



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Black Hills National Forest
Bearlodge Ranger District

121 S 21st Street; PO Box 680
Sundance WY. 82729-0680
307-283-1361

File Code: 1950-1

Date: November 5, 2004

Dear Interested Party,

The Bearlodge Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest is beginning analysis of the Dean Project Area. Fuel reduction, timber harvest, travel access, wildlife habitat improvement, changes to the Management Area designation within the project area, and road management proposals are described in the attached document.

I invite your comments on the proposed actions. The planning team will use public input to develop other alternatives for action. Please submit your comments by **December 7, 2004**.

If you have questions or concerns, contact me or Janis Bouma of my staff at the above address.

Sincerely,

STEVEN J. KOZEL
District Ranger

Enclosures: (11 pages) Dean Project description, maps



Dean Project Area Environmental Analysis

Black Hills National Forest
Bearlodge Ranger District
Crook County, Wyoming

Location 7.5 miles north of Sundance, Wyoming (see attached vicinity map)

Acreage 12,468 acres National Forest System lands
2,356 acres under private ownership

Landmarks Truck Trail, Hemler Reservoir, Dean Spring, Table Mountain

Access Main access is via Redwater Road (FS Road 843) and Forest Service Road 830 (locally known as the Truck Trail).

Legal description

Township	Range	Sections
52 North	63 West	1, 2, 3, 10, 11,
53 North	63 West	23, 24, 35, 36,
53 North	62 West	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30, 31, 32,
53 North	63 West	11, 12, 13, 14, 25, 26,
6 th Principal Meridian		

The project area is currently designated as **Management Area (MA) 5.4**. These lands are managed for big game winter range, healthy plant communities, and recreational opportunities. Off-road motorized travel may be restricted if necessary to meet other objectives. All activities, including recreation, are managed so that deer and elk can effectively use this area during winter and other critical time periods.

Current Conditions

The majority (78%) of the project area is forested with ponderosa pine. The remaining area is vegetated with paper birch, quaking aspen, bur oak, and grasses/forbs. Most stands have been managed in the past by thinning, regeneration cutting, or prescribed fire. The Rednose timber sale is currently under way in part of the project area.

There are four northern goshawk nests, within three territories, known to exist within the project area. Two nests were active in 2004. Some nest stands lack adjacent small openings important for goshawk prey and foraging. Among the wildlife species observed in the project area are black-backed woodpeckers, mountain lions, sharp-shinned hawks, and northern leopard frogs.

Recent fire records show that from 1970 to 1990, 38 wildfires occurred in the analysis area, the largest of which was three acres. Two fires during this time period were escaped campfires, while all others were caused by lightning. This averaged nearly two fires per year for this time period. The fire frequency has increased slightly in the past four to five years, as have human-caused ignitions. Three fires occurred during the 2004 fire season, the largest of which burned 22 acres (Boundary Fire of March, 2004, mix of FS and private land). However, the most significant fire event in the last 80 years was the Puma Fire of April, 2003, which burned 475 acres. Fire scars also show that a fire burned approximately 200-300 acres in the Hemler Dam area, probably in the 1920s.

Recreational activities in the project area include hunting, hiking, firewood gathering, berry picking, and recreational driving. There are no developed campgrounds, however the project area does contain approximately nine miles of designated snowmobile trails (see "Dean Project Area" map).

Approximately 103 miles of roads exist in the project area. About 70% of the roads are closed to motorized travel year-round. The main access roads include Forest Service Roads 843 and 830. Forest Service Road 843 is open year-round except when closed by snow. A portion of Forest Service Road 830, also known locally as the Truck Trail, is closed year-round. All areas are currently open to motorized off-road travel, however the Forest proposes to close the area to motorized off-road travel, and restrict ATV use to designated routes. The project area also contains an area closure, "walk-in hunting area" south of the Redwater Road on the east side of the project area which is currently closed to all motorized vehicles.

