

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Roseburg BLM District, Oregon**

Rolling Thunder Timber Sale

Decision Document

SECTION 1 – THE DECISION

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the Rolling Thunder project included in the Proposed Action Alternative 3 that is described in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2010-011-EA; pgs. 1-33) and below (q.v. pgs. 2-4).

The Rolling Thunder timber sale will thin approximately 223 acres of second-growth forest stands that are 50-59 years old located in the Middle North Umpqua Watershed in Sections 21, 23, 25 and 29 of T. 26 S., R. 2 W. Willamette Meridian (Figures 1-2). In addition, approximately 3 acres of second-growth forest stands will be removed for the development of spur roads and right-of-ways. The Rolling Thunder timber sale will provide approximately 4.6 million board feet of timber available for auction.

The Roseburg District initiated planning and design for this project to conform with the Roseburg District's 1995 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP). Rolling Thunder includes lands within the General Forest Management Area (GFMA), Connectivity/Diversity Blocks (C/D) and Riparian Reserve (RR) land use allocations.

The silvicultural prescription to be implemented in Rolling Thunder will include light and moderate thinning as well as skips which include the no-harvest stream buffers (EA, pgs. 16, 33). The EA included analysis for heavy thinning and gap prescriptions however they were not proposed for Rolling Thunder units and are not part of the treatment in this decision. In addition, the shaded fuel break analyzed in the EA in Action Alternative 3 was not proposed for Rolling Thunder units and is not part of this decision. Logging activity slash will be treated at landings and along roadways as described in the EA (pg. 19). The Project Design Features that will be implemented as part of Rolling Thunder are described on pages 9-33 of the EA and have been developed into contract stipulations included in the timber sale contract.

Updated Information

The updated information, described below, has been considered, but does not alter the conclusions of the analysis.

1) Unit Configuration:

Of the 485 acres described in the EA (pg. 15) as the Rolling Thunder project, thinning will occur on approximately 149 acres within GFMA, 7 acres within C/D and 67 acres within the Riparian Reserve land use allocations (Table 1; Figures 1-2). In addition, approximately 2.3 acres within GFMA and 0.1 acre within Riparian Reserve will be removed for the development of spur roads and right-of-ways on BLM lands (Table 1) and 0.7 acres on privately-owned lands.

Approximately 260 acres will be excluded from this decision for the following reasons:

- Approximately 161 acres (EA Units 19C, 19D and 20A) were included in the Big Thunder decision and timber sale.
- Approximately 64 acres will be excluded from thinning because it is within no-harvest stream buffers (i.e. 35 or 60 feet [EA, pg. 6]) or in wet, ponded areas with associated wet soils.
- Approximately 3 acres will be excluded from thinning because of low stocking levels.
- Approximately 13 acres will be excluded from thinning to protect unstable soils and cliff areas.
- Approximately 4 acres will be excluded from thinning because of issues related to logging access.
- Approximately 1 acre will be excluded from harvest to protect cultural sites.
- Approximately 14 acres will be excluded from thinning because it is within a known spotted owl nest patch, including EA unit 23B (3 acres), or was determined through field review to be an older stand type and suitable spotted owl habitat.

Within Rolling Thunder, there will be approximately 56 acres of ground-based yarding and approximately 167 acres of cable yarding (Figures 1-2). In addition, the three acres removed for the development of spur roads and right-of-ways will be ground-based yarded. The EA (pg. 15) proposed approximately 485 acres of thinning in a combination of ground-based and cable yarding. Helicopter logging was considered as an alternative logging method but was determined to not be economically viable at this time (EA, pg. 34).

Table 1. Rolling Thunder Units and Land Use Allocations.

Sale Unit No.	EA Unit	Township-Range-Section	Sale Unit Acres	Land Use Allocation (acres)			Roads/ Right-of-Ways (acres)	
				GFMA	C/D	RR	GFMA	RR
1	29C	T26S-R02W-Secs. 29	39	31		8	0.8	
2	21F	T26S-R02W -Sec. 21	15	15				
3	21G	T26S-R02W -Sec. 21	37	24		13	0.5	
4	21H	T26S-R02W -Sec. 21	30	15		15		
5	23A	T26S-R02W -Sec. 23	16	16				
6	23C, 23D	T26S-R02W -Sec. 23	70	48		22	1.0	0.1
7	25A	T26S-R02W -Sec. 25	16		7	9		
Total			223	149	7	67	2.3	0.1

2) Roads & Spurs:

The spurs and roads in Rolling Thunder have been re-numbered as shown in Table 2.

