USDA United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Forest Supervisor's Office
903 3rd Street, Kamiah, ID 83536
208-935-2513 (office)

File Code: 1950
Date: December 17, 2015

Dear Planning Participant:

We will be considering the enclosed project proposals and conducting environmental analyses on them in the near future.

You are being notified of these proposals because you have expressed interest in projects on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

Preliminary assessments have been made that the following projects fall within a category of actions listed in 36 CFR 220.6, thereby excluding them from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). On our Forest, we refer to these as "Small NEPA" projects. Please feel free to offer your comments regarding them (see next page).

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

Sincerely,

CHERYL F. PROBERT
Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests

Enclosures: Project Descriptions and Maps

Information Regarding 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. 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).

Please note that this opportunity for comment is primarily for you to make statements regarding why the project should or should not proceed as described below. If you have questions about any details regarding an individual project, we encourage you to please contact the project proponent, listed with each project on the pages below, to possibly get answers (including requests for more detailed project maps) before submitting your comments.

If you have any questions regarding comment submission, please contact Norma Staaf, 208-935-4284 (work), 208-935-4275 (FAX); or, mail inquiries: Supervisor's Office, Nez Perce-Clearwater NFs, 903 3rd Street, Kamiah, ID, 83536.

Please submit your comments by January 29, 2016, for full consideration.

1) *Lochsa NPT Partnership Culvert Replacements (Lochsa & Powell RDs)*

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18): *Installing a newly-designed structure that replaces an existing culvert to improve aquatic organism passage and prevent resource and property damage where the road or trail maintenance level does not change.*

Legal Coordinates (Boise Meridian): West Fork Deadman Creek: NE, SW Sec 14, T34N, R7E; Powell Creek: NW, NW Sec 33, T9N, R25W; Pete King Creek: NE, NW Sec 21, T33N, R6E.

Background: Forest Service and NPT are conducting an ongoing assessment process to identify and replace those culverts that create barriers to passage for both resident and anadromous fish species, including Fall Chinook salmon and Steelhead. In addition, culvert replacements also often provide for greater capacity during higher flows, reducing the likelihood of culvert failure. The Nez Perce Tribe, in partnership with the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest proposes to replace 3 undersized culverts at the following locations:

a. West Fork Deadman Creek Culvert (Rd. 5541 MP 3.3) - The existing 56" round CMP is undersized and is a barrier to passage for salmonids and resident fish/insects depending on flow (drop at outlet). CMP is failing, and water is flowing underneath the pipe.
b. Powell Creek (Rd. 102, 0.6 mi) - The existing 42" x72" squash CMP is undersized and is a barrier to passage for Steelhead and resident fish/insects depending on flows. Existing pipe is also undersized for hydrologic conditions.
c. Pete King Creek (Rd. 418, 1.13 mi.). - The existing 46"round CMP is undersized and is a barrier to passage for salmonids and resident fish/insects as a result of high velocities at higher flows. Pipe is also undersized for hydrologic conditions such as unexpected storm flows.

Project Design / Equipment: At each location, a contractor will remove the existing culvert, ensure the channel is to grade, and install a new bottomless structural plate arch culvert. The contractor will then re-build the road prism and provide erosion control on the new fill slopes, and if necessary, re-surface the road.

Culvert replacements require local clearing of vegetation around the crossing and excavation of the road and fill over the pipe. There may be additional excavation to accommodate concrete footers (foundation) for the pipe itself. All this excavated material is then replaced.

We anticipate using an excavator in the 50,000lb. class, and a dump truck. Projects of this type also may require the use of a compacting roller and a grader for final road surfacing.

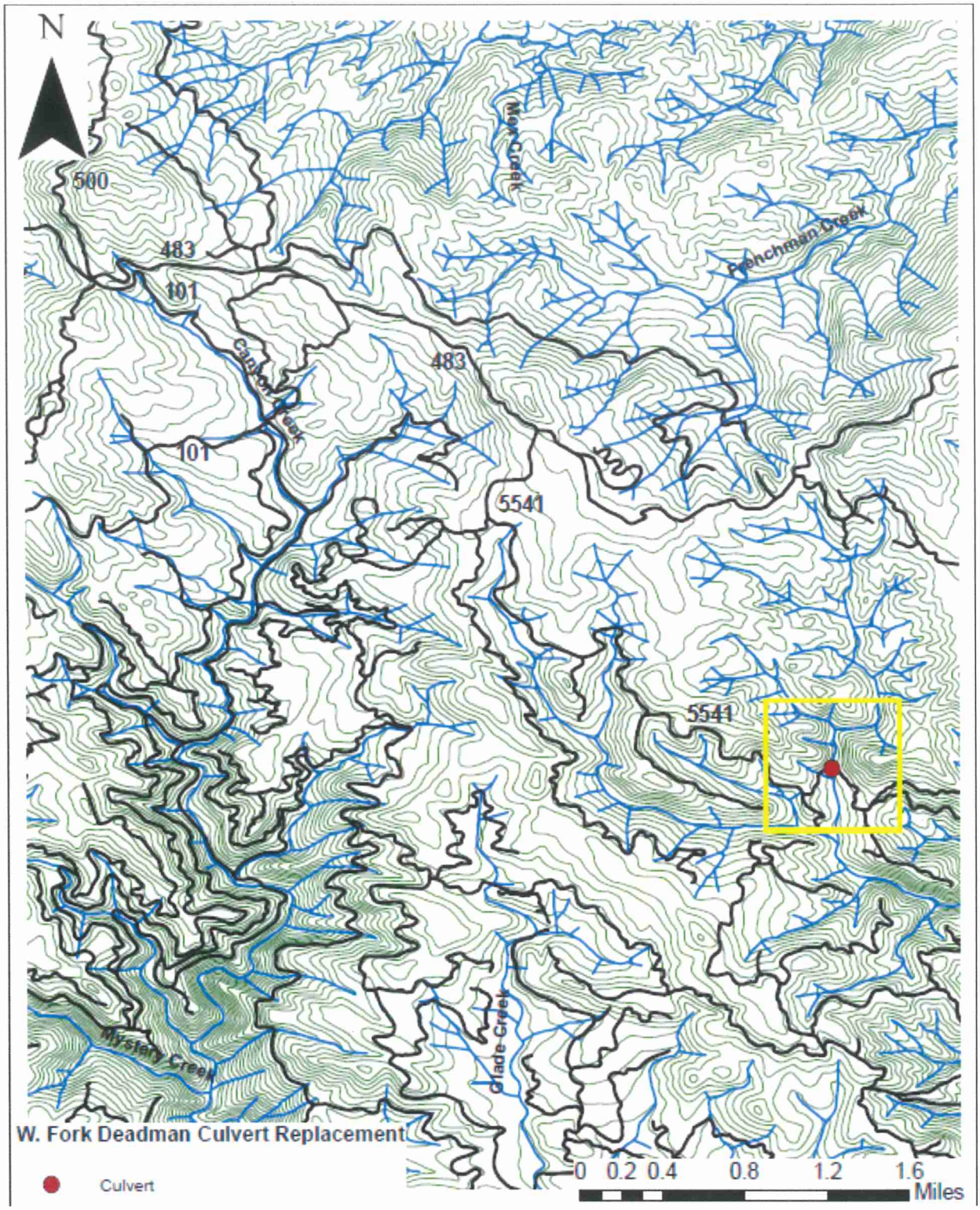
We do not anticipate this culvert replacement to impact any other resource areas, other than a temporary production of sediment at the site. Other than that, replacing the culvert with a larger version with a functioning stream bed may increase the number of resident and anadromous fish above the crossing in the future.