Proposed Actions

- 1) The Forest Service proposes to modify stand structure across the planning area to reduce the potential for uncharacteristically intense wildfire behavior, reduce fuel loads, modify stand density to reduce Forest risk of insect outbreaks, and to provide for diverse wildlife habitat. Proposals are shown on attached maps "Proposed Silvicultural Treatments Map 1", "Proposed Silvicultural Treatments Map 2", "Proposed Wildlife Treatments", and "Proposed Fuel Treatments". All figures are approximate.

Commercial Harvest	
Commercial thin	2165 acres
Commercial thin w/POL thin	614 acres
*Commercial thin w/POL and overstory removal	121 acres
Shelterwood seedcut	1,015 acres
*Shelterwood seedcut/overstory removal	1,350 acres
Overstory removal	465 acres
*Treatment would vary within stands according to local conditions.	
Total silvicultural treatments	5,730 acres
Sawtimber volume	8-12 million board feet
Fuel Reduction Treatments	
Prescribed burning	2,601 acres
Chip and/or mulch	206 acres
Precommercial thinning	687 acres
Total fuel reduction treatments*	3,494 acres
*Additional burning of piles or concentrations of fuel may take place after timber harvest.	
Wildlife Treatments	
Pine Encroachment	642 acres
Oak brush thinning and/or removal	170 acres
Patch cuts	70 acres
Hardwood restoration	69 acres
Other Treatments	
Noxious weed control	As needed

2) To protect wildlife, manage motorized access and motorized off-road use, allow better maintenance of the road system, and reduce existing soil and water damage the following actions are proposed.

- **Road Decommissioning.** Approximately 16.1 miles of existing roads (all are considered non-system, or “unclassified” two-track roads) would be decommissioned. Some roads may be closed using natural barriers or slash, while others may require gates, earth berms, or recontouring for effective closure. See “Dean Transportation Proposed Action” map, attached. Approximately ten miles of new construction would take place, including approximately one mile of reclassification of “non-system roads” to “system roads”.
- **ATV Trail System and Motorized Off-Road Closure.** A system of ATV trails and other motorized vehicles less than 50” wide is proposed on existing roads. Larger vehicles would not be allowed on the proposed ATV trails. Off-road motorized travel would be prohibited in the project area, but main system routes currently open to vehicle traffic will remain open. Specific roads have not been identified for the proposed ATV trails, but designated routes would be established in the vicinity of the Truck Trail and the Southeast corner of the project area. The public is invited to provide input for specific roads in the area which may be appropriate as designated ATV trails.
- **Change in Management Area Designation.** The Forest proposes to change the current Management Area Designation in a portion of the project area from MA 5.4 (Big Game Winter Range Emphasis) to MA 5.6 (Forest Products, Recreation, and Big Game Emphasis). See map “Dean Project Area Proposed Management Area Change”. The proposed management area change reflects the fact that the lower elevations and south aspects on the east side of the project area currently provide appropriate and important big game winter range habitat, and are currently utilized as such. However, the remainder of the project area is currently heavily utilized only during the spring, summer, and fall (calving and fawning areas). A change of these areas to MA 5.6 would better reflect the big game utilization and non-motorized recreation opportunities (current walk-in hunting area).

Public Input

We invite your comments on this proposal. Alternatives to the proposed action will be developed based on the issues raised by your comments. Public input will help us identify areas of concern and alternative management actions, and is a vital factor in the management of public lands.

Please send comments or questions to Bearlodge District Ranger Steve Kozel, P.O. Box 680, Sundance, WY 82729, or via electronic mail to:

comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-bearlodge@fs.fed.us

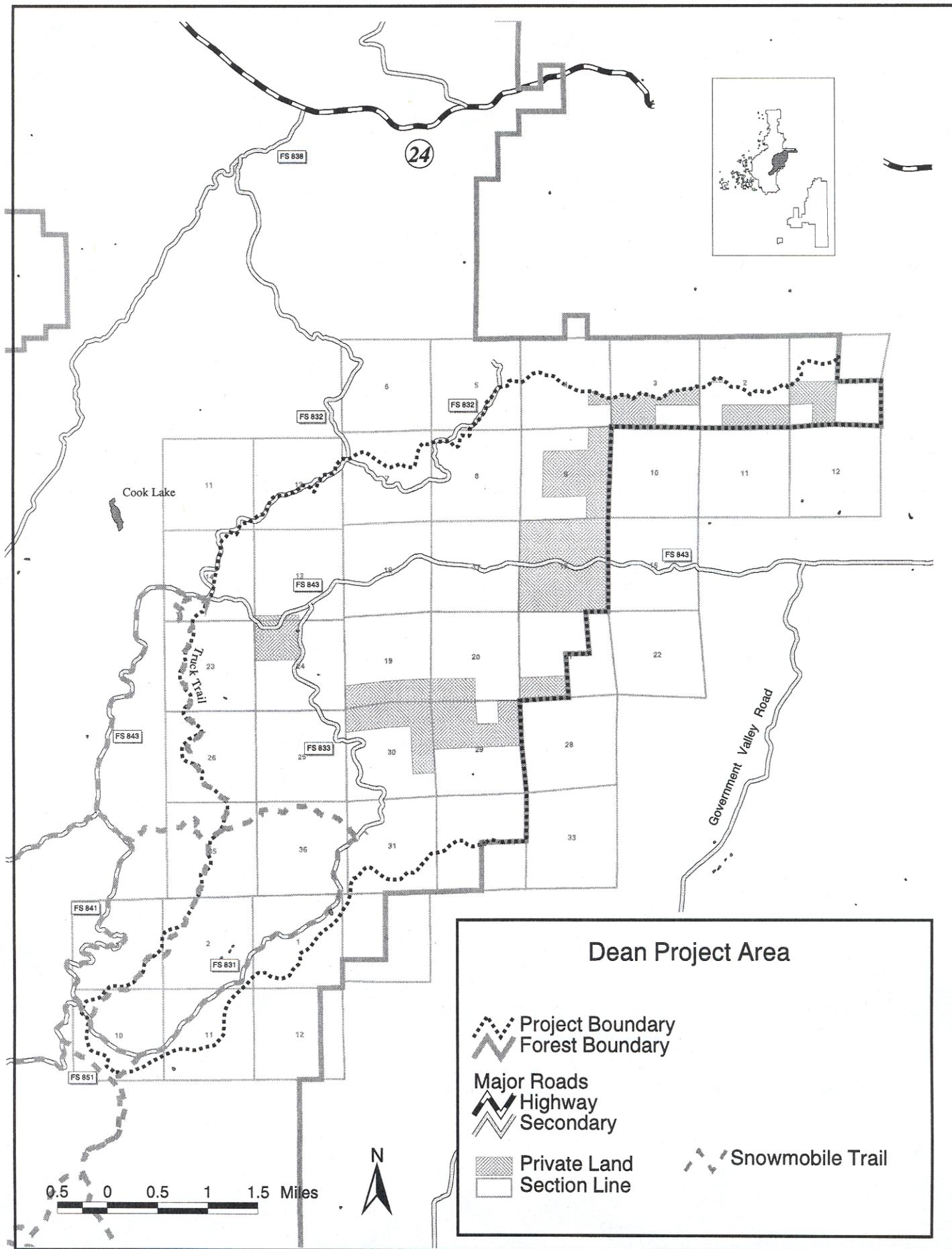
Please include “Dean Project” in the subject line.

