Management Plan and it is consistent with that plan and the scope of effects anticipated from that plan. The analysis of effects has also occurred in the context of multiple spatial and temporal scales as appropriate for different types of impacts.

I have considered the intensity of the impacts anticipated from this Pickett Snake decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested by the CEQ. With regard to each:

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects. The assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts. None of the individual or cumulative effects have been identified as being significant and outside of the scope of the EISs to which the project's EA is tiered.

2) The degree of the impact on public health or safety. No aspects of the project have been identified has having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. The fuel and fire hazard reduction elements of the project will have a beneficial impact on public health and safety, particularly within the rural interface areas.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area. The Picket Snake Landscape Management project area is adjacent to and includes a portion of the Rogue Wild and Scenic River. This decision does not include any actions within the designated boundary of the Rogue Wild and Scenic River. The project design features and assessment include VRM II management guidelines to insure that adverse impacts on the visual qualities of the river do not occur due to actions outside of the designated boundary but within the river's viewshed. No other unique areas have been identified that would be potentially impacted.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects. The effects of the Pickett Snake project are similar in nature to those of many other projects that are implemented within the scope of the Northwest Forest Plan and the Resource Management Plan. There is a continual full range of debate, findings and opinions about the potential effects of such land management activities as evidenced by the public comments received regarding the Pickett Snake project. It underscores a level of uncertainty that exists in assessing the changes that may occur as a result of all such projects. This uncertainty is acknowledged by the EISs to which the Pickett Snake EA is tiered. Neither the analysis nor the public comments identified any areas where there was a significant or unique level of controversy about the effects that would result from the Pickett Snake project. Certainly there was a range of views expressed regarding the desirability of some elements of the project (*e.g.*, commercial harvesting and road construction) and the desirability of some of the changes that would

result (*e.g.*, wildlife habitat changes).

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 analysis does not show that this action would involve any 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 action and the decision will not set any precedents for future actions with significant effects. It is one of many similar projects designed to implement with the RMP and NFP.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. No significant cumulative impacts have been identified outside of those addressed and anticipated in the RMP - EIS.

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. The project area does not include any listed National Historic Register sites or sites known to be eligible. Cultural sites in the project will be protected per the project design features noted above.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat. The project includes project design features that preclude adverse impacts on ESA listed species. ESA consultation with NMFS and FWS has been completed with the determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect T&E species. As noted in the decision, some changes are made to the proposal to insure consistency with mandatory terms and conditions set forth by the regulatory agencies.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements. There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten a violation.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons 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 Regulations 43 CFR § 5003.2(a&b), the effective date of the decision, as it relates to an advertised timber sale(s), will be when the first Notice of Sale for such a sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located. This newspaper is the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of the first notice of sale establishes the effective date of the decision for those portions of this decision record included in the timber sale and timber sale prospectus. The effective date of this decision establishes the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3.

