USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Nez Perce National Forest
104 Airport Road
Grangeville, ID 83530
208-983-1950
Clearwater National Forest
12730 Highway 12
Orofino, ID 83544
208-476-4541

File Code: 1950
Date: June 7, 2013

Dear Planning Participant:

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest will be conducting environmental analysis on the attached proposed project.

The District Rangers have made preliminary assessments that this project falls within categories of actions listed in *36 CFR 220.6*, thereby excluding it from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

To submit a comment on this proposal, please follow the instructions provided under the "How to Provide Comments" section on pages 6-7 of this letter.

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

Sincerely,

Rick Brazell

RICK BRAZELL
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures: Maps of Project Sites

Introduction

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest proposes to pre-commercially thin approximately 3471 acres of previously harvested, over-stocked, mixed conifer species stands from 2013 to 2016 in young forest stands which have resulted from regeneration harvests in the last 15 to 25 years located on the Moose Creek (272 acres), Salmon River (1947 acres), and Red River (1252 acres) Ranger Districts, Idaho County, Idaho as follows (Boise Meridian) (see attached maps):

T23N R1W Sections 4, 5, 9, 13, and 14
T24N R1W Section 35
T25N R1W Sections 1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, and 24
T25N R1E Sections 6, 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20
T25N R2E Sections 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, and 34
T25N R3E Sections 11, 14, 21, 26, 27, and 28
T26N R1W Section 36
T26N R1E Sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 30, and 31
T26N R3E Sections 22, 23, 25, and 26
T27N R1E Sections 28 and 31
T27N R2E Section 11
T27N R3E Sections 4, 5, 21, 25, 30, 31, and 36
T27N R4E Sections 29, 30, 31, and 36
T28N R4E Section 1
T28N R5E Sections 1, 6, 7, and 12
T29N R3E Section 25
T29N R4E Sections 25, 26, 29, 30, 35, and 36
T29N R5E Sections 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, and 36
T29N R6E Sections 6, 7, 8, 12, and 31
T30 N R5 E Sections 12, 13, 14, 21, 22, and 28
T30 N R6 E Sections 5 and 7
T30 N R7 E Section 4
T31 N R6 E Sections 21, 22, 32, and 33

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest also proposes to pre-commercially thin approximately 3666 acres of previously harvested, over-stocked, mixed conifer species stands from 2013 to 2016 in young forest stands which have resulted from regeneration harvests in the last 15 to 25 years located on the Lochsa (593 acres), Powell (1183 acres), North Fork (850 acres), and Palouse (1040 acres) Ranger Districts, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Latah, Idaho and Clearwater Counties, Idaho as follows (Boise Meridian) (see attached maps):

T33N R6E Sections 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 21, 31, and 36
T33N R7E Sections 4, 5, 8, 28, and 32
T34N R6E Sections 1, 13, 17, 31, 34, and 36
T34N R7E Sections 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 17, 21, 26, 30, 31, 33
T35N R6E Section 18

T35N R7E Sections 4 and 5
T36N R6E Sections 5, 10, and 33
T36N R14E Sections 2 and 12
T36N R15E Sections 6 and 7
T37N R6E Section 25
T37N R7E Sections 20 and 30
T37N R8E Section 13
T37N R14E Sections 8, 20, 22, 32, and 34
T37N R15E Sections 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 16, 21, 28, and 29
T37N R16E Sections 6, 30, and 32
T38N R14E Sections 21 and 24
T38N R15E Sections 14, 15, 16, 20, 28, 30, 32, and 34
T38N R16E Sections 30 and 32
T39N R2W Section 16
T40N R1W Section 25
T40 N R6E Section 26
T40N R7E Section 30
T40N R8E Section 36
T41N R1W Sections 7 and 8
T41N R3W Section 20
T41N R6E Section 26
T42N R1W Sections 7, 8, and 18
T42N R2W Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 23, 26, 28, 33, and 34
T42N R3W Sections 6, 12, 19, 20, and 28
T43N R1W Section 32
T43N R2W Sections 29, 32, and 33
T43N R3W Section 23
T43N R4W Section 35

The proposed category for both the above projects is: *36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.*

Background

Pre-commercial thinning is an intermediate silvicultural treatment that occurs in young stands which have not reached commercial size. Stands targeted for treatment generally have a component of long-lived early seral species. The thinning treatment is designed to favor these species in order to maintain long term resistance and resilience at the landscape scale.

Although tree species diversity usually remains more or less unchanged, pre-commercial thinning can be used to shape the final composition of a forest intended for wildlife, recreational or other uses.

Purpose and Need

Purpose (Desired Condition)

The purpose of this project is to:

- To improve long-term resistance and resilience at the landscape scale by maintaining and promoting long-lived early seral species that have been previously established during past management activities.
- To increase the amount of sunlight to the ground and sustain the diversity of early seral vegetation species including those browse species important to big game and to also lengthen the time period that this forage would otherwise be available.
- To reduce the long-term fire hazard conditions in the stands to be treated and adjacent forest by:
    - By reducing the ladder fuel hazard and the potential fuel buildup from future stem exclusion tree mortality.
    - By creating a break in the continuity of standing dense ladder fuels across the landscape.
- To accelerate the diameter and height growth on the remaining selected trees in order to accelerate structural development to the larger size classes.
- To improve the vigor of the remaining trees to make them more resistant to insect and disease attacks and less vulnerable to ice and snow damage and thereby promote long-term forest health and resiliency.

Forest-wide management direction in the Nez Perce National Forest Plan related to this project can be found on pages II-15 to II-27 (USDA Forest Service, 1987). The management area direction for Management Areas (MA) 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 21 may also apply to this project. These management areas provide direction to: Manage for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained yield basis (MA 12); manage to produce sustained yields of sawtimber and other wood products, while meeting the visual quality objectives of retention or partial retention and improving the quality of the winter range habitat for deer and elk on the appropriate areas (MA 14); manage to produce sustained yields of sawtimber and other wood products, while improving the quality of the deer and elk winter habitat on the appropriate areas (MA 15); improve the quality of the winter range habitat for deer and elk through timber harvesting, prescribed burning, and other management practices (MA 16); manage to improve the quality of the winter habitat for deer and elk through timber harvesting or prescribed burning, while meeting visual quality objectives of retention or partial retention on the appropriate acres (MA 18); and manage the grand fir-Pacific yew plant communities to provide for a continuing presence of Pacific yew "suitable" for moose winter habitat (MA 21). Nine units on the Moose Creek Ranger District are located in the Nez Perce National Forest Plan FEIS Appendix C Clear Creek Roadless Area, and are adjacent to the Clear Creek Idaho Roadless Area, with a Backcountry Restoration Theme, in the Idaho Roadless

Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C), however, no activities are proposed in the Idaho Roadless area, and all proposed activities would occur in previously harvested stands.

Forest-wide management direction in the Clearwater National Forest Plan related to this project can be found on pages II-20 to II-40 (USDA Forest Service, 1987). The management area direction for Management Area (MA) E1 may also apply to this project. This management area contains direction to provide optimum, sustained production of wood products (MA E1).

Need (Existing Condition)

There is a need to maintain the stands targeted for treatment in a more diverse and resilient forest structure and composition by maintaining existing long-lived early seral species composition by retaining and planting early seral species in previously managed areas to promote resistant and resilient to change agents such as insect, disease, and fire. The rationale for this need is documented in the following:

Byler, J.W. and Hagle, S.K. USDA, Forest Service. 2000, Successional Functions of Pathogens and Insects for Ecoregion Sections M332a and M333d in Northern Idaho and Western Montana- Volume 2- Results and Conclusions. Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, Forest Health Protection, Northern Region, FHP Report No. 00-11, July 2000.

