

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Coeur d'Alene Field Office  
3815 Schreiber Way  
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815

## **DECISION RECORD**

Silver Fuels Hazardous Fuels Reduction  
NEPA Register No. DOI- BLM-ID-C010-2013-0003-CX

### **1. Background**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Coeur d'Alene Field Office is proposing hazardous fuel reduction activities on 127 acres of land managed by the agency, in the wildland urban interface (WUI), Shoshone County, Idaho. These lands have missed two or more fire return intervals and the key ecosystem components are at risk of a stand replacing fire. In addition, the juxtaposition of these lands are near communities, structures, values at risk, that pose a hazard to the public, infrastructure, and firefighters in the event of an intense wildland fire occurrence. In the summer of 2011, a wildland fire occurred within the vicinity and similar vegetation that threatened the community and proved to be a challenging assignment for wildland firefighters. This event illustrated the need for the proposed activities on lands managed by the BLM.

Hazardous fuel reduction activities will be accomplished by modifying the surface and ladder fuels, and piling of the biomass for future prescribed burning activities. The proposed action prescribes cutting suppressed and undesirable tree species up to 8 inches in diameter. In areas where trees greater than 8 inches in diameter do not exist, the best leave tree will be favored on a 20 foot spacing. Any live or dead tree greater than 8 inches in diameter will remain uncut; the dead trees greater than 8 inches in diameter could serve as snags for wildlife species. All brush species would be cut with stems greater than 0.25 inch diameter. All of the slash less than 7 inches in diameter would be piled. Any blowdown material would be piled according to specifications, however material greater than 8 inches in diameter would be cut in 6 foot lengths and will remain on the surface of the ground as large woody debris. Modification of the stand structure would decrease potential flame lengths and change potential fire type in the event of a wildland fire. The treatments are planned for the field season in the year 2013, or appropriately as funding allows. More detailed information (maps, photos, contract specifications) attached.

### **2. Decision**

It is my decision to implement the proposed project as described above and in the attached detailed information; hazardous fuels reduction activities on 127 acres of land managed by the BLM, Coeur d'Alene Field Office in the wildland urban interface in Shoshone County, Idaho. The hazardous fuel reduction activities will be accomplished

by modifying the surface and ladder fuels, piling of the biomass for future prescribed burning.

### **3. Authority**

This is a Fire Management decision in accordance with 43 CFR 5000.

### **4. Rationale**

This land decision is compliant with the National Fire Plan (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); and is in response to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Shoshone County. This is further reinforced by the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, along with accompanying 2001 review update. The activities proposed are small in size, short duration, and completed mechanically with hand tools, thus, as stated in the attached Categorical Exclusion Documentation, there is no potential for significant impacts.

### **6. Coordination and Consultation**

The Bureau of Land Management, Coeur d'Alene Field Office, coordinated with the Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai, Kalispell, and Salish Kootenai Tribes concerning the project. The coordination occurred in the month of December 2012 and has not identified concerns. This project was also planned in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service (Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District), Shoshone County Commissioners, Shoshone County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Working Group. Scoping for preparation of this CX included publishing information on the Idaho BLM NEPA website. On September 4, 2012 the scoping notice was published that described the proposed action, location, and purpose and need. Although no substantive issues were identified by individuals or organizations, the agencies issues were addressed through consideration in the analysis.

### **7. Protest and Appeal**

The decision to implement this forest management project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. As outlined in 43 CFR 5003 (a) and (b), protests of a forest management decision may be made within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. Publication of this decision record on the BLM internet ePlanning site will initiate this protest period. Therefore, a protest must be filed (in person, or by mail before close of business (4:15 p.m.) January 31, 2014, at:

Bureau of Land Management  
Coeur d'Alene Field Office  
ATTN: Silver Fuels Hazardous Fuels Reduction  
3815 Schreiber Way  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

Regulations do not authorize acceptance of the BLM of protests in any form other than a signed, paper document that is delivered to the physical address of the BLM office within the 15-day period. Therefore, e-mail, verbal, or facsimile protests will not be accepted

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_

Kurt Pavlat  
Field Manager

1/9/14 \_\_\_\_\_

Date

Attachment: Categorical Exclusion Documentation

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Coeur d'Alene Field Office  
3815 Schreiber Way Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Documentation**  
Silver Fuels Hazardous Fuels Reduction  
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**1. Description of the Proposed Action**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Coeur d'Alene Field Office is proposing hazardous fuel reduction activities on 127 acres of land managed by the agency, in the wildland urban interface (WUI), Shoshone County, Idaho. These lands have missed two or more fire return intervals and the key ecosystem components are at risk of a stand replacing fire. In addition, the juxtaposition of these lands are near communities, structures, values at risk, that pose a hazard to the public, infrastructure, and firefighters in the event of an intense wildland fire occurrence. In the summer of 2011, a wildland fire occurred within the vicinity and similar vegetation that threatened the community and proved to be a challenging assignment for wildland firefighters. This event illustrated the need for the proposed activities on lands managed by the BLM.