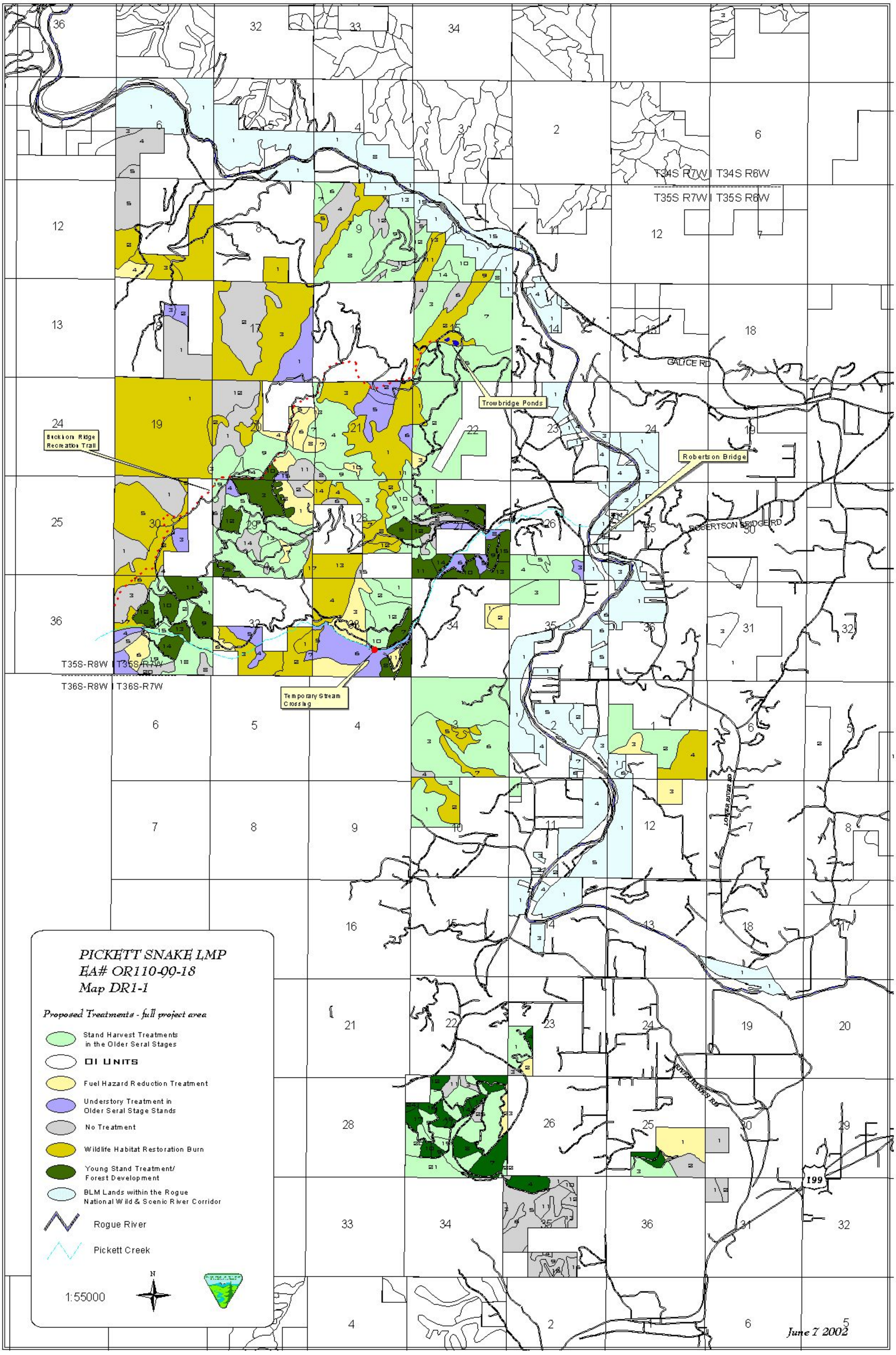
In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR § 5003.2 (a&c), the effective date of this decision, as it pertains to actions which are not part of an advertised timber sale, will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision and FONSI in The Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of this notice establishes the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3. While similar notices may be published in other newspapers, the date of publication in the Grants Pass Daily Courier will prevail as the effective date of this decision.

