



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Wind River  
Ranger  
District

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File Code: 1950-1

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## PUBLIC SCOPING NOTICE

### Wiggins Fork Vegetation Treatment Project

### USDA Forest Service, Shoshone National Forest Wind River Ranger District Fremont County, Wyoming

#### Introduction

The Wind River Ranger District, Shoshone National Forest is proposing to conduct a variety of vegetation treatments to meet multiple resource objectives including wildlife habitat, range betterment, forest health, fuels reduction, and public safety. The project area, which would include approximately 3,900 acres of treatment, is located in proximity to Forest Service Road 285 serving Double Cabin Campground, beginning approximately 12 miles north of Dubois, Fremont County, Wyoming (See Vicinity Map).

#### Proposed Action

To accomplish the multiple objectives, tiered from recommendations given in the Horse Creek Watershed Assessment, the project would include approximately 3,900 acres of treatment. The table below lists the acres by treatment type. These are estimated figures and the final acreages and boundary lines may change after further evaluation and review (See Map 1 & Map 2).

Treatment Type	Approximate Acreage
Aspen Enhancement	1322
Aspen Enhancement/Sanitation-salvage	310
Clear-cut or Clear-cut with Reserves	239
Overstory Removal/Pre-commercial Thinning	38
Conifer Encroachment/Prescribed Burning	1946
Sanitation/Salvage	47



**Aspen Enhancement** – Aspen stands within the project area are being out competed by conifers or are growing old and starting to exhibit signs of decreased vigor and health. To address this situation, treatments consisting of conifer removal and the cutting of aspen trees would be done. The slash from the cutting would either be left on site or burned. The objective of leaving slash on site is to deter cattle and ungulate browsing until successful regeneration is established.

- Units A6 and A10 will have the small conifers cut and burned in conjunction with range betterment treatments in units R1, R2, and R3.
- Aspen enhancement will also be performed west of the T-Cross ranch in unit F2 to provide a fuel break to help protect the ranch's structures.
- In unit T1, there will be some merchantable conifers removed along with some of the older aspen trees.

**Clear-cuts/Clear-cuts with Reserves** – These treatments are to be performed in existing lodgepole pine stands that are infected with dwarf mistletoe and comandra blister rust or are old stands that are not in a healthy condition. In most cases, these stands are adjacent to young lodgepole stands. The purposes of the treatments are to remove the source of infection to the newly regeneration stands and to regenerate stands that are past rotation age. Healthy lodgepole trees will be left as a seed source for regeneration in some units. The clear-cut in unit F1 northwest of the T-Cross Ranch will be done to help create a fuelbreak to protect structures. The slash within these units would be burned.

**Overstory Removals/Pre-commercial Thinning** – These treatments (units F3 and F4) are being done as fuels reduction treatments west of the T-Cross Ranch. These treatments, in combination with aspen enhancement and a clear-cut, are designed to create a 'line' of treatments that will be tied in with existing openings west of the T-Cross Ranch. This treatment 'line' is designed to alter fire behavior of a wildfire, should one occur, moving west to east by prevailing westerly winds. The intent of these treatments is to provide for public and firefighter safety in the event of wildfire occurrence.

These stands have a lodgepole pine overstory (F4) or a mixed conifer overstory of lodgepole, spruce, and fir (F3) with an understory of lodgepole pine seedlings and saplings. The objective is to remove dead and dying overstory trees (mostly from age, drought, dwarf mistletoe and comandra blister rust) and thin understory trees to a minimum of 15 x 15 or 18 x 18 foot spacing to reduce fuel loading adjacent to structures on private land. The resulting slash would be hand piled and burned.

**Sanitation/Salvage** - These treatments will be performed in the vicinity of Double Cabin campground and surrounding dispersed camping sites. These treatments will be done to remove hazard trees in and around the recreation facility.

**Conifer Encroachment/Prescribed Burning** – These treatments are being performed to improve range and forage conditions within the project area. These treatments would be performed in grass/sage meadows to reduce conifer seedling establishment, reduce decadent sagebrush, stimulate aspen suckering, and improve palatability of forage. The small conifers would be cut and left to help carry the fire prior to burning.

