Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management Environmental Assessment

EA# OR-105-06-06

Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management Environmental Assessment

EA # OR-105-07-04

Suicide Squeeze Density Management Decision Document

Bureau of Land Management
South River Field Office, Roseburg District Office

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project, completing implementation of Alternative Two of the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (pp. 4-11), and continuing implementation of Alternative Two of the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (pp. 5-14).

Nine units located on lands allocated as Late-Successional Reserve will treat a total of 211 acres. Five of the units were analyzed in the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA. These are located in Section 27, T. 28 S., R. 8 W., W.M. Three units analyzed in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA, are located in Sections 5 and 15, T. 29 S., R. 8 W., W.M. An additional unit, evaluated in a determination of NEPA adequacy, is located in Section 5, T. 29 S., R. 8 W., W.M.

The added unit in Section 5 is similar in age and composition to two units that generally bound it to the southwest and northeast. No resource issues were identified in the determination of NEPA adequacy not already considered and analyzed in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA.

An additional three acres will be cut for road rights-of-way. The rights-of-way are principally located within the boundaries of the density management units.

Access will be primarily provided by existing roads, to be supplemented as follows. Three temporary spur roads will be constructed, approximately 0.47 miles in combined length. These spur roads will be decommissioned by subsoiling at the end of the operating season in which they are constructed and used. If it is necessary to carry these roads over to the following year, they will be winter-proofed prior to autumn rains.

The first 0.35 miles of Road No. 28-8-27.1 will be renovated. Upon completion of use, the road segment will be water-barred and blocked to vehicular traffic.

One permanent spur road and one permanent system road (No. 29-8-5.5) will be constructed. The total combined length will be 0.23 miles.

Three cross-drain culverts will be replaced along portions of Road No.29-8-2.0, the Suicide Creek road, which provides primary access to units in Section 27, T. 28 S., R. 8 W.

The density management project will yield an estimated 2,922 thousand board feet of timber not chargeable to the Roseburg District allowable annual sale quantity.

Ground-based harvest will be conducted using harvester/forwarder equipment operating on pre-designated trails, using existing skid trails to the greatest degree practical.

Cable-yarding equipment will be capable of maintaining a minimum of one-end log suspension to reduce soil compaction and displacement, and have a minimum of 100 feet of lateral-yarding capability to minimize the number of corridors and landings required.

Operations on units designated for harvester/forwarded yarding will be seasonally restricted to the dry season, typically between mid-May and mid-October. Where access is provided by unsurfaced roads not suited to all-weather use, cable yarding operations will also be seasonally restricted. Operating season may be extended beyond mid-October under a provisional waiver if the weather conditions remain dry.

Felling and yarding of timber, other than for clearing road rights-of-way, is seasonally restricted from April 15 to July 15 during the bark slip period.

Rationale for the Decision:

The Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA analyzed two alternatives in detail, Alternative One, the alternative of No Action (EA, p. 5), and Alternative Two, The Proposed Action (EA, pp. 5-14). This EA (pp. 14-16) also considered two additional alternatives not analyzed in detail, as one "Helicopter Yarding vs. Building or Reconstructing Roads" was not considered economically reasonable and viable, and the second "Reservation of the Largest Trees in Riparian Reserves and LSRs to Provide Down Wood and Snags" was essentially already addressed by the Proposed Action.

The Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA also analyzed two alternatives in detail, Alternative One, the alternative of No Action (EA, p. 4), and Alternative Two, The Proposed Action (EA, pp. 4-11). It also considered, but did not analyze in detail, a helicopter yarding alternative.

Alternative Two, as described in each of the EAs will achieve objectives for density management in Late-Successional Reserves enumerated in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (pp. 3-4) and Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (pp. 2-3), whereas the alternatives of No Action will not.

Survey and Manage

On July 25, 2007, the *Record of Decision to Remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines from Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* was signed by the Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior.

This decision amended resource management plans for western Oregon and eliminated the provisions of the Survey and Manage program set forth in the *Record of Decision for Amendments* (ROD) *to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.* Consequently, for the aforementioned reasons the decision to eliminate Survey and Manage is effective on this project.

