



File Code: 1950

Date: July 20, 2004

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Sisters Ranger District is seeking your comments on our Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for the B&B Fire Recovery Project in the Deschutes National Forest.

Background

The Link Fire started on July 5, 2003 and was contained at approximately 3,600 acres on July 13th. The B&B Complex Fires started on August 19, 2003 and were contained at approximately 92,000 acres in November. All of the Link Fire, and approximately two thirds of the area that burned within B&B is located on the Sisters Ranger District.

Since these fires, restoration of the burned areas has been and will remain a high priority for the Sisters Ranger District and Deschutes National Forest. Rehabilitation of impacts incurred during suppression activities has been completed, and a substantial amount of the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) work has already been accomplished. Restoration activities that we have accomplished include: noxious weed monitoring and control, stream channel stabilization, and trail reconstruction. Planting of approximately 1,485 acres of upland and streamside forests was initiated this past spring. Forest Service crews have treated imminent hazard trees along designated roads in order to re-open portions of the area for the public, and additional hazard trees along primary roads are scheduled for removal this summer. While all fire restoration actions are not connected to this project proposal, I feel it is important to note that we will continue to work on accomplishing a wide variety of important restorative work within the fire areas.

This project specifically considers the portions of the 2003 fires that are on the Sisters Ranger District and outside of Cache Mountain Research Natural Area and the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness Area. The area is located approximately 12 miles northwest of Sisters, Oregon and encompasses approximately 41,000 acres of public lands that were burned during the Link and B&B Complex Fires. See the enclosed vicinity map.

Proposed Action

Sisters Ranger District is proposing to harvest dead and dying trees, followed by the reduction of fuels and tree planting within the salvage units. Road closures and road obliteration is also proposed. A description of the proposed action is attached, including a detailed map that shows where treatments are being considered.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the project is highlighted below:



- The harvest of dead and dying timber before it loses all of its economic value.
- Reduction of harvest slash and small trees within salvage units to establish fuel conditions that will reduce the potential for future uncharacteristic fire and restore fire as an ecosystem component,
- Reforestation of historically prevalent or common species (where seed sources are lacking) within salvage areas to aid in the quicker development of desired forest conditions, including large tree structure.
- Provide for public, administrative, and operational safety by removing hazard trees along open roads and areas of concentrated high use.
- Reduction of open road densities, particularly within Late-successional and Riparian Reserves, to help protect and improve watershed conditions, fisheries, and wildlife habitat,

Environmental Analysis

The environmental analysis for this project will be documented in the B&B Fire Recovery Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In brief, the environmental analysis process will follow these steps:

1. Scoping – This is the step we are in now. It involves public involvement to help in the identification of issues and concerns with the proposed action.
2. Alternative Development – Alternatives to the proposed action are formulated and described in response to identified issues and concerns.
3. Description of Environmental Consequences – Effects of all of the alternatives are described in site-specific detail sufficient to address the issues and concerns, and to allow for the identification of a preferred alternative for implementation.
4. Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) – When the three steps above are completed the analysis will be documented in a DEIS and made available to the public and other agencies for comment (estimate February 2005).
5. Comment Review – Comments to the DEIS will be reviewed, and adjustments are made to alternatives or analysis where needed.
6. Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – Response to comment and final environmental analysis documented in FEIS.
7. Record of Decision – Based on the analysis documented in the FEIS a decision will be made on which alternative to implement (estimate July 2005).

Public Comments

An Interdisciplinary Team will be developing alternatives to the proposed action based on issues that arise during this initial scoping period. Your participation is important and will help us in the development of these issues. If you have concerns or information about the proposal, you can write to us at the address below. Please include the title of the project (B&B Fire Recovery EIS). Your input would be most helpful if received by August 20, 2004.

District Ranger, c/o Tom Mafera, PO Box 249, Sisters, Oregon 97759.

You may also e-mail your comments or concerns about the proposal to:

comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-sisters@fs.fed.us

This is a very important part of our overall restoration activities of the Link and B&B Fires. We understand that the salvage of trees from fire areas is controversial. Our intent is to plan and implement this project in a way that protects important resource values (such as late successional and riparian habitats, soil and water quality, plants, wildlife, and fish), while recovering wood products, improving public safety, and reducing fuels from the forest. Even with post-fire salvage, we consider what we leave to be as important as what we take. We greatly appreciate your input that will help us successfully meet our intent.