**Related information** – Treatments may be performed west of units F1-F4 to in Douglas-fir stands where a Douglas-fir beetle outbreak is occurring. A combination of salvage and shelterwood seed cuts with protection of reserve trees would be performed. Ground conditions, however, may limit the types of treatment and product removal that could occur.

- A variety of methods would be used to perform the vegetation management work, including, but not limited to timber sale, service, or stewardship contracts.
- All treatments would use existing roads or temporary roads, as needed. Temporary roads would be closed after use.
- Seasonal and daily timing restrictions would be used for hauling operations around the T-Cross ranch.

### **Purpose and Need**

**Project Purpose** – The purpose of the proposed action is to improve the overall health and age-class diversity of vegetation within the project area and to create a fuelbreak adjacent to the T-Cross Ranch. This purpose is tiered from the Shoshone National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (amended) goals listed on pages III-6 through III-10:

- Manage vegetation types outside of wilderness to provide multiple benefits commensurate with land capability and resource demand.
- Improve the health and vigor of vegetation types outside wilderness and selected types in wilderness where necessary.
- Integrate vegetation management with resource management in functional areas – range, recreation, timber, water and wildlife.
- Improve habitats where vegetation conditions are significantly below biological potential.
- Reduce damages by insect, disease and other forest pests to acceptable levels through integrated management of vegetation.
- Improve tree age class and species diversity to benefit forest health, recreation experiences, visual quality and wildlife habitat.
- Improve or maintain the quality of habitat in winter range on the Forest.
- Provide cost-effective fire protection to minimize the combined costs of protection and damages; and prevent loss of human life.
- Manage the timber resources on lands suitable for timber management to provide sawtimber, roundwood and firewood to meet resource management objectives.

**Need for the Project** – The following existing conditions were identified, which support the need for the proposed action:

- Aspen stands within the project area are being out competed by conifers or are mature or over mature. Recommendations from the Horse Creek Watershed assessment included maintenance of amount and health of aspen within the watershed.
- Existing lodgepole pine stands are infected with dwarf mistletoe and comandra blister rust or are past rotation age. In most cases, these stands are adjacent to or overtopping regenerated lodgepole stands and infecting new stands with mistletoe and comandra blister rust.
- Current drought conditions have lead to an outbreak of Douglas-fir beetles on Ranger Ridge west of the T-Cross Ranch. In addition, dense stands of lodgepole pine or mixed conifers exist near structures located on the ranch.
- Current drought conditions, dwarf mistletoe, and comandra blister rust have caused accelerated mortality in the vicinity of Double Cabin Campground and dispersed recreation sites within that vicinity.
- Sagebrush within the project area is becoming decadent and is outside of its natural fire regime. In addition, conifers are encroaching into grass/forb/sage meadows.

## **Forest Plan – Management Areas**

The majority of the proposed action (approximately 2,297 acres) is located on lands identified in the Shoshone National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (amended) as Management Area 2B and 7E. Management Area 2B provides for rural and roaded natural recreation opportunities. Motorized and non-motorized recreation activities such as driving for pleasure, viewing scenery, picnicking, fishing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are possible. Conventional use of highway-type vehicles is provided for in design and construction of roads. Motorized travel may be prohibited or restricted to designated routes to protect physical and biological resources. Management Area 7E provides for wood-fiber production and utilization of large roundwood of a size and quality suitable for sawtimber (See Maps 3 & 4).

The remaining treatment (approximately 1603 acres) is located on lands identified in the Shoshone National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (amended) as Management Area 3A and 5A. Management Area 3A provides for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in both roaded and unroaded areas. Recreation opportunities such as hiking, horseback riding, hunting and cross-country skiing are available. Seasonal or permanent restrictions on human use may be applied. Management Area 5A provides for winter range for deer, elk, pronghorns, bighorn sheep and mountain goats. Treatments are applied to increase forage production of existing grass, forb and browse species or to alter plant species composition. Prescribed burning, seeding, spraying, planting and mechanical treatments may occur in this area (See Maps 3 & 4).

## **Scoping and Public Involvement**

This notice is the public's opportunity to identify and submit issues and concerns they feel the Forest Service should address related to this project. If you feel you have information pertinent and specific to the proposed action, we welcome your participation. We are NOT reviewing this project subject to the Health Forest Restoration Act of 2003.