Frankel, Susan J, technical coordinator, 1998. User's Guide to the Western Root Disease Model, Version 3.0. PSW-GTR-165, USDA, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station.
Graham, Russell T.; Sarah McCaffrey, Theresa B. Jain (tech. eds.), 2004. Science bases for changing forest structure to modify wildfire behavior and severity. Gen. Tech. Rep. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. RMRS-GTR-120.

Franklin, Jerry F. and K. N. Johnson. 2011. Moist Forest Principles and Prescriptions (Emphasizing the creation of diverse early successional ecosystems through variable retention regeneration harvest). Unpublished

Graham, Russell T.; Jain, Theresa B., Ponderosa pine ecosystems, 2005. In: Ritchie, Martin W.; Maguire, DouglasA.; Youngblood, Andrew, tech. coordinators. Proceedings of the Symposium on Ponderosa Pine: Issues, Trends, and Management, 2004 October 18-21, Klamath Falls, OR. General Technical Report PSW-GTR-198. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture: 1-32

Hagle, Susan K. 2006. Armillaria Root Disease and Management. USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection. Report 11.1.

Harvey, Alan E., Byler, James W., McDonald, Geral I., Neuenschwander, Leon F., Tonn, Jonalea R., 2008. Death of an Ecosystem: Perspectives on Western White Pine Ecosystems of North America at the End of the Twentieth Century. Gen. Tech. Report. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. RMRS-GTR-208.
Millar, Constance I., Nathan L Stephenson and Scott L. Stephens. 2007. Climate Change and Forest of the Future: Managing in the Face of Uncertainty. Ecological Applications, 17(8), 2007, pp. 2145-2151, Ecological Society of America.

Rippy, Raini C.; Stewart, Jane E.; Zambino, Paul J.; Klopfenstein, Ned B.; Tirocke, Joanne M.; Kim, Mee-Sook; Thies, Walter G. 2005. Root diseases in coniferous forests of the Inland West: potential

implications of fuels treatments. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-141. Fort Collins, CO: USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

USDA, Forest Service, 2000. Successional Functions of Pathogens and Insects for Ecoregion Sections M332a and M333d in Northern Idaho and Western Montana- Volume 2-Results and Conclusions. Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, Forest Health Protection, Northern Region, FHP Report No. 00-11, July 2000.

- All work would be done by hand using chainsaws. There would be no ground disturbing activities associated with this project.
- No burning would occur in the stands after thinning or release, nor would any further mechanical slash treatment be done, except on approximately 136 acres in four Palouse Ranger District Units. In these units, slash would be handpiled and burned along existing temporary roads to reduce the fire hazard conditions.
- Only existing roads would be used to provide access to the sites. All trees that are felled across any Forest road or trail would be removed.
- No thinning would occur within RHCAs in the Moose Creek Ranger District stands.
- Thinning could occur within the boundaries of riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) in the Clearwater National Forest's stands where such treatments would promote accelerated stand structure development, long term shade objectives, and future large woody debris development.

Environmental Issues

Potential issues identified through consultation with Forest Service resource specialists and from issues identified from similar past projects include:

- Effects to watershed, and other Forest resources; and, effects to wildlife habitat.

Decisions to Be Made

The decisions to be made are:

- Whether or not to pre-commercially thin approximately 7137 acres.
- If the areas are treated, what stipulations to implementation would be required?

Project Information

If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Mark Klinke at (208) 476-8300.

How to Provide Comments

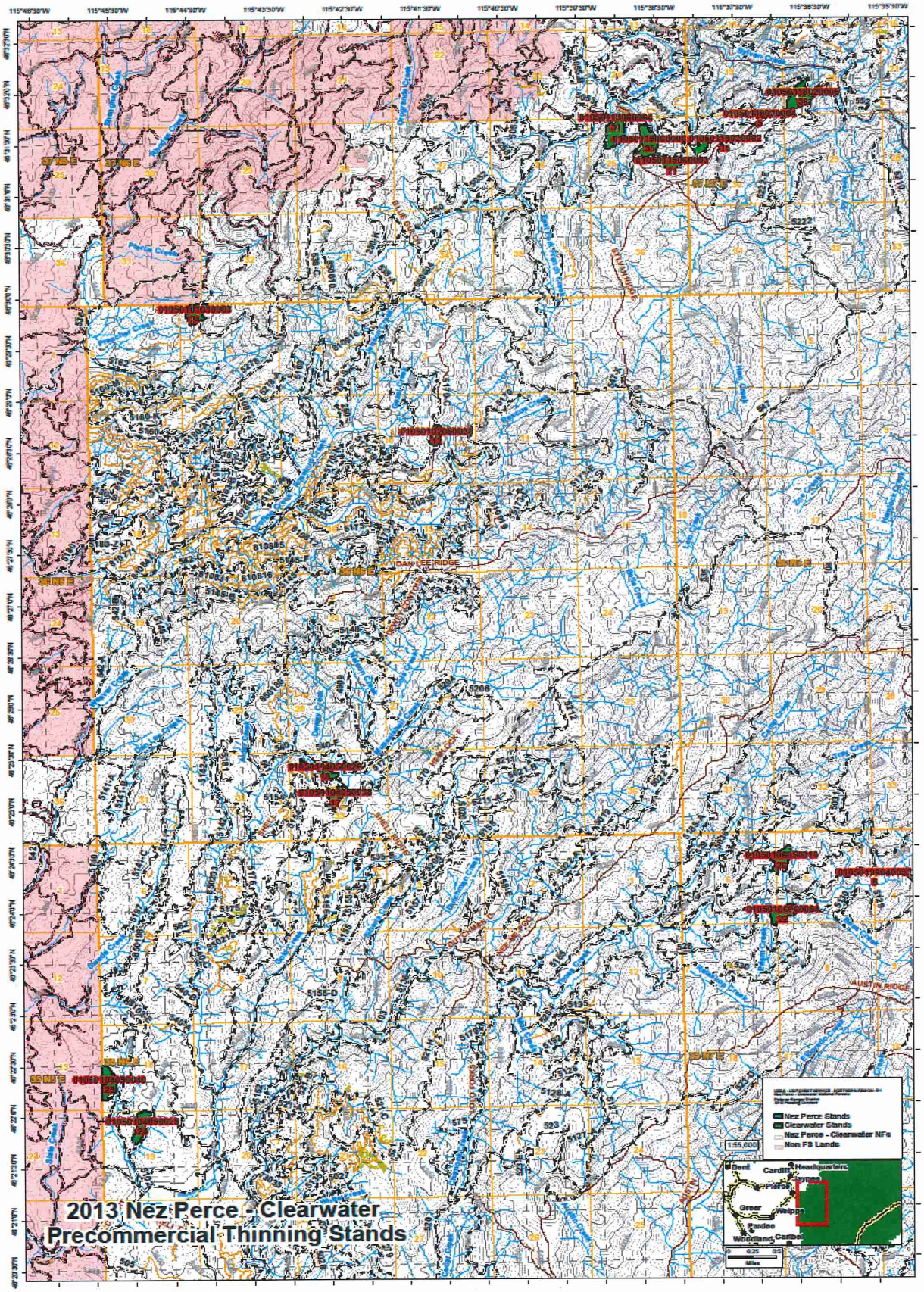
Please review the above proposal and submit your site-specific comments as described below so they can be included in our analyses for the project.

Written, facsimile transmitted, hand-delivered, and oral comments will be accepted for **30 calendar days following publication of a legal notice in the *Lewiston Tribune*.** The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this proposal. One should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding this project, please contact Linda S. Helm, Small NEPA Coordinator, Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests, Kamiah, Idaho or call (208) 935-4285. Oral comments must be provided to her during business hours (between 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (PST), weekdays, excluding holidays) *via t*elephone or in person. Written comments should either be mailed or hand-delivered to her c/o Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests, Supervisor's office, 104 Airport Road, Grangeville, Idaho 83530; submitted *via* facsimile transmittal to her at (208) 935-4275, where they will be forwarded to the Kamiah office *via* electronic mail. Electronic mail comments should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us.