We are planning a variety of ways (letters, newsletters, tours, etc.) to help engage you in our work. Please contact Tom Mafera, Project Leader, at 541-549-7744, or Todd Chaponot, Writer/Editor at 541-549-7719 if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

BILL ANTHONY
District Ranger

Enclosure

cc: Leslie Weldon, Mike Johnson, Craig Courtright, Chris Hoff, Helen Maffei, Cal Joyner, Jamie Barbour, Susan Skakel, Nancy Gilbert

Note: Your comments for this proposed action will be considered part of the public record. Information you submit will be available for public inspection, including names and addresses. Comments submitted anonymously will also be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments normally will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR part 215. Anyone may request us to withhold their submission from the public record, 7 CFR 1.27(d), by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits them confidentiality. Request for confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform you of our decision regarding a request for confidentiality. If not granted confidentiality, you will have your submission returned to you. You can then resubmit comments (with or without name and address) within 10 days.

PROPOSED ACTION

B&B Fire Recovery Project, Sisters Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest

This proposal is for the salvage of commercial timber on approximately 10,000 to 14,000 acres on the Sisters Ranger District. Trees to be harvested were killed or severely damaged during the Link and B&B Complex Fires in the summer of 2003. Reforestation and fuel treatments on the same areas are also proposed. It includes approximately 80 miles of roads to be closed or decommissioned out of approximately 360 miles currently within the project area.

The general location by landmark is east of Mt. Jefferson Wilderness, north of Forest Road 2067 to the Sisters Ranger District Boundary with the Warm Springs Reservation, and west of Forest Roads 12 and 1270.

The legal description: Township 11 South, Range 8 East, Section 36; Township 11 South, Range 9 East, Sections 31-34; Township 12 South, Range 8 East, Sections, 1, 2, 11-15, 22-28, 33-36; Township 12 South, Range 9 East, Sections 2-11, 15-22, 28-32, Township 13 South, Range 8 East, Sections 1-4, 9-12, 14-16, 21-29, 32, 34-36; Township 13 South, Range 9 East, Sections 5-7, 16, 19, 30; and Township 13 South, Range 8 East, Sections 2-3.

There are 95,600 acres within the 2003 Link and B&B fires areas. The B&B Fire Recovery Project area includes approximately 42,143 acres of the total within these fires. The project area includes only lands on the Sisters Ranger District (east of the Cascades) and outside of the Cache Mountain Research Natural Area and the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness Area. Ownership within the project area is shown below.

Land Ownership within the B&B Project Area	Project Area	
	Acres	Percent
Deschutes National Forest	40,935	97
Private	1,208	3
Total	42,143	100

The intensity of the wildfires within the project area varied and resulted in some pockets of unburned areas, however, approximately half of the project area experienced near or complete stand mortality. Most of the stand-replacement fire within the project area was uncharacteristic in size and intensity compared to historic fires. The majority of the project area (75%) is a short-interval, fire adapted ecosystem (Fire Regimes I and IIIa). These fire regimes are characterized by frequent fires (0-50 year return interval) where lower severity fires predominated. Immediately after the fires, satellite imagery showed that roughly 43% of this area experienced complete mortality. Many areas that experienced low to moderate severity fire resulted in the cambium layer of trees being killed, particularly of the fire intolerant white fir trees. Many of the white fir trees in these areas have lost their ability to move water and nutrients up the tree from their root systems and although currently green, are physiologically dead and will gradually turn color and lose their needles.

In wilderness areas and higher elevations, stand replacement fires were historically common and the B&B Complex Fires are considered more normal in intensity but likely larger than historic fires. **These areas are outside the project area.**

The purpose and need for this project includes the following primary goals:

- The harvest of dead and dying timber before it loses all of its economic value.
- Reduction of harvest slash and small trees within salvage units to establish fuel conditions that will reduce the potential for future uncharacteristic fire and begin to restore fire as an ecosystem component,
- Reforestation of historically prevalent or common species (where seed sources are lacking) within salvage units to aid in the quicker development of desired forest conditions, including large tree structure.
- Provide for public, administrative, and operational safety by removing hazard trees or fuels along open roads and areas of concentrated high use.
- Reduction of open road densities, particularly within late-successional and riparian reserves, to help protect and improve watershed conditions, fisheries, and wildlife habitat.

The effects of the fire on vegetation within the Metolius Late Successional Reserve (LSR) were variable. However, approximately half of the LSR has been characterized as stand replacement, where more than 75% of the overstory trees are dead. Within this Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) allocation, only dead trees are proposed for removal and harvest would be consistent with NWFP Standards and Guidelines (C13-16).

The effects of the fire on vegetation within Matrix and Administratively Withdrawn allocations were also variable. These areas experienced less overall mortality to the overstory trees as evidenced by post-fire satellite imagery. Approximately two thirds of the area was mapped as mixed mortality, (where 25-75% of the overstory trees are dead) or underburned (where less than 25% of the overstory trees are dead). Dead and dying trees would be removed in these allocations.