## Contact

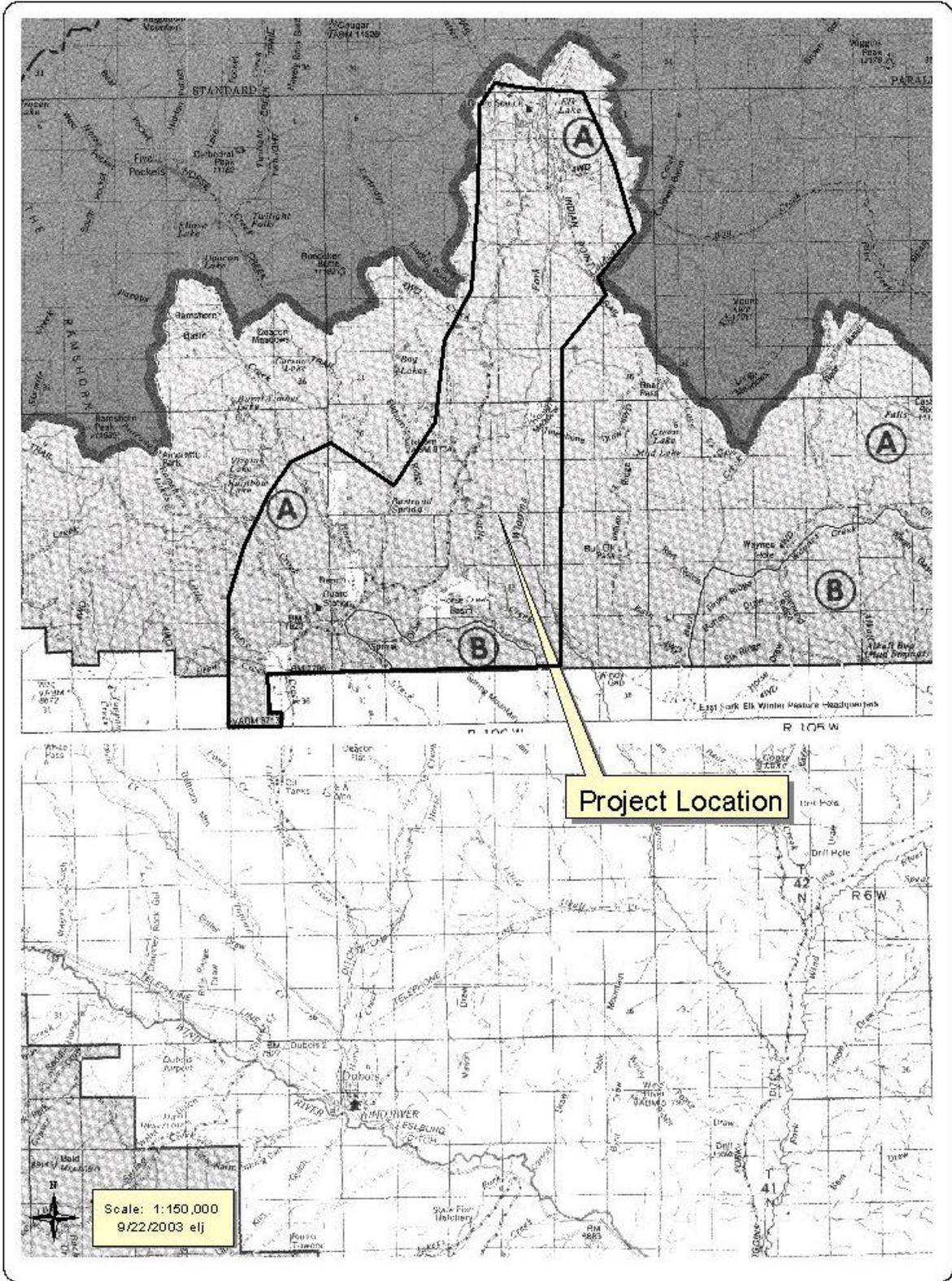
The public should submit any issues and/or comments related to this project in writing to: Mark King, NEPA Coordinator, South Zone/Washakie Ranger District, 333 E. Main Street, Lander, WY 82520, by email at [comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-wind-river@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-wind-river@fs.fed.us) or faxed to (307) 578-1204, ATTN: Mark King. Please refer to “Wiggins Fork Vegetation Treatment” in the subject line of emailed for faxed responses. Email attachments must be in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect or plain text format. **Your comments would be most helpful if received before July 6, 2004.**

Questions related to the proposed action should be directed to Ellen Jungck, South Zone Silviculturist, Wind River Ranger District, telephone (307) 455-2466 or email [ejungck@fs.fed.us](mailto:ejungck@fs.fed.us).