Project Implementation: As West Fork of Deadman Creek, Powell Creek and Pete King Creek are fish bearing streams, it is likely the project will be completed within the FWS/NOAA 'fish window' of July 15 to August 15. Extensions to this window can be and have been granted through consultation with the respective agencies. Work would be conducted during low flow conditions and would follow any terms and conditions imposed by the ESA regulatory agencies.

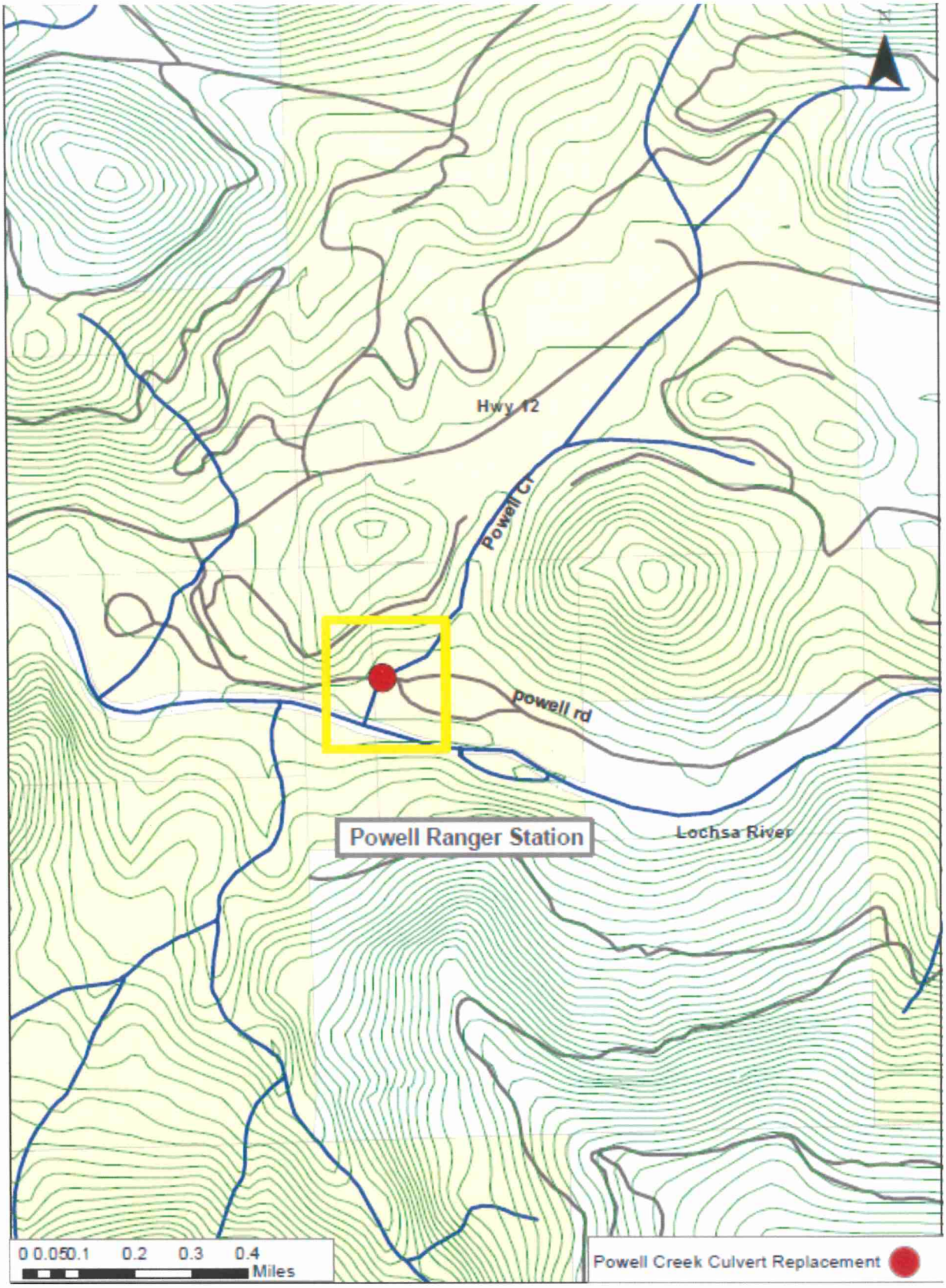
Any required permits for disturbance of water or wetlands would be obtained prior to initiating work (Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit).

Project Information: Taylor Greenup, Hydrology and Watershed Restoration, 208-476-8228, tgreenup@fs.fed.us.

