



File Code: 7730
Date: December 2, 2015

Dear Planning Participant

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests will be considering the attached project and conducting environmental analyses in the near future. You are being notified of this proposal because you have expressed interest in projects on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Road, Administrative and Recreation Site Maintenance project is designed to address damage to Forest infrastructure from the 2015 wildfires.

A preliminary assessment has been made that this project falls within the category of actions listed in 36 CFR 220.6, thereby excluding it from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA), or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

To submit a comment on this proposal, please follow the instructions provided in the "How to Provide Comments" section.

Thank you for your continued participation in projects involving the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

Sincerely,


CHERYL F. PROBERT
Forest Supervisor



How to Provide Public Comments

Please review the following proposals and submit your site-specific comments, as described below, for inclusion in our analyses for the projects.

Comments should be submitted as an email attachment, in Word (preferred) or PDF format, to: comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us.

If you choose to comment on the proposals, please include the following:

- (1) Your name, address, phone number, email address, and organization, if any;
- (2) Title of project; and,
- (3) Specific facts and relevant rationale you feel should be considered.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names, telephone numbers, addresses, and email addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request this Agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the Agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality and the options available (see 7 CFR 1.27 for further information).

If you have questions about any details regarding this project, please contact the project proponent listed below.

If you have any questions regarding comment submission, you may contact Zach Peterson, Forest Planner, 208-935-4239 (work), 208-935-4275 (FAX); or mail inquiries to: Supervisor's Office, Nez Perce Clearwater NFs, 903 3rd Street, Kamiah, ID, 83536.

Please submit your comments by December 28, 2015, for full consideration.

Project Name: Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Road, Administrative Site, and Recreation Site Maintenance Project.

Proposed CE Categories:

36 CFR 220.6(d)(3) *Repair and maintenance of administrative sites.*

36 CFR 220.6(d)(4) *Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries.*

36 CFR 220.6 (d)(5) *Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities*

Location of Project Sites:

This project is located in Idaho County, on the Salmon River, Red River, Powell, North Fork, and Lochsa Ranger Districts of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The road segments that comprise this project are all within the fire perimeters of the Teepee Springs, Walsh, Woodrat, Baldy and other fires (see enclosed map).

Background:

The 2015 fire season on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests was exceptionally severe, not for total acres burned, but because of the compressed timeframes and location of the burned areas. Approximately 300 fires burned over 184,000 acres. A high proportion of the fires burned in lower elevation front country, where much of the Forests' infrastructure is located. Initial inventories indicate that the fires burned over 238 miles of system roads, 174 miles of system trails and approximately 25 recreation developments, high use areas and administrations sites. This has resulted in a much higher maintenance workload for the Forests, which this project is intended to address. Although this project is being planned under Categorical Exclusions reserved for maintenance, which do not require public scoping, because of the scale of this project the Forest Supervisor has chosen to conduct a formal scoping period.

Purpose and Need for Action:

The purpose of this project is to provide safe and unimpeded access along and near National Forest System roads, administrative facilities and recreation sites. The project is needed to maintain the routes, administrative facilities, and trailheads which were damaged by wildland fire.

Fires on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests killed and weakened trees along many Forest roads, recreation and administrative sites. Falling trees can damage the structure of the road surface, impede or capture runoff, or contribute woody material that plugs ditches and culverts designed to allow for drainage and maintenance of the road surface in a navigable condition. Falling trees can also block safe passage along roads and near high-use structures.

While many trees were killed as a direct result of wildfire, many more trees were intolerably stressed and will die over a period of several years. Secondary effects of the wildfires, including increases in insect and disease activity within burnt stands of timber will continue to increase for a period of several years, resulting in on going threats to human safety and safe access.

The Forest Service Manual on Transportation Systems directs the Agency to plan for danger tree management in a timely manner (FSM 7733.32 10) and in the case of fire to "Promptly start planning the commercial removal along medium and low priority roads if suppression and Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) activities have not mitigated the hazard and roads will remain open for administrative, commercial, or public traffic." (FSM 7733.32 (14)(e)). The Forest Service Transportation Handbook

7709.59_41.7 further states that “Road maintenance includes removing danger trees that threaten the safe use of the transportation system” (FSH 7709.59_41.7).

This action is needed because the roads within the project area are used by Forest Service employees, contractors, and Forest visitors (for recreational activities, woodcutting, hunting and fishing). A need exists to remove the trees before they further deteriorate from infestation by insects, decay organisms and/or succumb to high winds or heavy snows. Merchantable value of logs removed could be used to offset the service cost of mitigating the hazards in these areas.

Proposed Action:

This proposal would provide for public and employee safety by performing maintenance and reducing the hazard from fire-damaged trees along high priority roads, administrative sites, and recreation developments.

Specifically, the **maintenance component** of this project would include:

- ***Drainage Maintenance*** – Cleaning and maintaining culverts, drainage dips, open tops, rubber water diverters, ditches, and riprap needs.
- ***Blading*** – Surface blading performed to keep the roadbed in a condition to allow traffic and provide drainage, including removal of potholes, ruts, and washboards, correcting improper templates, restoring proper surface drainage, repairing minor cracks, and removing minor slumps.
- ***Slides and Road repairs*** – Removal of minor slide material from the roadway (less than 10 cubic yards), restoration of travel way, and repairing rutting issues and washboards.
- ***Rock and stump removal*** – Removal of stumps and rocks that roll into the roadway.
- ***Signs and Access Control Maintenance***– Sign, route marker, and mile post markers installation and maintenance; gate installation and repair; and earth and concrete barrier installation, maintenance and repair.
- ***Brush Cutting*** – Removal of brush, trees and shrubs within the roadway clearing limits. Material would be cut near flush to the ground by hand and within 8 inches with a mechanical brusher.
- ***Trail Maintenance***- Restoring damaged trail tread, removing fallen logs and rocks from trails and brushing to ensure safe, travelable trail condition.
- ***Administrative and Recreation Site Maintenance***- Maintenance and replacement of infrastructure damaged as a result of fire. Any of the above listed maintenance actions would be utilized as necessary in administrative sites and recreation sites.