Hazard tree removal along open roads and areas of high use is also proposed within all NWFP allocations.

Salvage harvest would be conducted using a combination of ground-based tractors, skyline systems, and helicopters. Approximately 88% of the planning area has slopes that are less than 30% where ground-based harvest would be considered. No new permanent roads would be constructed. Timber harvest residues and small trees would be treated with consideration for providing for wildlife habitat and long-term soil productivity. To minimize further value loss due to wood deterioration the timber would be offered for sale in the summer of 2005. Additionally, approximately 80 miles of roads are proposed for inactivation or decommissioning, out of a total of approximately 360 miles within the project area.

Areas proposed for salvage are located outside of Riparian Reserves with the exception of areas along roads or high use areas (e.g. Dark Lake, Suttle Lake) where hazard trees need to be fallen or removed to address public safety. The width of Riparian Reserves varies by stream class, vegetative associations and sensitive geomorphic conditions. Dead trees (snags) and down wood would be left to meet wildlife habitat objectives for the short and long term.

As noted above, approximately 10,000 to 14,000 acres are being considered for some form of treatment, out of a total project area of 42,143 acres. Areas that are not considered for treatment in this proposed action include:

Private lands

Nesting, roosting and foraging habitat (NRF for northern spotted owls, where stands contain less than 50% white fir

Roadless areas inventoried in the Deschutes NF Land and Resource Management Plan

Riparian Reserves, except where necessary to create defensible space around critical habitats or private property

Known landslide areas in the Canyon and Cabot Creek drainages

Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands that were underburned with resulting low mortality

The Metolius Wild and Scenic River corridor

Stands containing nests for great grey owls, goshawks and northern spotted owls

Recent timber sales and plantations

Fire regime IV stands, predominately high elevation lodgepole or mountain hemlock stands with fire return intervals of 50 to 100 years, where the high intensity stand replacement fire from B&B is consistent with what would have occurred historically.

See the attached vicinity map, the map of areas being considered for harvest, the map and table of proposed road closures and obliteration, the map of the current mortality layer, and the Northwest Forest Plan Allocation Map.

The following table summarizes the amount of acres within the project area by NWFP and Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan Allocations.

NWFP Allocation	Acres	Percent of Project Area
Late Successional Reserve	23,559	56%
Matrix	16,304	39%
Administratively Withdrawn	1,032	2%
Other Ownership	1,208	3%
Total	42,143	100%
Deschutes LRMP Allocation	Acres	Percent of Project Area
Metolius Special Forest - Management Area 22	19,933	47%
Metolius Scenic Views - Management Area 26	8,777	21%
Metolius Heritage Area - Management Area 19	4,495	11%
General Forest - Management Area 8	2,214	6%
Metolius Wild and Scenic River - Management Area 28	1,730	4%
Intensive Recreation – Management Area 11	1,492	3%
Scenic Views - Management Area 9	947	2%
Bald Eagle - Management Area 3	808	2%
Metolius Black Butte Scenic - Management Area 21	540	1%
Other Ownership	1,208	3%
Total	42,143	100%

Roads Proposed for Decommissioning

Total Decommissioning:

51.75

USFS Road	Miles
1200050	0.3
1200176	0.2
1200177	0.1
1200178	0.1
1200420	0.2
1200518	0.1
1200520	0.15
1200530	0.5
1200540	0.2
1200542	0.1
1200547	0.6
1200548	0.2
1200554	0.7
1200559	0.5
1200650	0.4
1200822	0.3
1200828	0.4
1200842	0.1
1200849	0.4
1200850	0.31
1200854	0.2
1200900	0.5
1200901	0.4
1200905	0.2
1200920	1
1200983	0.4
1200996	0.2
1210130	0.45
1210201	0.15
1210300	0.25
1210320	0.3
1210490	0.2
1210500	0.68
1210535	0.2

USFS Road	Miles
1210570	0.13
1210680	0.1
1210810	0.2
1210820	0.2
1210870	2.5
1210900	0.3
1210910	0.5
1210950	2.2
1220125	0.4
1220430	0.6
1220445	0.35
1220490	0.41
1220620	0.5
1220655	0.4
1220656	0.3
1220744	0.02
1230010	0.2
1230108	0.5
1230216	0.8
1230220	1
1230225	1.1
1230238	0.2
1230240	0.2
1230246	0.8
1230247	0.2
1230250	0.47
1230290	1
1230294	0.2
1230338	0.5
1230340	0.2
1230451	0.4
1230452	0.3
1230455	0.2
1230520	1.3