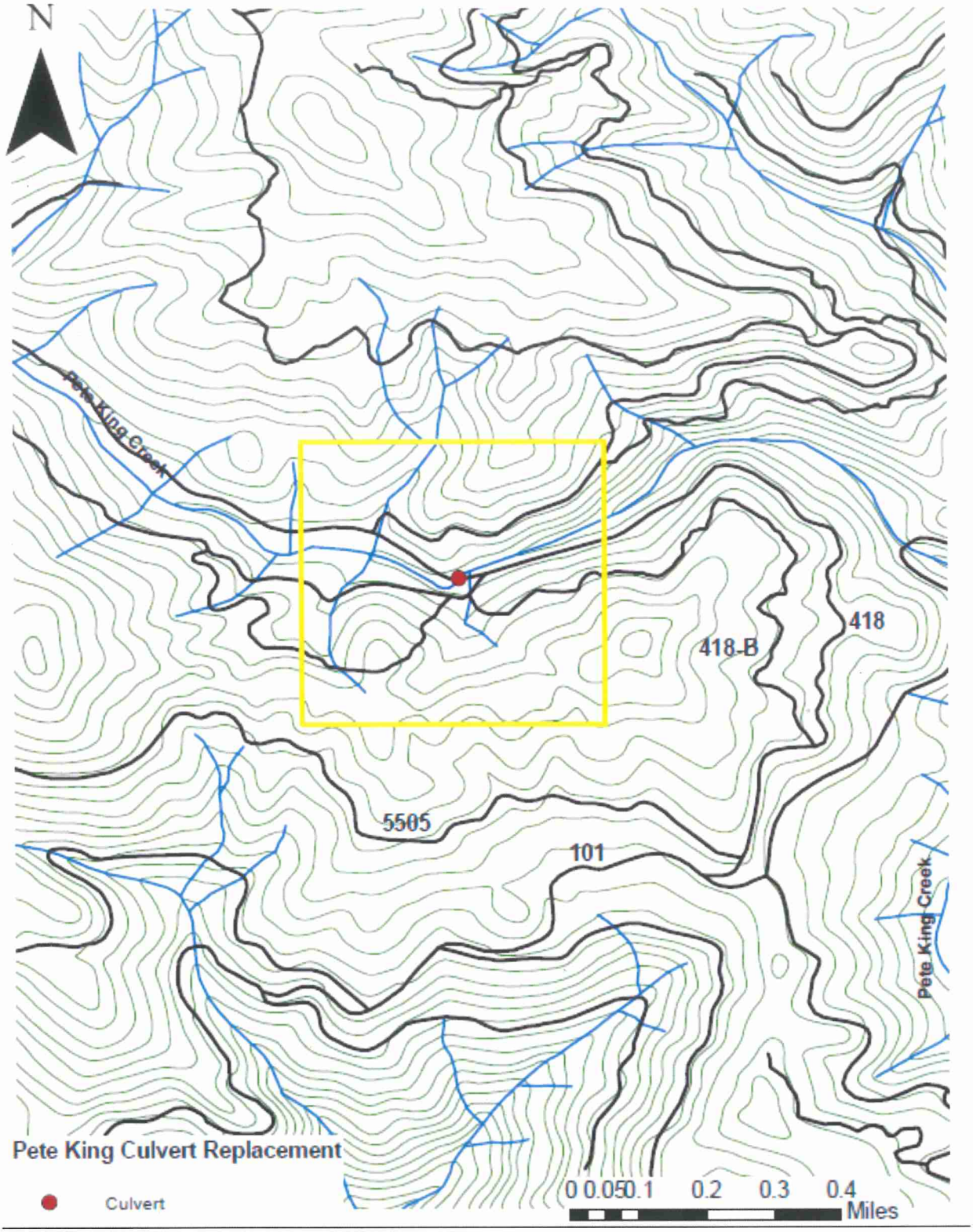
Map of West Fork Deadman Creek Culvert Replacement



Map of Powell Creek (Rd 102) Culvert Replacement



Map of Pete King Creek Culvert Replacement



2) *South Brushy Fork Non-system Road Decommissioning (Powell RD)*

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(20): *Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, excluding National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails to a more natural condition that may include removing, replacing, or modifying drainage structures and ditches, reestablishing vegetation, reshaping natural contours and slopes, reestablishing drainage-ways, or other activities that would restore site productivity and reduce environmental impacts.*

Legal Coordinates of Project Site: SW Sec 16, T9N, R24W, access via Forest Road 5669

Background: The Nez Perce Tribe, in partnership with the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forest proposes to decommission and recontour up to eight miles of non-system that have been identified through inventory as causing severe erosion into streams at the present time as well as having high potential to continue depositing large amounts of sediment into streams. Many of the culverts both log and metal, on these roads are also plugged or failing. These roads are currently overgrown with brush that excludes motorized access. Most of the roads identified for road decommissioning are on dissected stream breakland land types, some are on mass wasting land types, both of which are subject to landslides.

Project Design / Equipment: Using heavy equipment, a contractor will clear the roads of vegetation, then decompact the road and inboard ditch, and recontour the road by pulling up the fill slope and re-shaping the ground close to its original contour. In addition, the operator will clump plant native vegetation on the recontoured slopes, and pull duff and organic material from the adjacent up-hill side to enhance revegetation. Where the roads cross streams, the operator will remove the existing culvert (log or cmp), re-establish the grade of the stream, and if necessary, construct grade control structures in the stream bed to mimic a typical step-pool system. In areas where sub-surface flow has been interrupted and has caused ponding, the contractor will excavate a shallow depression to ensure drainage, and will use the excavator to plant vegetation perpendicular to the flow to help re-establish sub-surface flow. It is common practice to scatter the removed vegetation (slash) on the recontoured surface to help limit erosion and provide micro-sites for re-vegetation.

Partnership road decommissioning uses a variety of BMPs including those for invasive plant management (equipment cleaning and inspection), and water quality, which may include erosion control measures, and native plant re-vegetation.