Public Comments

Comments on the completed EA were received from four organizations. These comments did not provide any new information or identify any relevant issues the BLM should have considered in the analysis. Some comments did not pertain to the project being analyzed.

A selection of comments on the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA was addressed in the Olly Cat Density Management decision on February 25th, 2008. This document may be viewed at http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/ollycatdr.pdf on the Roseburg District web page.

A selection of comments on the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA was addressed in the Deep Six Density Management decision on February 25th, 2008 and the Burma Triangle Commercial Thinning decision on May 23rd, 2008. These may be found at http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/deepsixdr.pdf and http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/BurmaTriangleDR.pdf, respectively.

Port-Orford-cedar and Phytopthera lateralis

No Port-Orford-cedar is documented in any of the density management units or along any of the designated haul roads.

Although no mitigation is indicated, measures to reduce risk of Port-Orford-cedar root disease will be implemented. These will include: equipment washing; restricting road construction and renovation to the dry season; restricting hauling on unsurfaced roads to the dry season; and decommissioning and blocking unsurfaced roads upon completion of density management.

Wildlife

As illustrated in Figure B-1, Appendix B of the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA, project units in Sections 5 and 15, T. 29 S., R. 8 W., W.M. are overlapped, respectively, by the Happy Hour and Lower Berry Creek **northern spotted owl** home ranges. As illustrated in the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (Map 3-1, p. 18), project units in Section 27, T. 28 S., R. 8 W., W.M. are located in the Suicide Creek home range. None of the units are located within Critical Habitat designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the survival and recovery of the spotted owl.

As described in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 57) and Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 43), no effect t from noise disruption is expected, as thinning operations will occur outside of disruption threshold distances for known spotted owl sites or activity centers, or be seasonally restricted from March 1st to June 30th if within the disruption threshold of unsurveyed suitable spotted owl habitat.

Seasonal restrictions could be waived if surveys indicate that spotted owls are not present, not nesting, or failed in nesting. This will ensure that noise disruption will not cause spotted owls to abandon nests or fledge prematurely.

Density management is not expected to negatively affect individual spotted owls or reduce the ability of the affected home ranges to support spotted owls and would benefit the species in the long term, as described in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 58) and Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 43).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with a not likely to adversely affect determination pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Ref. # 1-15-05-I-0511).

The Suicide Squeeze Density Management project is located in Critical Habitat Unit OR-06-D, designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the survival and recovery of the murrelet. Suitable nesting habitat for the **marbled murrelet** is adjacent to the Suicide Squeeze Density Management units, but it is not present within the units. Consequently, there will be no direct effect to murrelets through modification of suitable nesting habitat.

The four units (6, 7, 8 and 9) located in the Middle Fork Coquille fifth-field watershed are located within the Restriction Corridor within Habitat Zone 2. The remaining units, located in the Olalla Creek-Lookingglass Creek fifth-field watershed are also located in Zone 2, but are outside the restriction Corridor. Two years of protocol surveys have been conducted for all units located within the 100 yards, the disruption threshold, of suitable nesting habitat. No murrelet detections were made and no seasonal or daily operating restrictions are required.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with a not likely to adversely affect determination pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Ref. # 1-15-05-I-0511).

As described in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 27) four Bureau Sensitive mollusk species are possible occupants of the watershed. These are the **Chace sideband snail** (*Monadenia chaceana*), **green sideband snail** (*Monadenia fidelis beryllica*), **Oregon shoulderband snail** (*Helminthoglypta hertlieni*), and **spotted taildropper** (*Prophasaon vannatae pardalis*). The Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 21) identified the three snail species as potential occupants of that watershed. Protocol surveys were conducted and one Chace sideband site was detected in Unit 5 near the eastern perimeter of the unit. It was protected by designating additional trees for retention to maintain shade and prevent disturbance.