If you choose to comment on the proposals, please include the following: (1) your name, address, and (if possible) your telephone number, and organization represented (if any); (2) title of the project on which you are submitting comments; (3) specific facts and relevant rationale concerning this project that you feel should be considered. For appeal eligibility, each individual must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Additional information regarding how to comment can be found at *36 CFR 215.6.*

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names, telephone numbers, addresses, and electronic mail addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; **however, those who submit anonymous comments may not have standing to appeal** the subsequent decision pursuant to *36 CFR Part 215.* Additionally, pursuant to *7 CFR 1.27(d)*, any person may request the Agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentially should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality and the available options at that time (see *7 CFR 1.27* for further information).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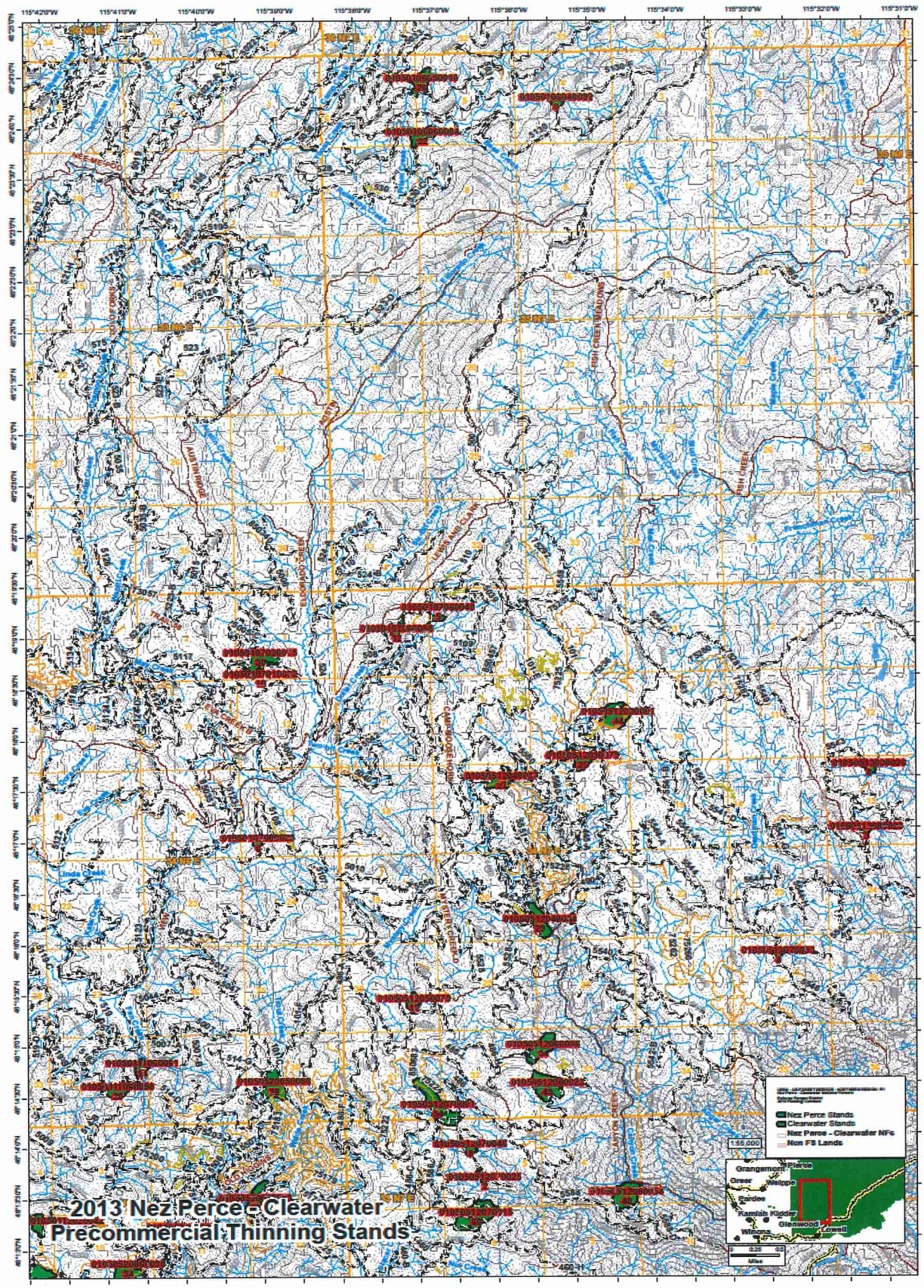
