

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

A. Background

BLM Office: Prineville Field Office

NEPA Log #: OR-056-08-247

Project/Lease/Serial/Case File #: N/A

Proposed Action Title/Type: Playa Habitat Rehabilitation II

Location: South of Hwy 20 between Brothers and Hampton, OR. See Appendix A.

Description of the Proposed Action:

Playa features found in rangeland ecosystems provide unique vegetation communities that are beneficial to a variety of wildlife, including the sage grouse. Many of the playa features have been altered through excavation. The playas were excavated in hope of increased water retention for cattle use.

Commencing fall 2008, one to four of the playa features in the project location area will be filled in with existing berm from the previous excavation. The berm will be pushed into the excavated area and smoothed to mimic the natural depression shape using a dozer. After the area has been filled in, the playas will be seeded and fenced off with a 5-acre cattle enclosure. The enclosure will allow new growth to establish without the stress of cattle grazing.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Brothers/LaPine Resource Management Plan

Date approved (ROD): July 1989

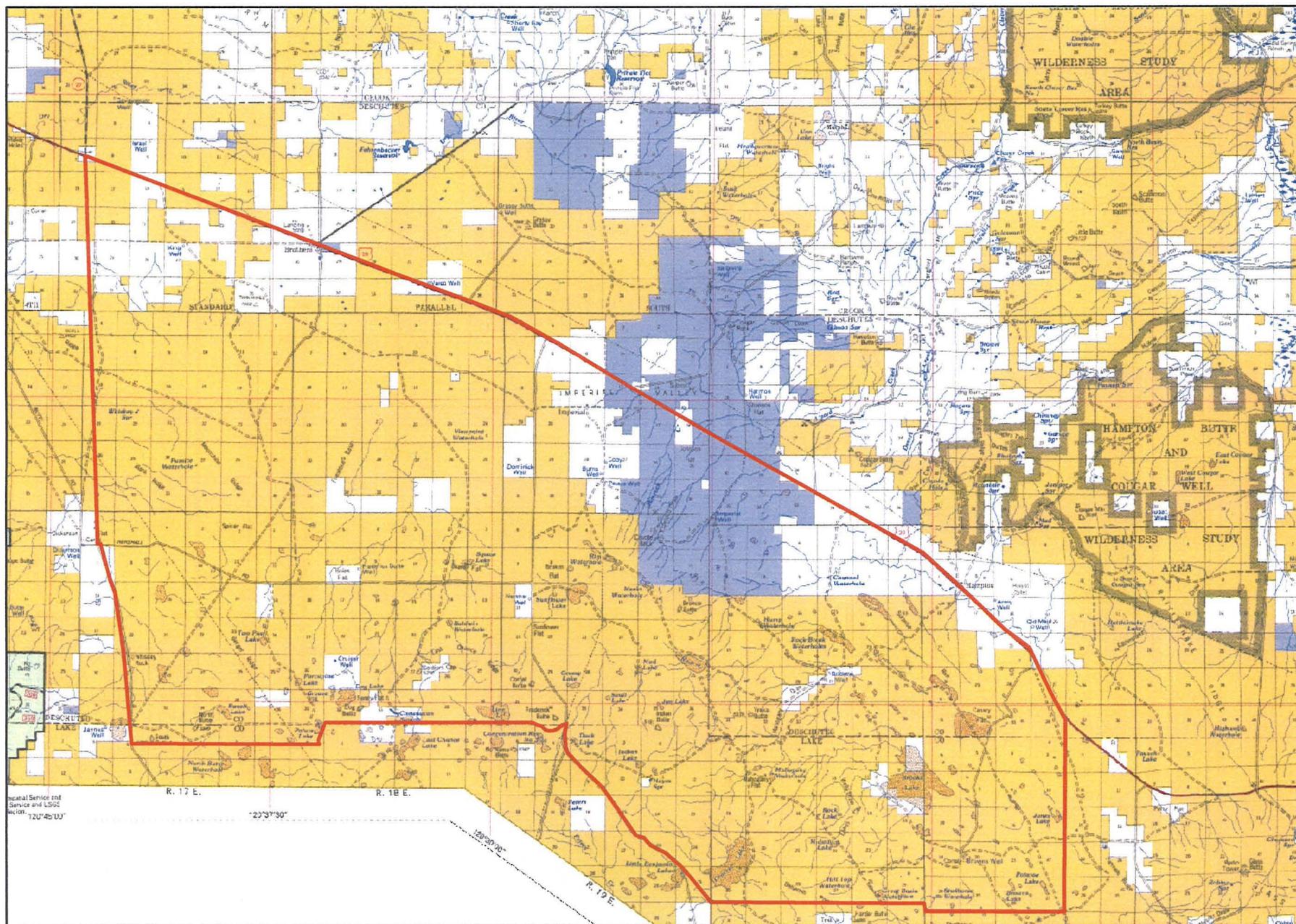
The proposed action is in conformance with the above plan, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following land use plan decisions, objectives, terms, or conditions: "All areas where major vegetation manipulation or conversion occurs will be totally rested from livestock grazing for at least two growing seasons following treatment...Protective fences will be constructed in riparian areas and other habitat improvement projects will be implemented where necessary to stabilize and/or improve unsatisfactory or declining wildlife conditions." Quoted from The Brothers/LaPine Resource Management Plan, Wildlife Habitat Section, page 97. Additionally, "disturbed soil will be rehabilitated to blend into the surrounding soil surface and reseeded as needed with a mixture of grasses, forbs, and browse as applicable..." Quoted from the Brothers/LaPine Resource Management Plan, Ongoing Management Programs: Soil, Water and Air pg 121.