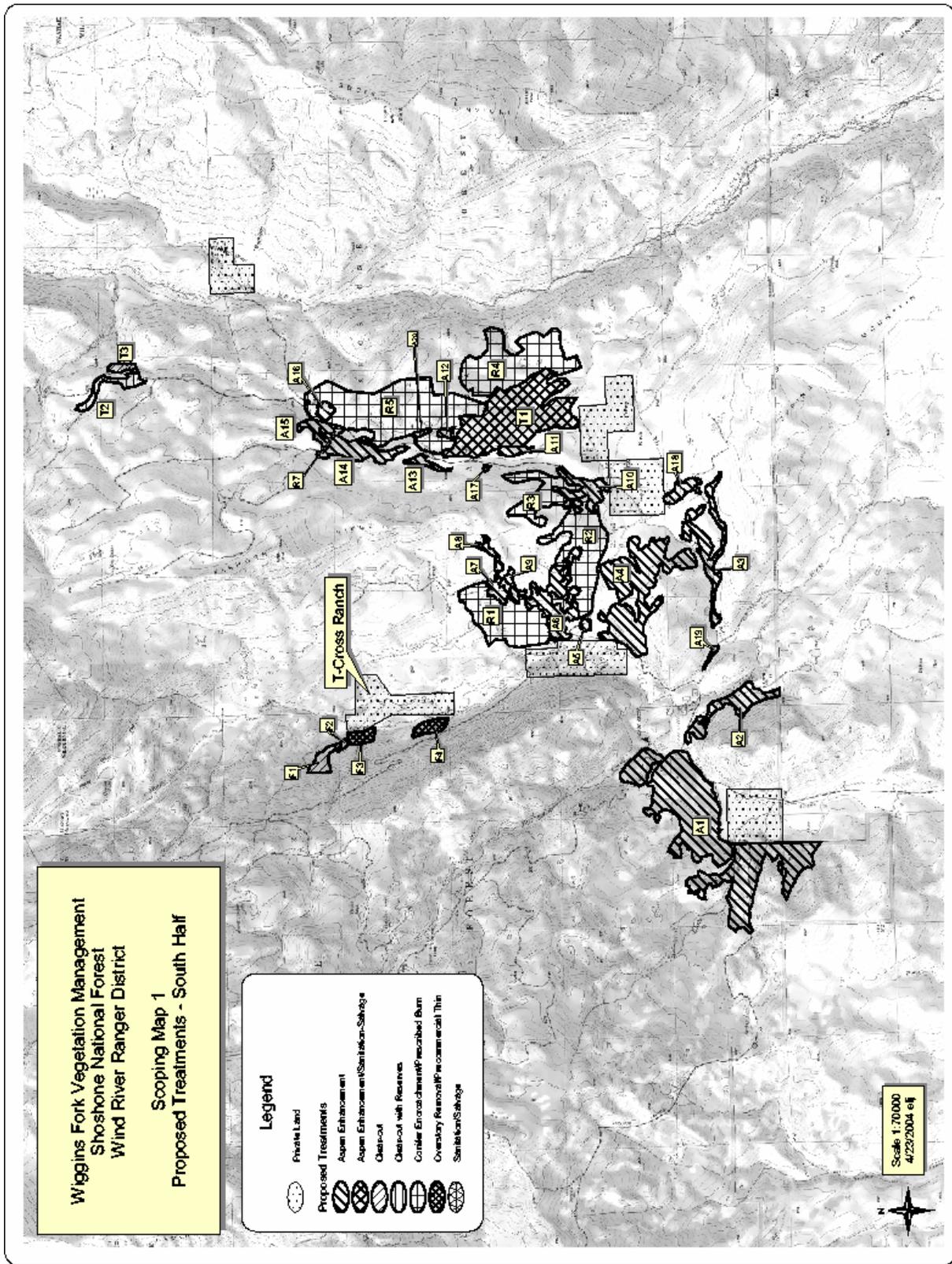
/s/ Rick Metzger  
RICK METZGER  
District Ranger  
Wind River District