Botany

The Suicide Squeeze Density Management units were surveyed for Special Status vascular plant, lichen and bryophyte species identified in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 36 and Appendix C) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (Appendix D). The results of these surveys were negative. Consequently, no effects to any Special Status vascular plants, lichens or bryophytes are expected.

As described in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 37) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 31), there are no known Special Status fungi species in the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project area that will be affected. As discussed in both of the EAs, surveys for fungi species are not considered practical, so the presence of any Bureau Sensitive fungi in the project area is unknown. If present in the density management units, loss of sites could result as a consequence of the removal of substrate and modification of microclimate.

Aquatic Habitat, Fish, and Essential Fish Habitat

As described in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (pp. 62-63) and Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 52), the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project is not expected to have any effects on stream substrate and sediment. "No harvest" buffers at least 20 feet in width have been established on all streams. Equipment operations are prohibited within these buffers so that soils are not displaced or compacted. Non-compacted forest soils in the Pacific Northwest have very high infiltration capacities and are not effective in transporting sediment by rain splash or sheet erosion. Any potential sediment resulting from thinning operations will be intercepted by the vegetated "no-harvest" buffers and precipitate out rather than reach stream channels. These buffers will provide root strength sufficient to protect bank stability and prevent abnormal bank erosion that can contribute additional sediment to streams where it could become embedded in streambed gravels. No effects from sediment associated with road construction, renovation, use and decommissioning are expected either.

It is acknowledged in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 63) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 53) that thinning will remove trees within a half site-potential tree height of streams which could result in a short-term reduction in available wood. This smaller diameter wood does not persist for long due to higher decay rates, however, and is more easily flushed from the system than large pieces. Current down wood will be reserved to provide for the short term, while density management will accelerate growth of large diameter trees to provide a long-term source of large wood for in-stream habitat. The availability of pool habitat will be unaffected as no large wood will be removed from streams.

As described in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 64) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 54), access to spawning and rearing habitat will be unaffected because road construction will be located on or near ridge tops, and will not involve construction or replacement of crossings that may act as barriers to fish passage.

As discussed in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 653) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (p. 53), direct effects to fish species from the harvest and hauling of timber could result from deposition of additional fine sediment and a temporary increase in turbidity. Density management is not expected to result in fine sediment reaching streams, however, because "no-harvest" buffers will filter out sediment from run-off. The effects of sediment generated by road related activities are expected to be so small as to not be measurable at the project scale.

For the aforementioned reasons it is not anticipated that the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project will have any adverse effect on Essential Fish Habitat.

Water Quality

No measurable change in stream flows is expected in association with the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project. None of the unit acres in the Middle Fork Coquille fifth-field watershed are located in the Transient Snow Zone where peak flow effects associated with timber harvest and warm rain-on-snow events might occur. Fewer than a dozen acres in Unit 3 located in the Transient Snow Zone in the Olalla Creek-Lookingglass Creek fifth-field watershed. Density management involves only partial removal of vegetation and retention of more than 30 percent canopy closure, and the area in the Transient Zone Snow that would be affected is less than 0.7 percent of Transient Snow Zone acres in the Tenmile Creek subwatershed and less than 0.1 percent of the Transient Snow Zone acres in the entire Olalla Creek-Lookingglass Creek fifth-field watershed.

The risk of new road construction influencing flows is also low. No permanent construction is planned in the Olalla Creek-Lookingglass Creek fifth-field watershed, and only 0.23 miles will be constructed in the Middle Fork Coquille fifth-field watershed. The permanent construction is to be located on a broad ridge and will be disconnected from the drainage network so that it has no potential for affecting stream flows.

Effects on sediment are addressed with respect to both thinning operations, and timber hauling. As discussed in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (p. 70) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (pp. 49-50), "no harvest" buffers will prevent disturbance to stream channels and stream banks, and intercept surface run-off so that any sediment transported by overland flow will settle out before it reaches active waterways.

As described above, there will be no new road construction with connection to the existing drainage network. Since road segments must be connected directly to stream channels in order to deliver sediment-laden water, these roads will not affect stream sediment. This eliminates potential effects on stream flow as water discharged onto forested slopes will infiltrate into the soil rather than run off.