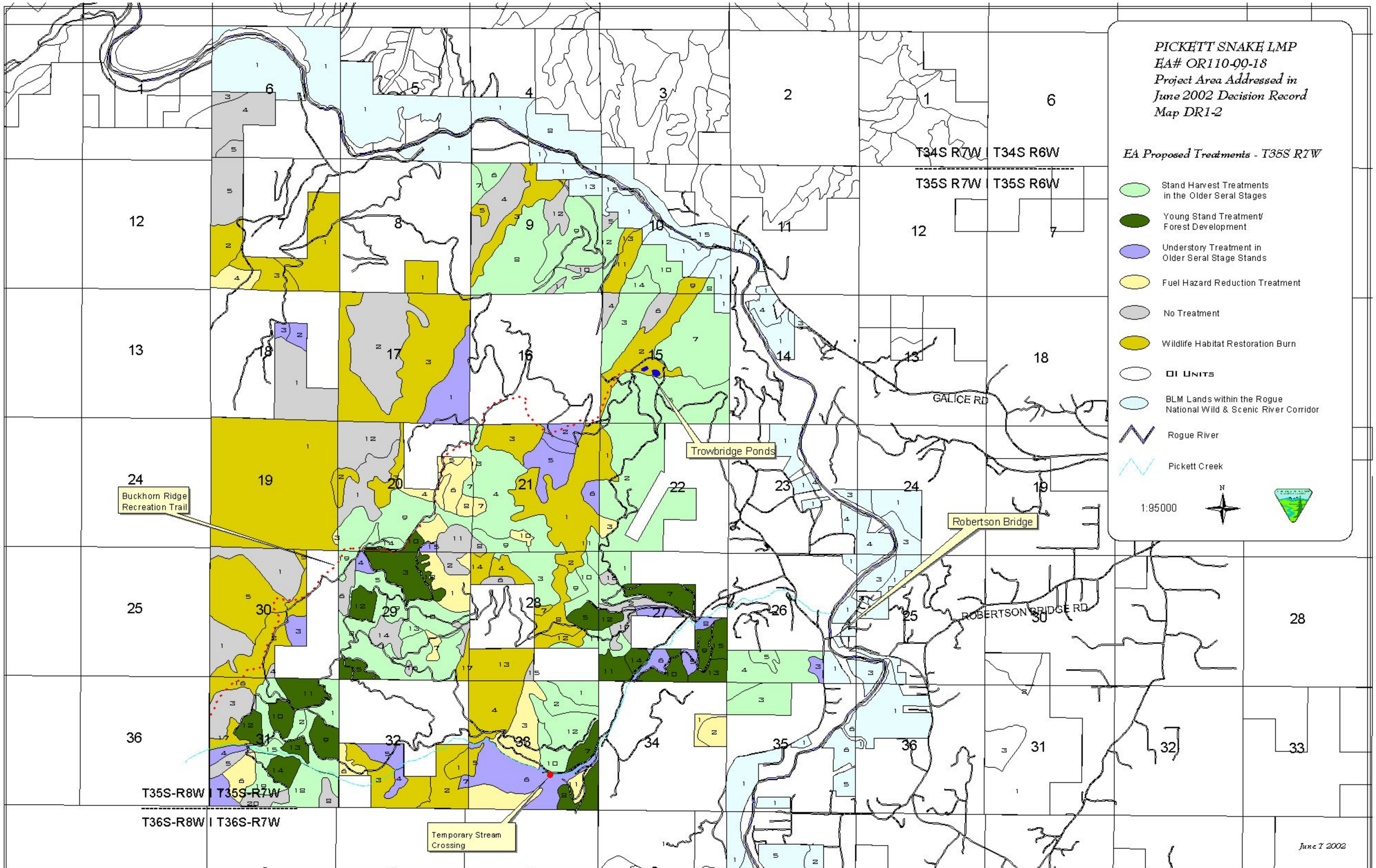
Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.