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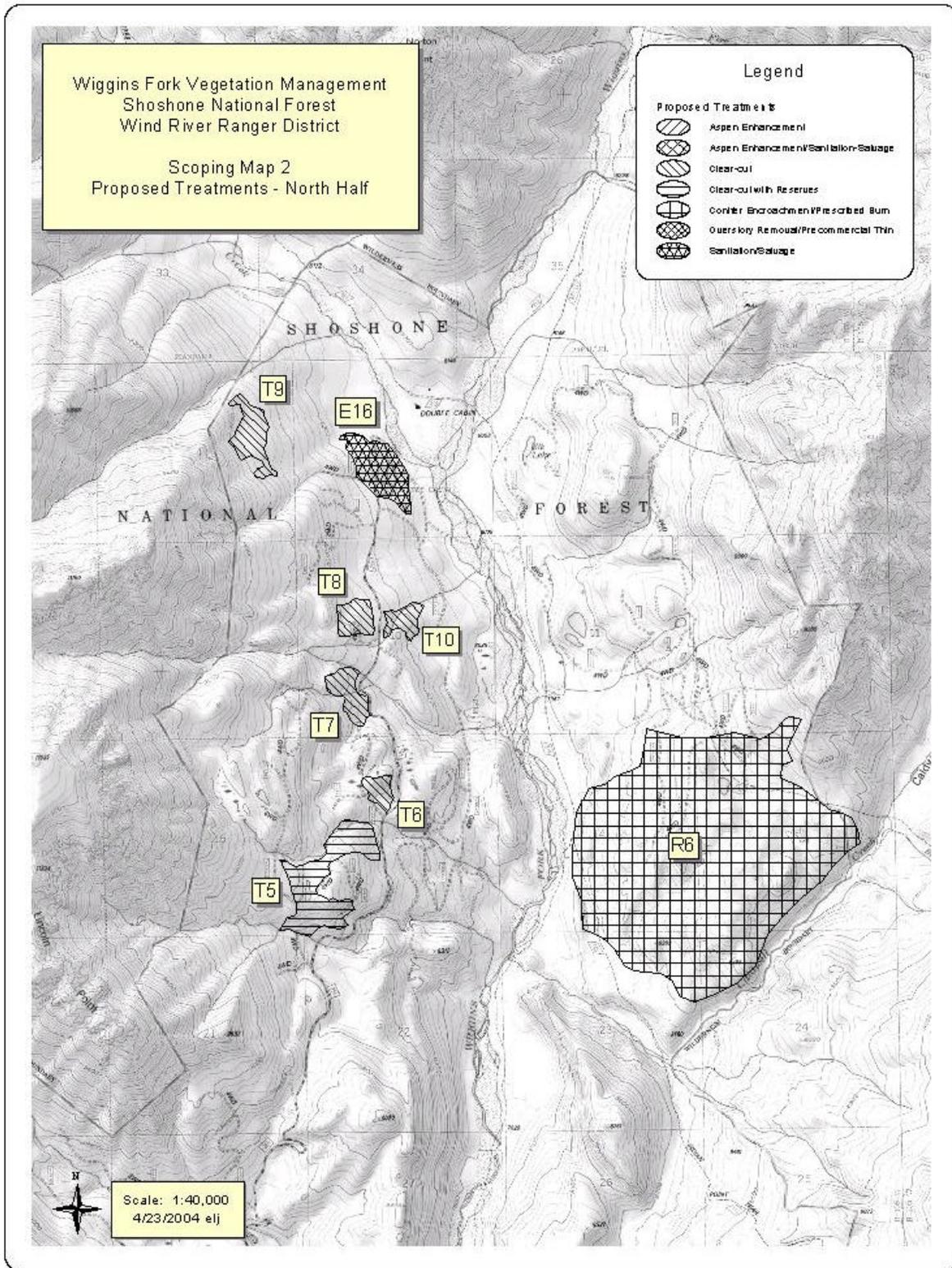
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**Vicinity Map.** This map shows the location of the project area in relation to Dubois, Fremont County, Wyoming.