There will be approximately 4,535 feet (0.8 miles) of new spur road construction (Table 2; Figures 1-2) as part of Rolling Thunder with approximately 160 feet (0.1 acres) within Riparian Reserves. New road construction will not occur within no-harvest buffers and will not cross streams. The EA proposed approximately 1.54 miles of new construction in Rolling Thunder, with 1,855 feet falling within Riparian Reserves, and included approximately 0.7 miles of proposed new construction that was part of the decision for the Big Thunder timber sale.

Spur 1 (1675 feet) will be constructed in Unit 6 instead of proposed EA Spurs RT6 and RT8 which involved approximately 1742 feet of new construction. The 26-2-28.1 road (EA, Spur RT 9) and Spur 2 will be constructed in Unit 1.

The native surface 26-2-20.4 road in Unit 1, proposed for renovation and decommissioning in the EA, will not be used for the Rolling Thunder timber sale and will therefore not be renovated. Trees will be cable yarded across the 26-2-20.4 road up to the 26-2-28.1 road and Spur 2 resulting in logging slash remaining on the 26-2-20.4 road when harvest is complete. Access to the 26-2-20.4 road is blocked by a stream crossing at the end in Section 29 and by logging slash on private lands in Section 28. Once harvest is complete in Unit 1, the 26-2-20.4 road will be effectively decommissioned.

To increase the economic viability of the timber sale, spurs may be rocked as described in Table 2 to allow for winter cable yarding opportunities. Approximately 54 percent of the Rolling Thunder timber sale will be available for winter operations due to the rocking of spurs that will allow harvest operations to take place outside of seasonal restrictions.

Approximately 8.7 miles of existing roads will be renovated for harvest operations (Table 2). The EA (Table 4c, pg. 25) proposed renovation of approximately 25.5 miles of existing roads in Rolling Thunder that will be included in this sale. Approximately 5.5 miles of Rolling Thunder proposed road renovation was included in the decision for the Big Thunder timber sale. Proposed renovation will not occur on roads that will not be needed for the final sale area.

Approximately 16,685 feet (3.2 miles) of roads will be decommissioned as part of Rolling Thunder. The EA (pg. 25) proposed decommissioning of approximately 3.42 miles of roads and spurs including approximately 1.1 miles of new construction and renovation that was included for decommissioning in the Big Thunder timber sale. Decommissioning will include water-barring, mulching the road surface with logging slash, seeding and mulching where logging slash is unavailable or where access is needed to treat noxious weeds, and blocking with a trench barrier or gate (Table 2; EA, pg. 13). Mulching of spur roads within harvest units will be done with logging slash, and not with straw, since logging slash serves to discourage unauthorized off-highway vehicle use of the decommissioned spur roads as well as providing erosion control.

Table 2. Rolling Thunder Roads and Spurs

Roads & Spurs		New Construction	Renovation	Surfacing		Decommissioning	
(in Decision)	(in the EA)	(feet)	(feet)	Existing	Proposed	(feet)	How Decommissioned
26-2-21.0	26-2-21.0		4,175	Rock	Rock		
26-2-21.3	26-2-21.3		3,750	Rock	Rock	3,750	Blade, water bar, block
26-2-21.3	Spur RT5	1,180			Rock	1,180	Blade, water bar, block
26-2-22.0	26-2-22.0		34,350	Rock	Rock	7,780	Blade, water bar, block
26-2-23.1	26-2-23.1		2,650	Rock	Rock		
26-2-23.2	26-2-23.2		560	Rock	Rock		
26-2-26.0	26-2-26.0		620	Rock	Rock	620	Blade, water bar, block
26-2-28.1	Spur RT9	1,510			Rock	1,510	Blade, water bar, remove culverts, block
Spur 1	Spur RT6	1,675			Rock	1,675	Blade, water bar, remove culverts, block
Spur 2		170			Rock	170	Blade and water bar
Totals		4,535	46,105 (8.7 miles)			16,685 (3.2 miles)	

Compliance

Compliance with this decision and the project design features described in the EA will be ensured by frequent on-the-ground inspections by the Contract Administrator.