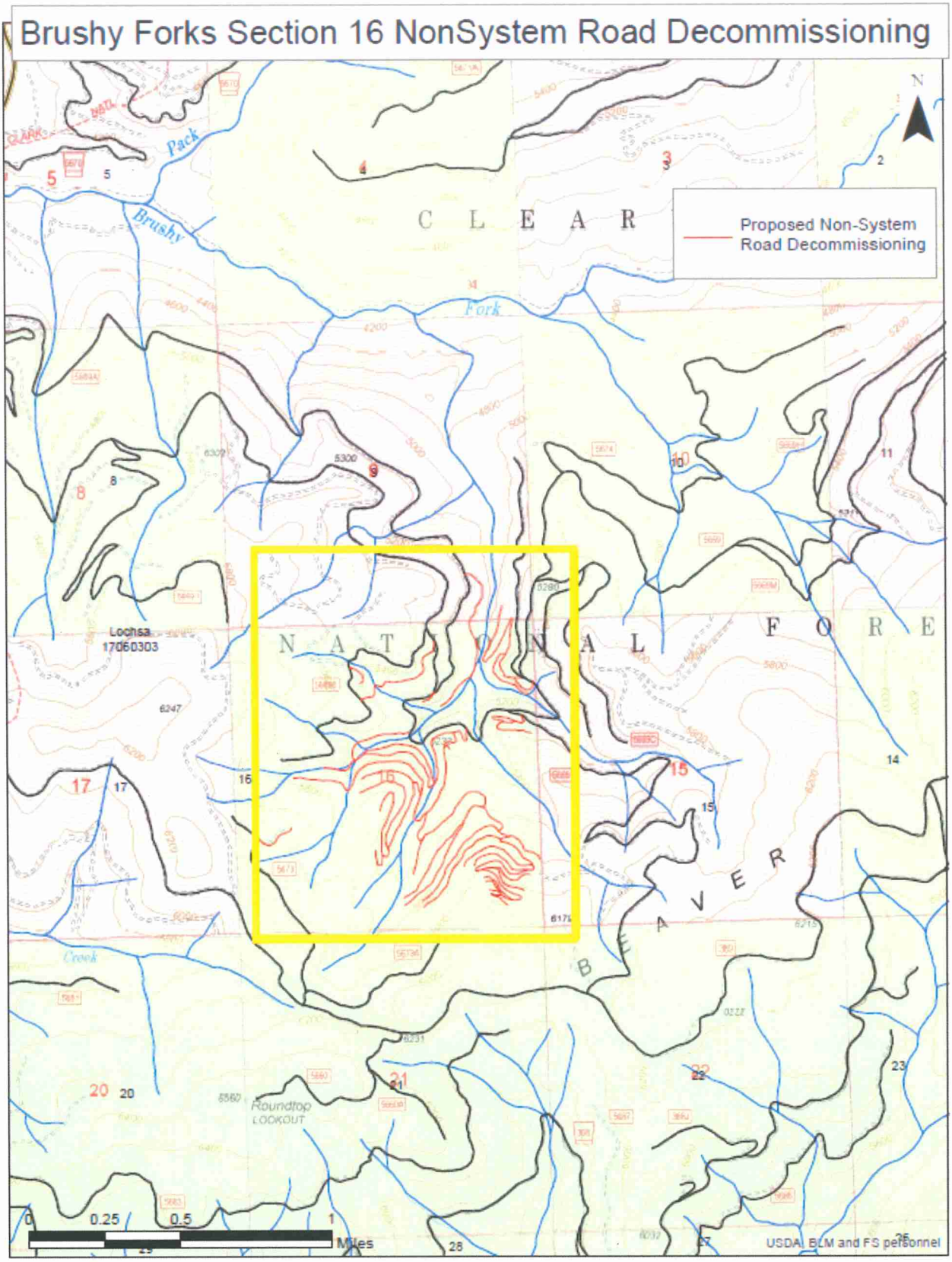
Any required permits for disturbance of water or wetlands would be obtained prior to initiating work (Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit).

Mechanical support would follow BMPs for fuel storage and machine fueling to minimize the risk of a fuels spill into live water. The contractor would have fuel spill containment supplies onsite in the event of a fuel spill and their employees would be trained in the proper application and use of those materials.

Project Implementation: The project would be implemented during the summer-fall of 2016.

Project Information: Taylor Greenup, Hydrology and Watershed Restoration, 208-476-8228, tgreenup@fs.fed.us.

Map of the S. Brushy Fork Non-system Road Decommissioning Project



3) *Pete King Creek Beaver Dam Analog Project (Lochsa RD)*

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18): *Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structure to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable.*

Legal Coordinates of Project Site: NW, NE Sec 30, T33N, R6E

Background: Pete King Creek suffers from chronic, long term sediment aggradation, and high cobble embeddedness. The sediment aggradation leads to diminished riffle-pool sequences; thereby causing a severe deterioration in the fish habitat resources of gravel streams. A highly pronounced riffle-pool sequence provides the cover and diversity of substrate and hydraulic conditions that meet the various requirements of life stages of steelhead, salmon, and trout.

To encourage scour and transport of fine sediment, the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), in partnership with the Nez Perce –Clearwater National Forest proposes to install several beaver dam analogs. These dam structures include small post and sapling sized material designed to function during moderate flows to scour pools, redistribute sediment, and improve channel complexity for spawning and rearing habitat along a one mile stretch of Pete King Creek. The intent is to mimic the natural conditions created by beaver dam construction and their effects on stream geomorphology, and to encourage beaver occupation of the structures.

