South River Commercial Thinning 2003
Environmental Assessment
South River Field Office
EA # OR-105-03-01

Decision Documentation
Prepared: June 28, 2004

Decision:

It is my decision to offer the Tater Tot Commercial Thinning timber sale, partially implementing Alternative Three, described on pages 9-10 of the South River Commercial Thinning 2003 EA.

The sale is comprised of thirteen units, located in Sections 31 and 32 of T. 28 S., R. 2 W.; Sections 35 and 36 of T. 28 S., R. 3 W.; and Sections 5 and 6 of T. 29 S., R. 2 W., W.M. (see attached maps). Approximately 111 thinning acres are allocated as General Forest Management Area or Connectivity/Diversity Block within the Matrix. Density management will be applied on approximately 59 acres allocated to Riparian Reserves. Road construction within units will cut an additional two acres of right-of-way, all in upland areas. Areas where individual trees are marked for cutting in association with road renovation total approximately one acre.

Thinning in the Matrix allocations will yield approximately 1,501 MBF of timber chargeable toward the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Roseburg District. The volume of timber to be derived from density management in Riparian Reserves is approximately 779 MBF, which is not chargeable toward the ASQ. It is anticipated that there will be additional volume modified into the sale as a result of the need to cut tailhold, guyline, and corridor trees.

There will be ten spur roads, numbered 1 through 8, 10 and 11. Spur 9 was eliminated. Six of the spur roads, totaling approximately 1.7 miles, are either temporary construction, or renovation of old natural-surface truck roads. Construction/renovation, use and decommissioning of these roads will be conducted consistent with conditions and circumstances described on page 8 of the EA. Spur roads 3 and 6, totaling 605 feet, will be renovated and made permanent. Spurs 4 and 5 will be new permanent construction, totaling 340 feet.

To reduce the probability of introducing new infestations of noxious weeds into the project area, pressure washing or steam cleaning of all logging and road building equipment will be required prior to move-in. If, at any time during the life of the timber sale contract, equipment is removed from the sale area, it will be cleaned prior to being returned to the sale area.

Thinning units were evaluated for the presence of suitable habitat for the Crater Lake tightcoil snail *(Pristoloma articum crateris),* Oregon shoulderband snail *(Helminthoglypta hertleini)* and Chace sideband snail *(Monadenia chaceana).* No tightcoil or shoulderband snails were identified. A single sideband snail was located next to Unit F (#3). The unit boundary was modified to exclude and further protect the area.

Surveys were conducted for Special Status botanical species identified on pages 23 and 24 of the EA, in April and May of 2003. None of these species were located in the project area.

Rationale for the Decision:

Management direction in the Roseburg District *Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP 1995) specifies " . . . commercial thinning in the matrix where practical and where research indicates increased gains in timber production are likely." (p. 62) Density management in Riparian Reserves is necessary to ". . . help achieve controlled stocking, establishment of desired non-conifer vegetation, and the desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy." (pp. 153-154)

As described on page 2 of the EA, chargeable volume is needed to attain the District ASQ and the socio-economic objectives of the Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement.* It will also help to meet the requirement of the O&C Act to provide a sustained production of timber from suitable forested lands. Alternative One, the "No Action" alternative will not meet these needs.

Comments on the EA were received from three organizations, and considered in the preparation of this decision. No issues or concerns were identified which were not already considered and addressed in the EA, or which constituted new information that would change the conclusions of the analysis. Three of these comments are addressed below for the purpose of elaboration and clarification, however.

- The thinning project lies along part of the Forest Service's "Scenic/Historic Route." The EA did not mention this tour route.

The South Myrtle Access Road (BLM Road No. 28-3-35.0) has no BLM designation as a Scenic Byway, no special land use allocation, or any Visual resource Management restrictions. The route was designated by the Tiller Ranger District of the Umpqua National Forest and South Umpqua Valley Economic Development in cooperation with several communities. The BLM has not entered into any memorandum of understanding (MOU) with any of the cooperators regarding management of lands astride the route. One objective of the route, discussed in the brochure prepared by the cooperators and titled "Myrtle Creek Canyonville Scenic Historic Route" is to provide a view of past and present forest management.

- BLM's priority for thinning should be managed plantations, as opposed to natural stands. Over half the project stands are natural forest.

Regardless of land use allocation, the ROD/RMP (p. 149) makes no distinctions between native and reforested stands when consideration is given to commercial thinning or density management. The objective is to manage young, mid-seral stands ". . . to control stand density, maintain stand vigor, and place or maintain stand developmental paths so that the desired stand characteristics result in the future." For lands in the Matrix allocations, the objective is to manage for a moderately high to high level of sustainable timber production. In Riparian

Reserves the objective is to manage for diverse vegetative characteristics that include both conifer and nonconifer vegetation, as addressed above.