The **hazard tree mitigation** component would include:

- ***Tree Felling*** - Felling of structurally weakened trees, dead trees and those likely to die that have the potential to impact forest users or employees traveling on the road prism. These would typically include trees within two tree lengths on either side of system roads, which represents an average distance based on the tallest trees that may fall and impact the road. This treatment considers the potential for falling trees to strike other weakened trees closer to the road, causing them to fall onto the road. The tree felling area would not typically exceed an average of 200 feet on either side of the road; the actual width would be determined during implementation. The same two-tree length concept would be used within and surrounding

administrative sites and recreation areas. This width is approximate and would be reduced or widened based on the long-term maintenance need. Hazard trees that are dead or likely to die within the next year would be felled in areas where removal is not occurring. Felling activities in these areas where removal of the product would not occur may be implemented annually to ensure safety risks are mitigated.

- **Timber Removal**- Removal of the felled trees may occur and logs would be sold to offset the cost implementing this project. In areas where tree removal may occur, trees that are dead, likely to die in the next 5 years or otherwise pose a hazard would be felled and removed. Ground based logging systems would be limited to slopes less than 35%. Cable based systems would be utilized in areas with steeper slopes. Removal of trees would not occur in the following areas:
 - Within riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCA's);
 - On ground verified landslide prone areas (LSP);
 - Within stands that have been field verified to have retained old-growth characteristics following the fire;
 - Within Idaho Roadless Rule areas except in areas within a Backcountry Restoration theme; and
 - In areas where cultural resources could be adversely affected.

- **Fuel Reduction** - Where fuel loads pose a hazard to access, activity fuel concentrations generated through this project may be reduced using a variety of treatments, including but not limited to bucking, lopping, scattering, chipping, masticating, hand piling, machine piling, or pile/jackpot burning, as fuel loadings, slopes and resource concerns allow.

Roads were identified for treatment based on a coarse filter/fine filter approach. This process used a number of sideboards to determine which areas to include in this project. Sideboards that would exclude areas include, among others, road segments or administrative sites that are located within Idaho Roadless Rule Areas (except backcountry restoration theme), Designated Wilderness Areas, and culturally significant areas such as Pilot Rock and Pilot Knob.

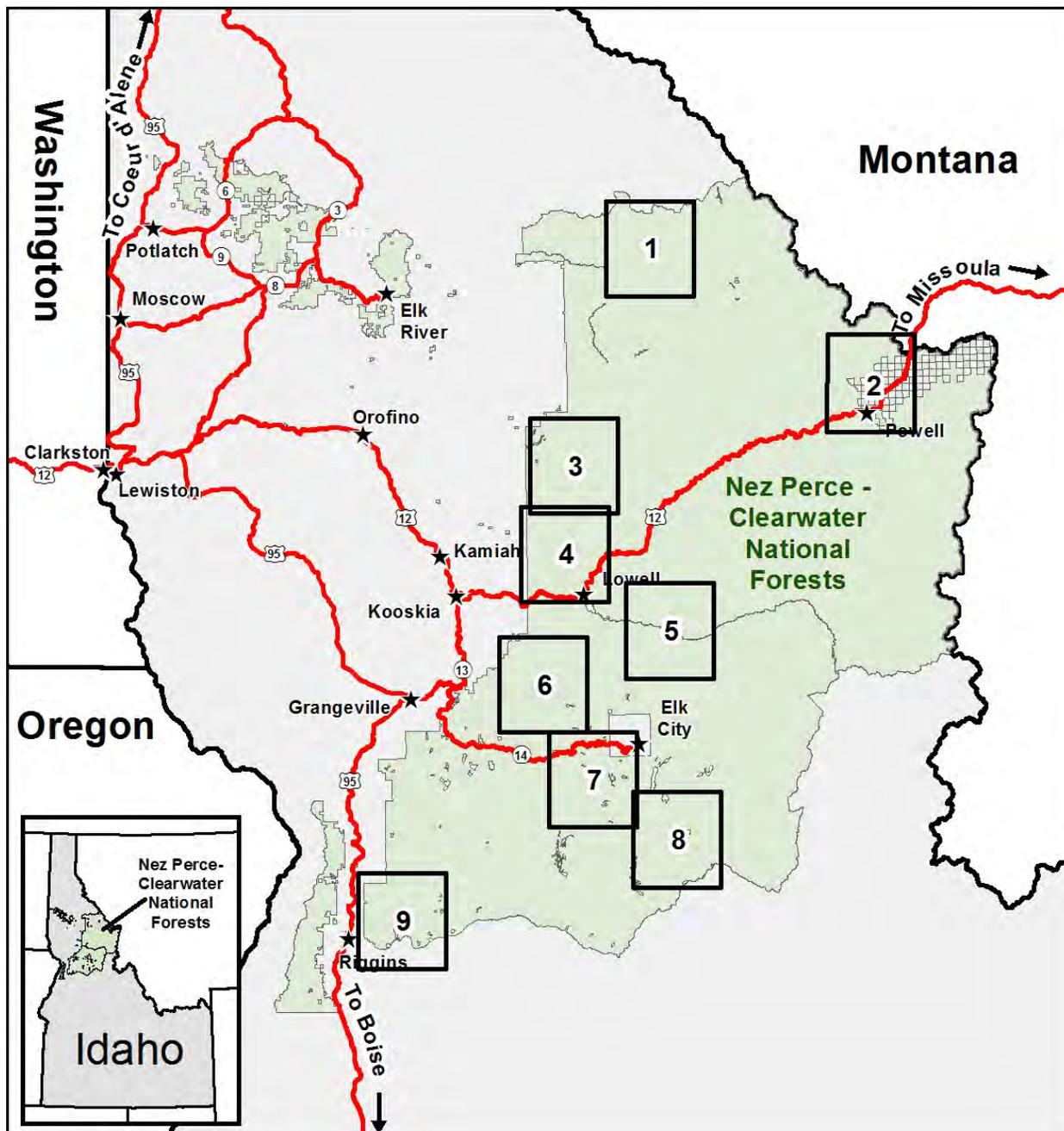
Design features from past actions, verified by field surveys, will be used to limit possible adverse effects to soils, water quality and fish habitat. These include directionally-felling trees and limiting equipment passes wherever possible to reduce the amount of off-road equipment usage; limiting operating periods to avoid saturated soils; locating skid trails, landings and yarding corridors in such a manner as to minimize the area of detrimental soil effects. Hazard trees would be identified using regional hazard tree and fire mortality guidelines. No healthy live trees would be removed as part of this project. In areas with high burn severity, trees would be processed on-site and slash (tops and limbs) scattered on site to add organic material and reduce surface erosion. In these areas ground-based harvest would generally be restricted to over-snow or frozen soil conditions, and no excavated skid trails or landings would be permitted.