USFS Road	Miles
1230521	0.2
1230525	0.2
1230550	0.2
1230710	0.1
1230730	0.34
1230790	1.2
1230900	1.8
1230913	0.3
1230920	0.39
1230948	0.5
1234022	0.13
1235090	1.2
1235198	0.6
1235199	0.15
1237200	0.3
1237623	0.2
1237630	0.1
1237700	0.25
1237850	0.3
1237860	0.7
1237867	0.2
1260201	0.1
1260235	0.1
1260240	0.8
1260243	0.1
1260247	0.2
1260260	0.2
1260280	0.1
1260294	0.4
1260295	0.4
1260710	0.4
1260730	0.38
1260760	0.5
1270615	0.1
1270617	0.25

USFS Road
1270615
1270617
1270710
1270715
1270717
1270810
1270815
1270910
1280010
1280110
1280210
1280215
1280410
1280610
1292510
1292610
1292615
1499010
1499015
2066010
2066015
2066110
2066115
2068410
2068415
2070010
2070110
2070115
2076210
2076215
2076217
2076219

Roads Proposed for Inactivation

Total Inactivation:

22.59

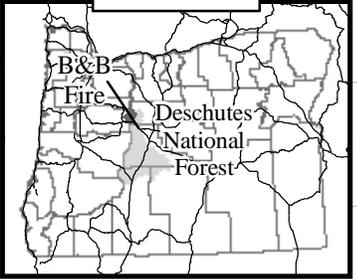
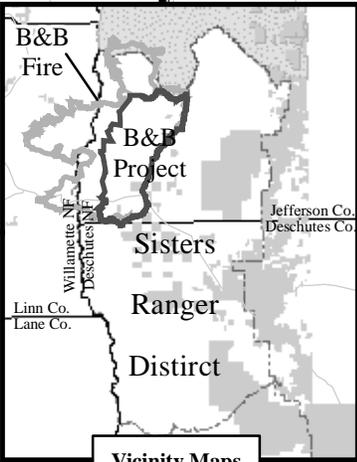
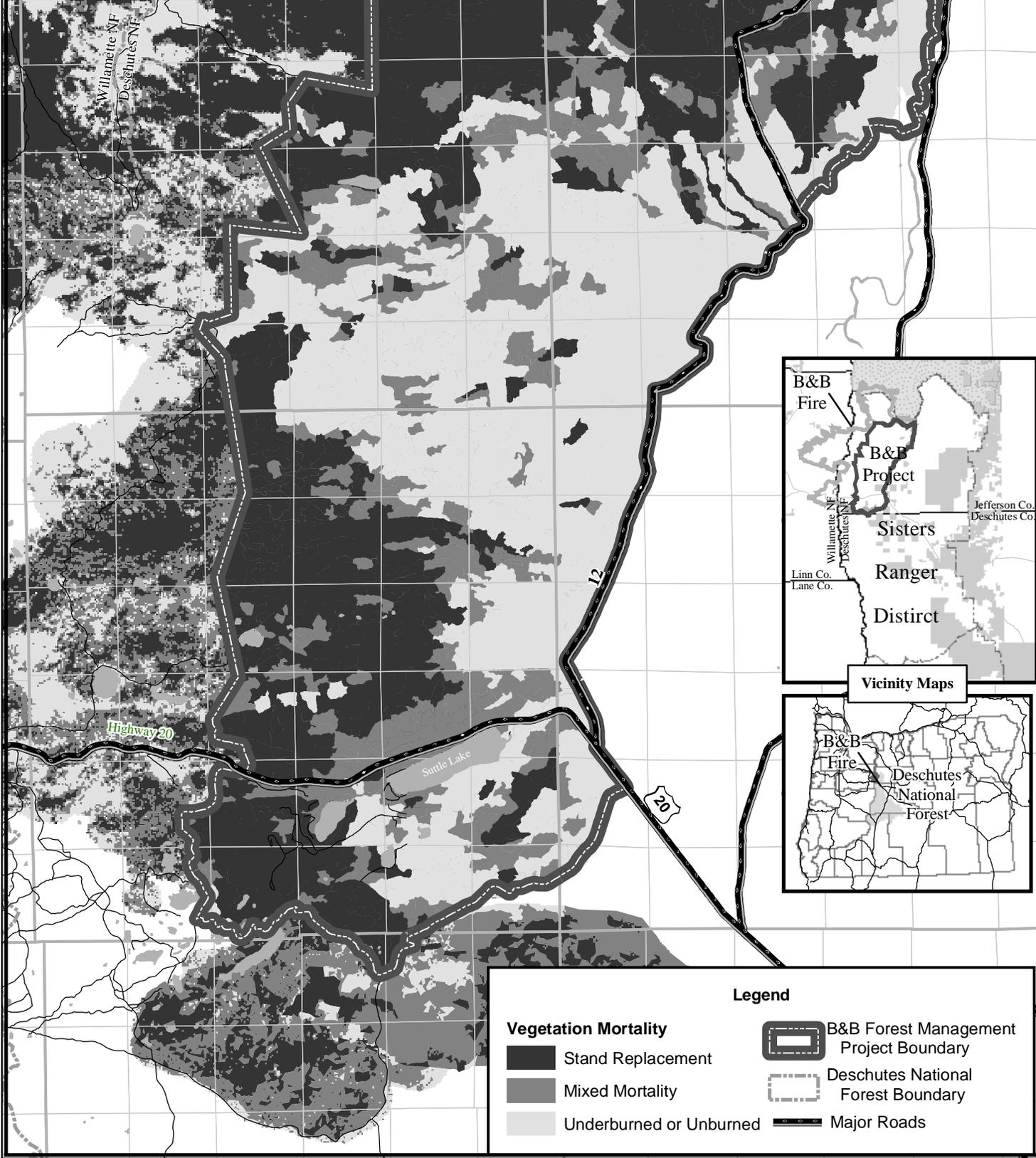
USFS Road	Miles
1200040	0.1
1200285	0.19
1200299	0.2
1200556	0.3
1200557	0.2
1200868	0.1
1200989	0.26
1210300	0.45
1210400	0.38
1210480	1.4
1210484	0.1
1210486	0.1
1210870	2.5
1220100	0.8
1220120	0.7
1220493	0.45
1220496	0.35
1220510	0.3
1220725	0.1
1230110	1.1
1230120	0.2
1230213	0.4
1230231	0.2
1230320	0.5
1230580	0.6
1230585	0.3
1230865	0.2
1230910	0.5
1230930	0.2
1232263	0.6
1234022	0.27
1234114	0.57
1235270	0.15
1260292	0.5
1260765	0.5