- 10% of the project removes spotted owl nesting habitat.

The EA (p. 17) describes ten percent of the aggregated area of all three of the proposed thinning sales as "habitat two." Habitat two is described in the EA (p. 16) as habitat that is primarily suitable for roosting and foraging, but which provides few opportunities for nesting. Subsequently, the stands comprising the thinning sale are not considered nesting habitat by the BLM or by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The BLM has made a determination of "No Effect" on the northern spotted owl for disturbance. None of the units or haul roads are in close proximity to an owl activity center and thinning operations would occur outside of nesting season, so the potential for disturbance is considered unlikely.

Thinning will only occur in stands that may provide foraging and dispersal habitat. No nesting habitat would be affected. Although thinning will modify habitat and alter its utility, this will be short term because canopy closure is expected to return to pre-thinning levels within ten to fifteen years. As a consequence, the BLM has made a determination of "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" for habitat modification. In the FY 2003-2008 Programmatic Biological Opinion (Log No. 1-15-03-F-160, pp. 2-3), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with these determinations.

Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout utilize South Myrtle Creek, adjacent to and downstream of Unit F (#3). Limits of Essential Fish Habitat are identical to coho distribution limits. The sole potential effect to coho salmon, steelhead trout and Essential Fish Habitat would be associated with sediment. Given the project design features to be implemented, the BLM has determined that the likelihood for increased sediment levels is less then negligible and that the project is a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" for coho salmon and steelhead trout. The project was determined to have no adverse affect on Essential Fish Habitat. In a letter dated November 5, 2003, NOAA/Fisheries concurred with this finding.

Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with provisions contained in Appendix I of the ROD/RMP (p. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199). Monitoring efforts would be targeted at the following resources: Riparian Reserves; Matrix; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the publication date of a notice of sale. Publication of such notice 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.

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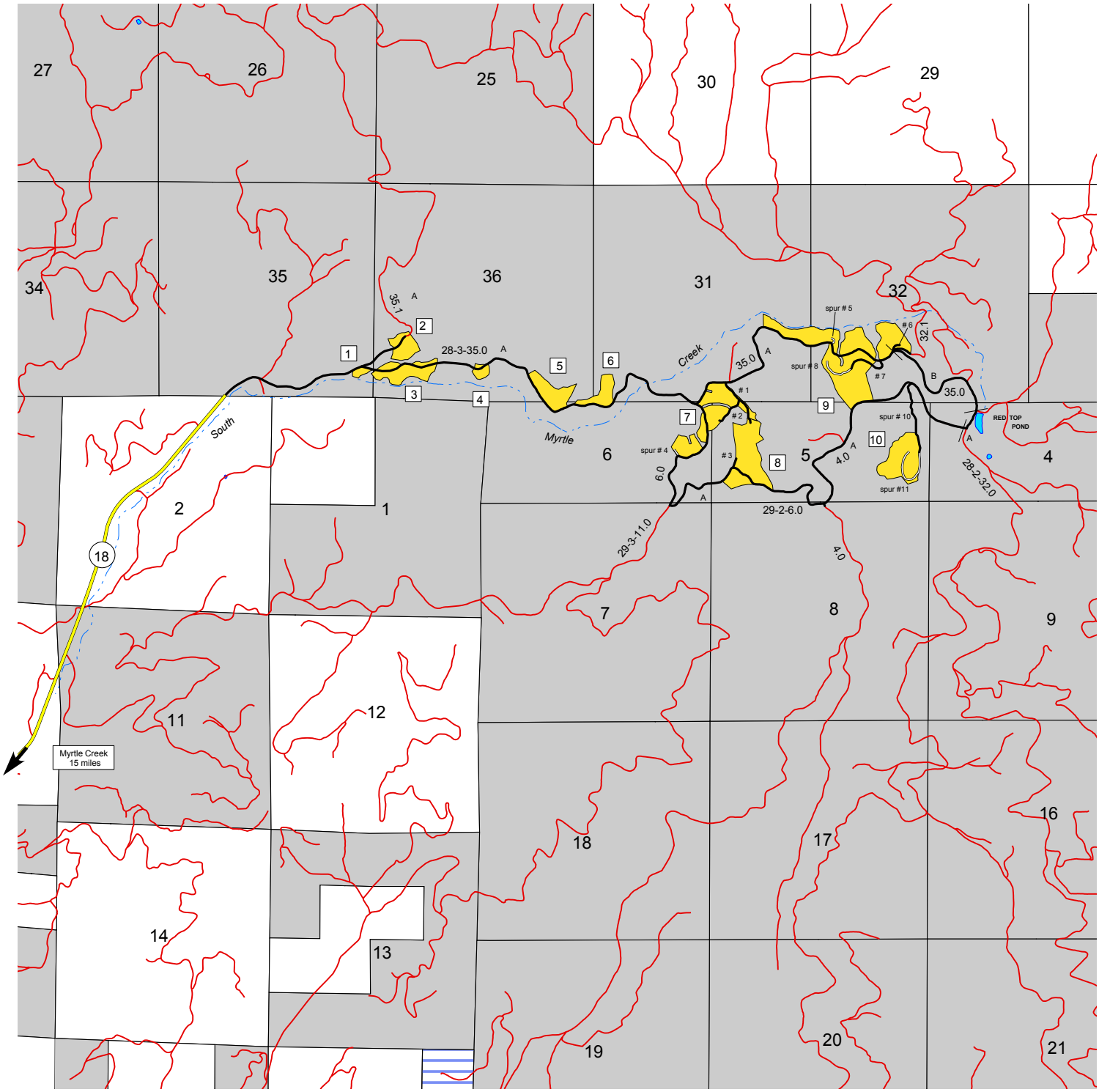
William Haigh Date
Field Manager
South River Field Office