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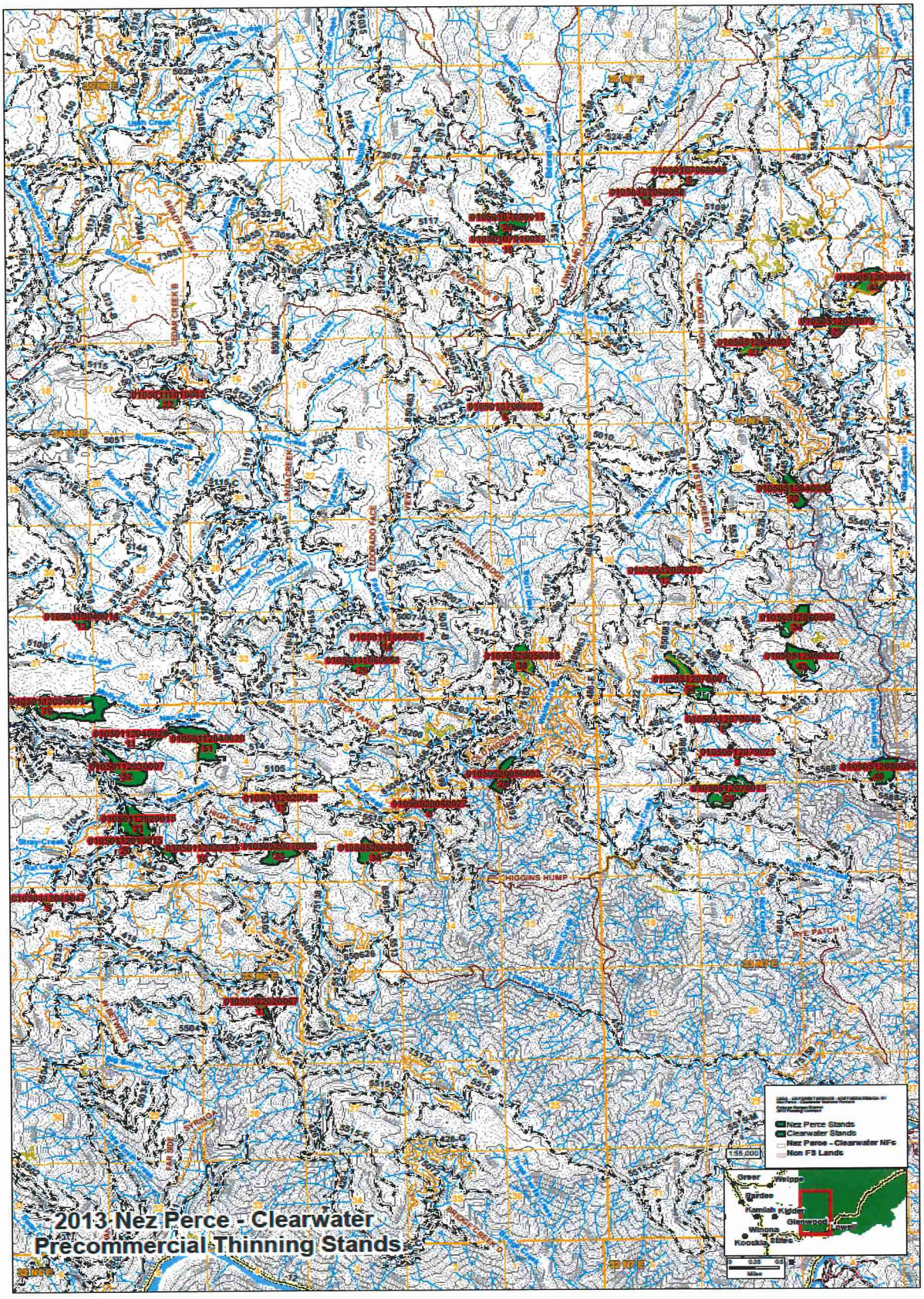
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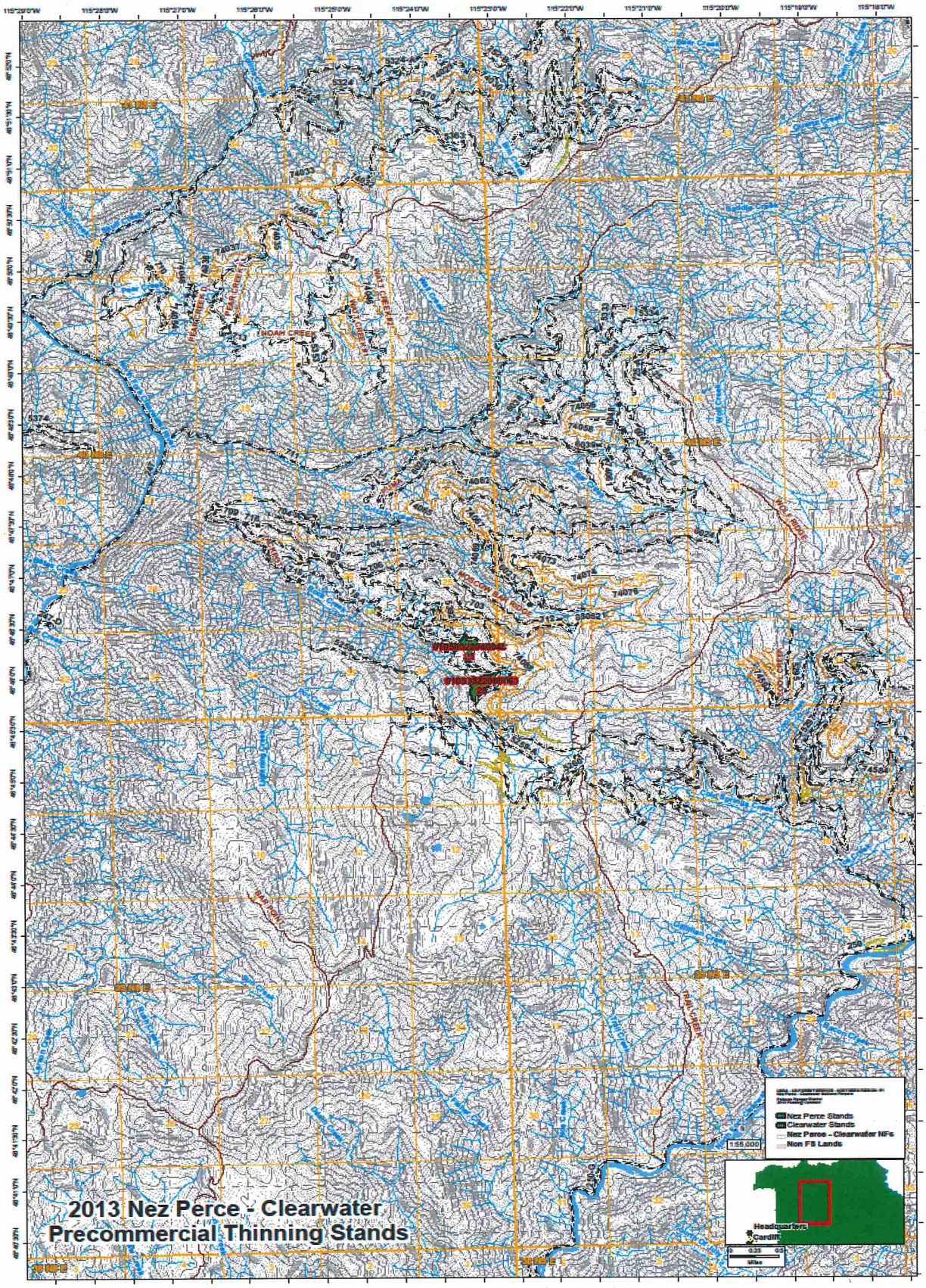
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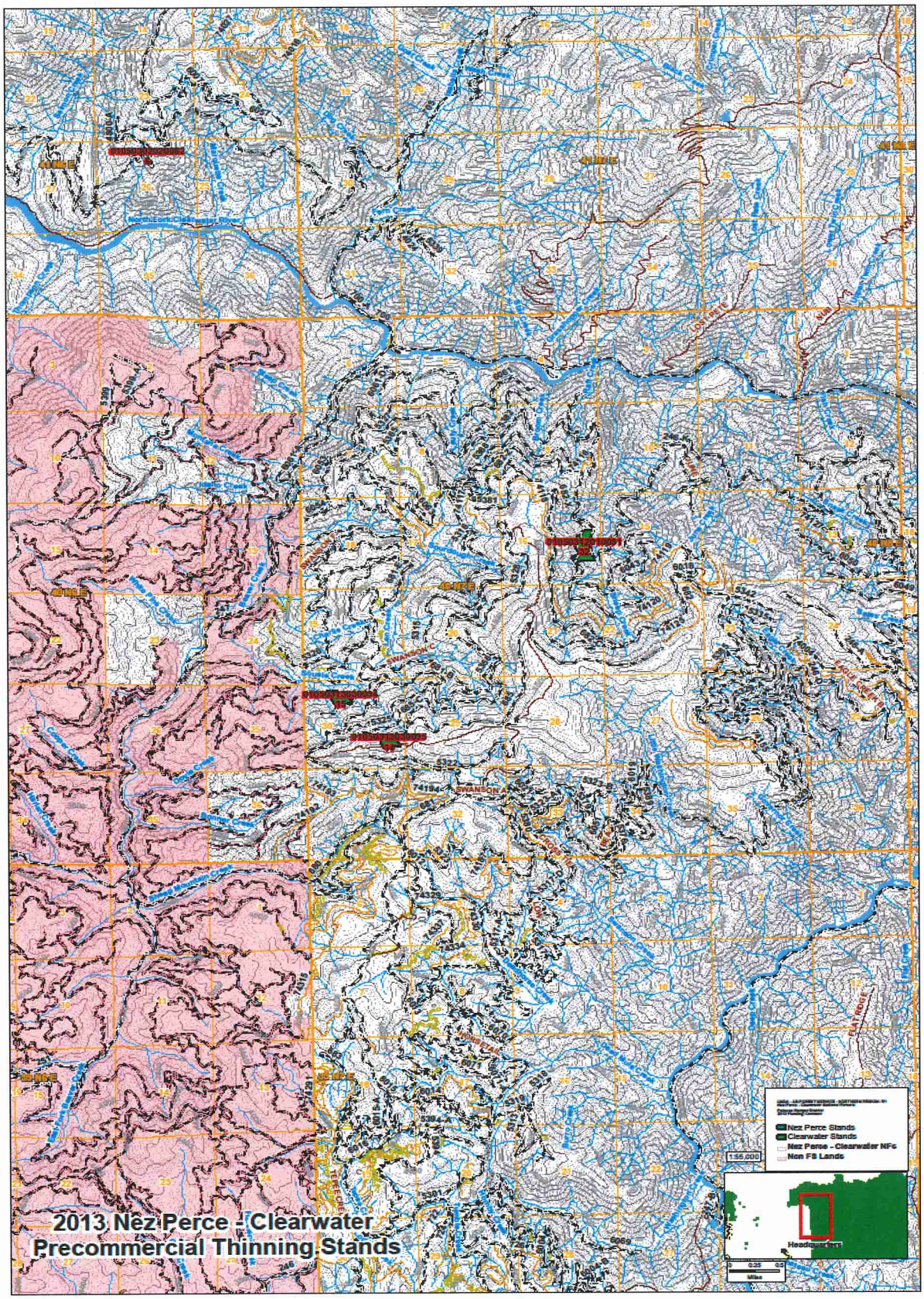