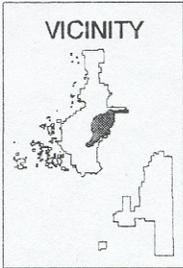
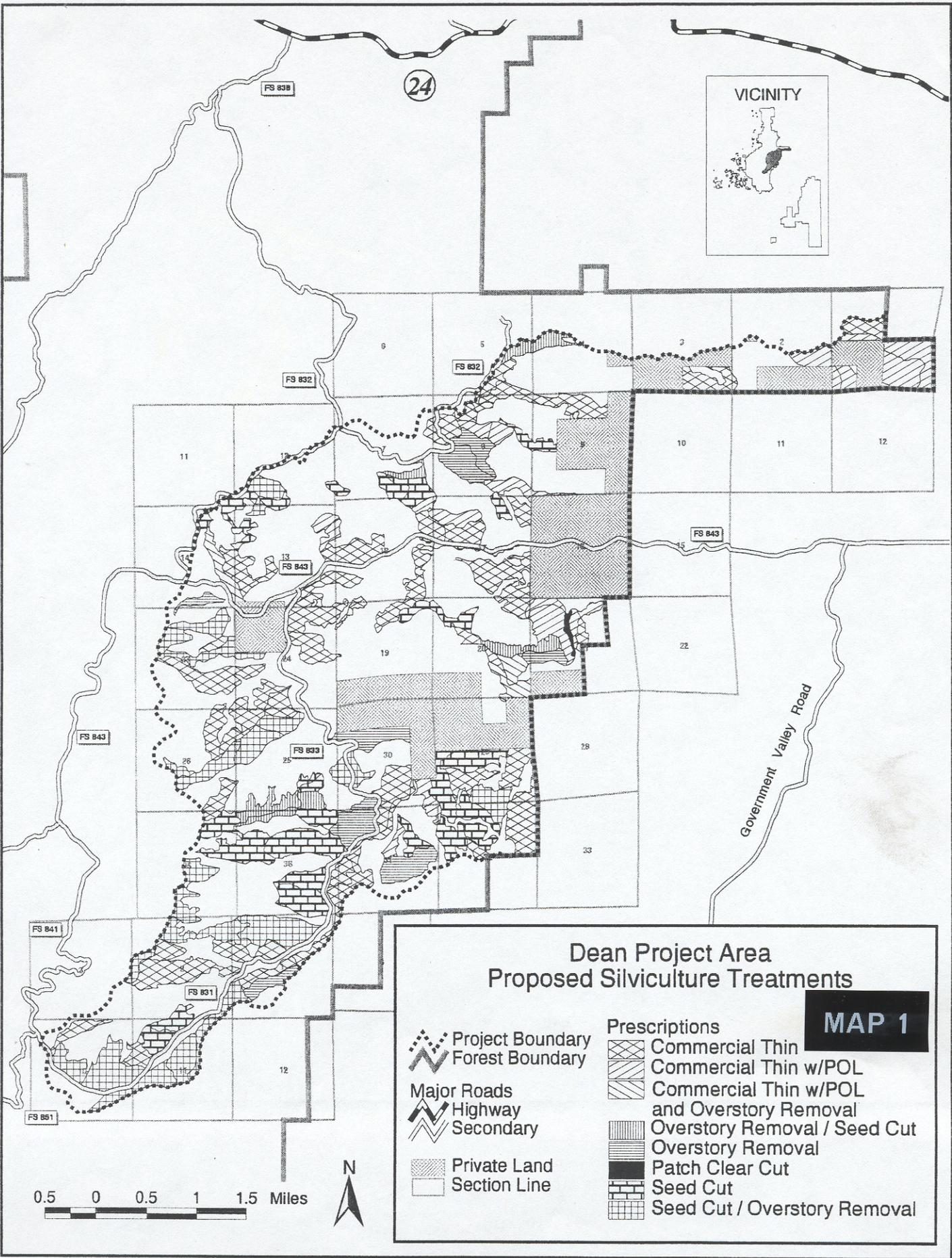
If you do not have comments at this time but would like to be kept informed of the status of this project, please contact Janis Bouma at the above address or telephone (307) 283-1361. The district office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mountain time.

The proposed actions do not represent a decision. After public input and analysis of environmental effects, the District Ranger or Forest Supervisor will decide which actions to implement.