Project Implementation:

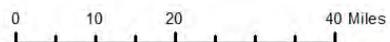
This project would be implemented beginning in January 2016 and continuing through the summer of 2016.

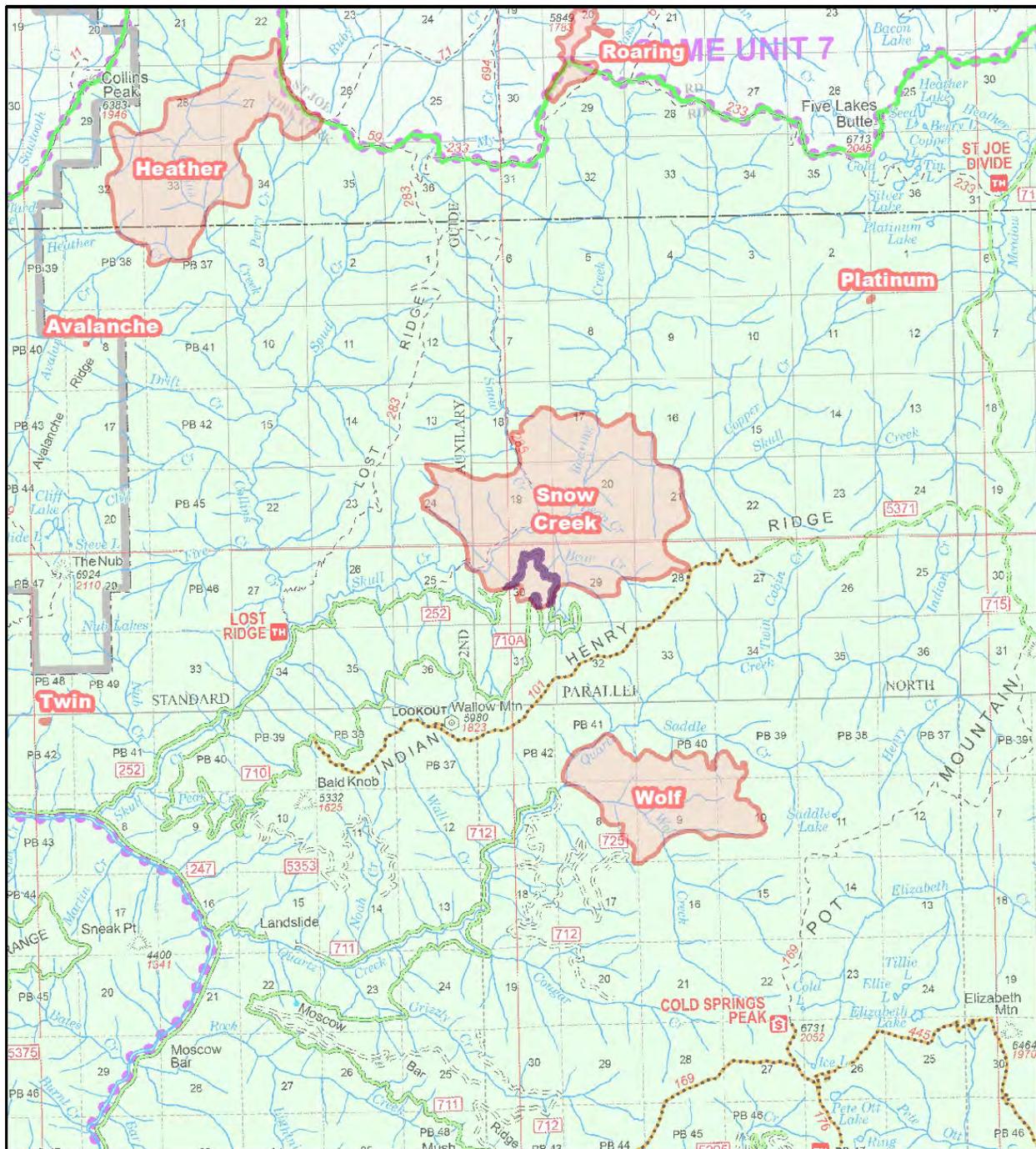
Project Information:

Zach Peterson, Forest Planner, 208-935-4239, zacharyapeterson@fs.fed.us.



**Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Road, Recreation, and Administrative Site
Maintenance Locations**



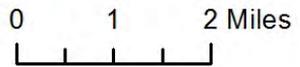


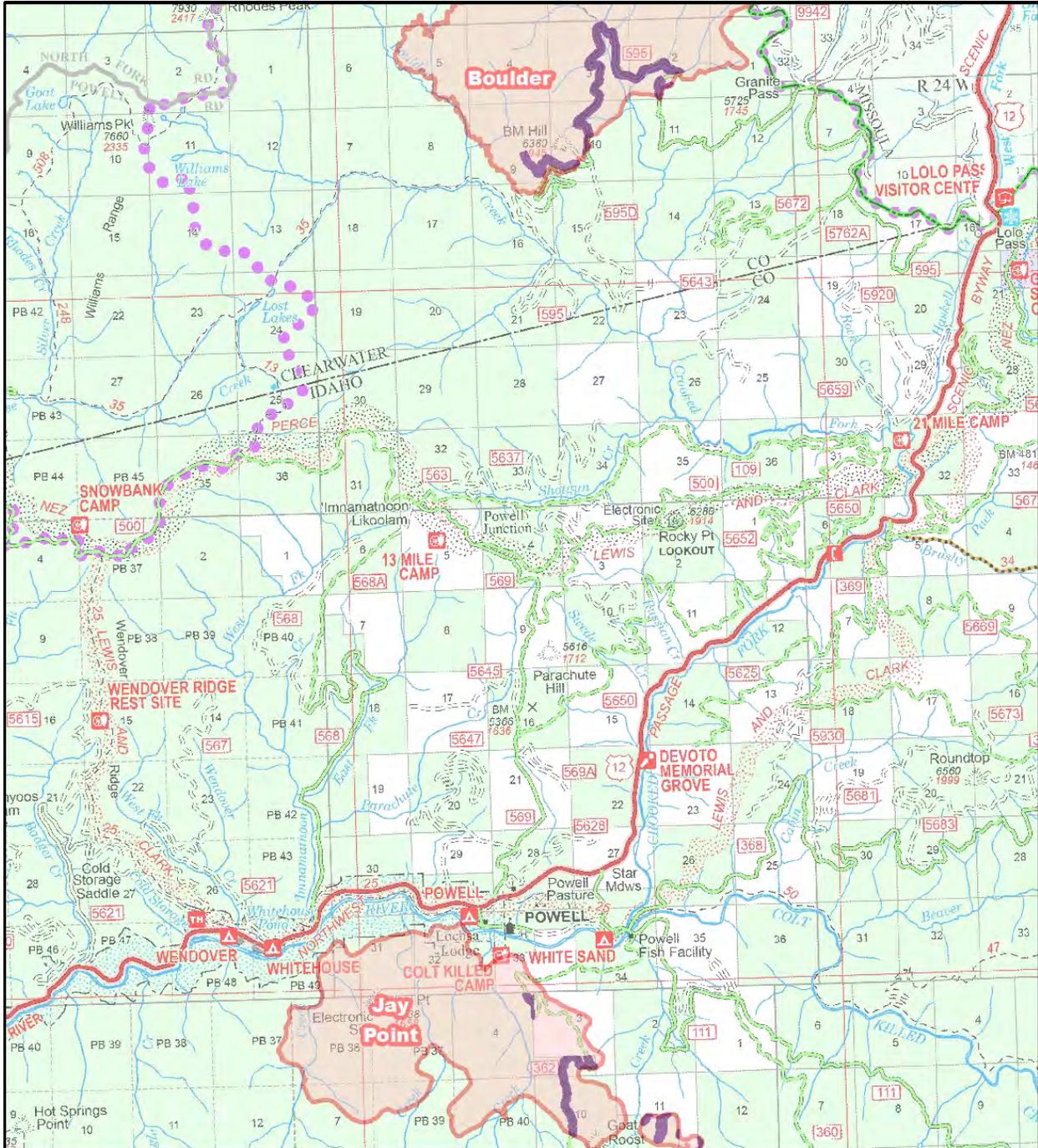
Snow Creek

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires



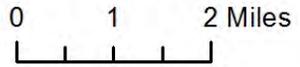


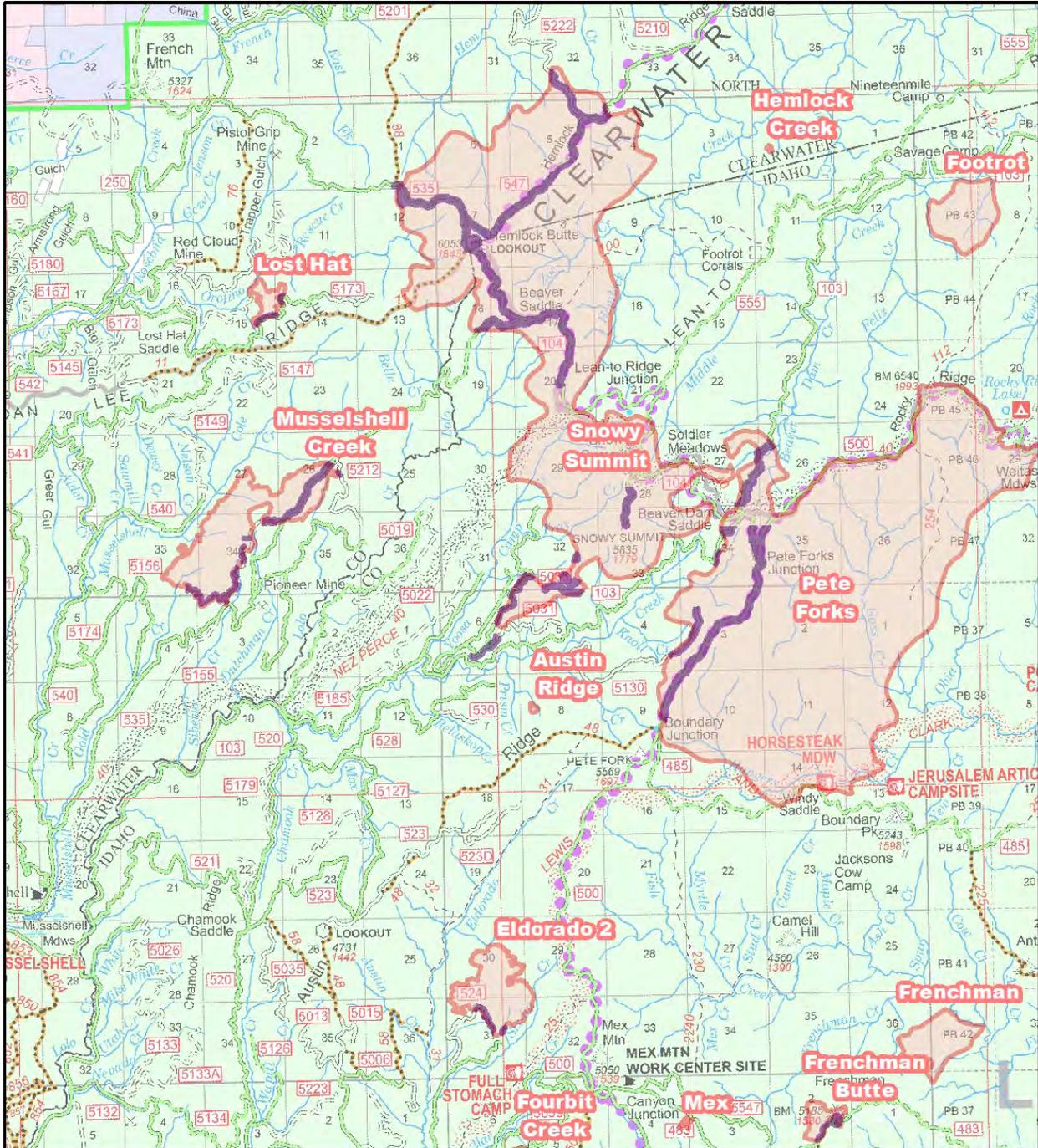
Boulder/Jay Point

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires



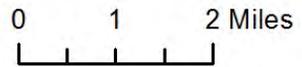


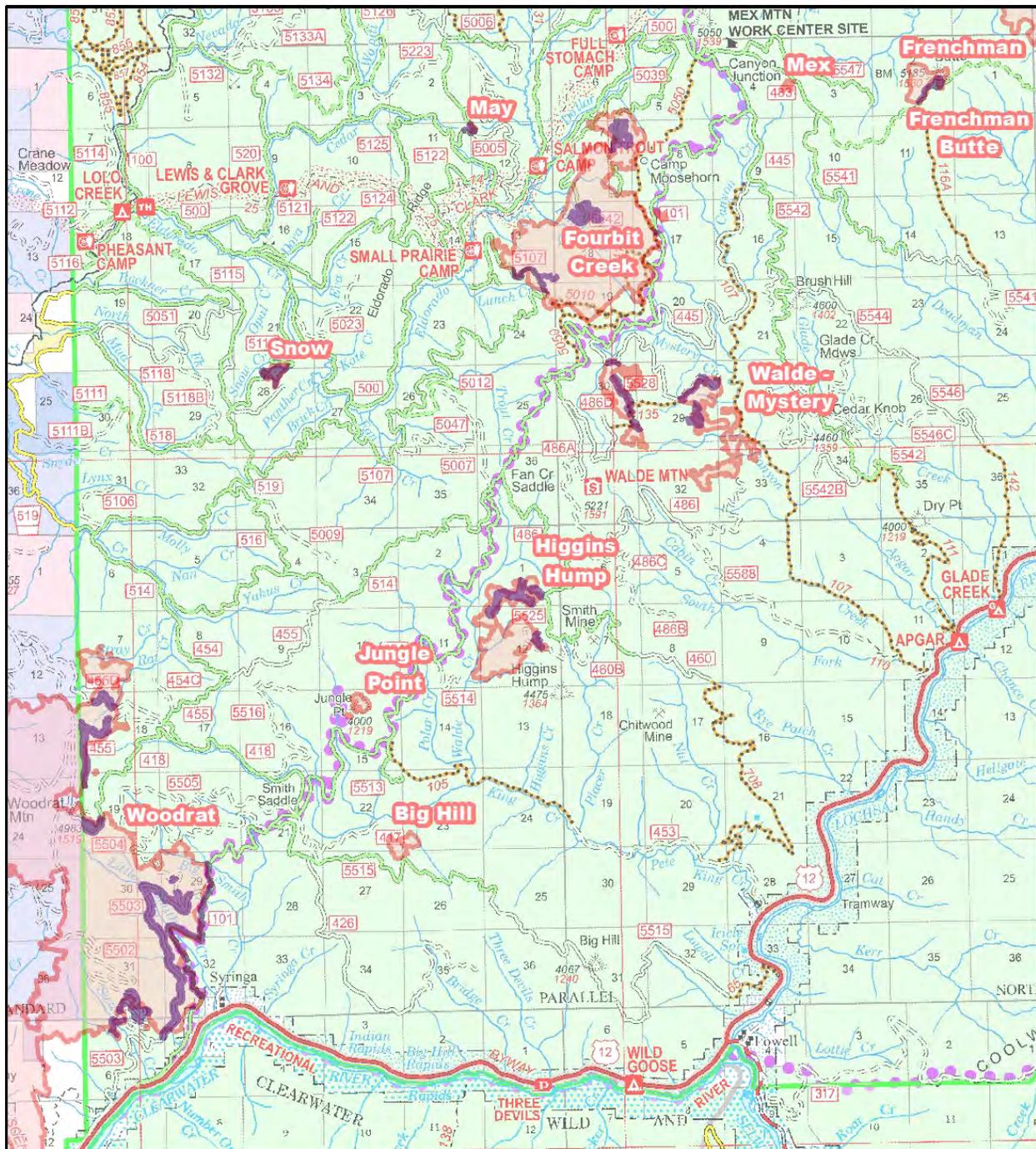
Motorway North