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 Section A, Fish and Wildlife: "minor modification of water developments to improve or facilitate wildlife use" and Section F, Solid Minerals: "disposal of mineral materials, such as sand, stone, gravel...and clay, in amounts not exceeding 50,000 cubic yards or disturbing more than 5 acres..." This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

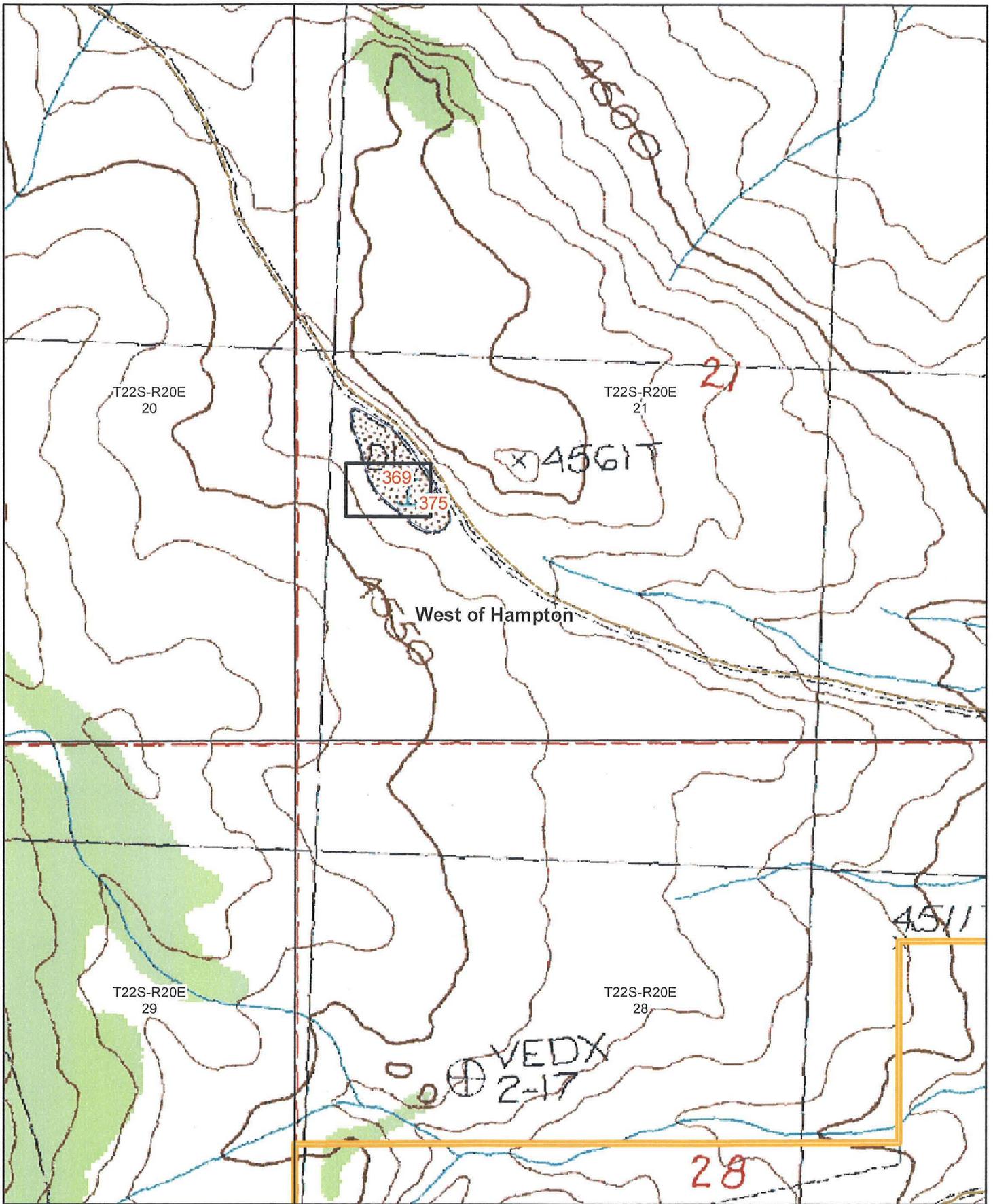
Appendix A
Project Area Maps

Playa Habitat Rehabilitation Boundary Prineville District, BLM



 Habitat Rehabilitation Boundary Line



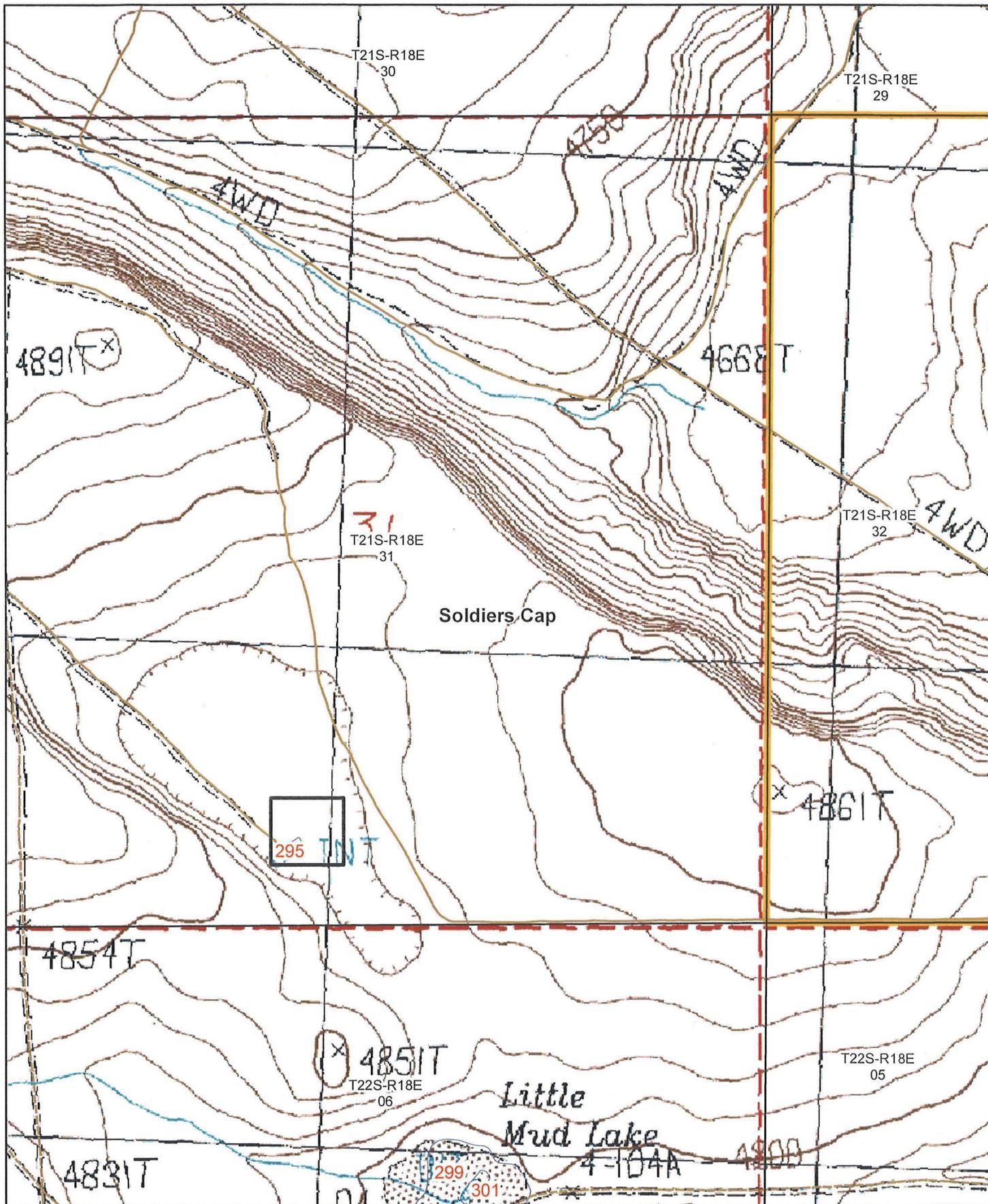


Waterhole #369 (Ram Lake NE)



Legend

-  Proposed Fence Location
-  Digitized Playa Boundary



Waterhole # 295



Legend

-  Proposed Fence Location
-  Digitized Playa Boundary

Appendix B Project Operating Procedures

Vegetation

1. Contractors or other project entities will be given a noxious weed information pamphlet and they will be required to ensure their vehicle and equipment are checked for weed matter prior to entering the project area. Contractors and other project entities are required to report any weed discoveries in the work area. Any weed sighting information should be forwarded to the Rangeland Management Specialist.