To reduce the potential for sediment delivery from road surfaces along the haul route, ditch lines will be left vegetated where possible to filter sediment from road runoff, and water bars or drain dips will be installed where indicated to further route water off road surfaces and onto the forest floor.

Variable width "no-harvest buffers" will conserve the vegetation that provides primary shade for stream channels. Consequently, stream shading will not be affected by density management and it is unlikely that stream temperatures will be affected in localized reaches, or cumulatively at the watershed scale.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy

Riparian areas, comparable to **Riparian Reserves**, have been designated on all perennial and intermittent streams in the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project area. Applicable management direction is being implemented. This includes: avoiding location of new roads and landings in riparian areas; minimizing disruption of natural hydrologic flow paths, including diversion of stream flow and interception of surface and subsurface flow; minimizing sediment delivery from roads; and maintaining fish passage at all road crossings.

The Suicide Squeeze Density Management project is not located in a **Key Watershed**, so no additional management direction applies.

As addressed in both the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA (pp. 1, 18, 19, and Appendix D) and the Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA (pp.1 and 28) recommendations and information from **Watershed Analysis** was considered and incorporated into the effects analysis. Additional information from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Aquatic Habitat Inventory surveys was used, in conjunction with site-specific evaluations, in describing aquatic conditions.

As stated in the EAs, a primary objective of this project is achievement of LSRA objectives by protecting and enhancing conditions of late-successional forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for late-successional and old-growth forest related species. Consequently, the project is considered a **Watershed Restoration** project, the only ACS component that is action-based, whereas the other objectives are location or process-based.

In consideration of these facts, and analysis in the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA and Olalla-Lookingglass LSR Density Management EA, it is my conclusion that the Suicide squeeze Density Management project is consistent with the intent and direction for the Aquatic Conservation Strategy set forth in the 1994 *Record of Decision for Amendments* (ROD) *to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, and the 1995 Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan.*

Cultural/Historical Resources

Pedestrian surveys were conducted consistent with Oregon BLM/SHPO Cultural Resource Protocol. No cultural resources were identified and the Suicide Squeeze Density Management project will have no effect on cultural and historical resources.

Noxious Weeds

All logging equipment, excluding log trucks and crew transport, will be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to mobilization in and out of the project area to minimize the risk of introducing soil from outside the project area that may be contaminated with noxious weed seed or other propagative materials. Any equipment removed during the life of the contract must be cleaned before being returned to the project area.

Monitoring:

Monitoring of the effects of the proposed action, if implemented, would be done in accordance with provisions contained in the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (p. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199), and would focus on the following resources: Late-Successional Reserves, Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 – Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a), protests may be filed within 15 days of the publication date of the timber sale notice. Publication of such notice on February 26, 2008, in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon, constitutes the decision date from which such protests may be filed. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: "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 or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

As set forth in 43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (c), protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the timber sale notice are not timely filed and shall not be considered.