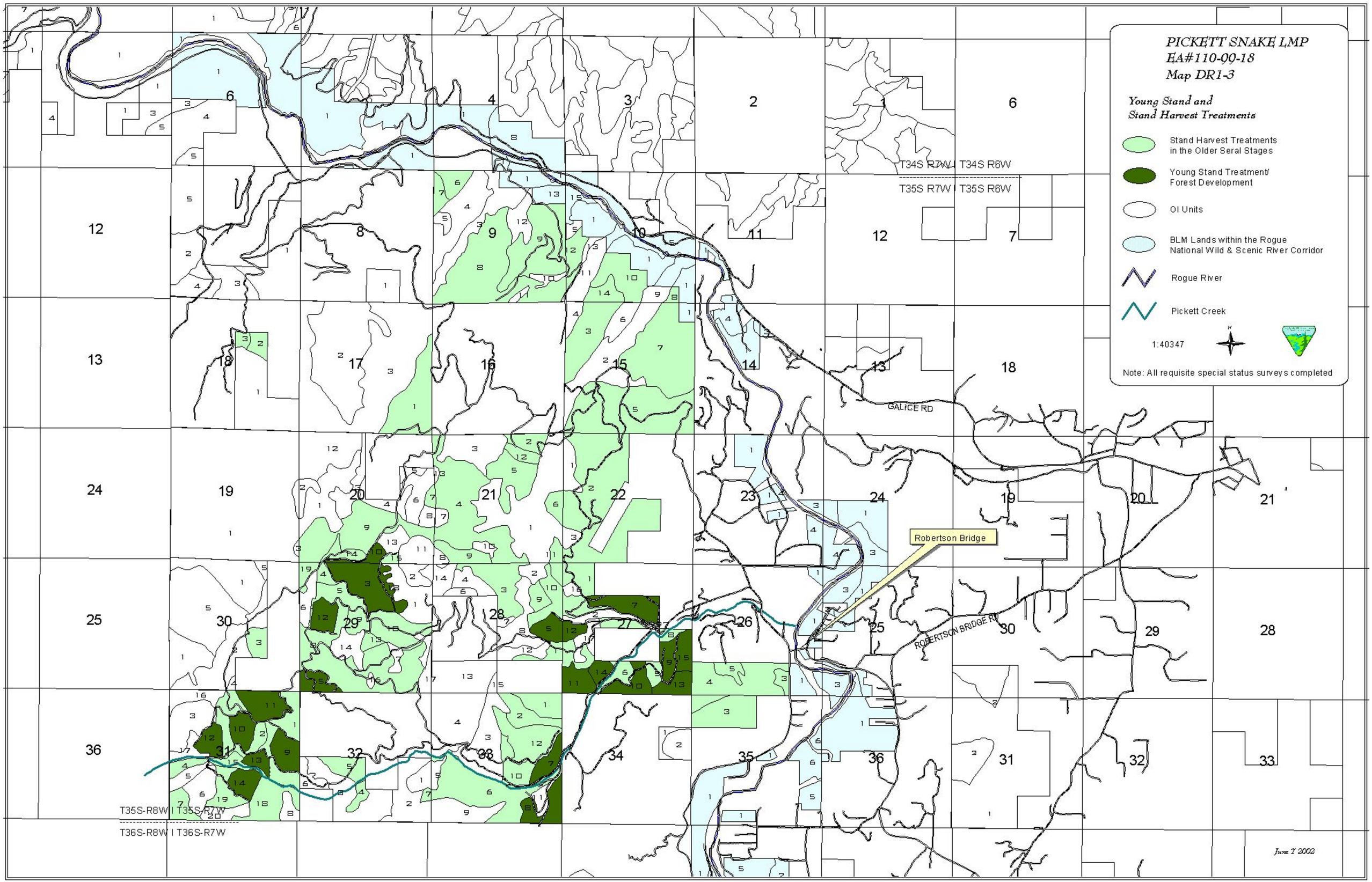
Abbie Jossie

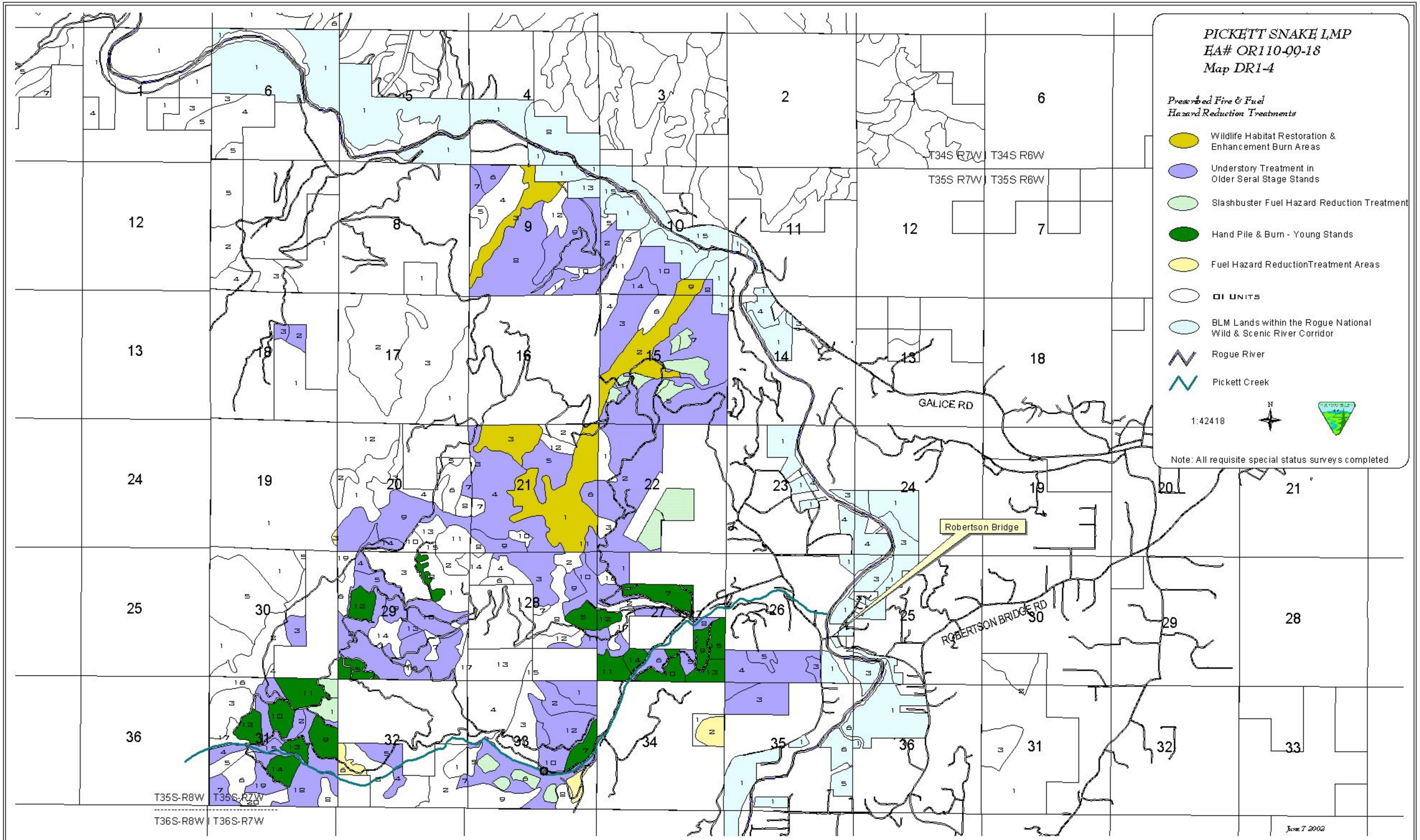
Abbie Jossie
Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