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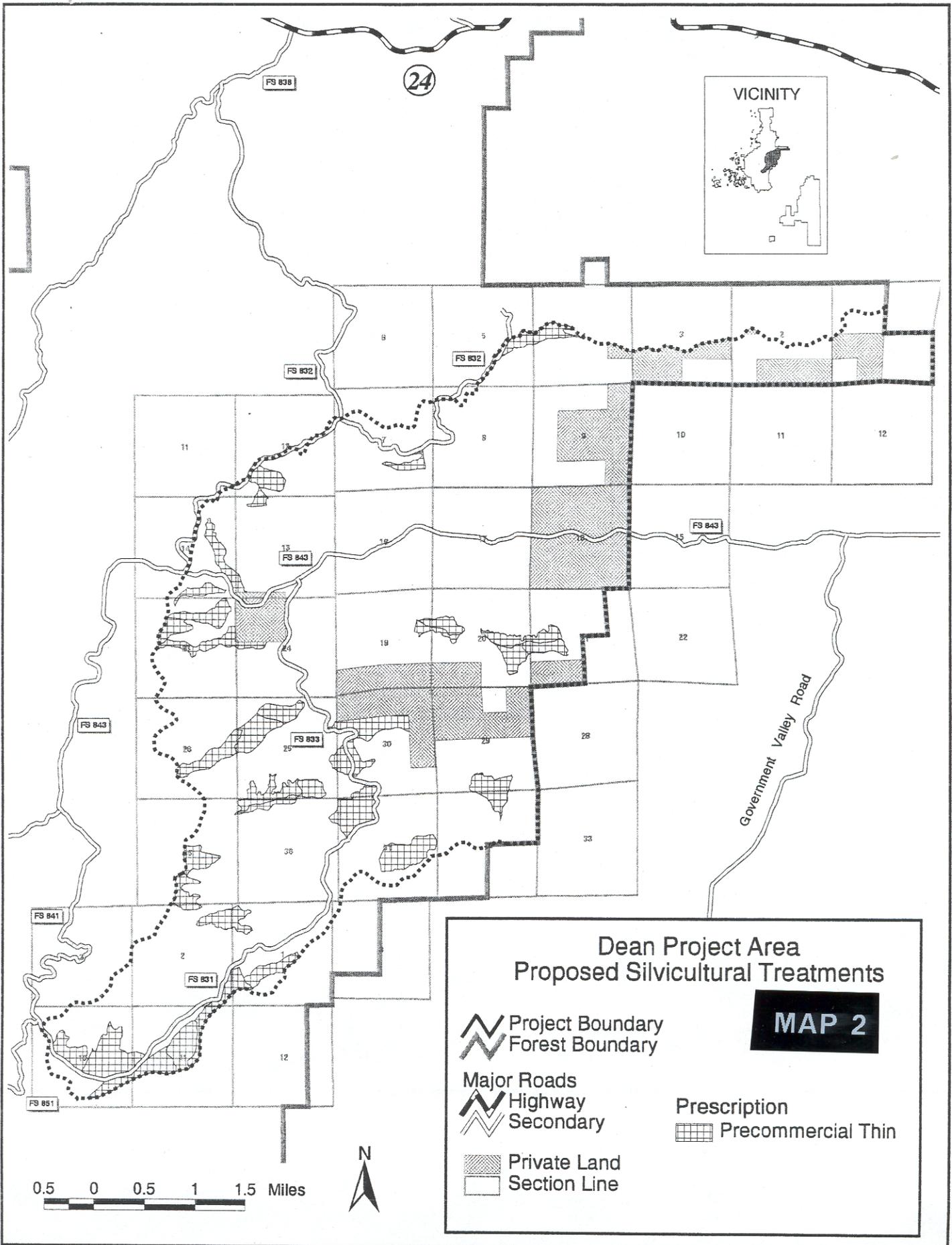
Dean Project Area Proposed Silviculture Treatments

MAP 1

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Boundary Forest Boundary Major Roads Highway Secondary Private Land Section Line | Prescriptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Thin Commercial Thin w/POL Commercial Thin w/POL and Overstory Removal Overstory Removal / Seed Cut Overstory Removal Patch Clear Cut Seed Cut Seed Cut / Overstory Removal |
|---|--|