TATER TOT

Commercial Thinning



N
W E
S

T28,29S R2,3W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

0 1 Miles

Paved Highway
Existing Road
A Haul Route (w/segments)
Road to be Constructed

Thinning Area
BLM (O&C) Land
BLM (PD) Land
Non-BLM Land

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were 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 notificatio

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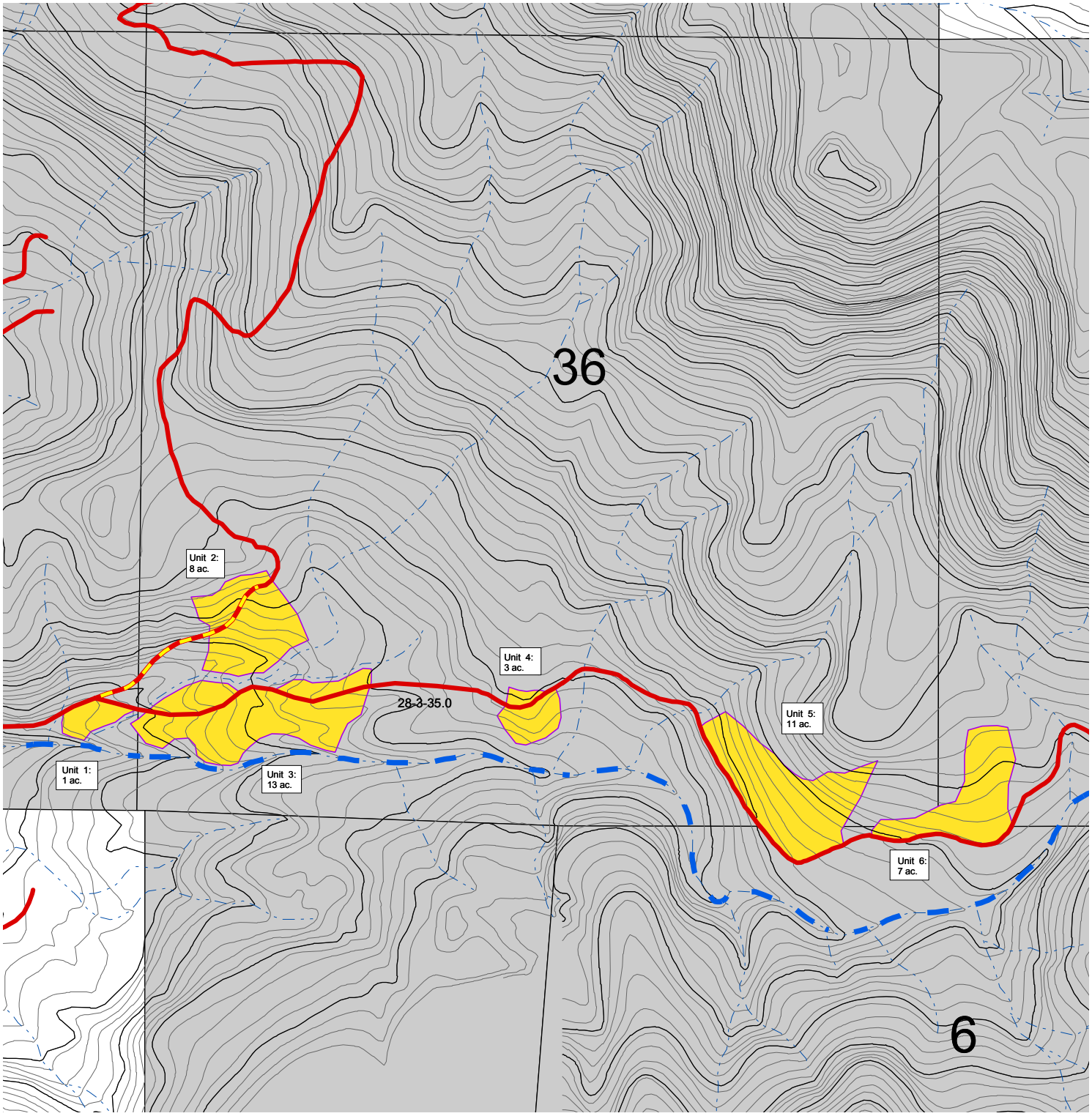
TATER TOT