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires





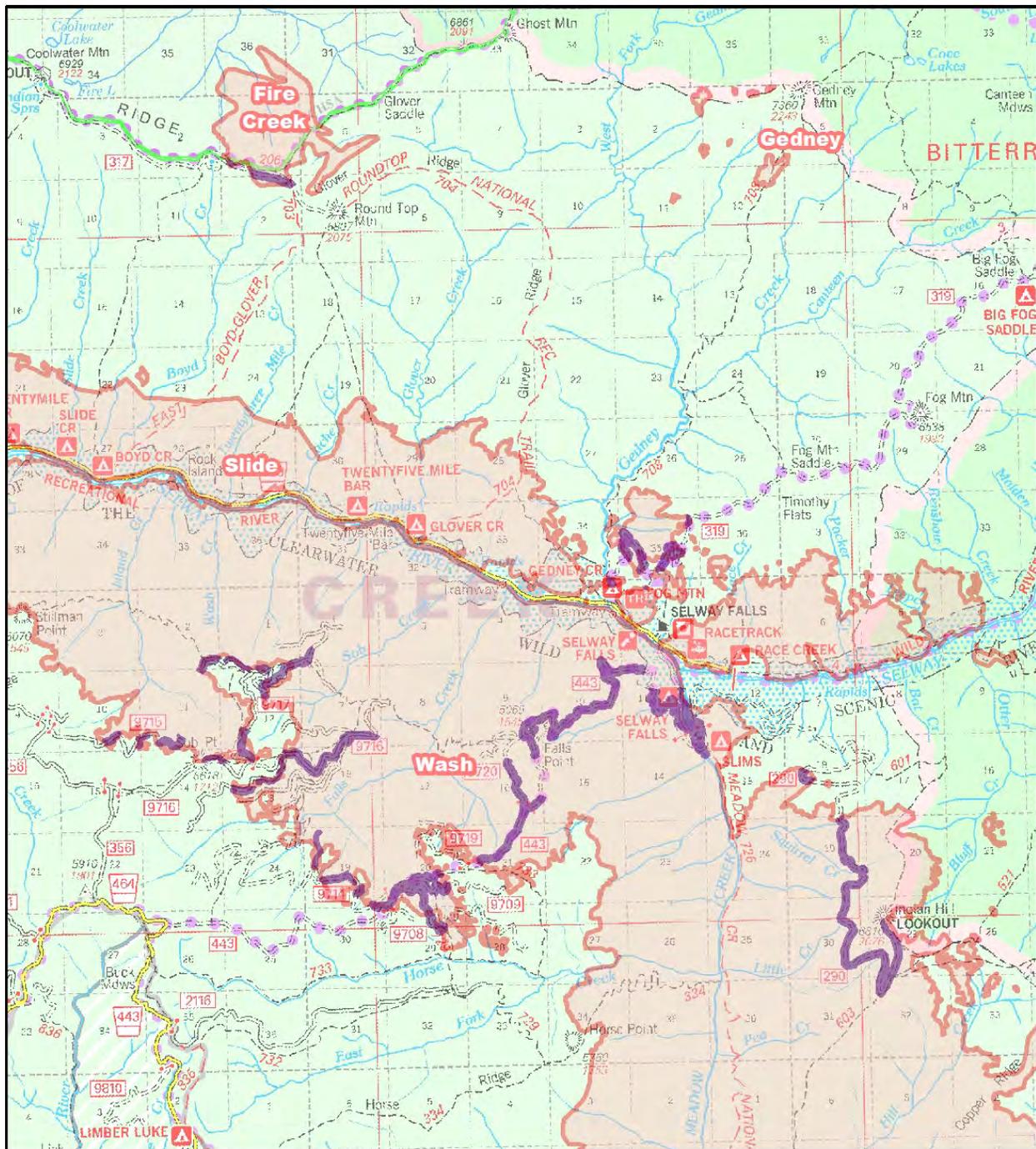
Motorway South

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires



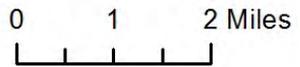


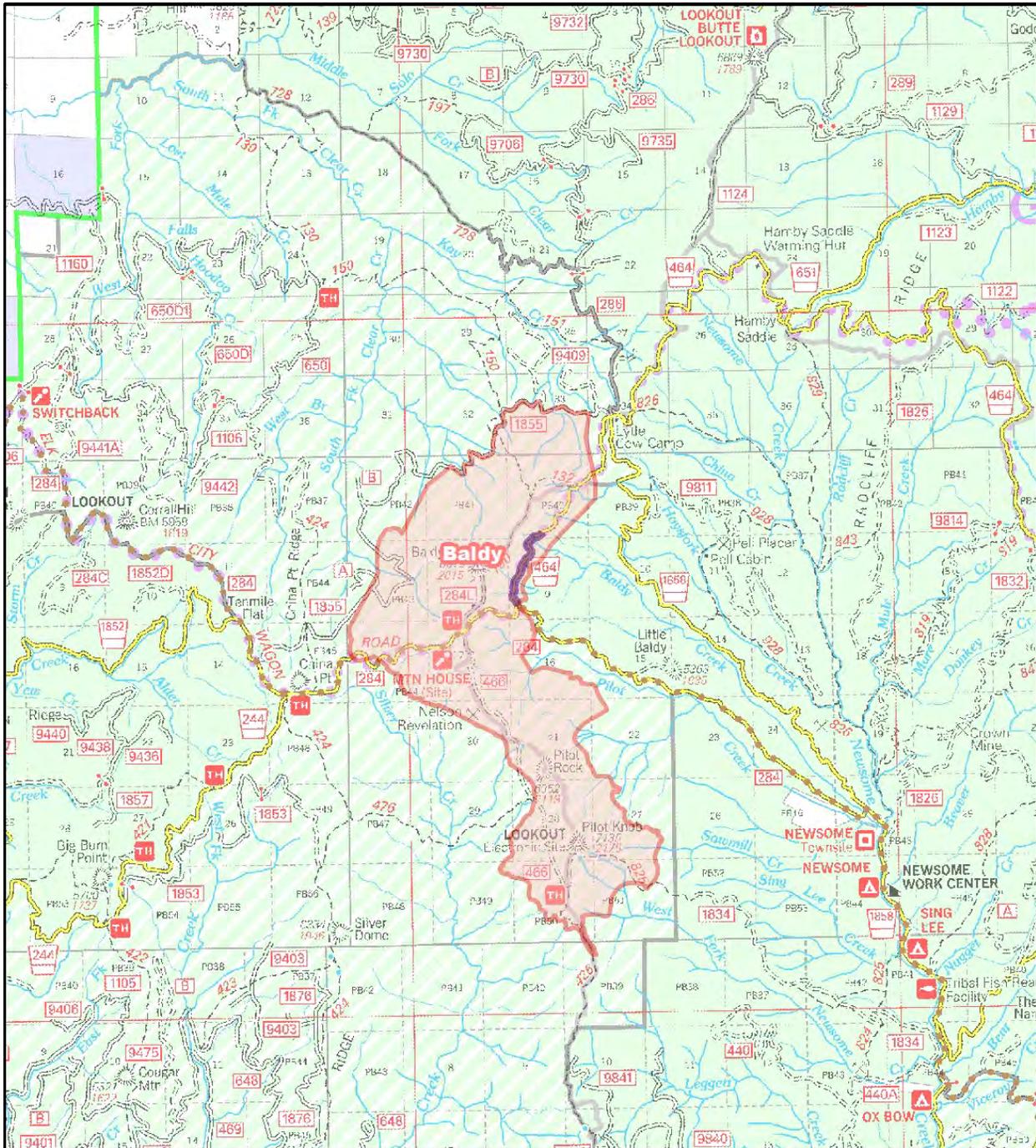
Slide/Wash