SECTION 2 – THE DECISION RATIONALE

Chapter 2 of the EA describes a "No Action" alternative and three "Proposed Action" alternatives. The No Action alternative was not selected because it did not meet the stated *need* “to provide substantial timber volume in support of the local economy and provide a potential location to safely fight a wildfire, while protecting northern spotted owl habitat components.” and the stated *purpose* “to reduce stand stocking in a cost-efficient manner that produces commercial timber and reduces the threat of wildfire while enhancing habitat for the northern spotted owl and improving the vigor of the residual stand” (EA, pg. 7).

Proposed Action Alternative 3 was selected because it meets both the *purpose* and *need* as stated in the EA (pg. 7), providing substantial timber volume in a cost-efficient manner and reducing the threat of wildfire while improving vigor in the residual stand and enhancing northern spotted owl habitat. The thinning prescription for Rolling Thunder was designed and trees were marked using management direction for Matrix and Riparian Reserves land use allocations under the 1995 ROD/RMP. In the Middle North Umpqua River Watershed, the total Riparian Reserve width for perennial, fish-bearing streams is 360 feet (two site potential tree heights on both sides of the stream). The total Riparian Reserve width is 180 feet (one site potential tree height on both sides of the stream) for perennial, non-fish bearing streams and also for intermittent

streams. The prescription retains no-harvest buffers of 35 feet along intermittent streams and 60 feet along perennial or fish-bearing stream channels. The outer portions of the Riparian Reserve will be thinned to variable densities to improve riparian vegetative and structural diversity and to produce stands that are more resilient to disturbance (EA, pgs. 40, 87).

The Project Design Features described in the Thunderbolt EA (pgs. 16-28, 30-33) will minimize soil compaction, limit erosion, and protect slope stability, wildlife habitat, fish habitat, air and water quality, as well as other identified resource values. I have reviewed the resource information contained in the EA and the updated information presented in this decision.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the Environmental Assessment, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared for Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment Project with a determination that the project, which includes Rolling Thunder, would not have a significant impact on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Survey & Manage

On December 17, 2009, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington (District Court) 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 USFS 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'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 (emphasis added):*
- 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 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 remain in place. I have reviewed the Rolling Thunder project in consideration of both the December 17, 2009 partial summary judgment and Judge Pechman’s October 11, 2006 order. Because the Rolling Thunder project includes no regeneration harvest and includes thinning only in stands less than 80 years old, I have made the determination that this project meets Exemption A of the Pechman Exemptions (October 11, 2006 Order), and may proceed to be offered for sale 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 first notice for sale will appear in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon on October 21, 2014.

SECTION 3 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM solicited comments from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners, affected State and local government agencies, and the general public on the Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment EA, which included the Rolling Thunder project, during a 30-day public comment period from November 12, 2013 to December 12, 2013. Three sets of comments were received as a result of the public comment period.

Upon reviewing the comments, the following topic warrants additional clarification that is pertinent to the Rolling Thunder project: 1) Roads.

1. Roads

Comments were received that questioned BLM’s road maintenance and whether roads are ‘bleeding sediment’ into streams because they are “*not fully repaired with road maintenance alone*”. Also, comments were received concerning the definition of road decommissioning: “*The description of “decommission” on page 13 appears to say “decommission” only means the road is “gated” or otherwise closed. Elsewhere on the Roseburg District, this also means the gated road is open to any OHV who can maneuver around the closure. And because it is closed, virtually no monitoring of OHV damage is done by the BLM. We object to this definition of “decommission”. The BLM should be more responsible in protecting riparian resources along closed roads.*”

The road maintenance performed by BLM each year is prioritized by road conditions and use and is frequently constrained by budgets. The statement on page 6 of the EA is

recognition of the fact that there may be sources of sediment from roads that annual road maintenance may not be able to correct due to workload and budgets unless that work can be included in a timber sale contract.