USFS Road	Miles
1270610	0.2
1270616	0.01
1270810	0.78
1270832	0.1
1270833	0.1
1270850	0.3
1270995	0.2
1280500	0.4
1280710	0.8
1290090	0.4
1290190	0.4
1290220	0.8
1290300	0.33
1292015	0.2
2066810	0.2
2067101	0.2
2067150	0.5
2068036	0.2
2070020	0.5
2076659	0.2

Roads Proposed for Opening

USFS Road	Miles
1260290	0.6

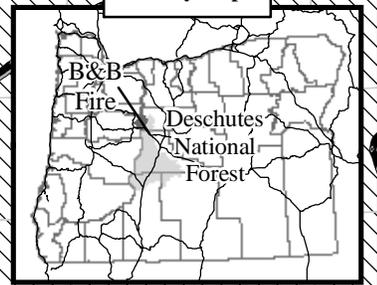
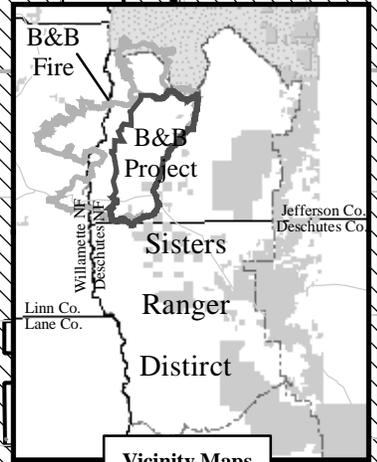
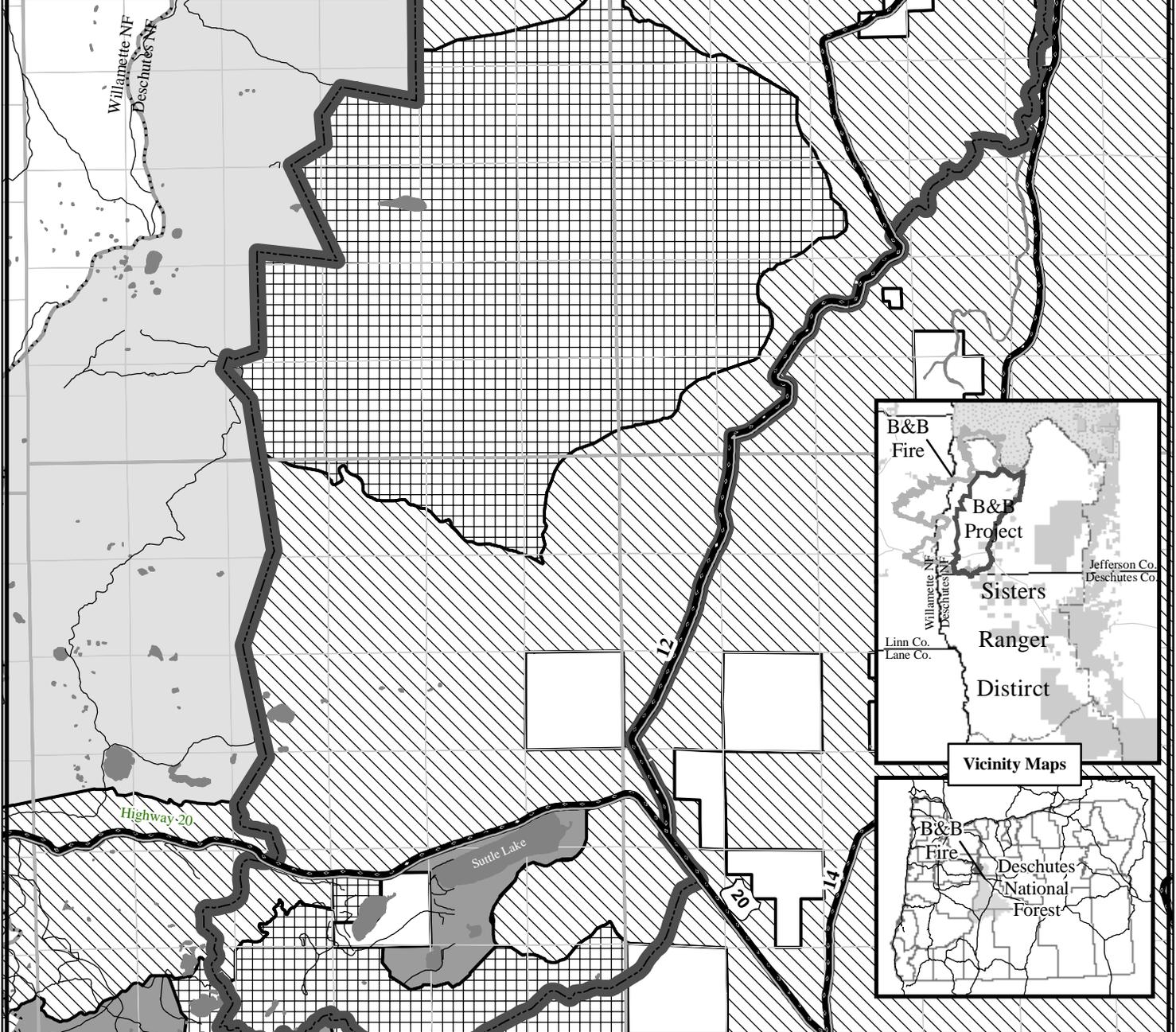
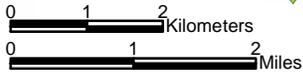
Vegetation Mortality
 B & B Forest Management Project
 Sisters Ranger District
 Deschutes National Forest



Legend

Stand Replacement	B&B Forest Management Project Boundary
Mixed Mortality	Deschutes National Forest Boundary
Underburned or Unburned	Major Roads

Northwest Forest Plan
 B & B Forest Management Project
 Sisters Ranger District
 Deschutes National Forest