0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles





Dean Project Area
Proposed Silvicultural Treatments

MAP 2

Project Boundary
Forest Boundary

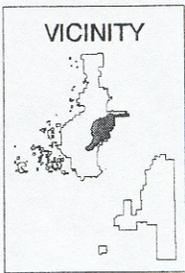
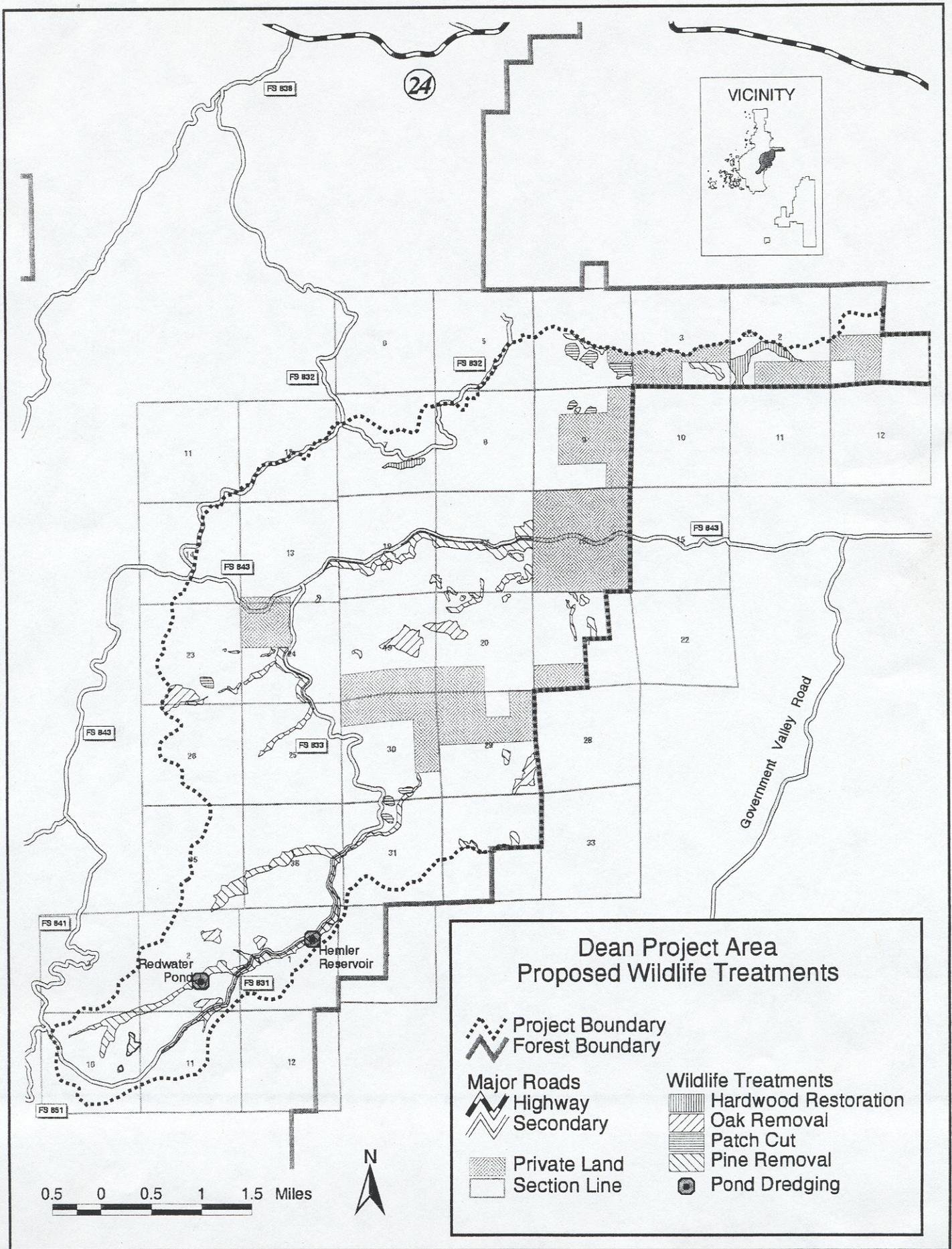
Major Roads
Highway
Secondary