Ralph Thomas
Field Manager
South River Field Office

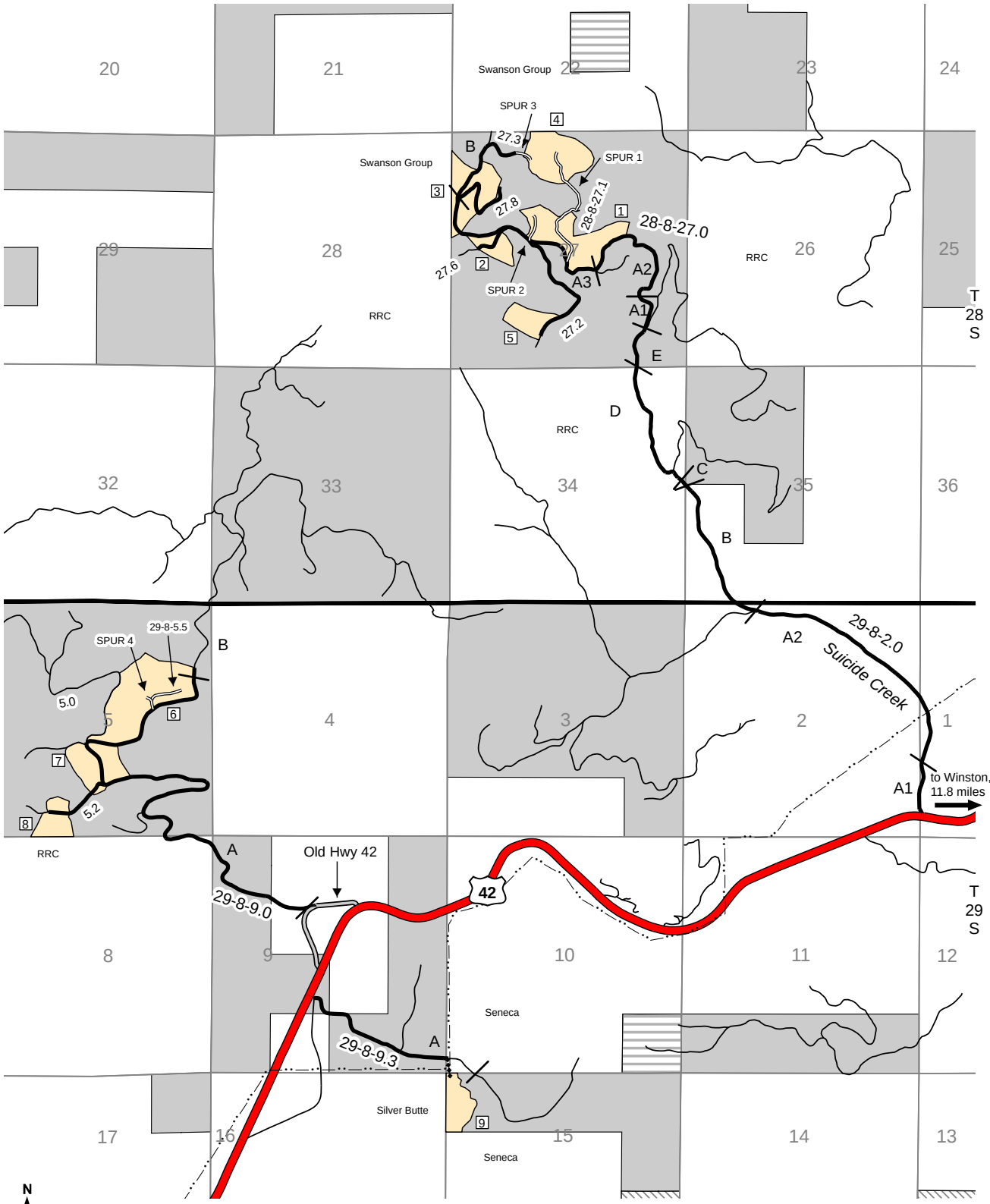
7/25/08
Date

ACCESS AND MAINTENANCE MAP
EXHIBIT "D"

