



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Coos Bay District Office

1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, OR 97459

Web Address: <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/coosbay>

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751-4303



IN REPLY REFER TO

5400/1792 (ORC030)

ORC00-TS-2016.0002

Steele 15 CT Timber Sale

DOI-BLM-OR-C030-2010-0001-EA

Fairview NWFP Project Environmental Assessment

**November 17, 2015**

Dear Concerned Citizen:

We have prepared the Decision Rationale for the Steele 15 CT Timber Sale (ORC00-TS-2016.0002). The units in this sale were analyzed as part of the Fairview NWFP Project Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-OR-C030-2010-0001-EA).

We have posted the Decision Rationale to the BLM NEPA Register website: <http://1.usa.gov/1Op3G9R>

Please note that the BLM began posting all NEPA-related documents to the BLM NEPA Register website on October 1, 2015; documents published prior to October 1, 2015 remain posted on the Coos Bay District website.

In accordance with Forest Management Regulations under 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for this timber sale will not become effective until the Notice of Sale is published in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by decision are located. For this project, the Notice of Sale will be published in The World newspaper on November 19, 2015.

Please direct requests for copies, questions, or comments to Coos Bay District BLM, 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, OR 97459-2000; call (541) 756-0100; FAX (541) 751-4303, or email to [BLM\\_OR\\_CB\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_CB_Mail@blm.gov), ATTN: John Goering

Sincerely,

*/s/ Todd D. Buchholz*

Todd D. Buchholz

Umpqua Field Manager



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Steele 15 CT Timber Sale

DOI-BLM-OR-C030-2010-0001-EA

Fairview NWFP Project Environmental Assessment

### **DECISION RATIONALE**

**Steele 15 CT Timber Sale**

**(ORC00-TS-2016.0002)**

**Fairview NWFP Project EA**

#### **Background:**

The Umpqua Field Office, Coos Bay District Bureau of Land Management, using input from District resource staff and public input, prepared the *Fairview NWFP Project Environmental Assessment (EA)*. This EA, which is incorporated by reference, concluded with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) dated October 17, 2011. The Proposed Action Alternative proposes to thin approximately 6,370 acres of conifer, and convert approximately 974 acres of red alder to conifer, in 40-75 year old stands primarily within the North Fork Coquille River Fifth Field Watershed. The edges of the project area overlap into Daniels Creek, Beaver Slough, Cunningham Creek, Isthmus Slough, and Catching Slough sub-watersheds which are all within Coos County.

The *Steele 15 CT Timber Sale* is composed of a portion of EA Unit #1, and EA Unit #4, as outlined in the table below. The unit was analyzed as part of the EA and is located in T. 27 S., R. 12 W., Section 15, Willamette Meridian.

#### **Proposed Action:**

The *Steele 15 CT Timber Sale* would implement treatment on 389 acres. This treatment area consists of 279 acres of commercial thinning within the General Forest Management Area (GFMA), and 110 acres of density management thinning within the Riparian Reserve (RR) land use allocation. This acreage has been reduced by 24 acres from an EA estimate of 413 acres. This reduction is due to removing areas that are not well suited for harvest at this time and for no-thin buffers on intermittent and perennial streams.

Approximately 7.0 MMBF of timber is scheduled for removal.

The sale will require construction of 2.05 miles of new road; an increase from the 1.55 miles of road construction identified in the EA for this unit. This minor change in construction distance is needed to improve road placement, and reduce the potential for channeling of runoff and sedimentation; thereby reducing road renovation effects and length as identified in the EA. No road construction will occur within the Riparian Reserve land use allocation. Road construction surfaces will be closed, as described below for decommissioning, after this timber sale.

The following tables (Table 1 and Table 2) show the relationship between EA estimates and field verified acres of forest treatment and miles of road construction/decommissioning for the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale:

**Table 1:** Comparison of timber sale unit acres to EA unit projections.

<b>Steele 15 CT Unit Number</b>	<b>EA Unit Number</b>	<b>Estimated Acres</b>	<b>Actual Acres*</b>
1	1	338	321
2	1	51	47
3	4	24	21

\*includes right-of-way acreage

**Table 2:** Comparison of the timber sale to EA action area projections for treatment and road work.

	<b>Treatment Acres</b>	<b>New Road Construction (miles)</b>	<b>Road Renovation or Improvement (miles)</b>	<b>Road Decommissioning (miles)</b>
<b>EA Estimate</b>	413	1.55	2.79	3.14
<b>Steele 15 CT</b>	389	2.05	1.91	3.37

The EA included a complete list of Project Design Features (pp. 17-27) designed to avoid or minimize impacts on resources as part of the Proposed Action. These and additional features are incorporated as site specific measures in the special provisions of the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale contract. The following is a brief summary of some of these Design Features.