Private Land
Section Line

Prescription
Precommercial Thin

0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles



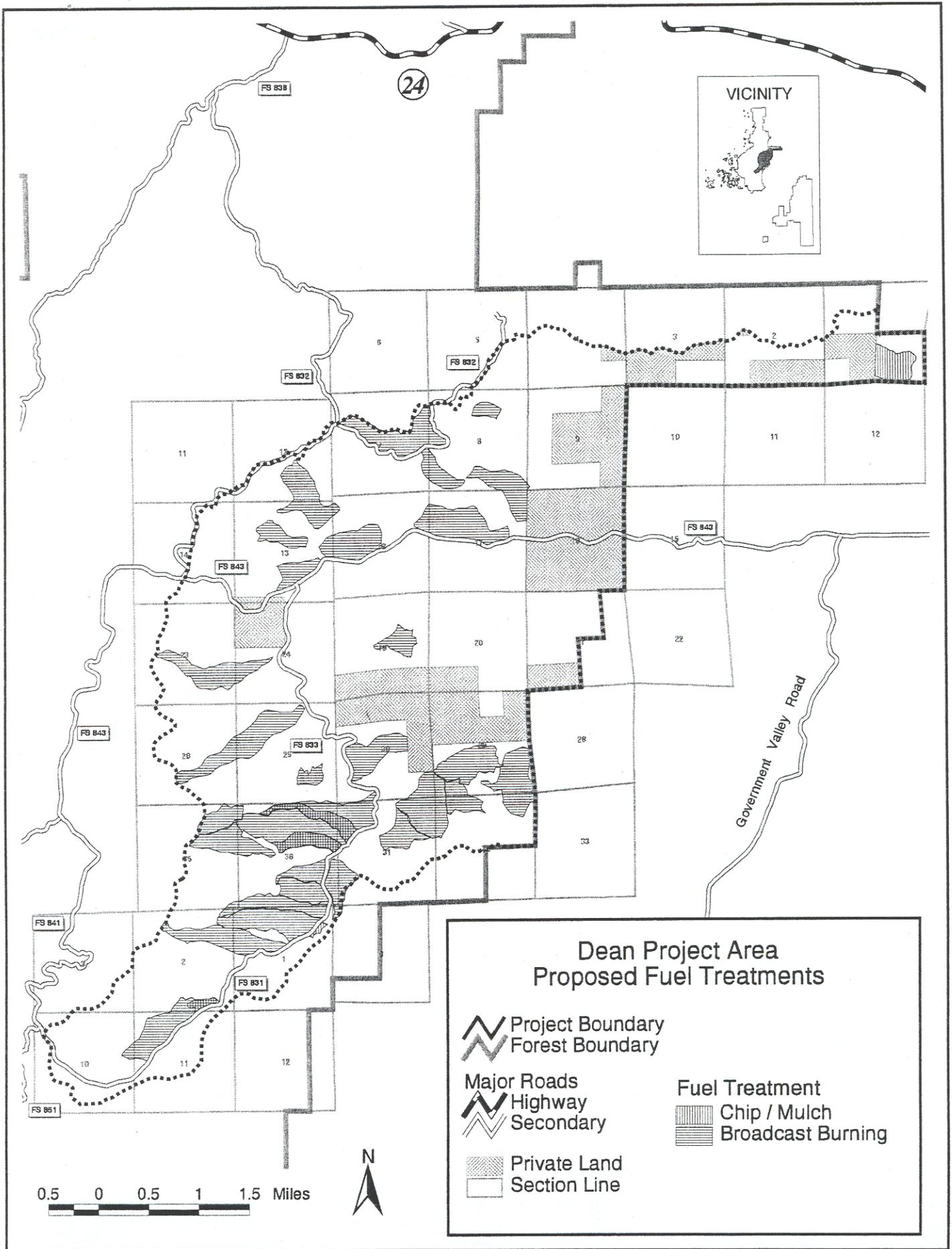


Dean Project Area Proposed Wildlife Treatments

- Project Boundary
- Forest Boundary
- Major Roads**
 - Highway
 - Secondary
- Private Land
- Section Line
- Wildlife Treatments**
 - Hardwood Restoration
 - Oak Removal
 - Patch Cut
 - Pine Removal
 - Pond Dredging