Hazardous fuel reduction activities will be accomplished by modifying the surface and ladder fuels, and piling of the biomass for future prescribed burning activities. The proposed action prescribes cutting suppressed and undesirable tree species up to 8 inches in diameter (i.e., precommercial thinning, small machine tools, chainsaws). In areas where trees greater than 8 inches in diameter do not exist, the best leave tree will be favored on a 20 foot spacing. Any live or dead tree greater than 8 inches in diameter will remain uncut; the dead trees greater than 8 inches in diameter could serve as snags for wildlife species. All brush species would be cut with stems greater than 0.25 inch diameter. All of the slash less than 7 inches in diameter would be piled. Any blowdown material would be piled according to specifications, however material greater than 8 inches in diameter would be cut in 6 foot lengths and will remain on the surface of the ground as large woody debris. Modification of the stand structure would decrease potential flame lengths and change potential fire type in the event of a wildland fire. The treatments are planned for the field season in the year 2013, or appropriately as funding allows. More detailed information (maps, photos, contract specifications) attached.

**2. Location**

Shoshone County, Idaho; Big Creek, Sunnyslope, Kellogg, Wallace  
Boise Meridian, T. 48N., R. 4 E, section 26  
Boise Meridian, T. 48N., R. 3 E, section 13, 15, 7

**3. Land Use Plan Conformance**

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), this proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved June 29, 2007. It is consistent with the following decisions from the RMP:

**Goal Wildland Fire Management (WF)-1** – Protect life and property while returning fire to its natural role in the ecosystem.

**Objective WF-1.1** – Provide an Appropriate Management Response to all wildland fires emphasizing firefighter and public safety while protecting resources and assets and minimizing suppression costs.

**Action WF-1.1.4** – Consider the following criteria in establishing fire management priorities:

- Firefighter and public safety is the first priority.
- Other priorities include:
  - Protect cultural and natural resources.
  - Protect areas with highly erodible soils.
  - Protect Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) consistent with the Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs).
  - Protect areas at risk of invasion by nonnative plant species.
  - Protect commercial forest resources and plantations.
  - Protect active grazing allotments and improvements.
  - Protect and/ or maintain municipal watersheds and special status species and habitats.
  - Protect developed recreation sites and structures on public lands.
  - Minimize the cost of fire protection.

**Objective WF-1.5** – Improve or protect valuable resources and improve Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) through the use of fuels treatment activities within the 8,200 acres where vegetation treatments will occur.

**Action WF-1.5.2** – A treatment plan for identified areas will be developed. Treatments to areas identified for improvement and/or protection will emphasize the resource at greatest risk (e.g., WUI, timber, recreation, mining, watershed, vegetation, and wildlife habitat), when site conditions are suitable.

**Action WF-1.5.3** – Fuels treatments (prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, or biological) will be conducted on identified areas.

**Action WF-1.5.4** – Coordinate fuels treatment activities with adjacent land owners and other management agencies.

**Objective WF-1.6** – Reduce impact from wildland fire to WUI areas, municipal watersheds, and infrastructure.

**Action WF-1.6.1** – Identify areas where fuels treatments will reduce hazards and emphasize the use of small diameter trees.

**Action WF-1.6.5** – Coordinate fuels treatment activities with adjacent land owners and other management agencies.

**Action WF-1.6.6** – Collaborate with local partners to assess WUI areas and update existing community wildland fire protection plans.

**Goal Forest and Woodland Vegetation (VF)-1** – Restore forest vegetation towards historic species composition, structure, and function across the landscape.

**Objective VF-1.2** – Restore forest stands to historic species composition, structure, and function by conducting vegetative treatments on approximately 8,200 acres.

**Action VF-1.2.6** – Restore forest structure and function by reducing tree density and brush/shrub competition using appropriate silvicultural treatments including, but not limited to, intermediate treatments, release treatments, use of pesticides, and prescribed burning. Aerial spraying to control brush/shrub competition will not occur. Prioritize these treatments within FRCC 2 and FRCC 3 areas.

#### **4. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under NEPA in accordance with 516 DM 11.9.C(4): Precommercial thinning and brush control using small mechanical devices. Application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances 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, Appendix C, exist.