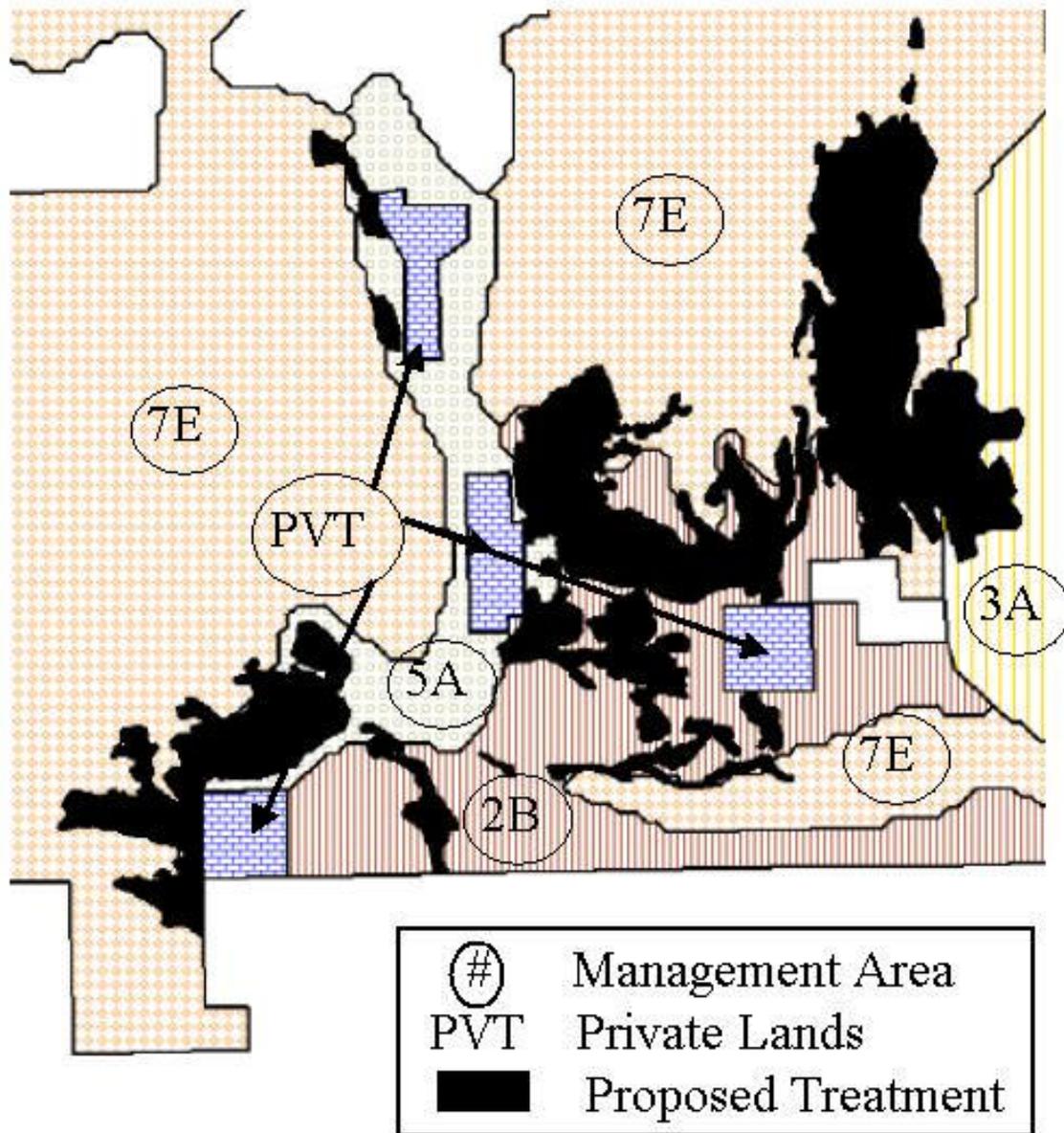
Map 1 – Shows the treatment areas located in the southern portion of the proposed project area.