Contract # OR10-TS08-10

SUICIDE SQUEEZE

Density Management



T28,29S, R8W

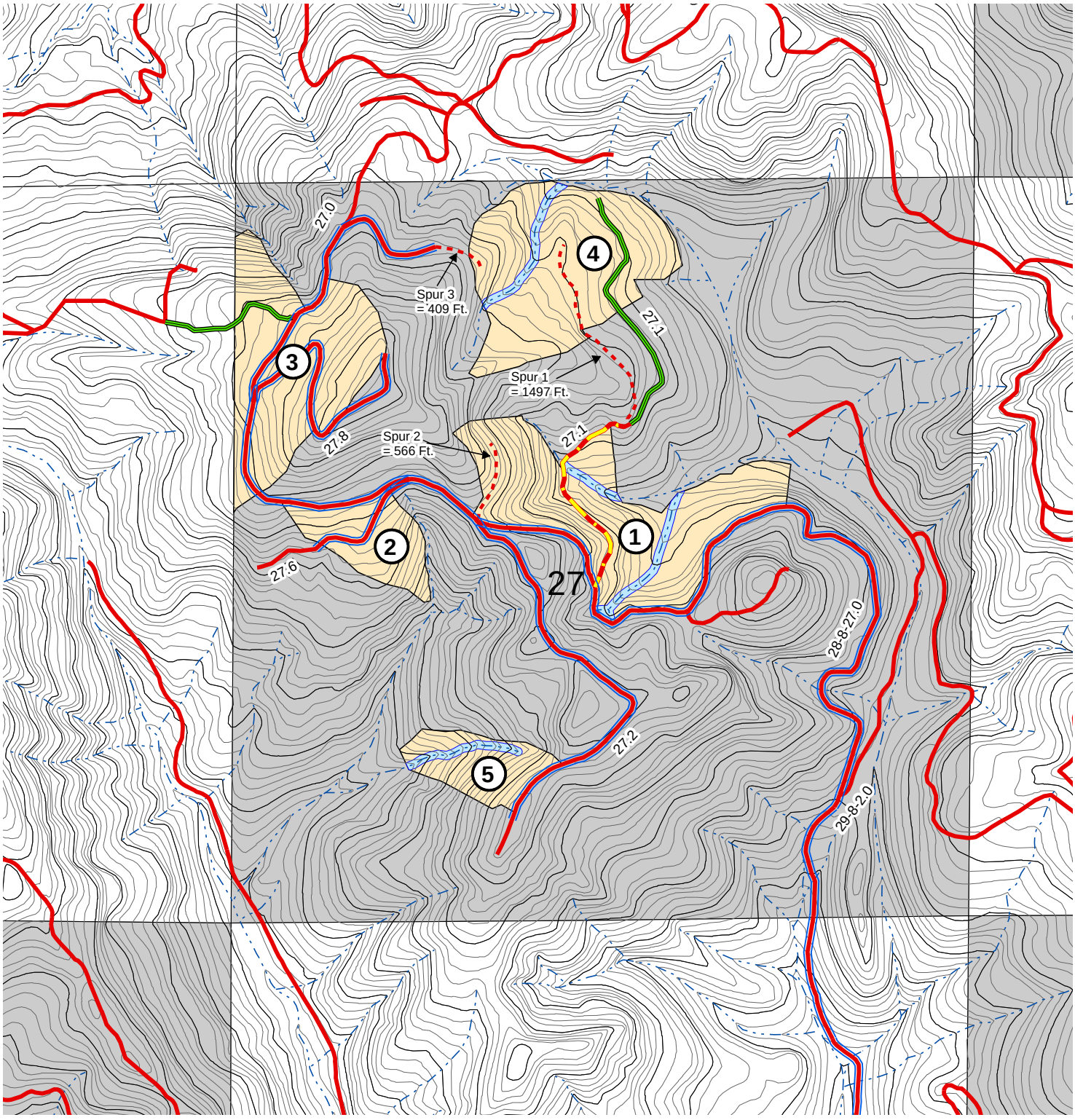
Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR

5-15-2008

Exhibit "D"

SUICIDE SQUEEZE

Density Management



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T28S, R8W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR

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No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of this data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data was compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