June 24, 2002
Date


T34S R7W | T34S R6W
T35S R7W | T35S R6W
T35S-R8W | T35S-R7W
T36S-R8W | T36S-R7W
Trowbridge Ponds
Buckhorn Ridge Recreation Trail
Robertson Bridge
Temporary Stream Crossing
GALICE RD
ROBERTSON BRIDGE RD
LOWER RIVER RD
199
PICKETT SNAKE LMP
EA# OR110-99-18
Map DR1-1
Proposed Treatments - full project area
Stand Harvest Treatments in the Older Seral Stages
OI UNITS
Fuel Hazard Reduction Treatment
Understory Treatment in Older Seral Stage Stands
No Treatment
Wildlife Habitat Restoration Burn
Young Stand Treatment/ Forest Development
BLM Lands within the Rogue National Wild & Scenic River Corridor
Rogue River
Pickett Creek
1:55000
N
June 7 2002


PICKETT SNAKE LMP
EA# OR110-00-18
Project Area Addressed in
June 2002 Decision Record
Map DR1-2
EA Proposed Treatments - T35S R7W
Stand Harvest Treatments in the Older Seral Stages
Young Stand Treatment/ Forest Development
Understory Treatment in Older Seral Stage Stands
Fuel Hazard Reduction Treatment
No Treatment
Wildlife Habitat Restoration Burn
OI Units
BLM Lands within the Rogue National Wild & Scenic River Corridor
Rogue River
Pickett Creek
1:95000
N
T34S R7W | T34S R6W
T35S R7W | T35S R6W
T35S-R8W | T35S-R7W
T36S-R8W | T36S-R7W
GALICE RD
ROBERTSON BRIDGE RD
Trowbridge Ponds
Robertson Bridge
Buckhorn Ridge Recreation Trail
Temporary Stream Crossing
June 7 2002


PICKETT SNAKE LMP
EA#110-00-18
Map DR1-3
Young Stand and
Stand Harvest Treatments
Stand Harvest Treatments in the Older Seral Stages
Young Stand Treatment/ Forest Development
OI Units
BLM Lands within the Rogue National Wild & Scenic River Corridor
Rogue River
Pickett Creek
1:40347
Note: All requisite special status surveys completed
T34S R7W | T34S R6W
T35S R7W | T35S R6W
T35S-R8W | T35S-R7W
T36S-R8W | T36S-R7W
GALICE RD
ROBERTSON BRIDGE RD
Robertson Bridge
June 7 2002


PICKETT SNAKE LMP
EA# OR110-00-18
Map DR1-4
Prescribed Fire & Fuel
Hazard Reduction Treatments
Wildlife Habitat Restoration &
Enhancement Burn Areas
Understory Treatment in
Older Seral Stage Stands
Slashbuster Fuel Hazard Reduction Treatment
Hand Pile & Burn - Young Stands
Fuel Hazard ReductionTreatment Areas
OI UNITS
BLM Lands within the Rogue National
Wild & Scenic River Corridor
Rogue River
Pickett Creek
1:42418
N
Note: All requisite special status surveys completed
T34S R7W
T34S R6W
T35S R7W
T35S R6W
GALICE RD
Robertson Bridge
ROBERTSON BRIDGE RD
T35S-R8W
T35S-R7W
T36S-R8W
T36S-R7W
June 7 2002