/s/  
Kurt Pavlat  
Field Manager

1/9/14  
Date

Attachment: Maps, Photos, and Specifications

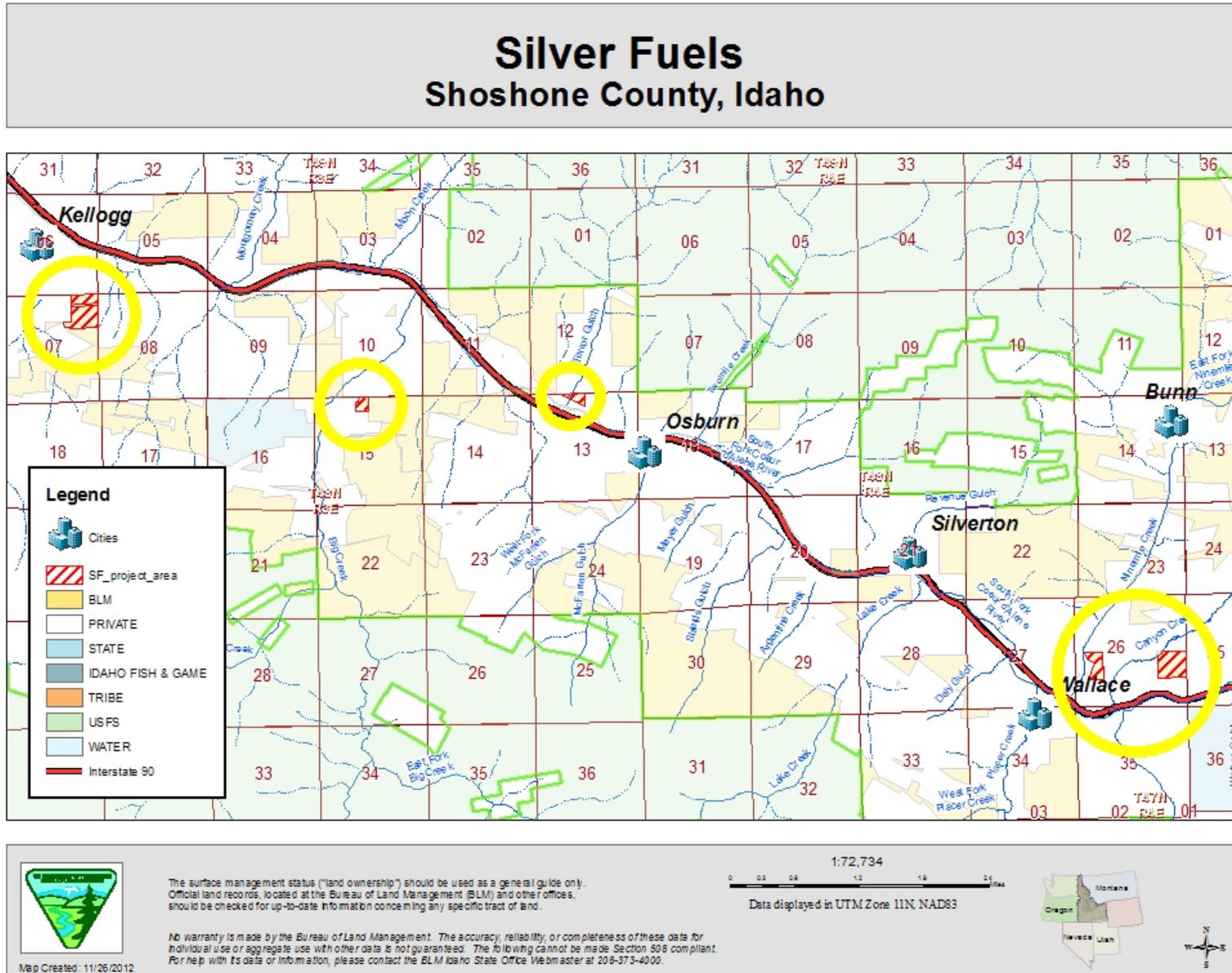
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**Picture of the aftermath of the Silver Mountain fire of 2011. This is one drainage immediately west of the BLM managed lands referenced in the purpose and need and proposed action.**