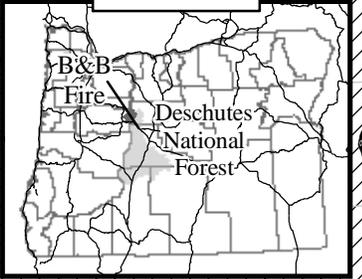
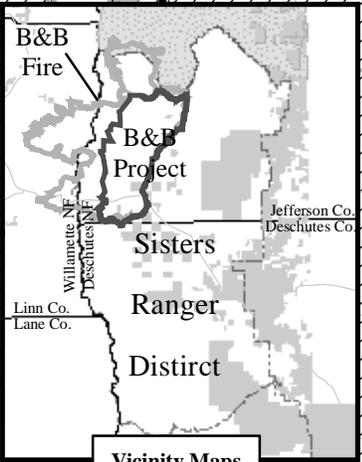
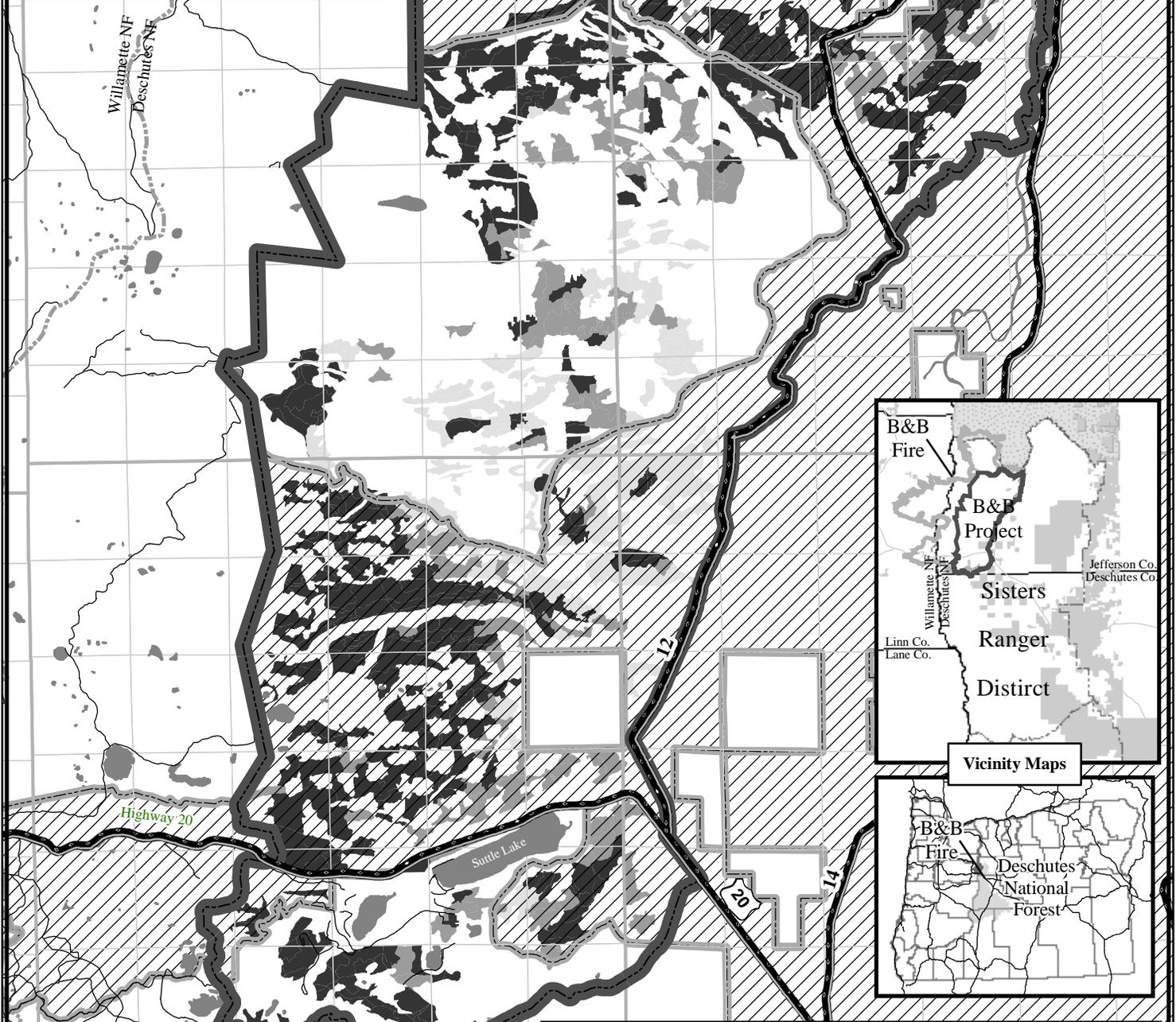
Legend

- Late-successional Reserves
- Matrix
- Administratively Withdrawn Areas
- Congressionally Reserved
- Other ownership
- B&B Forest Management Project Boundary
- Deschutes National Forest Boundary
- Major Roads

Potential Treatment Areas
 B & B Forest Management Project
 Sisters Ranger District
 Deschutes National Forest