2. Fence construction and dozer activities will not proceed until botanical clearances are completed. Any recommendations therein will be followed. For example, if a rare plant was found, and was determined to require protection, then the affected area would be excluded from the project activities.
3. Seeding in the playa project area will be done with native plant mixes of grasses and forbs that are representative of the native plant community found in the project area.

Soils/Watershed

1. All project activities will be scheduled to minimize compaction and rutting to road surfaces.
2. Surface disturbance outside of excavated playa area will be held to minimum, and as necessary, blended in with surrounding soil surfaces. Emphasis will be placed on avoiding repeated entry of vehicles or equipment on sites where this activity previously occurred.

Wildlife

1. No trees or underbrush areas showing obvious signs of wildlife habitation will be disturbed.
2. Should the wildlife situation change (such as a new species found to be present or the status of a species changes), then additional operational restrictions may be applied.
3. A BLM wildlife biologist will be notified if pygmy rabbits (or their burrows), ferruginous hawks, sage grouse or goshawk nests or individual birds are discovered prior to or during treatment activities. The biologist would determine appropriate measures of necessary for species and the treatment activities will be adjusted accordingly.

Cultural Resources

1. All project activities (filling in dug-outs, seeding and fencing) will not commence until clearances are completed. Any recommendations therein would be followed.
2. Cultural resource inventory methods would, in accordance with OR BLM/SHPO Protocol, be focused on identifying archeological sites deemed most at risk from project activities.
3. All significant cultural resources determined to be at risk from project activities would be protected from damage or disturbance.

Recreation/Visuals/Aesthetics

1. All vegetation manipulation actions would be consistent with the BLM's Visual Resource Management criteria.
2. Access to existing camping and related recreation sites would be retained.

Structures/Facilities/Private Lands/ Livestock Grazing/ Other Uses

1. To minimize private land owner gate access and other impacts, the BLM would minimize the number of contractors requiring private land access to execute their work.
2. The Guidelines for Livestock and Grazing Management (p. 15 of the S&G's) would continue to govern livestock grazing management. This would include such year-long and seasonal rest from livestock grazing, as required to meet these guidelines and the project objectives.
3. Permittees of the BLM allotments will be notified of activity in their area prior to commencement.