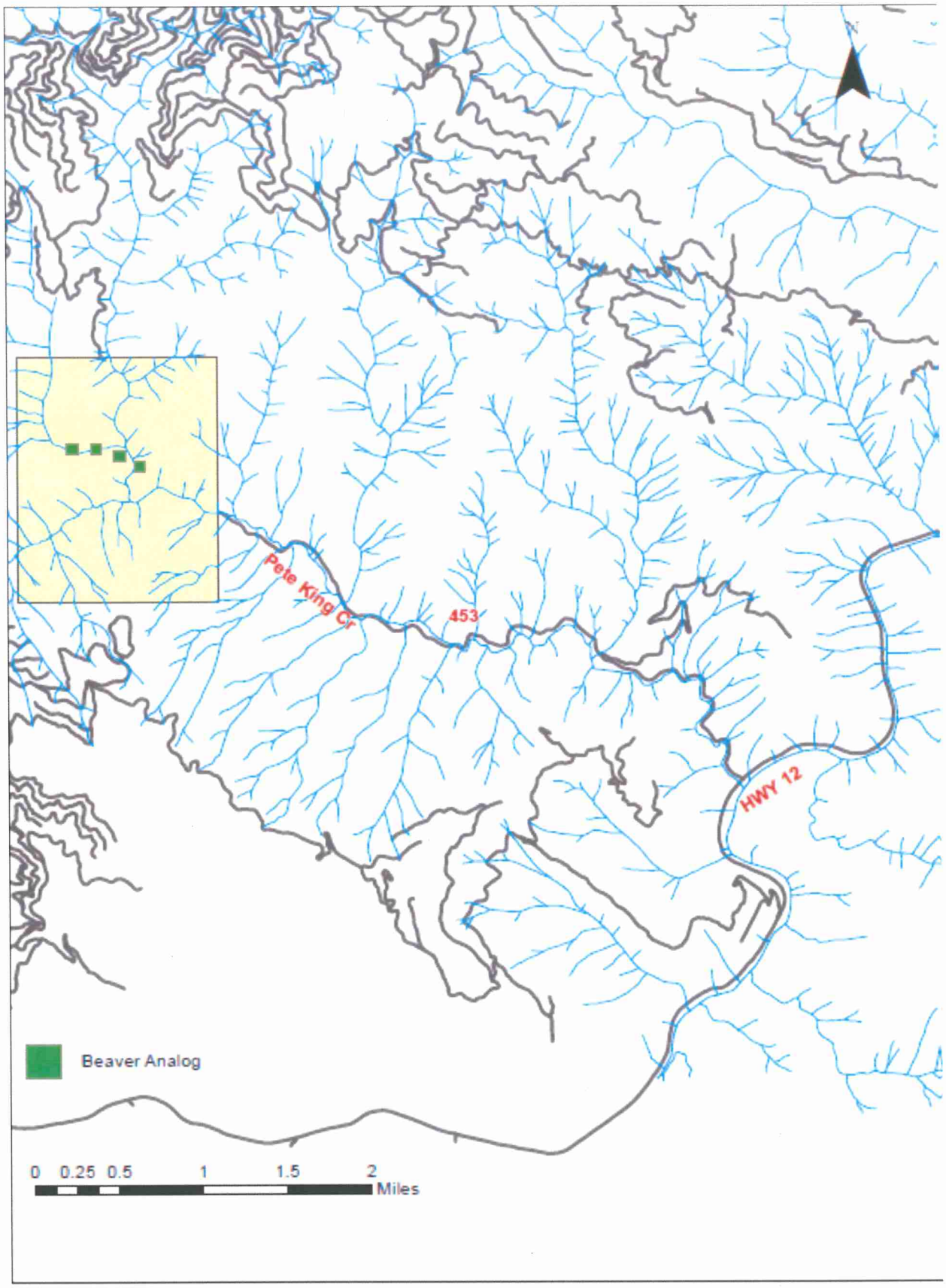
Project Design / Equipment: NPT personnel will install up to four beaver dam analog structures using un-treated posts and locally gathered plant materials to create smaller in-stream structures to help scour pools and redistribute sediment to provide more complex and usable habitat within the channel. These analog structures will be designed and strategically placed to mimic the structures already present in Pete King Creek. All work will be done by hand. The un-treated posts will be installed using a post driver and will be set partially across the active channel of Pete King Creek. Native vegetation will be woven in between posts to mimic a dam that will recruit additional vegetation and organic debris.

BMPs implemented would include that all equipment and vehicles be thoroughly cleaned to mitigate for the spread of weeds. A spill kit would be on-site to mitigate for fuel spills (chainsaw gas). Also, any required permits for disturbance of water or wetlands would be obtained prior to initiating work (Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit).

Project Implementation: Since Pete King Creek is a fish-bearing stream, the project would need to be implemented during the FWS/NOAA "fish window" of July 15 – August 15, 2016.

Project Information: Taylor Greenup, Hydrology and Watershed Restoration, 208-476-8228, tgreenup@fs.fed.us.

Map of the Pete King Creek Beaver Dam Analog Project



4) *Elk Creek Falls Trailhead Vegetation Management (Palouse RD)*

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(d)(5): *Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.*

Legal Coordinates of Project Site: Sections 2 and 11, T39N, R2E

Background: The area surrounding Elk Creek Falls Trailhead is heavily forested. The need to address dead and dying hazard trees has increased over the last number of years, as disease agents including Indian Paint Fungus and Armillaria root disease become more prevalent. A vegetation management plan has been developed to direct the restoration of the coniferous vegetation found at this site.

The Elk Creek Falls Trailhead serves one of, if not the, most popular trailheads on the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forest and with that, it is important to address visitor safety at the site; we feel that the best way to accomplish this, while simultaneously addressing long-term vegetation and visual health is through implementation of the proposed vegetation management project.

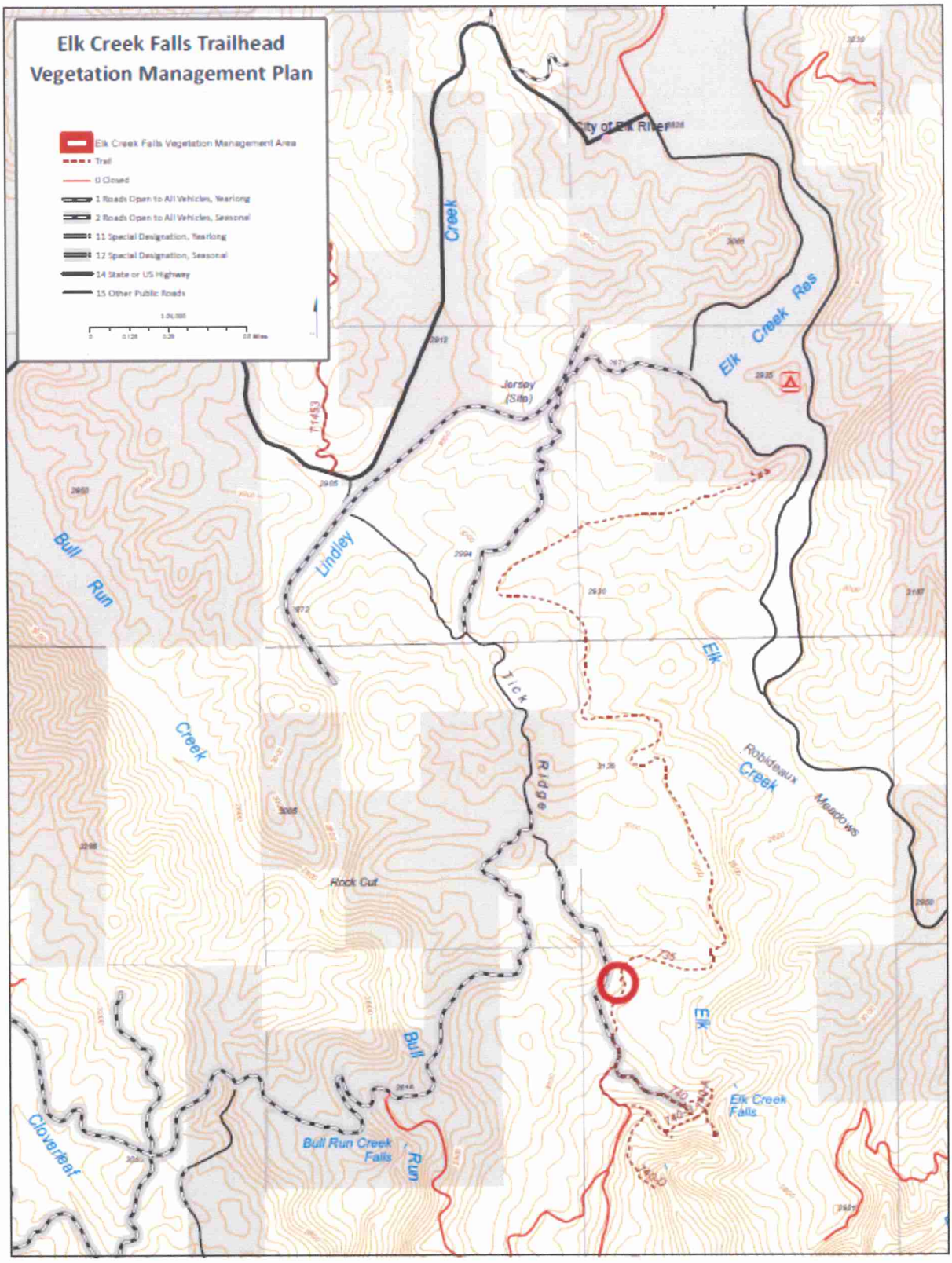
Project Design / Equipment: To properly address public safety, hazard trees will be identified for removal within the identified boundaries of Elk Creek Falls Trailhead in phase one of the vegetative management plan. Ground disturbance will be limited to certain trees having to be cabled down the slope to the log-deck site at the trailhead.