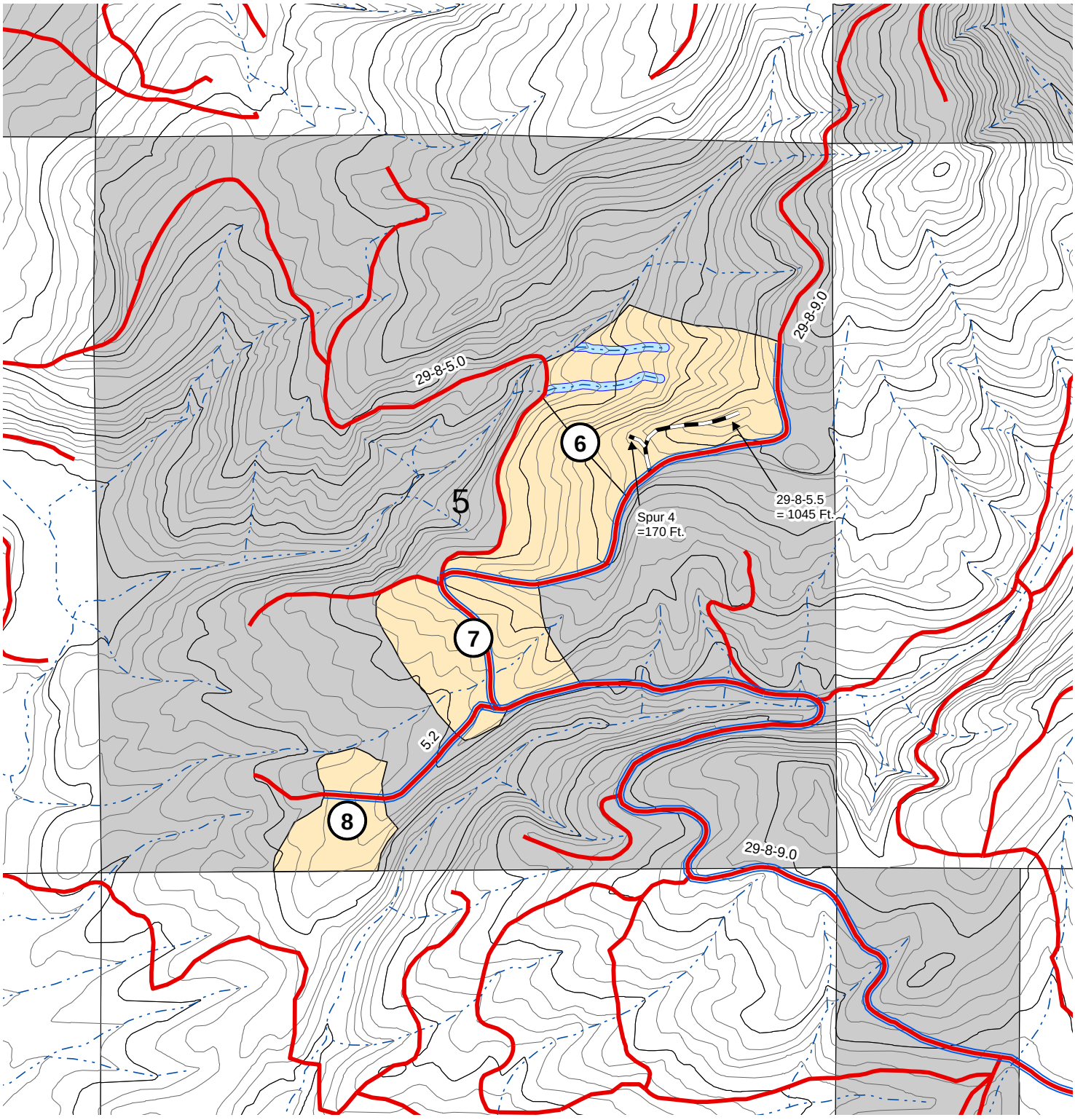
- Haul/Access Route
- Existing Road
- Undrivable Road
- Renovate, Decommission
- Construct, Decommission
- Stream
- 100' Contour
- 20' Contour

- Thinning Area
- No Harvest Stream Buffer
- BLM (Coos Wagon Road) Land
- Non-BLM Land

11-26-2007

SUICIDE SQUEEZE

Density Management



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T29S, R8W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR