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires





Baldy

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires





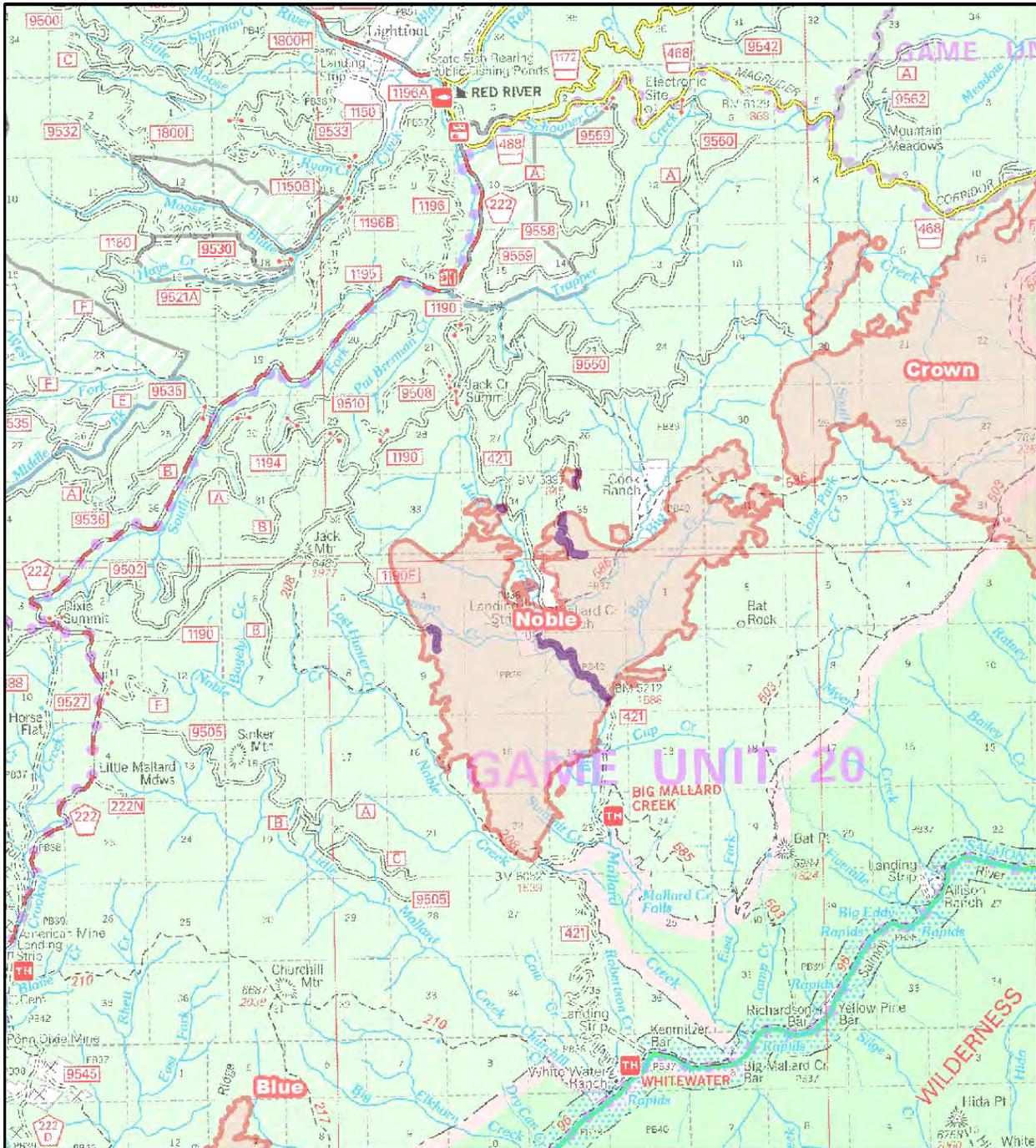
Deadwood

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires

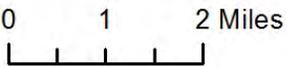