#### Harvest Systems

- The sale area will be harvested with skyline cable and ground-based systems.
- Seasonal timing restrictions would be implemented to minimize soil compaction and damage to residual trees.

#### Road Decommissioning

- Road decommissioning consists of 3.37 miles of closure, and water-barring of rock surfaces. Natural surfaces will be seeded, fertilized, and mulched to stabilize the soil.

#### Prescription

- The *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale is marked using leave tree prescriptions for the Douglas-fir. Unit #1 and #2 is marked to an average of 150 basal area leave, and Unit #3 is marked to 130 basal area leave.

#### **Compliance and Conformance:**

This project was developed under the direction of the *1995 Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (1995 ROD/RMP). The analysis supporting this decision tiers to the *Final Coos Bay District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (USDI 1994). This 1995 Record of Decision is also supported by, and consistent with, the 1994 *Final Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Late-successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* and its associated Record of Decision (USDA/USDI 1994).

The *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale is consistent with court orders relating to the Survey and Manage mitigation measure of the Northwest Forest Plan, as incorporated into the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan.

In 2006, the District Court for the Western District of Washington (Judge Pechman) invalidated the agencies' 2004 RODs eliminating Survey and Manage due to National Environmental Policy Act (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;
- 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 projects 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."

I have reviewed the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale in consideration of the October 11, 2006 order. Because the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale 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 therefore may still proceed to be offered for sale.

Proposed activities that may affect listed wildlife species within the project area were submitted for consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in accordance with Section 7(A)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 [16 U.S.C. 1536(A)(2) and (A)(4) as amended]. A Letter of Concurrence (FWS Ref. # 13420-2010-I-10) was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on June 21, 2010 in which they stated that the proposed actions "may effect, but are not likely to adversely affect" the northern spotted owl or the marbled murrelet.

Based on analysis by the Umpqua Field Office fisheries biologist, it has been concluded that the proposed activities in the *Fairview NWFP Project* EA project area will have "no effect" on threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon and coho critical habitat. Additionally, project activities would not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). Therefore, consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is not warranted (EA p. 73).

Analysis also concluded that implementation of the Proposed Action will not increase the likelihood or the need to list any Special Status Species as identified in BLM Manual 6840 and BLM OR/WA 6840 policy. Botanical Special Status Species surveys have been completed on all units for which surveys are practical or those species included in the 2008 State Director's Special Status Species List. These surveys identified a small site with botanical Special Status Species in the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale area and the sites was excluded from the treatment area accordingly.

The project area is covered by watershed analyses (EA p. 3) which addressed Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) Objectives, and relevant findings were incorporated into the Proposed Action. Based on analysis by the Umpqua Field Office hydrologist, it has been concluded that the proposed activities in the *Fairview NWFP Project* EA project area will promote attainment of ACS Objectives (EA pp. 56-66).

The *Fairview NWFP Project* EA is in compliance with the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Clean Air Act. The project area does not contain any Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, designated Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers, or prime and unique farmlands. There were no concerns identified regarding Cultural Resource Values, Native American Religious Concerns, or Environmental Justice issues (EA pp. 110-111).

The *Fairview NWFP Project* EA (DOI-BLM-OR-C030-2010-0001-EA) resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), thus development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

#### **Public Involvement:**

The *Fairview NWFP Project* EA and Finding of No Significant Impact were made available for public comment on June 30, 2011. The comment period closed on July 31, 2011.

In response to public comments, additional language to clarify project planning considerations, the need for roads, the effects of treatment within the Riparian Reserves, Large Woody Debris effects, and explanation on how the project is consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives was added to the EA. These additions did not change the proposed action or effects. The updated environmental document was made available to the public on October 17, 2011. Accordingly, the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact fully cover the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

#### **Rationale for the Decision:**

Using the Decision Factors described in the *Fairview NWFP Project* EA (EA pp. 7), I am choosing to implement the Proposed Action Alternative as it applies to the *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale for the following reasons:

- It is consistent with the Proposed Action and best meets the purpose and need described in the *Fairview NWFP Project* EA. The No Action alternative fails to address the purpose and need for action and does not meet the management objectives.
- The project is consistent with the *1995 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* for the Coos Bay District of the Bureau of Land Management. The *Steele 15 CT* Timber Sale meets the objectives and management directions for the land use allocations.
- It complies with other major applicable laws, regulations, and Bureau policies.