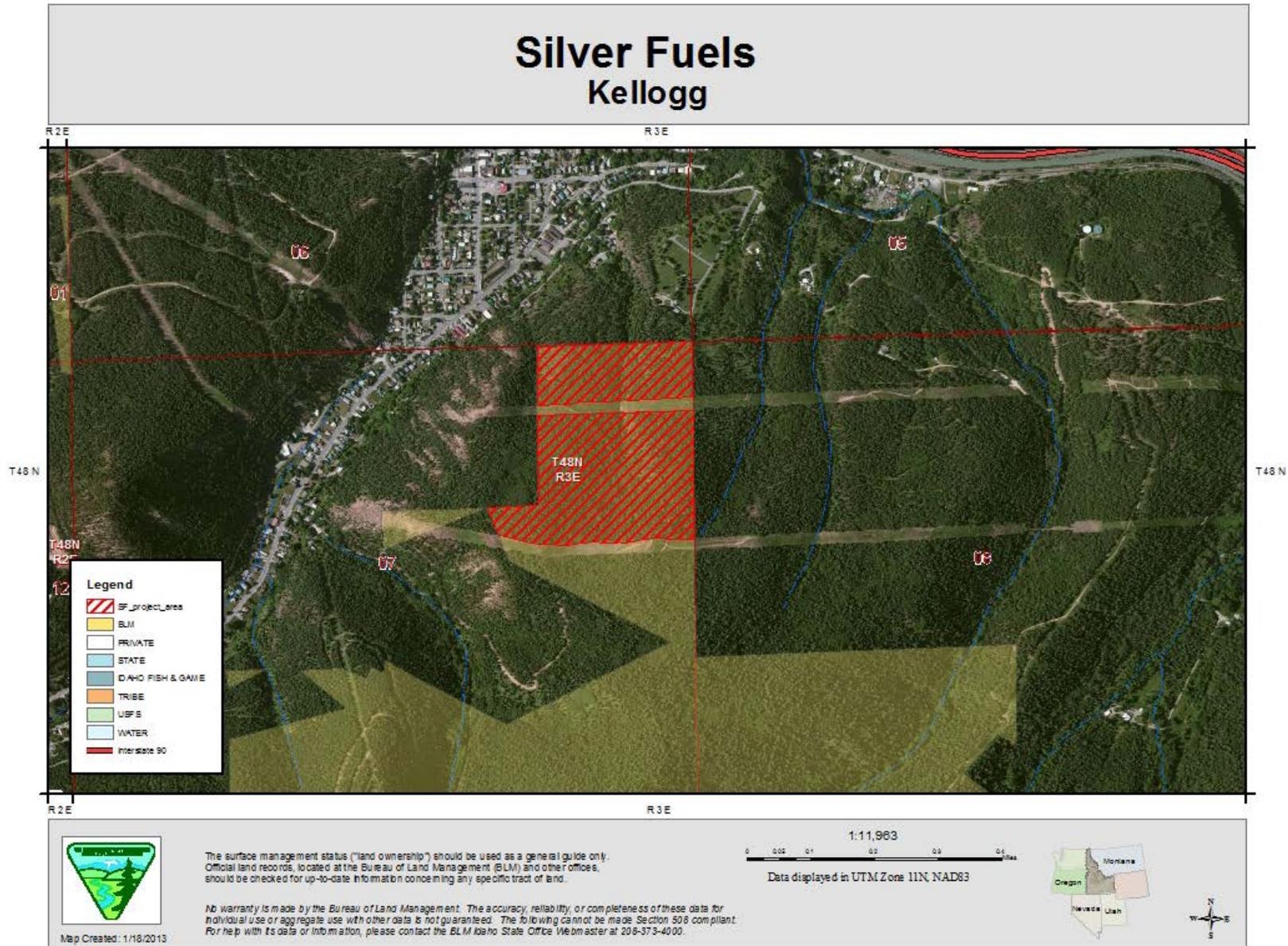
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**Map 1:**



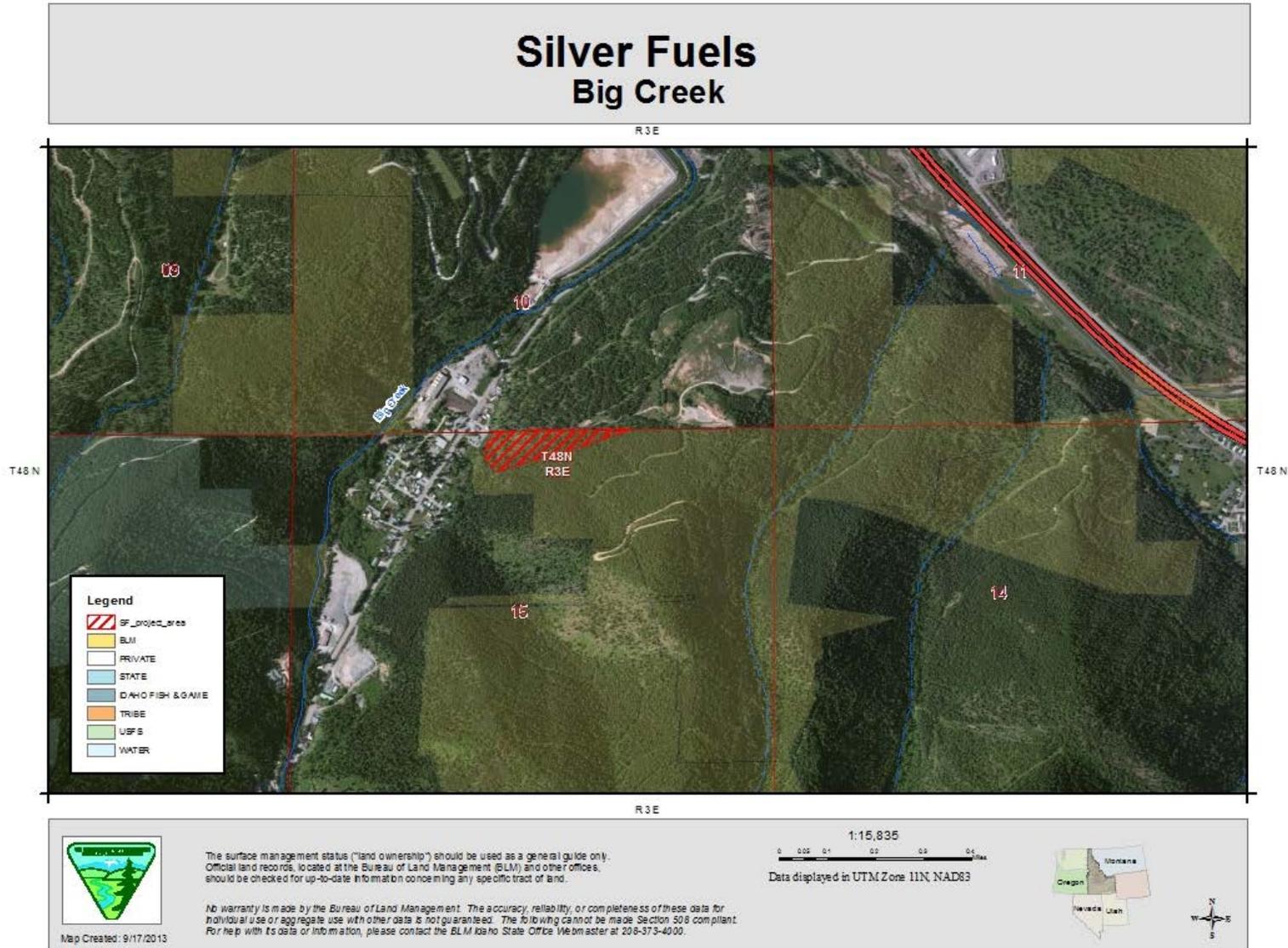
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**Map 2:**