0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles





Dean Project Area Proposed Fuel Treatments

Project Boundary
 Forest Boundary

Major Roads
 Highway
 Secondary

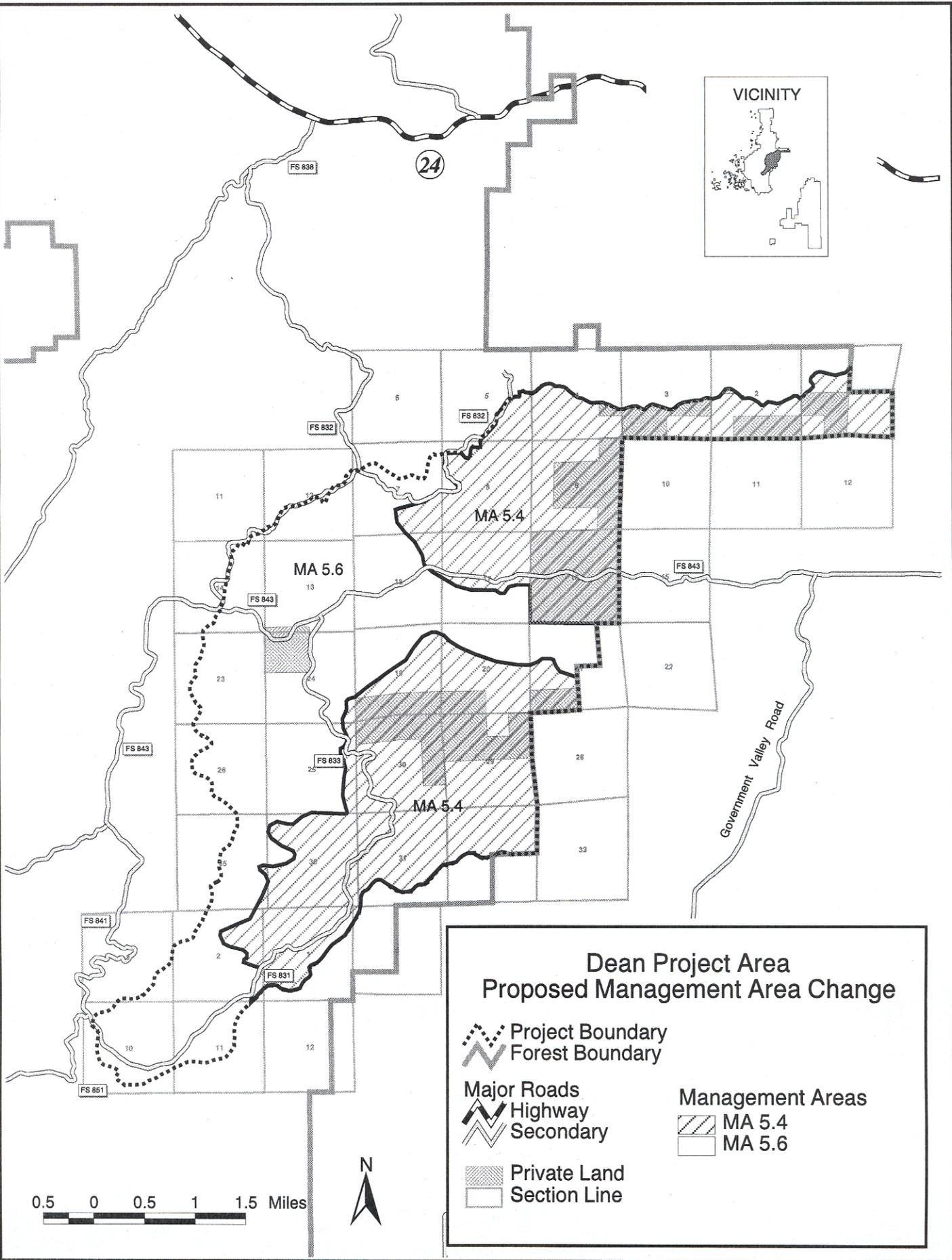
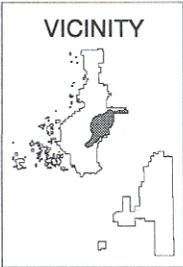
Fuel Treatment

Chip / Mulch
 Broadcast Burning

Private Land
 Section Line

0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles





Dean Project Area Proposed Management Area Change

- Project Boundary
- Forest Boundary
- Major Roads
 - Highway
 - Secondary
- Private Land
- Section Line

- Management Areas
- MA 5.4
 - MA 5.6