Map 2 – Shows the treatment areas located in the northern portion of the proposed project area.

# Wiggins Fork Vegetation Management Shoshone National Forest Wind River District

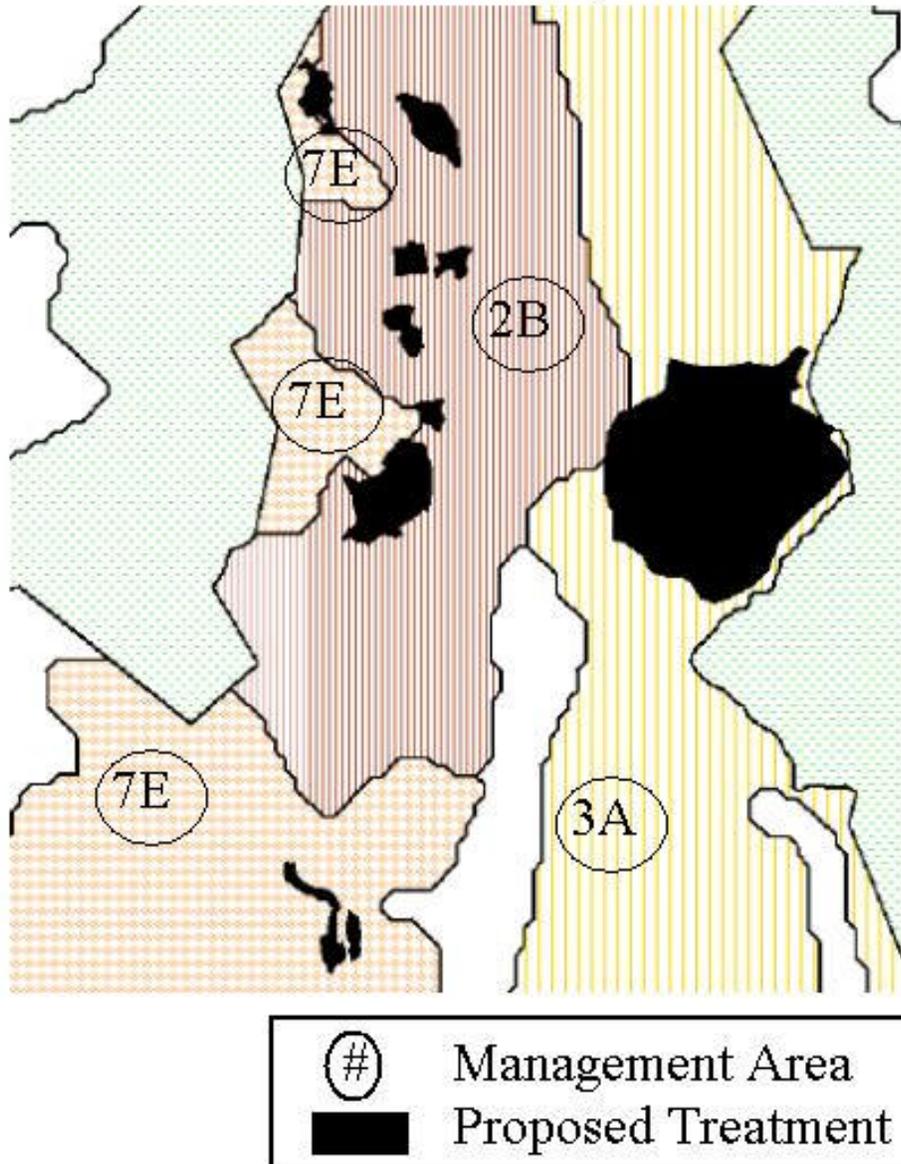
Scoping Map 3  
Southern Treatments related to Management Areas



Map 3 – Shows the proposed treatment areas as they related to the Forest Plan Management Area direction.

# Wiggins Fork Vegetation Management Shoshone National Forest Wind River District

Scoping Map 4  
Northern Treatments related to Management Areas



Map 4 – Shows the proposed treatment areas as they relate to the Forest Plan Management Area direction.