No vehicles will move off of the trailhead parking surface or the existing roadbed. For trees that cannot be removed directly from the roadside, sawyers will reach trees by foot and fall the trees using mechanized hand equipment.

Project Implementation: Timber to be removed would be marked in the spring (2016), with removal occurring later in the fall.

Project Information: Adam McClory, Recreation Staff, 208-875-1734, amcclory@fs.fed.us.

Map for the Elk Creek Falls Trailhead Vegetation Management Project



5) *Dispersed Campsite Riparian Protection Project (Palouse & North Fork RDs)*

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(d)(5): *Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.*

Legal Coordinates of Project Sites:

Palouse: T42N, R4W, Sec. 21 (Waterhole); T42N, R2W, Sec, 14 (across from Cleveland Gulch; T41N, R2W, Sec 8 (Little Sand/Bonami); T41N, R2W., Sec 36 (Vassar Meadows area); T40N, R2W, Sec 2 (Vassar Meadows area)

North Fork: T41N, R8E, Sec 34 (Skull Creek, 2 sites); T38N, R7E, Sec 35 (Jazz Creek); T39N, R9E, Sec 32 (Unnamed Site 2); T39N, R9E, Sec 15 and 22 (Gillfillian); T39N, R10E, Sec 5 and 6 (Unnamed Site 2); T40N, R10E, Sec 16 (Unnamed Sites 3 and 4).

Background: Each of the individual locations identified for work through this project are situated in riparian locations that experience high levels of recreation use, including dispersed camping, fishing, hunting, boating and off-highway vehicle use. Along the North Fork of the Palouse, Vassar Meadows, Skull Creek, the North Fork of the Clearwater River and others, there are hundreds of dispersed sites that are used extensively from approximately April – November. While some of these sites pose no risk to area resources, many others do, impacting localized water quality, seriously damaging area vegetation, and degrading the recreation experience.

Project Design / Equipment: Through installation of physical barriers such as vegetation and boulders, the general use area (or "footprint") of selected dispersed campsites will be better defined to ensure resource protection measures in highly sensitive locations. Specifically, to restrict vehicle access to sensitive riparian areas, the following would take place at campsites with the most serious problems:

- Install boulders (approx. 3' x 4') or jack-leg fencing at strategic spots throughout the general use area or "footprint" of the dispersed site to delineate parking and camping locations and eliminate off-highway vehicle use within dispersed campsites.
- Where practical, decompact or scarify impacted areas and plant select vegetation to both rehabilitate damaged vegetation and prevent further deterioration of area resources.
- Install signage informing recreation visitors of our efforts with the goal of developing a recreation use ethic promoting responsible recreation use.

Through use of a dump truck and backhoe, a contractor will set boulders or install fencing in place at logical spots at each dispersed campsite to protect site resources. This will, in effect, provide clearly defined areas for vehicle parking. Depending on the size of boulders selected, some or all boulders may need to be set in holes to ensure stability and ensure that they will not be removed.

Project Implementation: Pending availability of stewardship funds, the project will begin and end during the summer of 2016.

Project Information: Adam McClory, Recreation Staff, 208-875-1734, amcclory@fs.fed.us.

Maps: Although there are too many maps associated with this project to show here, copies can be viewed or requested by contacting Adam McClory (above).

6) Wildfire Tree Planting (Lochsa RD)

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(11): *Post-fire rehabilitation activities, not to exceed 4,200 acres (such as tree planting) to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management approved condition from wildland fire damage.*

Legal Coordinates of Project Sites: T34N, 7E, Sections 7, 17 and 18; T33N, R6E, Sections 19, 29, 30 and 31.

Background: The stands in need of planting were in the Woodrat, Four bit and Walde wildfires of 2015 on the Lochsa Ranger District. The burn severity in these stands was high and there is very little forest vegetation remaining. Planting conifer tree seedlings is needed to meet the requirements of NFMA which states that "All forested lands in the National Forest System shall be maintained in appropriate forest cover with species of trees, degree of stocking, rate of growth, and conditions of stand designed to secure maximum benefits of multiple use sustained yield management in accordance with land management plans". The main species for planting is western white pine, which will help perpetuate white pine in the ecosystem, western larch and ponderosa pine. All three species are also more resistant to root disease which will reduce this pest problem in these stands. Planting trees will assist in improving soil and water quality and will assist in providing habitat for wildlife in these watersheds. This will also maintain healthy desirable vegetation that is more resistant to noxious week establishment.

Project Design / Equipment: This proposal would plant trees on approximately 320 acres within 14 stands (see maps). The two year old bareroot stock will be planted on an 11 x 11 foot spacing. The species to be planted are western white pine, western larch and ponderosa pine which are all shade intolerant seral species. The planting will be accomplished by a contract crew with oversight by the Forest Service.