The Thunderbolt EA (pg. 13) states a complete definition of “Road Decommissioning” as it pertains to the project:

“Roads and spurs that are not needed for long-term resource management or require resource protection would be closed to vehicle traffic. Prior to closure, roads would be left in an erosion-resistant condition by applying one or more of the following:

- removal of temporary culverts and/or existing culverts where barriers would prevent culvert maintenance;
- installation of water bars to effectively drain a rock or native road surface;
- mulching the road surface with logging slash to control erosion and deter use by off-highway vehicles;
- mulching the road surface with seed and straw mulch to control erosion where logging slash is unavailable or where future access would be necessary for noxious weed control or power line maintenance;
- blocking the road with a barrier, such as logs, a gate or a trench to prevent access.”

The removal of culverts, installation of water bars, mulching with logging slash, and blocking temporary roads with barriers, including gates, logs and trenches, all serve to deter off-highway vehicle use and protect **all** resources, not just riparian resources.

The remaining comments did not raise substantive issues that would influence my selection of Proposed Action Alternative 3 for implementation of the Rolling Thunder Timber Sale as included in the Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels EA and updated above.

SECTION 4 – PROTEST PROCEDURES

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR Subpart 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests of this decision may be filed with the authorized officer (Max Yager) within 15 days of the first publication date of the notice of decision /timber sale advertisement in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon on October 21, 2014.

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 Roseburg District 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.

43 CFR § 5003.3 subsection (c) states: "Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of decision or the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered." Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the project decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to him. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of the review, serve the protest decision in writing to the protesting party or parties. Upon denial of a protest, the authorized officer may proceed with the implementation of the decision as permitted by regulations at 5003.3(f).

If no protest is received by the close of business (4:30 P.M.; Pacific Time Zone) within 15 days after first publication of the decision notice on October 21, 2014, this decision will become final. If a timely protest is received, the project decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and the Swiftwater Field Office will issue a protest decision.