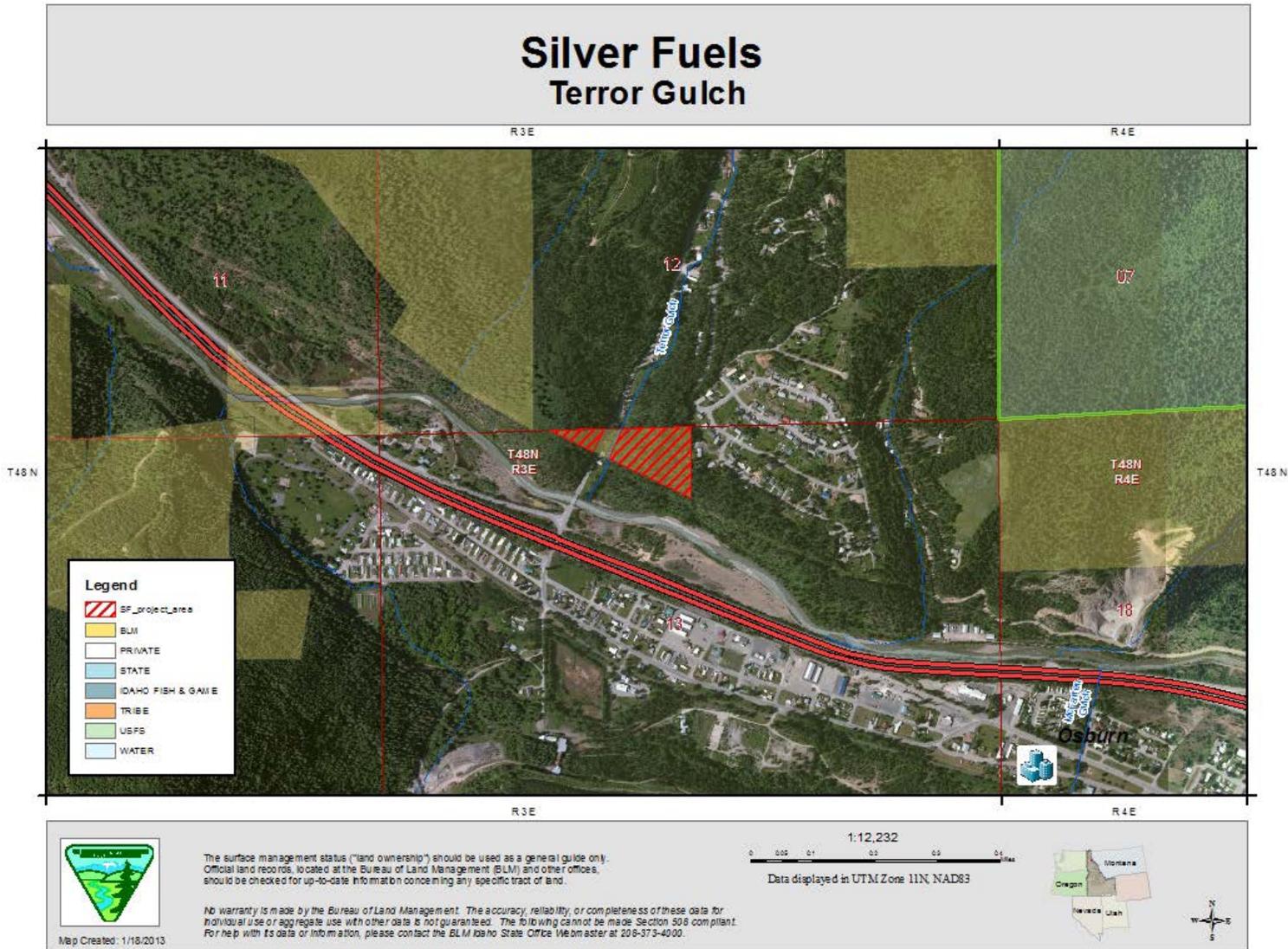
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**Map 3:**