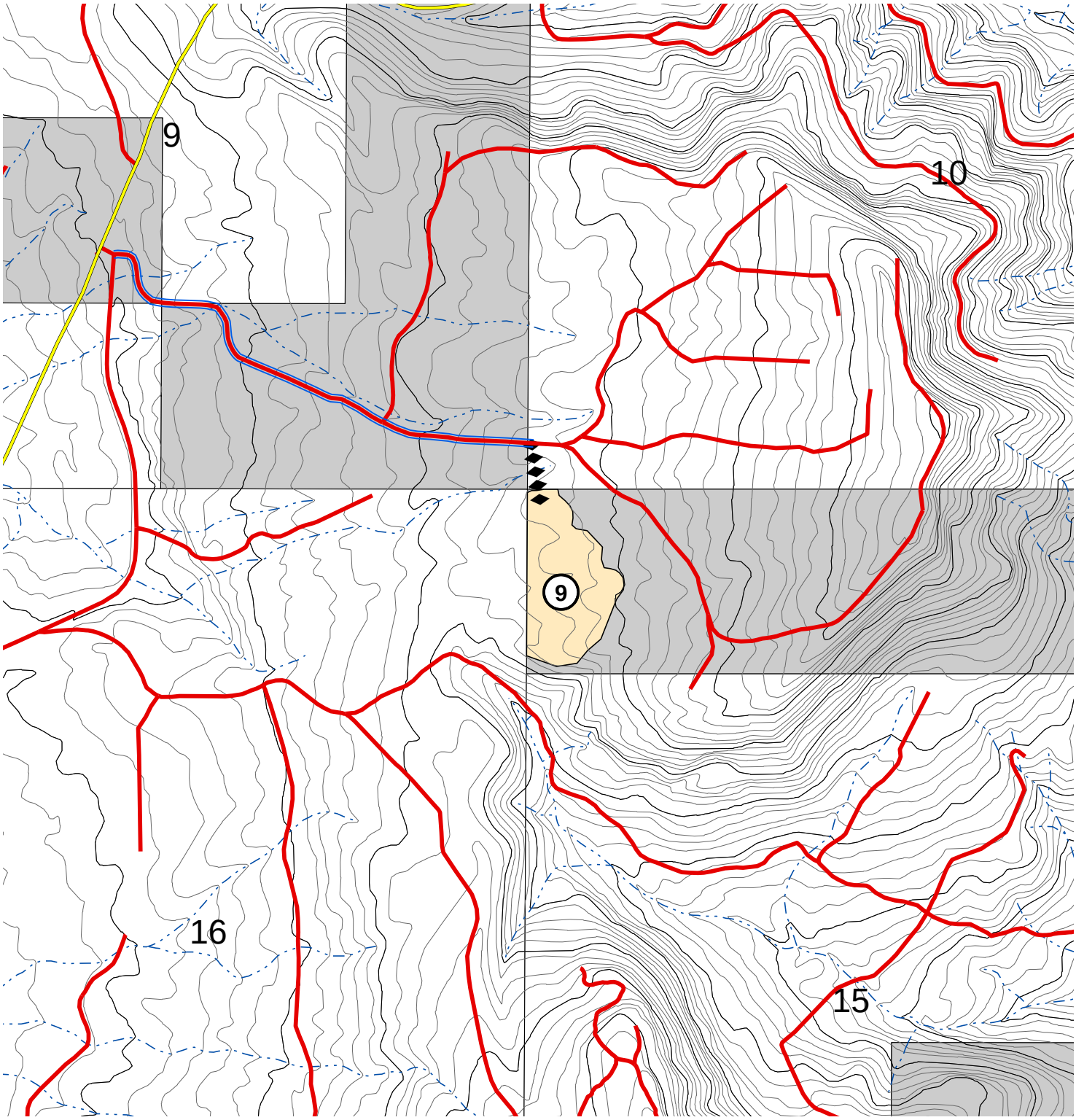
Haul/Access Route
Existing Road
Construct, Permanent Rock
Construct, Decommission
Stream
100' Contour
20' Contour

Thinning Area
No Harvest Stream Buffer
BLM (Coos Wagon Road) Land
Non-BLM Land

11-26-2007

SUICIDE SQUEEZE

Density Management



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- Haul/Access Route
- Existing Road
- Harvester-Forwarder Trail
- Stream
- 100' Contour
- 20' Contour
- Thinning Area
- BLM (Coos Wagon Road) Land
- Non-BLM Land

T28S, R8W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR

11-26-2007