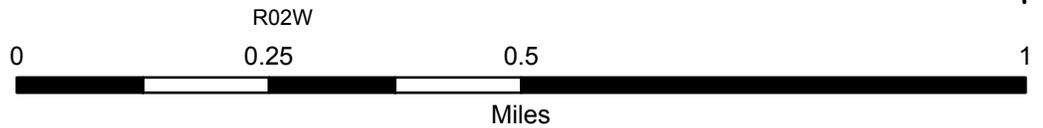
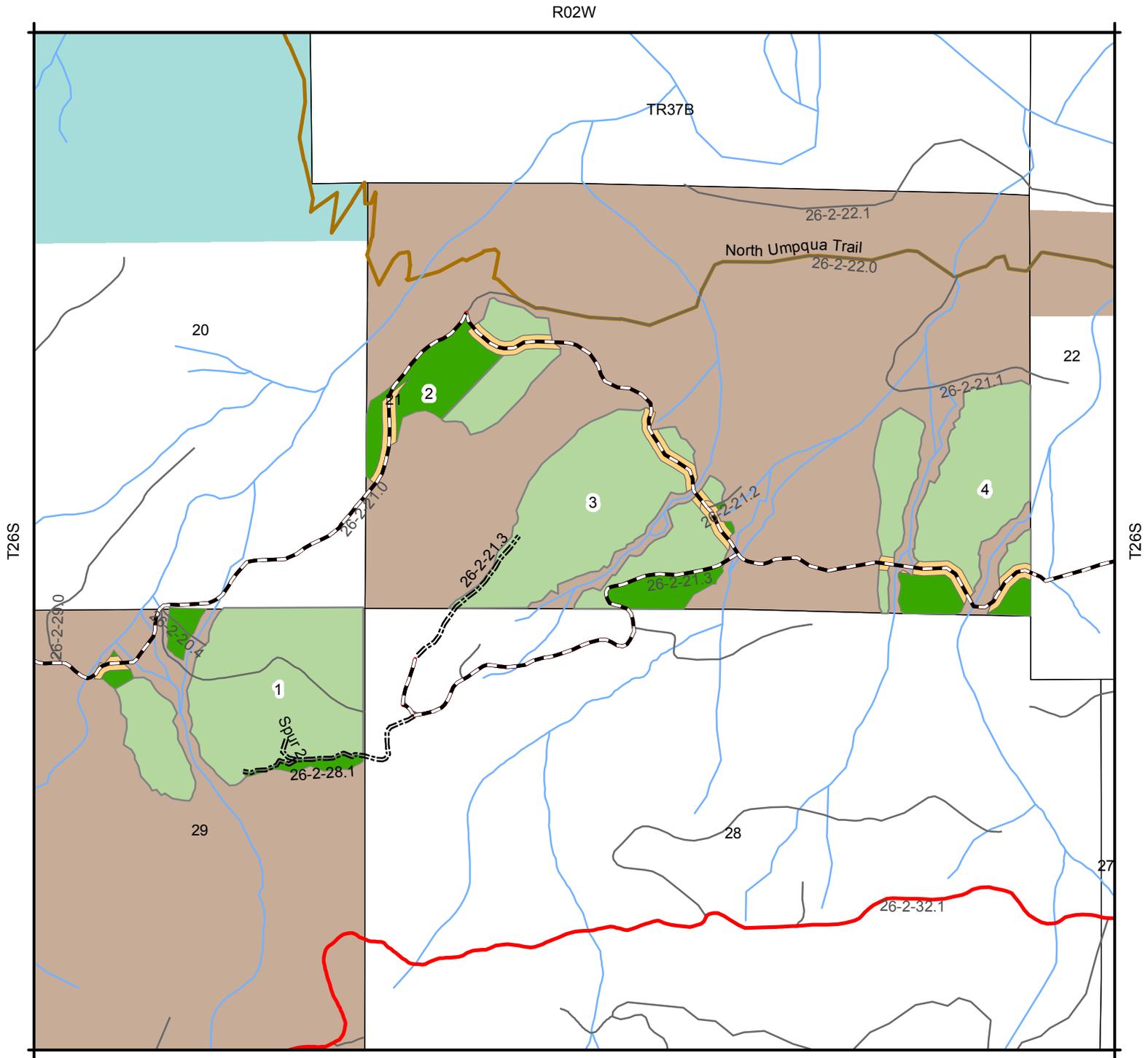
For further information, contact Max Yager, Field Manager, Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, 777 NW Garden Valley Blvd; Roseburg, OR 97471, (541) 440-4930.