#### **Administrative Remedies:**

In accordance with *Forest Management Regulations* in 43 CFR 5003.2, the Decision Record for this timber sale will not become effective or be subject to formal protest until the *Notice of Sale* is published

"... in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located." For this project, the *Notice of Sale* will be published in *The World* newspaper on November 19, 2015.

43 CFR § 5003.3 subsection (b) states: "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and would 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 Coos Bay 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, at the conclusion of the review, serve the protest decision in writing to the protesting party (ies). 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 pm) within 15 days after publication of the decision notice, 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 Coos Bay District Office will issue a protest decision.

For further information contact the Coos Bay District Office at 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, OR 97459; by phone at (541) 756-0100; or by email at [BLM\\_OR\\_CB\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_CB_Mail@blm.gov), Attn: John Goering.

**Decision Approved by:**

*/s/ Todd D. Buchholz*

*November 17, 2015*

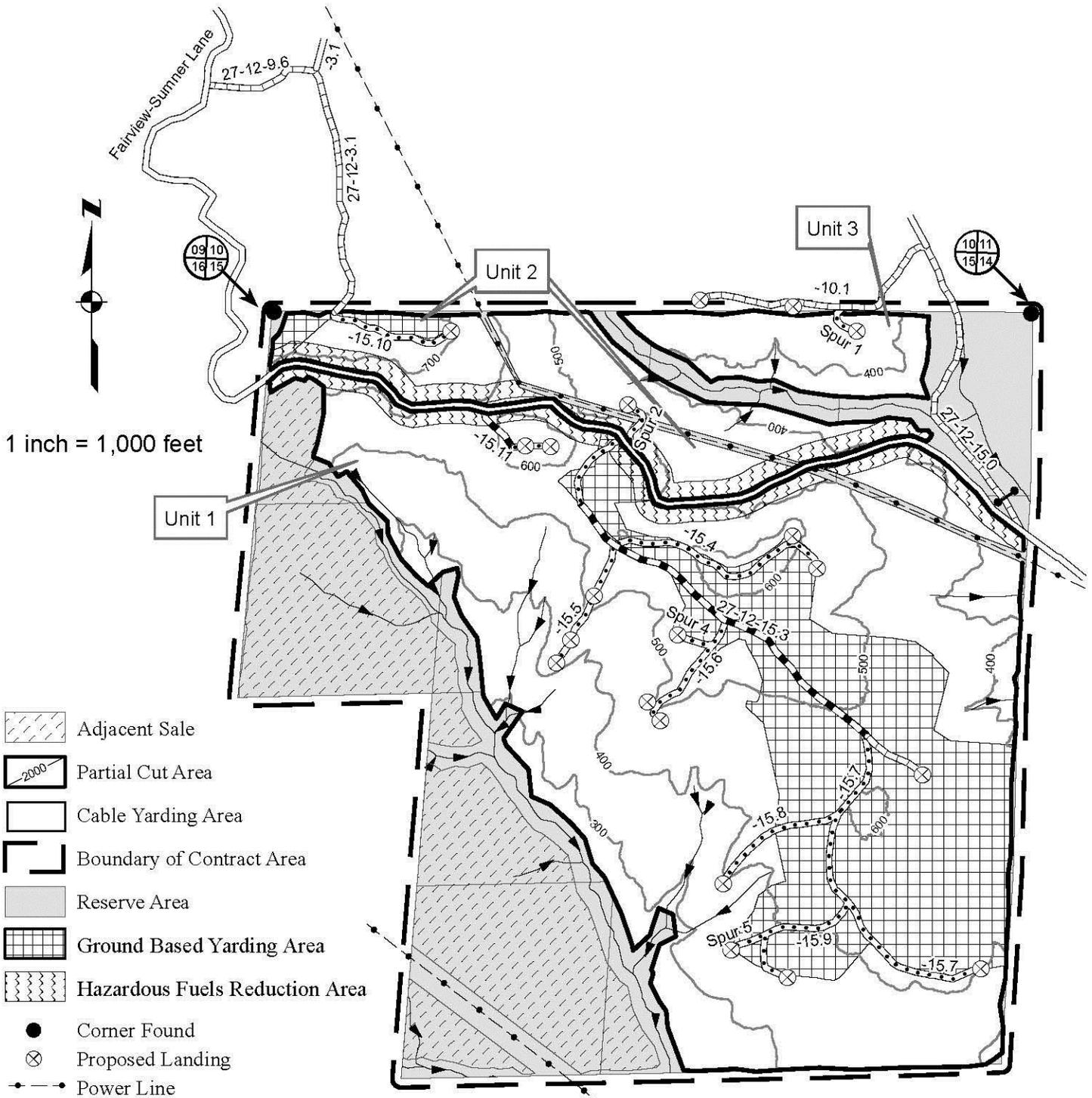
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Todd D. Buchholz  
Umpqua Field Manager