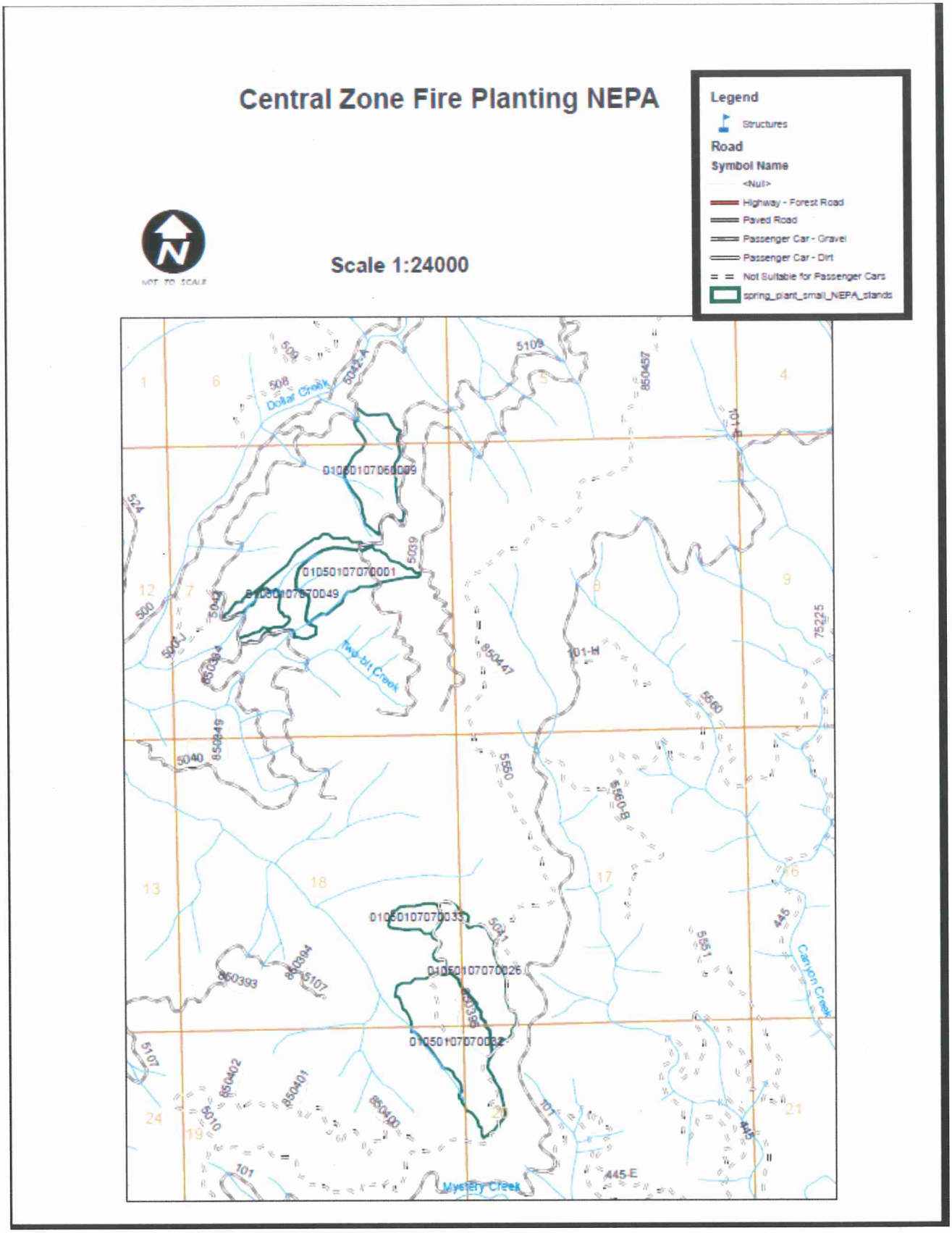
Planted seedlings will increase species composition to a greater component of seral species which are more resistant to root disease and stem decay and tend to be more fire resistant and longer lived than most of the species lost in the fire. The planted trees will also improve the overall health, structure and vigor of the stand, which will assist in improving soil and water quality and wildlife habitat, plus, maintain healthy desirable vegetation that is more resistant to noxious week establishment.

The planting will occur in stands without any timber salvage operations. These stands have been evaluated and it has been determined that timber salvage is not viable. All planting will be done with hand tools; no mechanical equipment will be used. There will be no ground disturbing activities with this proposed action. The project does not change access restrictions. Only existing roads would be used to provide access to the sites. Driving full size vehicles on roads during wet conditions will be minimized and access by All Terrain Vehicles or walking will be used instead to minimize damage to roads. If Forest Specialists determine that there are areas within the stands where no tree planting activity should occur, they will be removed from the project. Forest Specialists will coordinate with other entities or agencies as required by their resource needs.

Project Implementation: Planting would occur in the spring (May) of 2016, and take approximately two weeks to complete.

Project Information: Clare Brick, Forest Culturist, 208-963-4208, cbrick@fs.fed.us.