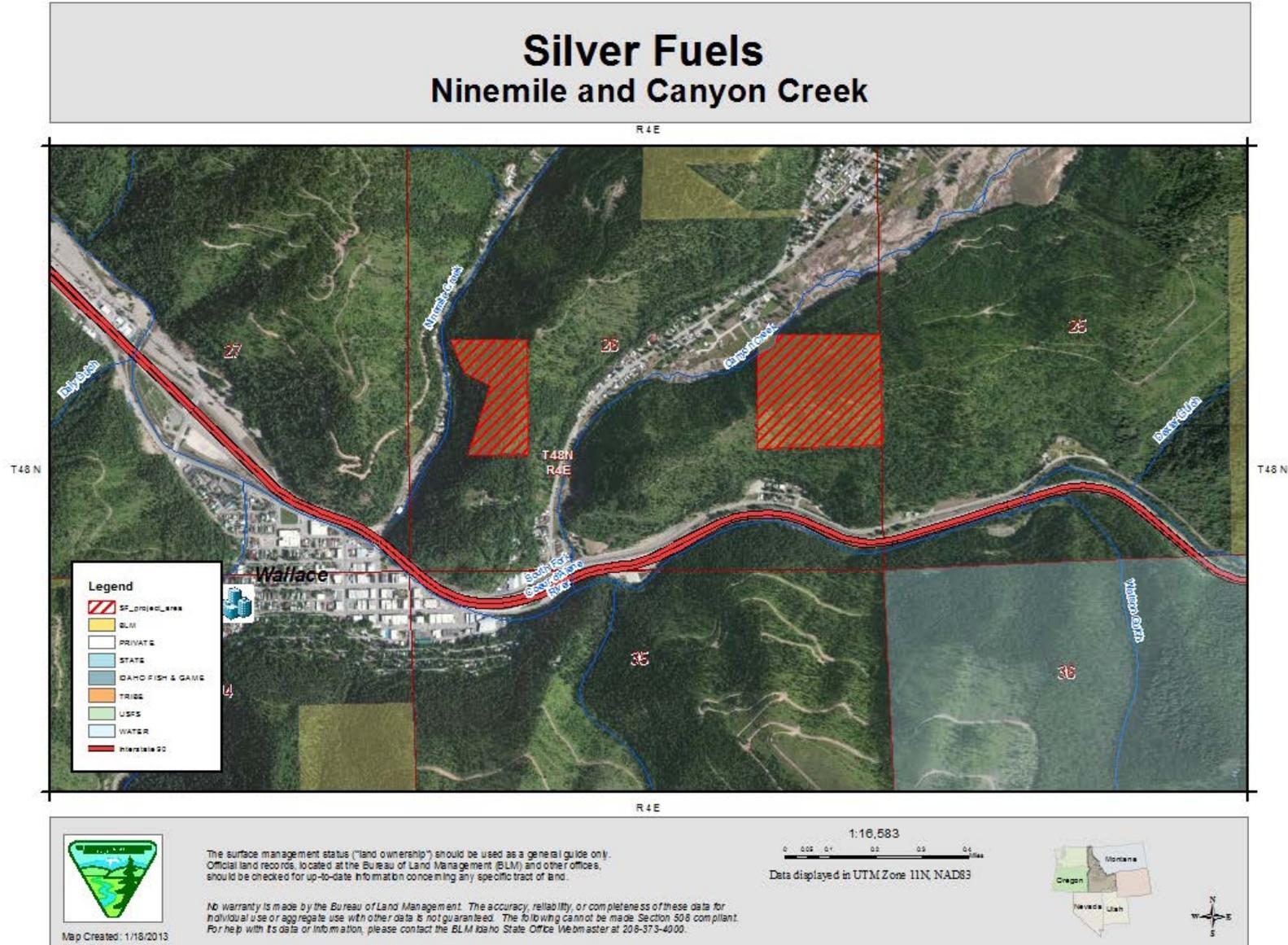
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**Map 4:**