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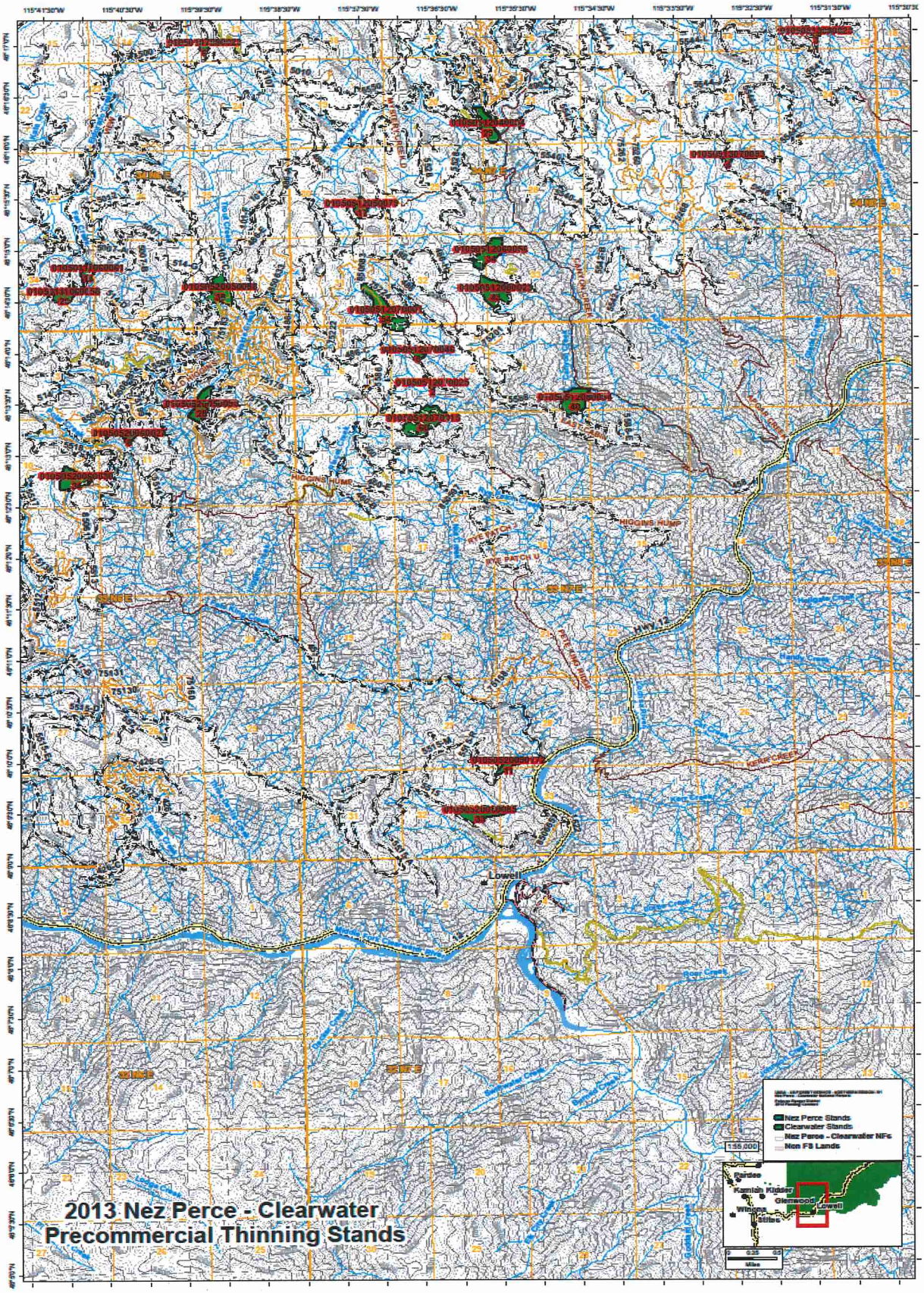
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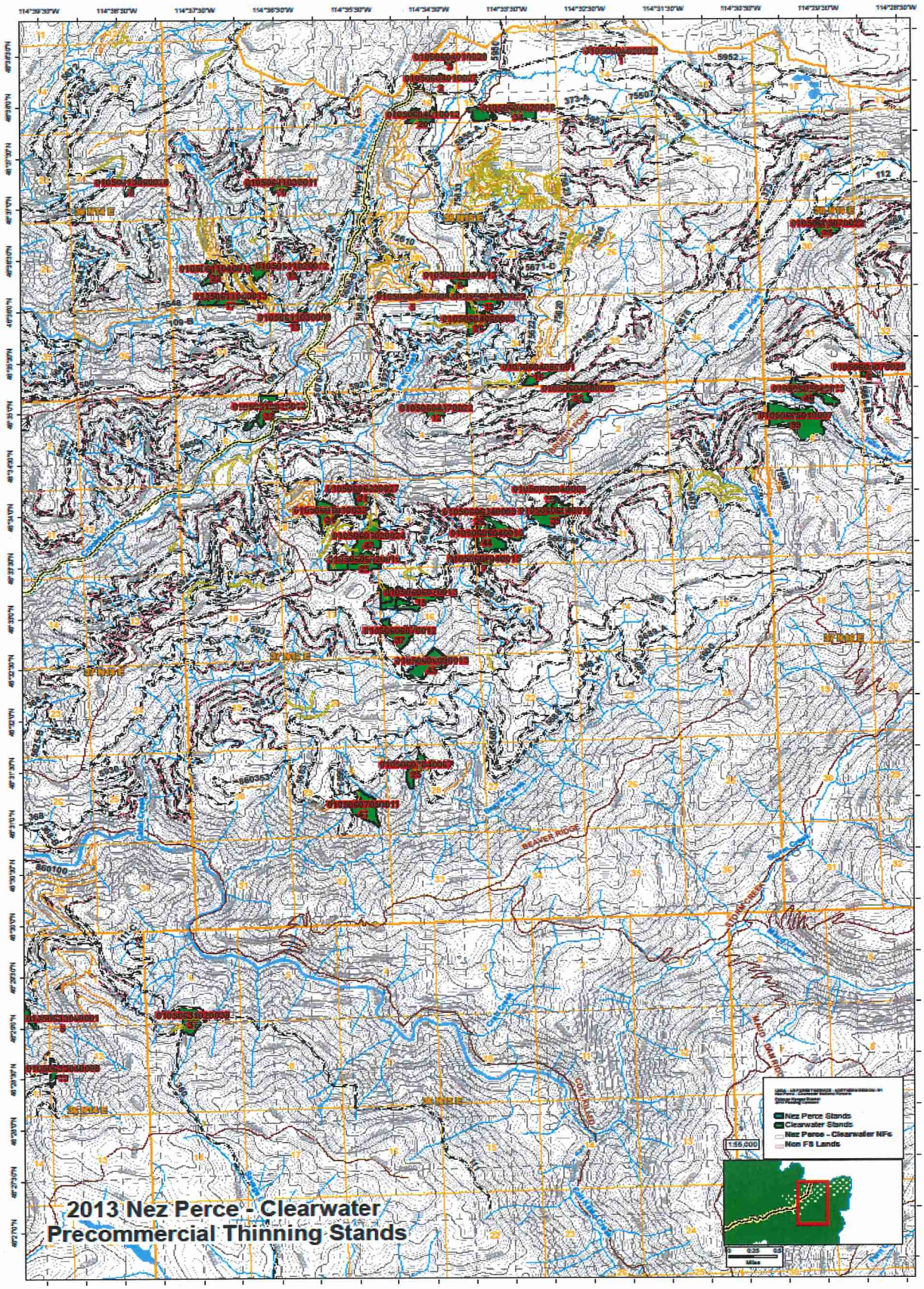
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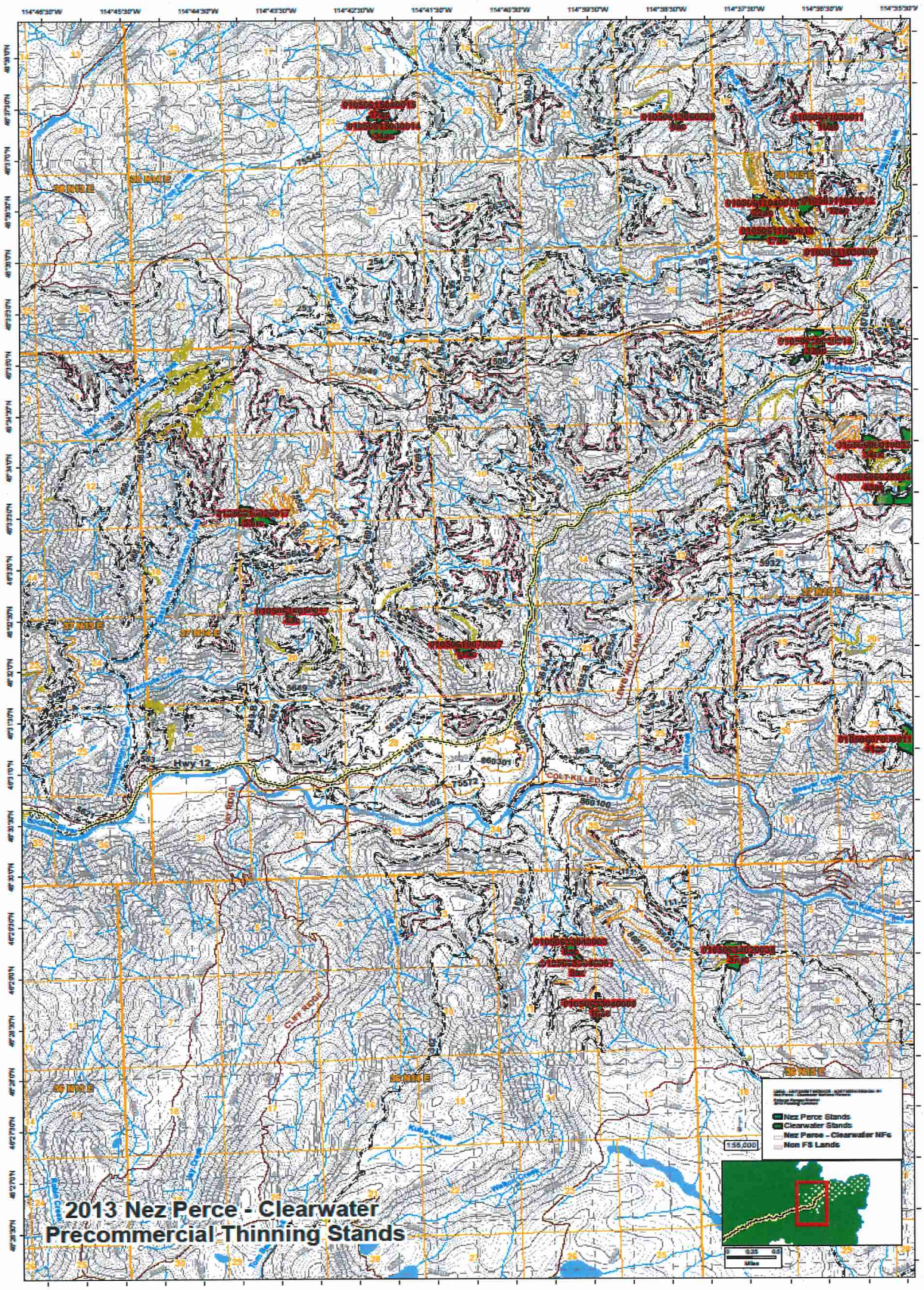
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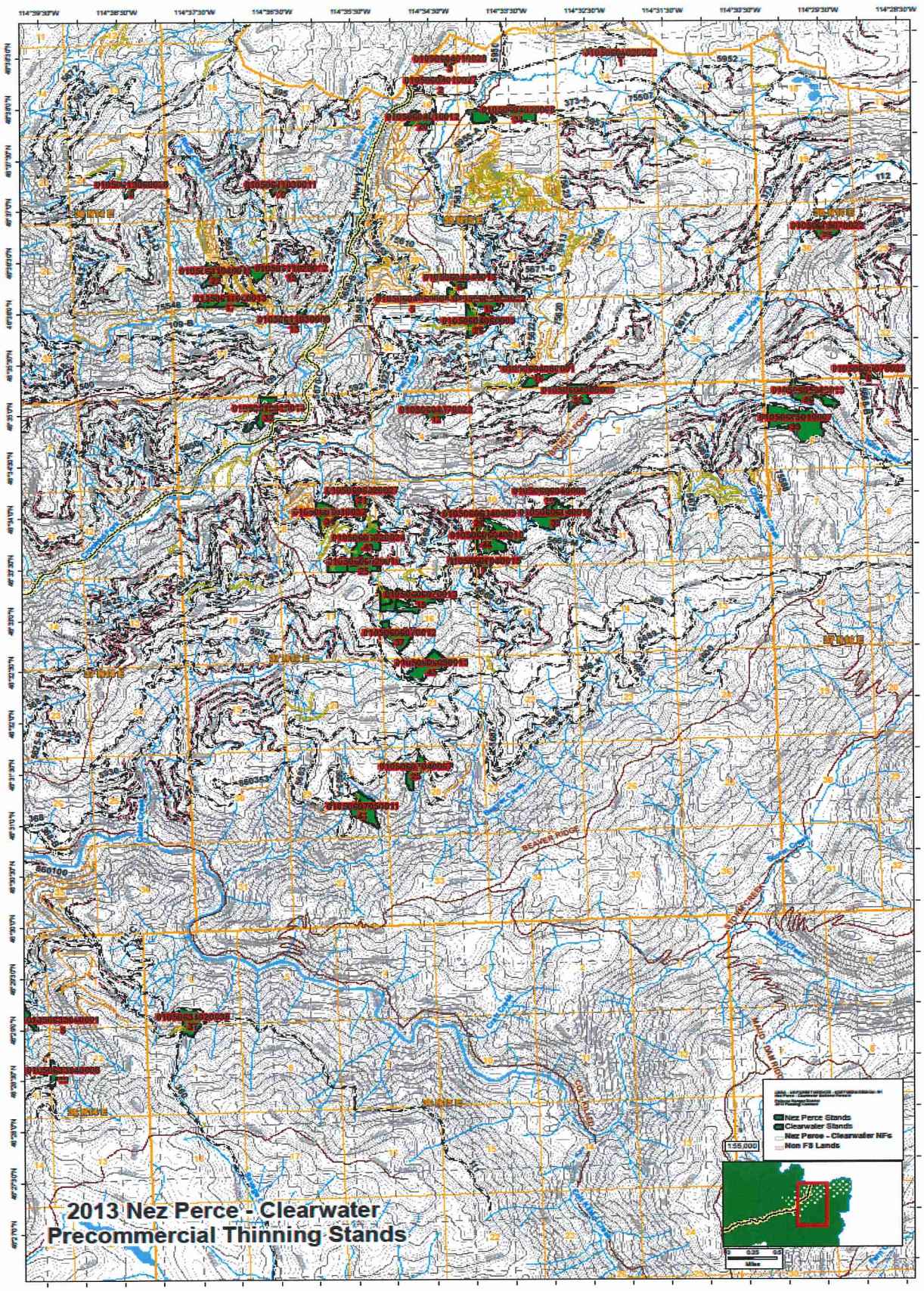
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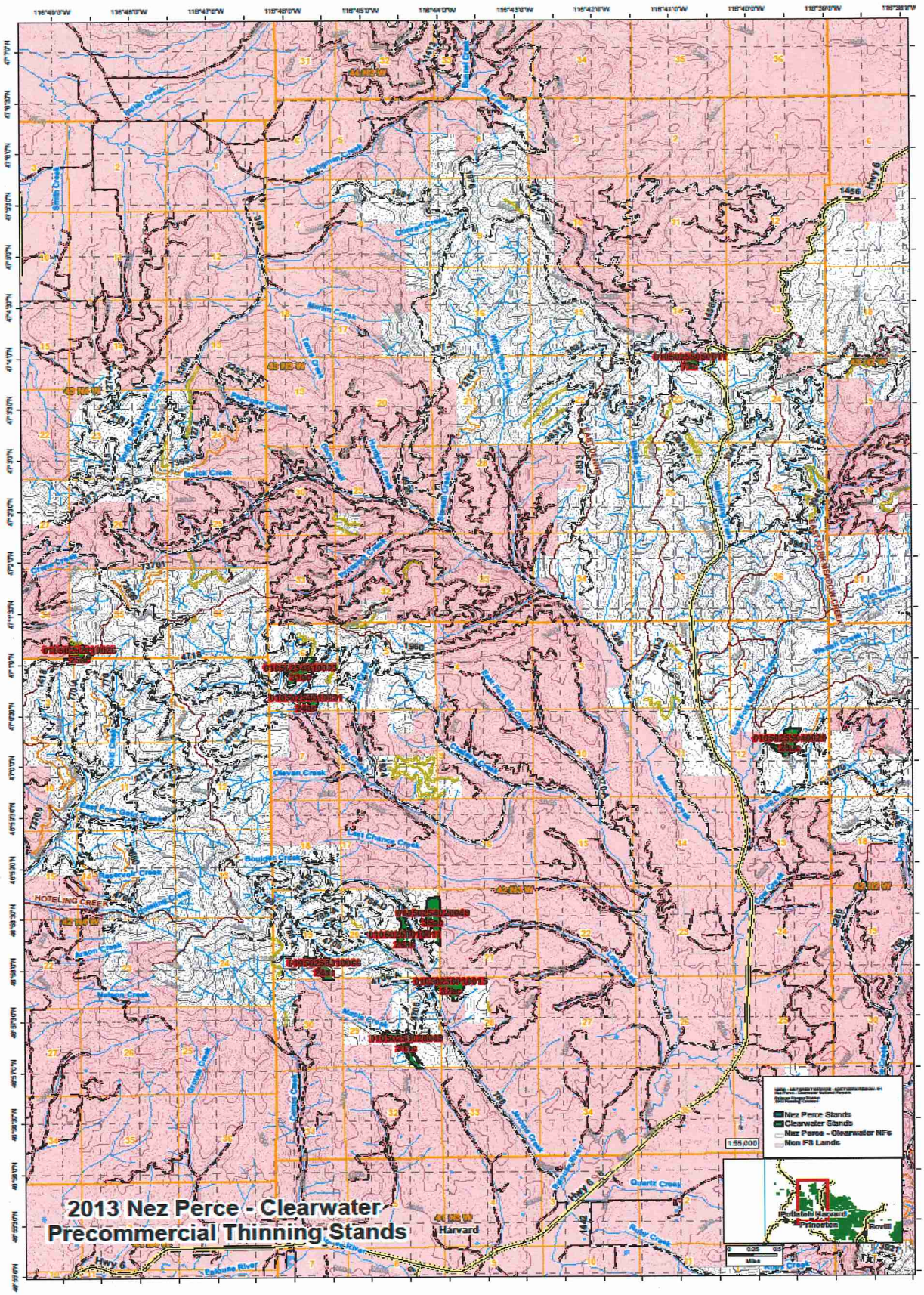