Map #1


Central Zone Fire Planting NEPA
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Not Suitable for Passenger Cars
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Two bit Creek
Canyon Creek
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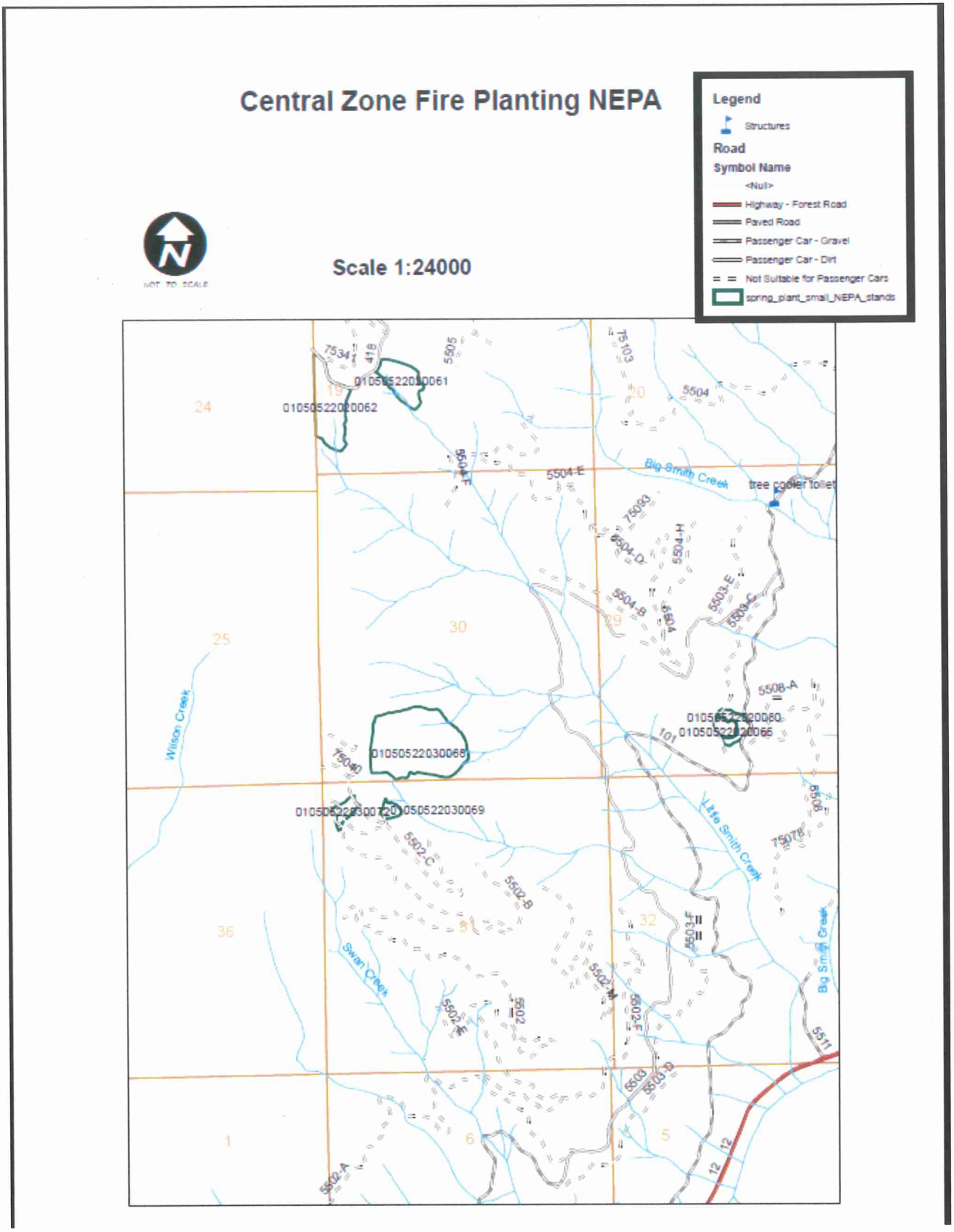
Map #2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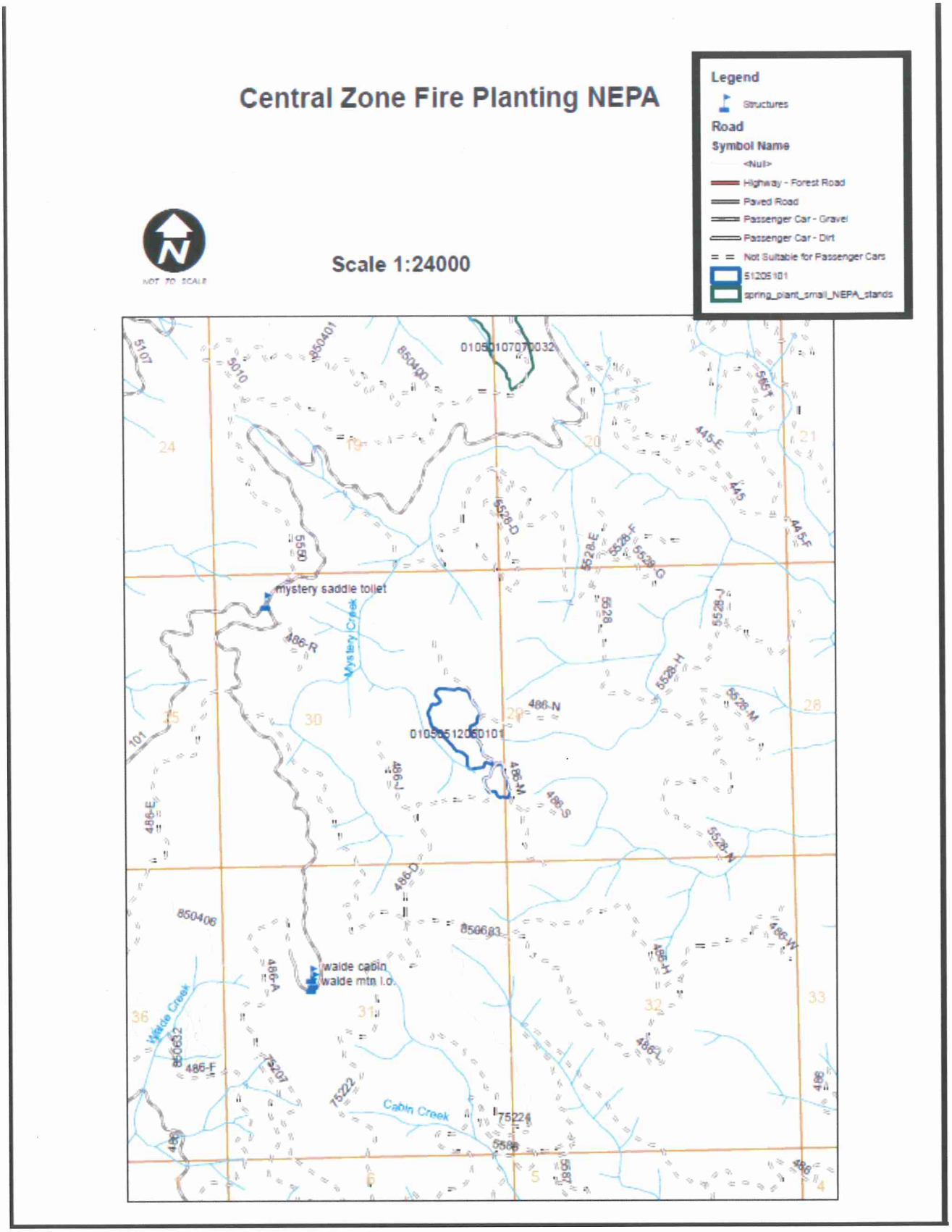
Big Smith Creek
Little Smith Creek
Wilson Creek
Swan Creek
tree cooler toilet

Map #3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Mystery Creek
walde cabin
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