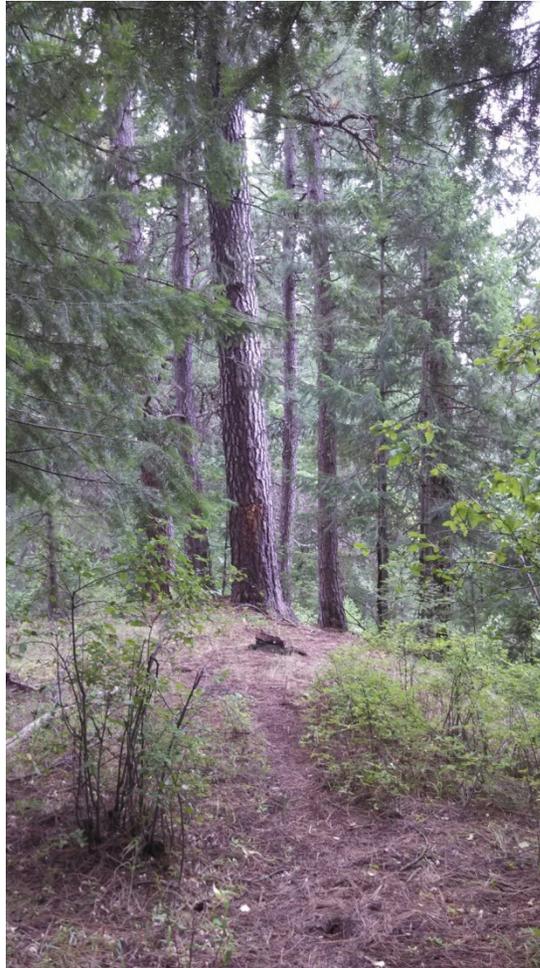


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**Map 5:**



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**Picture of ponderosa pine that survived the 1910 fire located on the ridgeline of the Ninemile parcel.**

## **Attachment 1 Categorical Exclusion Documentation**

Silver Fuels Hazardous Fuels Reduction

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1. **Scope of Work:** The scope of work is for approximately 126 acres of slashing, handpiling, and cover activities in Kellogg Unit (48 ac), Big Creek (9 ac), Terror Gulch Unit (8 ac), Ninemile Unit (19 ac), and Canyon Creek (48 ac) of Silver Fuels hazardous fuels reduction project.

**The specifications for the unit are the following:**

### **Kellogg Unit (48 acres total):**

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**Line Item #0007AF- Level VI Slashing, Hand piling and Cover (crown closure of material to be hand severed and piled and covered is estimated to be from 31 to 60 percent total cover. Slope is greater than 45%.)**

Cut all understory vegetation (alive or dead) up to 8" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH); stumps and stobs created from severing will be less than 6 inches in height. In areas where trees greater than 8" DBH do not exist, favor the best leave tree using 20 X 20 foot spacing. Favor western white pine, ponderosa pine, western larch (if present), then Douglas-fir tree species respectively.

Cut all dead aspen less than 6' DBF on the northern portion of the unit, from the powerline to the northern boundary. Leave all aspen species (alive or dead) on the southern portion of the unit, from the powerline to the southern boundary.

There is a riparian buffer of 100 feet on either side of the stream channel; continue the slash and pile treatment as described above, except leave all aspen (alive or dead) and all brush species within the buffer.

Pile all slash between 0.25 and 7 inches in diameter. Slash less than 0.25 inch in diameter or greater than 7 inches in diameter shall be left on the ground to decompose. Slash and pile any blown-down material less than 8' DBH. Any blown-down material greater than 8' DBH can be bucked into 6' lengths in order to orient the material on the surface of the ground. Ensure that no vegetation (limbs or bole) persists above 1.5' in height.

Orient the piles in an area free of trees that are to remain on site. Build the piles in a conical shape without significant gaps in the center, composed of a compliment of fine fuel to initiate the burning of the pile when operations are planned. Avoid stacking slash in horizontal rows that simulate a firewood stack, they do not burn. Piles built as specified above will be a minimum of 3.5 feet in height and a maximum of 8 foot in diameter. Material to cover the piles shall be provided by the contractor. Cover material shall be thick craft paper or 4-mil polyethylene plastic such that at least 50% of the pile's surface area shall be covered. Favor the downhill side of the pile for covering.

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### **Big Creek Unit (9 acres total):**

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**Line Item #0007AF- Level VI Slashing, Hand piling and Cover (crown closure of material to be hand severed and piled and covered is estimated to be from 31 to 60 percent total cover. Slope is greater than 45%.)**

Cut all understory vegetation (alive or dead) up to 7" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH); stumps and stobs created from severing will be less than 6 inches in height. In areas where trees greater than 7" DBH do not exist, favor the best leave tree using 20 X 20 foot spacing. Favor ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, and then Douglas-fir tree species respectively.

Leave all aspen, birch, and cottonwood species regardless of size class.

Pile all slash between 0.25 and 7 inches in diameter. Slash less than 0.25 inch in diameter or greater than 7 inches in diameter shall be left on the ground to decompose. Slash and pile any blown-down material less than 7' DBH. Any blown-down material greater than 7' DBH can be bucked into 6' lengths in order to orient the material on the surface of the ground. Ensure that no vegetation (limbs or bole) persists above 1.5' in height.

Orient the piles in an area free of trees that are to remain on site. Build the piles in a conical shape without significant gaps in the center, composed of a compliment of fine fuel to initiate the burning of the pile when operations are planned. Avoid stacking slash in horizontal rows that simulate a firewood stack, they do not burn. Piles built as specified above will be a minimum of 3.5 feet in height and a maximum of 8 foot in diameter. Material to cover the piles shall be provided by the contractor. Cover material shall be thick craft paper or 4-mil polyethylene plastic such that at least 50% of the pile's surface area shall be covered. Favor the downhill side of the pile for covering.