Commercial Thinning



N
W E
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T28,29S R2W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

0 500 1,000
Feet

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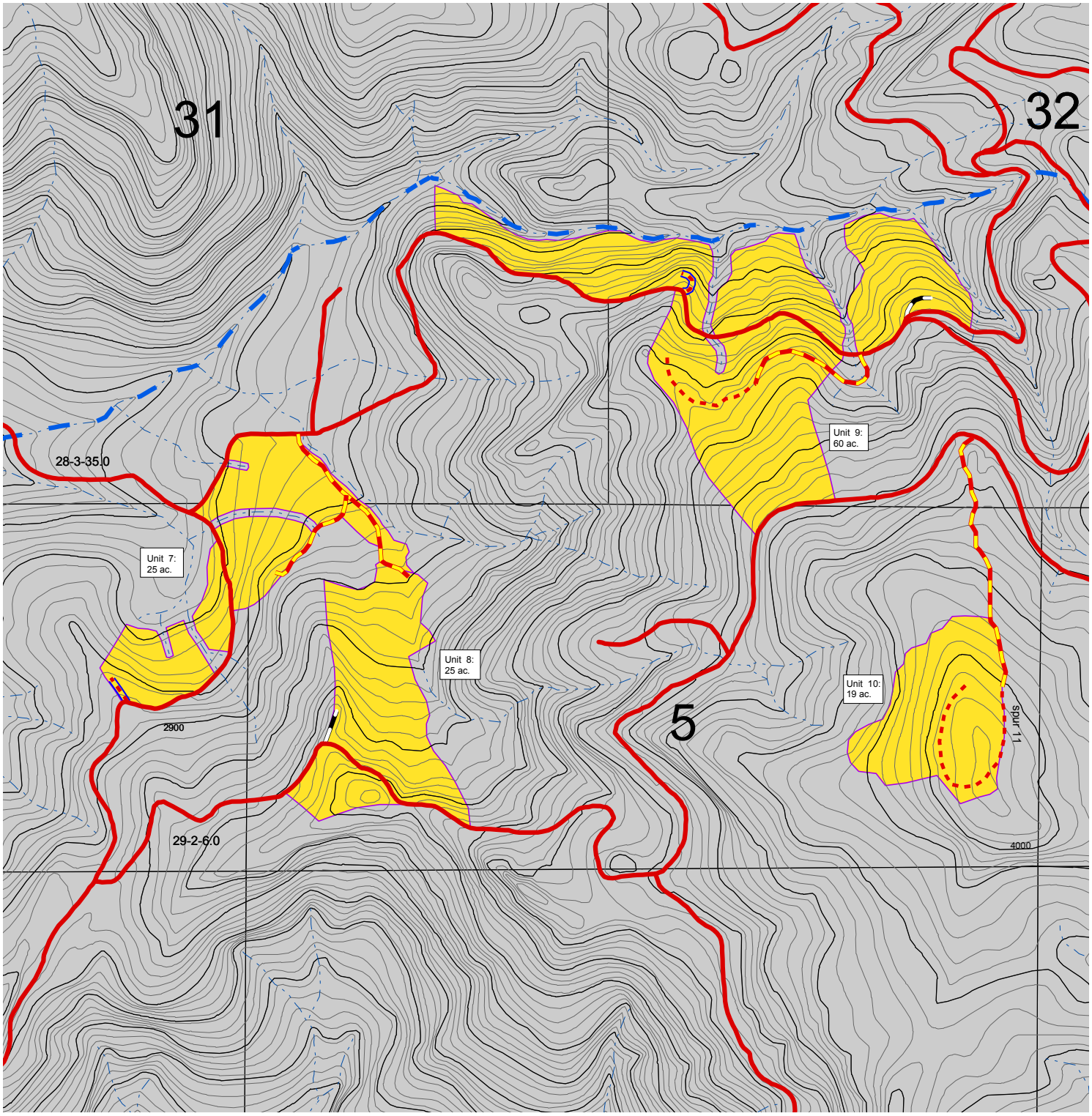
Existing Road
Construct, Decommision
Construct, Permanent Rock
Renovate, Permanent Rock
Renovate, Decommission
100' Contour
20' Contour
Stream
Fish Bearing Stream

Thinning Area
BLM (O&C) Land

6-17-2004

TATER TOT

Commercial Thinning



N
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T28,29S R2W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

0 500 1,000
Feet

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