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Date

Attachments: Timber Sale Contract Map (Exhibit A, and A-1; 3 pages)



- Adjacent Sale
- Partial Cut Area
- Cable Yarding Area
- Boundary of Contract Area
- Reserve Area
- Ground Based Yarding Area
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction Area
- Corner Found
- Proposed Landing
- Power Line
- Stream Channel
- 100' Contour
- Existing Road
- Road to be Renovated
- Road to be Constructed
- Road to be Improved
- Gate

Partial Cut Area	
Unit 1	311 ACRES
Unit 2	46 ACRES
Unit 3	21 ACRES
RW	11 ACRES
Reserve Area	184 ACRES
<b>Total Contract Area</b>	<b>573 ACRES</b>

Acreage data was collected using a Trimble Geo XT Global Positioning System receiver. Acreage was calculated based on Global Positioning System traverse procedures including differential correction.



-  Cable Yarding Area
-  Reserve Area
-  Private Property- Coos County Sheep Company
-  Yarding Wedge
-  Property Boundary
-  Landing

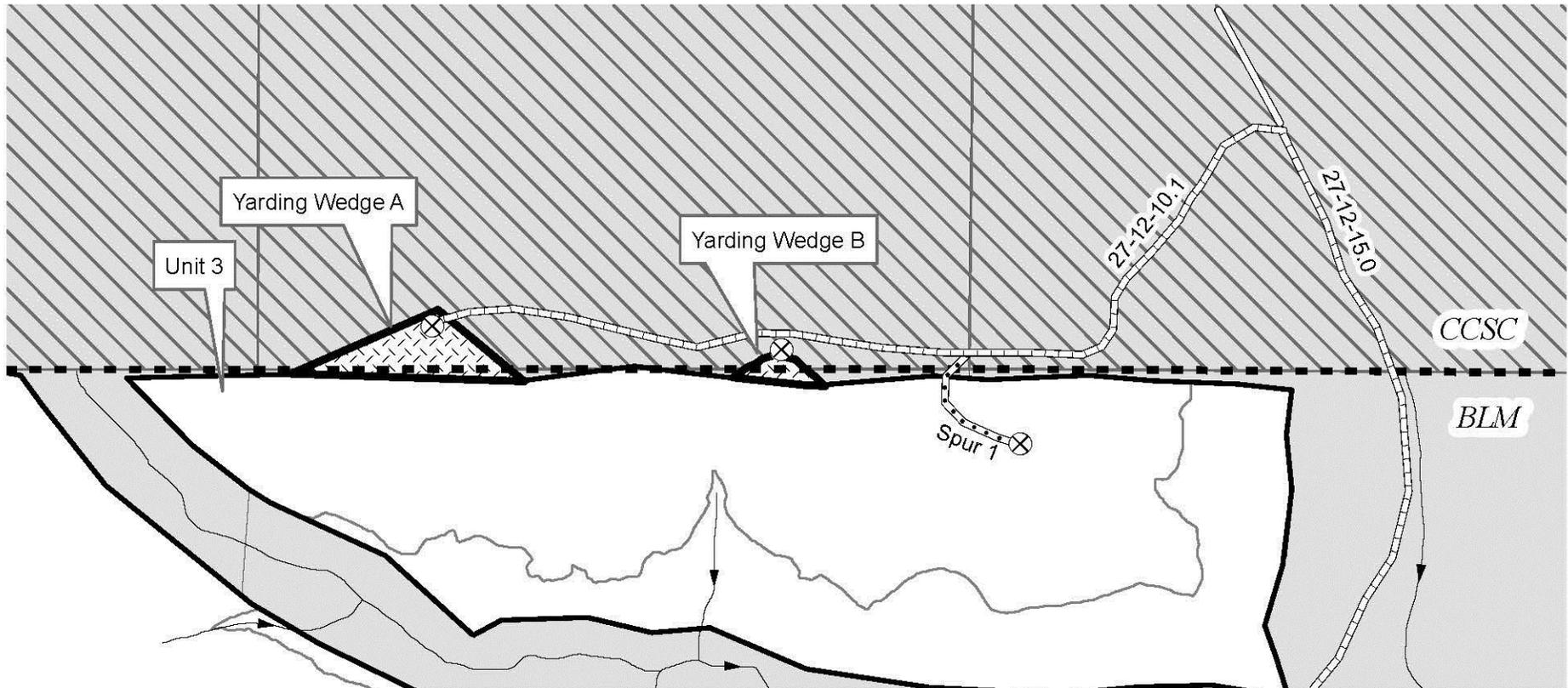
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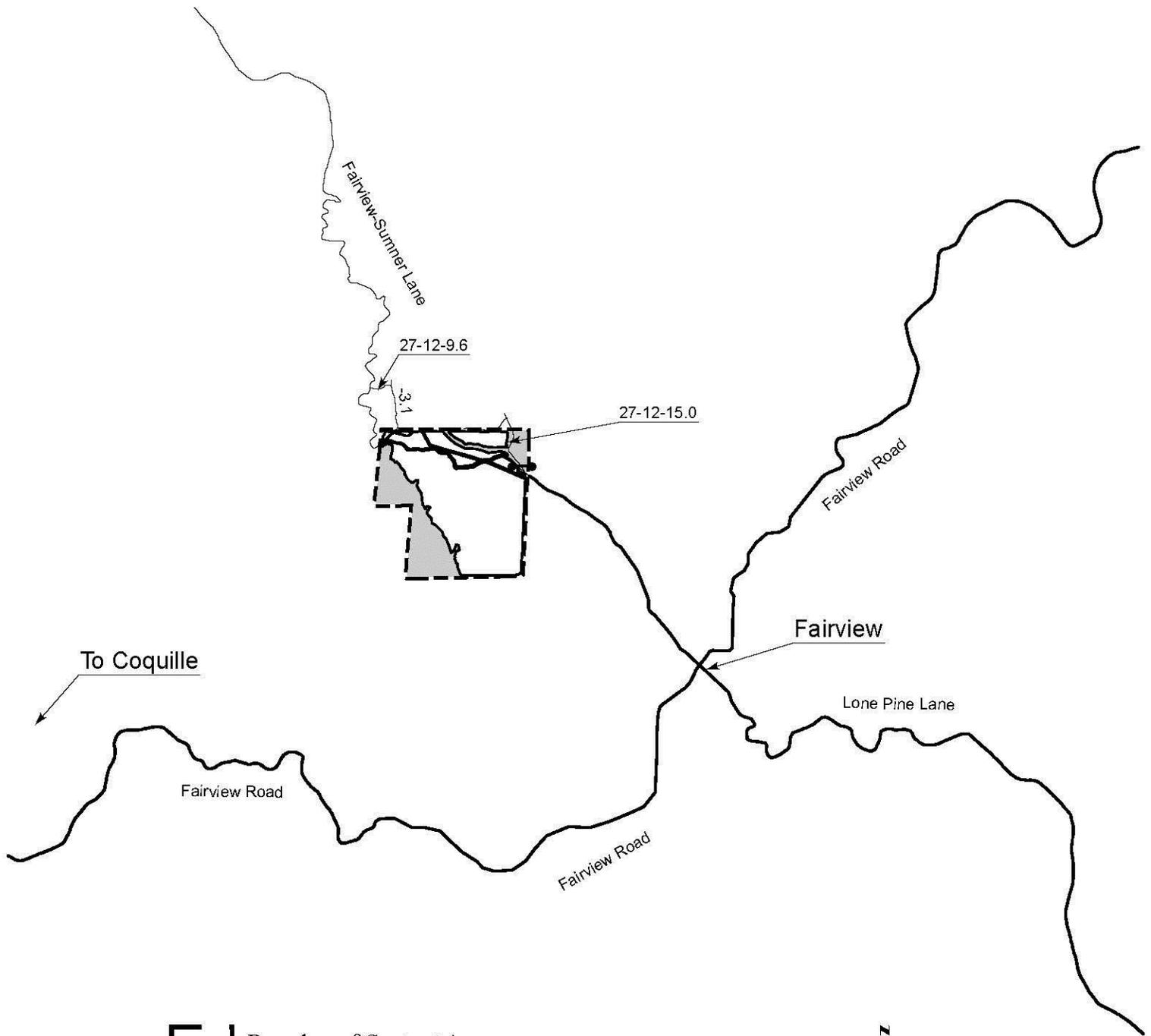
<b>Yarding Wedge Area</b>	
Yarding Wedge A _____	.6 ACRES
Yarding Wedge B _____	.1 ACRES

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Acreage data was collected using a Trimble Geo XT Global Positioning System receiver. Acreage was calculated based on Global Positioning System traverse procedures including differential correction.

1 inch = 300 feet





-  Boundary of Contract Area
-  Reserve Area
-  Partial Cut Boundary
-  Paved Road
-  Rock Road
-  Locked Gate

  
Scale 1" = 1 mile