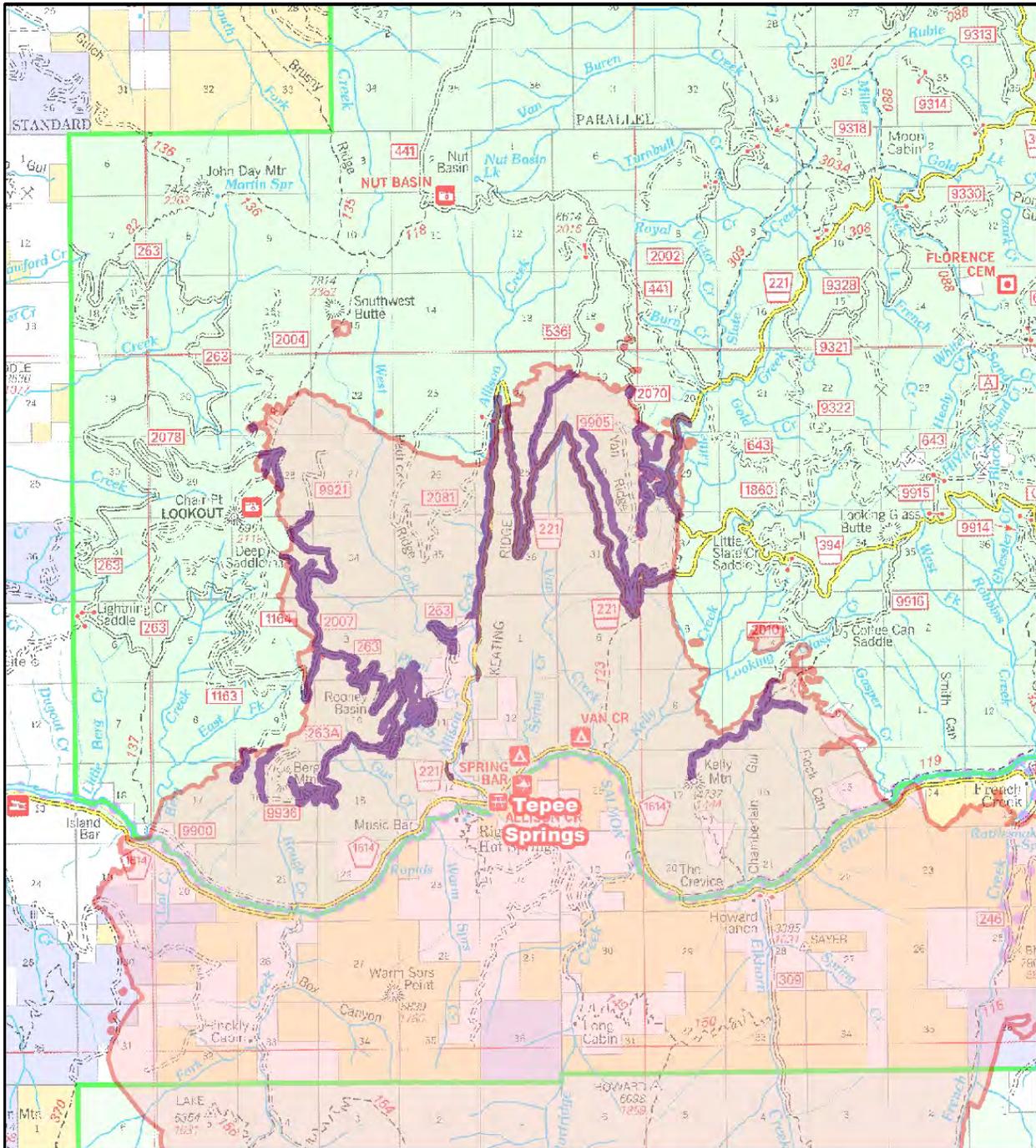


Noble
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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires





Tepee Springs

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Legend

- Treatment Areas
- 2015 Fires