### **Terror Gulch Unit (8 acres total):**

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**Line Item #0007AF- Level VI Slashing, Hand piling and Cover (crown closure of material to be hand severed and piled and covered is estimated to be from 31 to 60 percent total cover. Slope is greater than 45%.)**

Cut all understory vegetation (alive or dead) up to 8" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH); stumps and stobs created from severing will be less than 6 inches in height. In areas where trees greater than 8" DBH do not exist, favor the best leave tree using 20 X 20 foot spacing. Favor ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, and then Douglas-fir tree species respectively.

Leave all aspen, birch, and cottonwood species regardless of size class.

Pile all slash between 0.25 and 8 inches in diameter. Slash less than 0.25 inch in diameter or greater than 8 inches in diameter shall be left on the ground to decompose. Slash and pile any blown-down material less than 8' DBH. Any blown-down material greater than 8' DBH can be bucked into 6' lengths in order to orient the material on the surface of the ground. Ensure that no vegetation (limbs or bole) persists above 1.5' in height.

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Orient the piles in an area free of trees that are to remain on site. Build the piles in a conical shape without significant gaps in the center, composed of a compliment of fine fuel to initiate the burning of the pile when operations are planned. Avoid stacking slash in horizontal rows that simulate a firewood stack, they do not burn. Piles built as specified above will be a minimum of 3.5 feet in height and a maximum of 8 foot in diameter. Material to cover the piles shall be provided by the contractor. Cover material shall be thick craft paper or 4-mil polyethylene plastic such that at least 50% of the pile's surface area shall be covered. Favor the downhill side of the pile for covering.

There is a 50' buffer around a Constance bittercrest plant species flagged as no treatment.

### **Ninemile Unit (19 acres total):**

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**Line Item #0007AF- Level VI Slashing, Hand piling and Cover (crown closure of material to be hand severed and piled and covered is estimated to be from 31 to 60 percent total cover. Slope is greater than 45%.)**

Cut all understory vegetation (alive or dead) up to 8" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH); stumps and stobs created from severing will be less than 6 inches in height. In areas where trees greater than 8" DBH do not exist, favor the best leave tree using 20 X 20 foot spacing. Favor ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, and then Douglas fir tree species respectively.

Leave all aspen, birch, and cottonwood species regardless of size class.

Pile all slash between 0.25 and 8 inches in diameter. Slash less than 0.25 inch in diameter or greater than 8 inches in diameter shall be left on the ground to decompose. Slash and pile any blown-down material less than 8' DBH. Any blown-down material greater than 8' DBH can be bucked into 6' lengths in order to orient the material on the surface of the ground. Ensure that no vegetation (limbs or bole) persists above 1.5' in height.

Orient the piles in an area free of trees that are to remain on site. Build the piles in a conical shape without significant gaps in the center, composed of a compliment of fine fuel to initiate the burning of the pile when operations are planned. Avoid stacking slash in horizontal rows that simulate a firewood stack, they do not burn. Piles built as specified above will be a minimum of 3.5 feet in height and a maximum of 8 foot in diameter. Material to cover the piles shall be provided by the contractor. Cover material shall be thick craft paper or 4-mil polyethylene plastic such that at least 50% of the pile's surface area shall be covered. Favor the downhill side of the pile for covering.

There are a few individual large Rocky mountain maple trees that are flagged to retain. Do not cut the flagged maple.

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### Canyon Creek Unit (42 acres total):

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**Line Item #0007AF- Level VI Slashing, Hand piling and Cover (crown closure of material to be hand severed and piled and covered is estimated to be from 31 to 60 percent total cover. Slope is greater than 45%.)**

Cut all understory vegetation (alive or dead) up to 8" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH); stumps and stobs created from severing will be less than 6 inches in height. In areas where trees greater than 8" DBH do not exist, favor the best leave tree using 20 X 20 foot spacing. Favor ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, and then Douglas fir tree species respectively.

Leave all aspen, birch, and cottonwood species regardless of size class.

Pile all slash between 0.25 and 8 inches in diameter. Slash less than 0.25 inch in diameter or greater than 8 inches in diameter shall be left on the ground to decompose. Slash and pile any blown-down material less than 8' DBH. Any blown-down material greater than 8' DBH can be bucked into 6' lengths in order to orient the material on the surface of the ground. Ensure that no vegetation (limbs or bole) persists above 1.5' in height.

Orient the piles in an area free of trees that are to remain on site. Build the piles in a conical shape without significant gaps in the center, composed of a compliment of fine fuel to initiate the burning of the pile when operations are planned. Avoid stacking slash in horizontal rows that simulate a firewood stack, they do not burn. Piles built as specified above will be a minimum of 3.5 feet in height and a maximum of 8 foot in diameter. Material to cover the piles shall be provided by the contractor. Cover material shall be thick craft paper or 4-mil polyethylene plastic such that at least 50% of the pile's surface area shall be covered. Favor the downhill side of the pile for covering.