Max Yager, Field Manager
Swiftwater Field Office

OCT. 9th, 2014
Date

Figure 1. Rolling Thunder Units 1, 2, 3 and 4



Legend

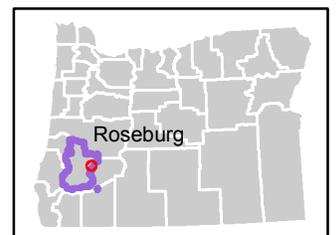
Rolling Thunder Harvest Units

- Cable Yarding
- Ground-based Yarding

Land Use Allocations

- BLM Administered Lands - GFMA
- BLM Administered Lands - C/D

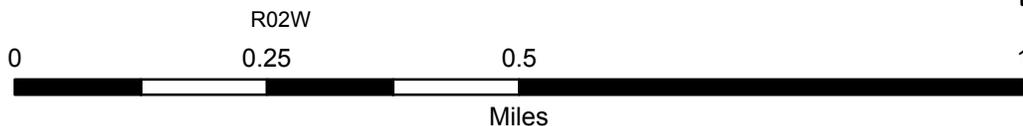
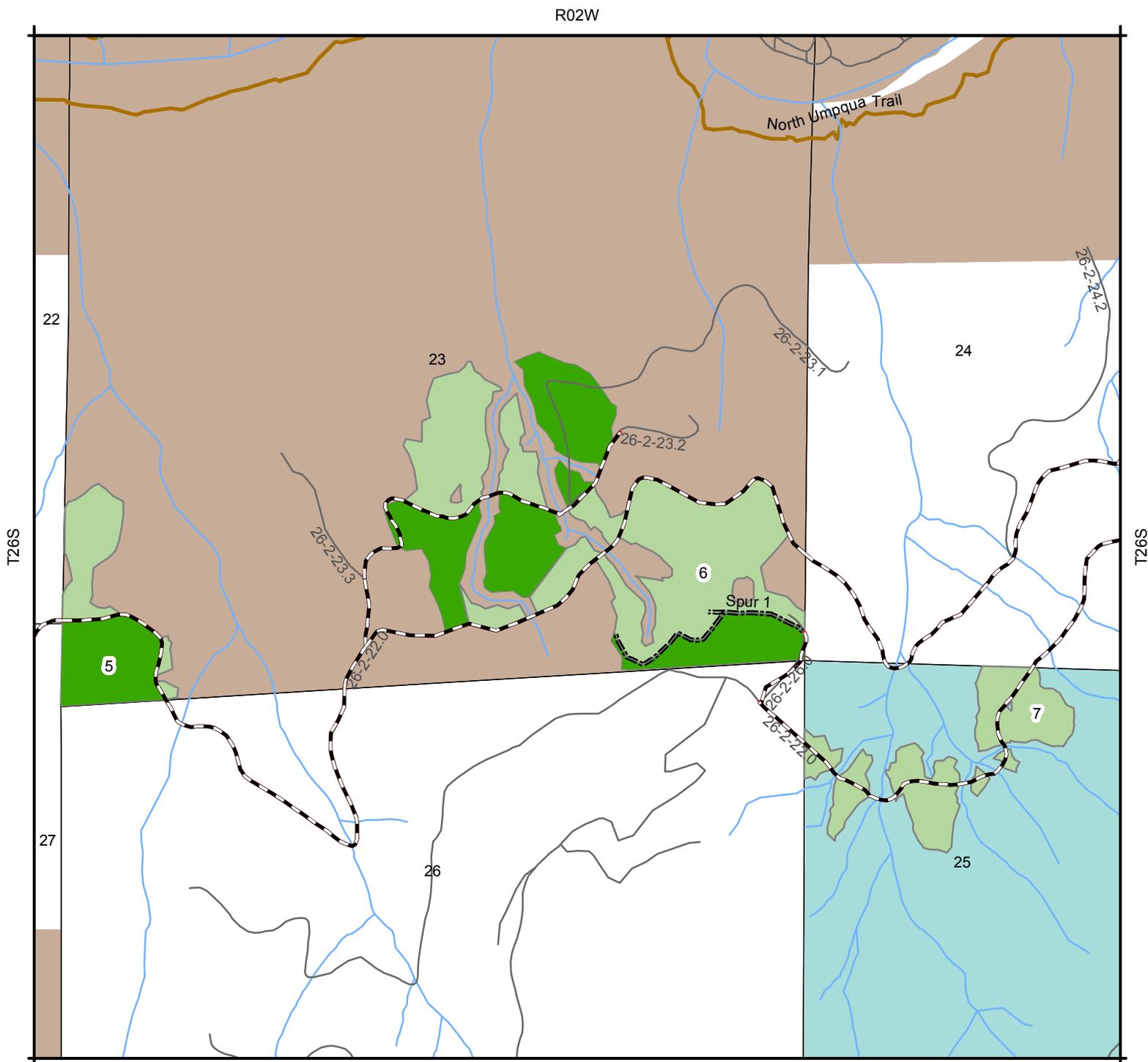
- Road Construction
- Road Renovation
- Haul_Route
- Existing Roads
- Trails
- Streams
- Roadside Fuels Treatment



Creation Date: 10/3/2014

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Figure 2. Rolling Thunder Units 5, 6 and 7



Legend

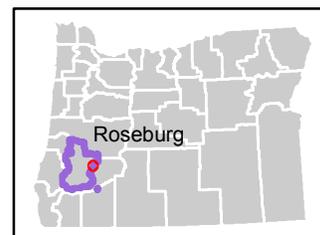
Rolling Thunder Harvest Units

- Cable Yarding
- Ground-based Yarding

Land Use Allocations

- BLM Administered Lands - GFMA
- BLM Administered Lands - C/D

- Road Construction
- Road Renovation
- Haul_Route
- Existing Roads
- Trails
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