0 1 2 Kilometers
 0 1 2 Miles



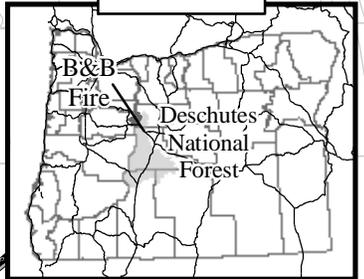
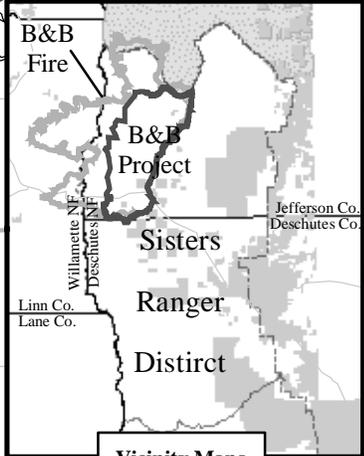
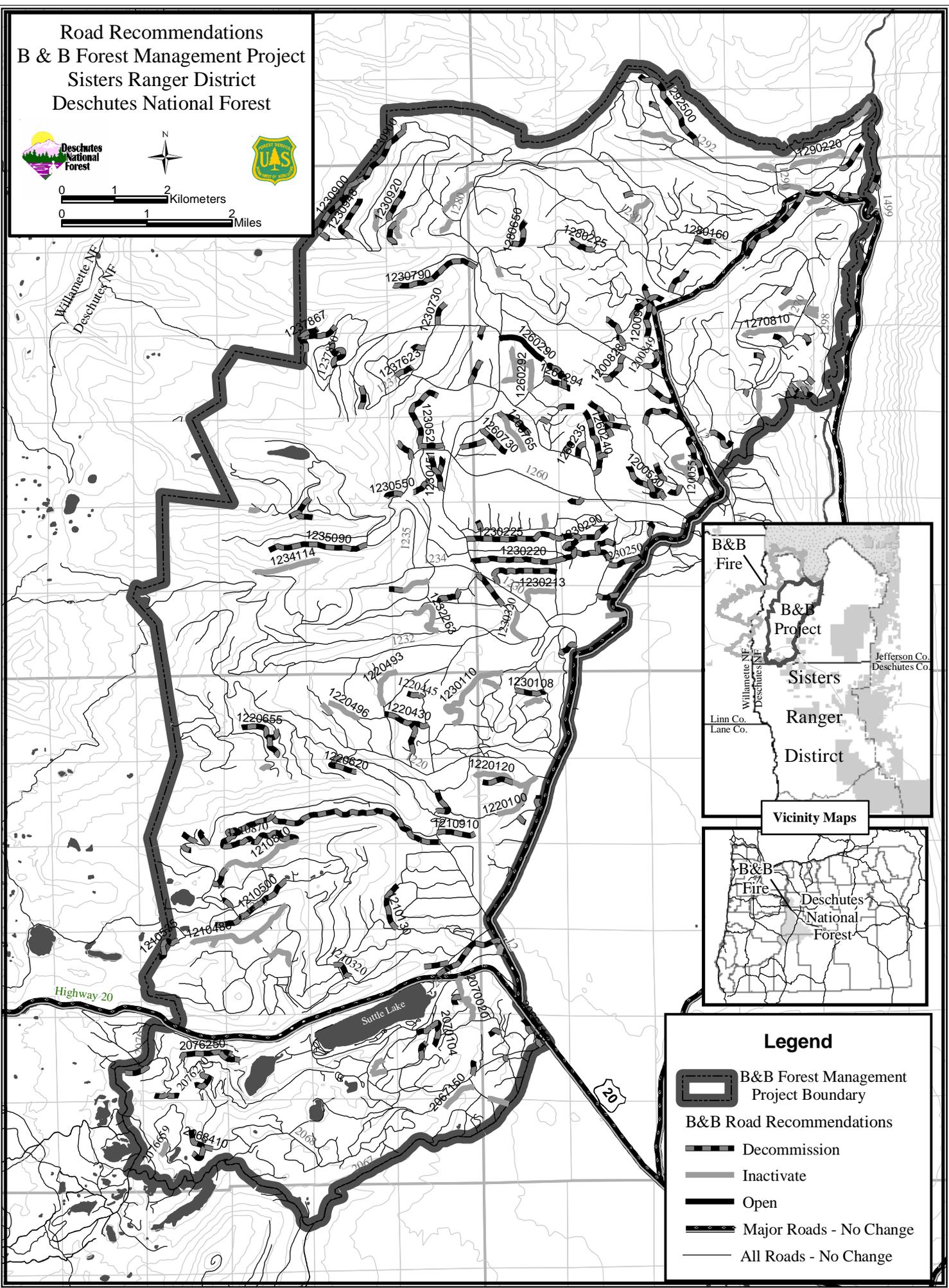
Legend

- Potential Treatment Areas by Vegetation Mortality
 - Stand Replacement
 - Mixed Mortality
 - Underburned or Unburned
- B&B Forest Management Project Boundary
- Late Successional Reserves

Road Recommendations
 B & B Forest Management Project
 Sisters Ranger District
 Deschutes National Forest



0 1 2 Kilometers
 0 1 2 Miles



Vicinity Maps

Legend

- B & B Forest Management Project Boundary
- B & B Road Recommendations**
- Decommission
- Inactivate
- Open
- Major Roads - No Change
- All Roads - No Change