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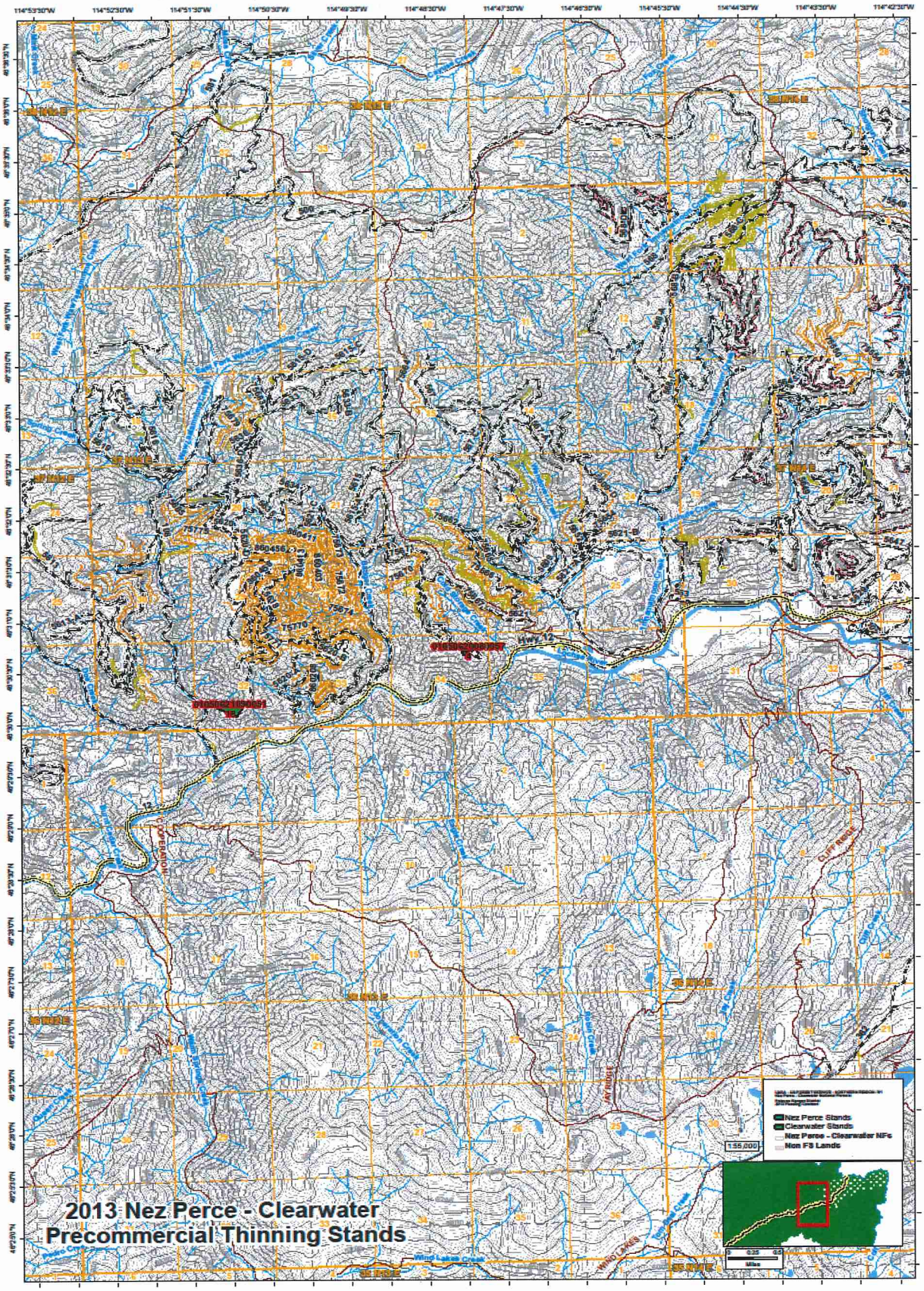
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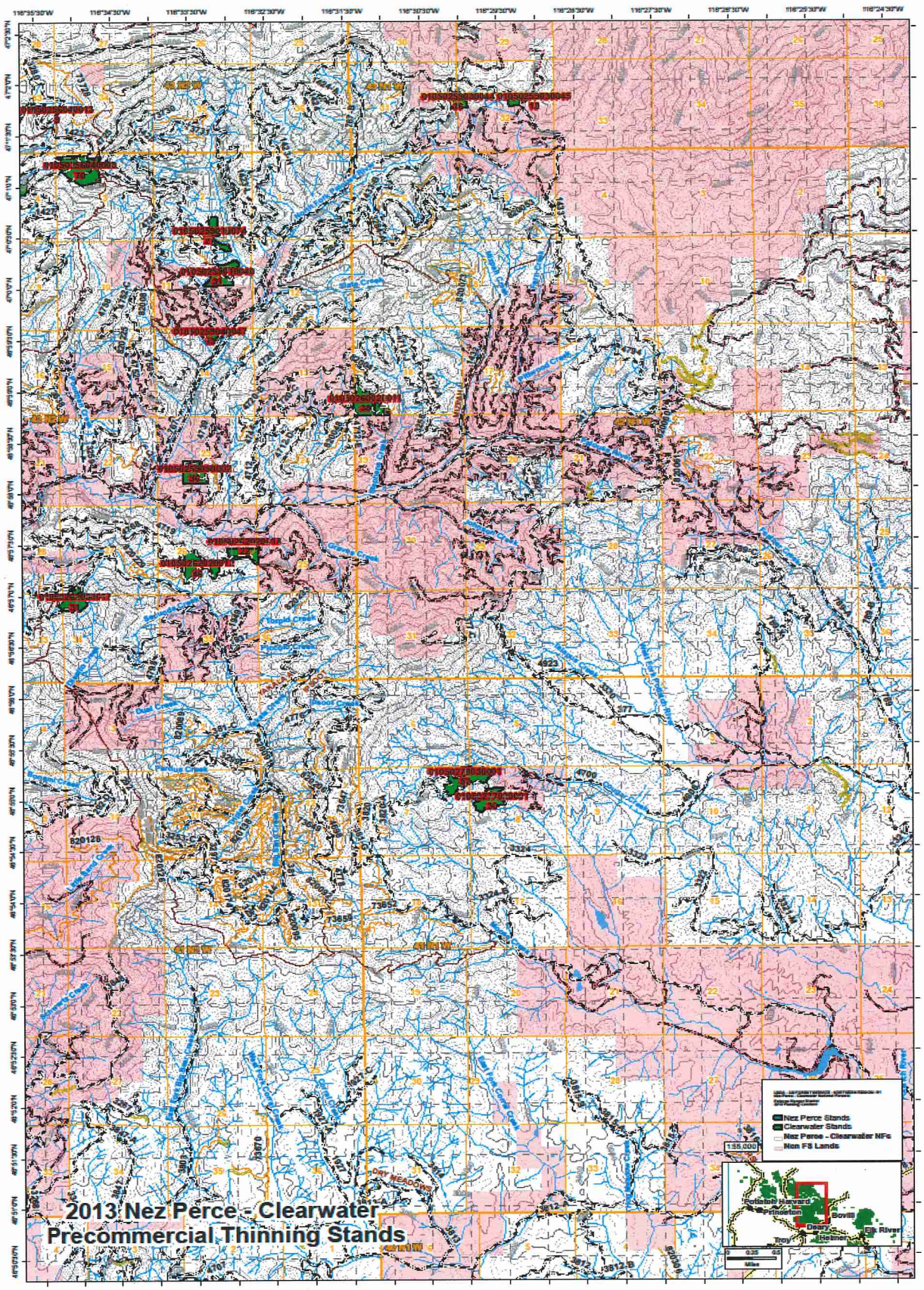
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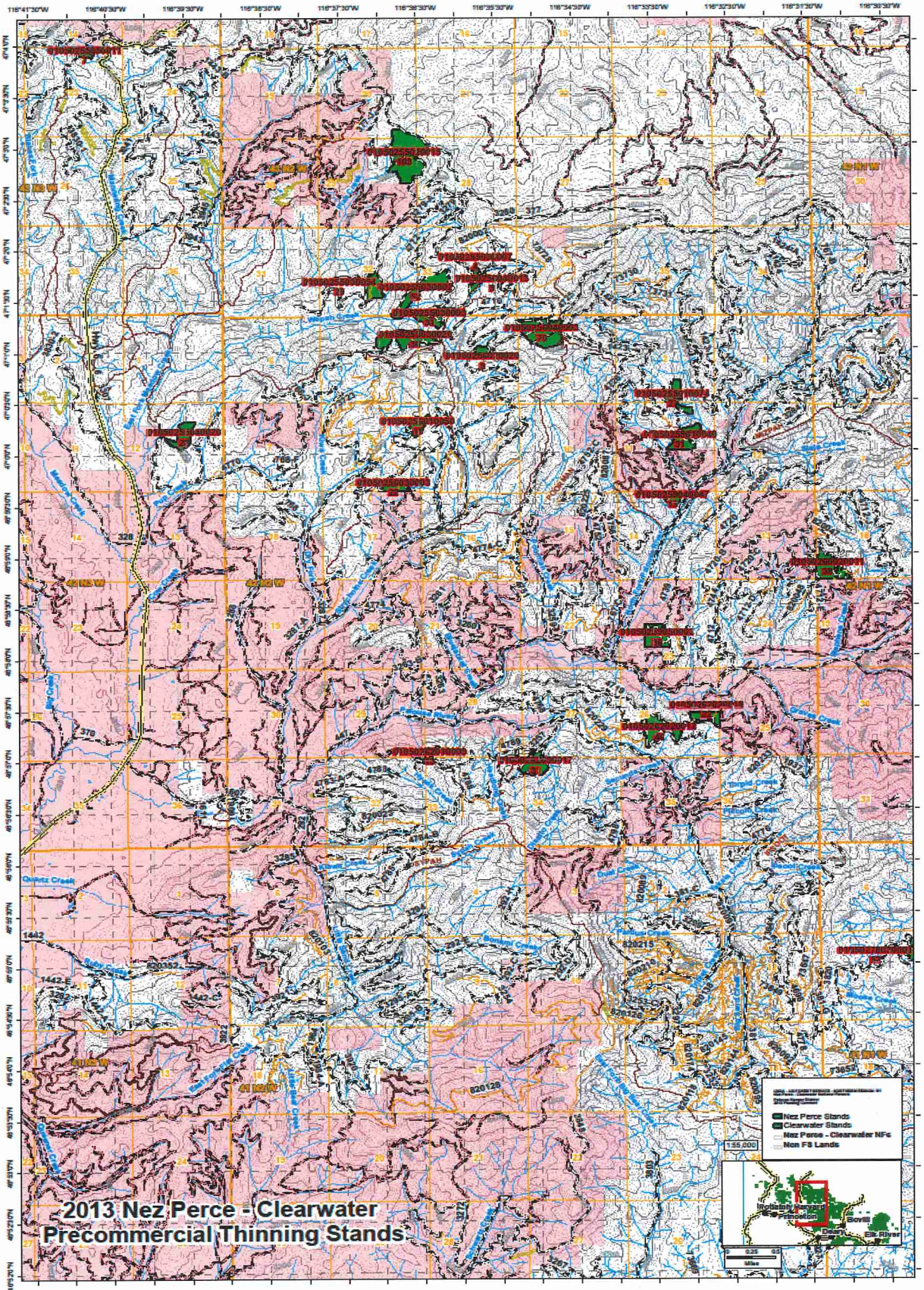
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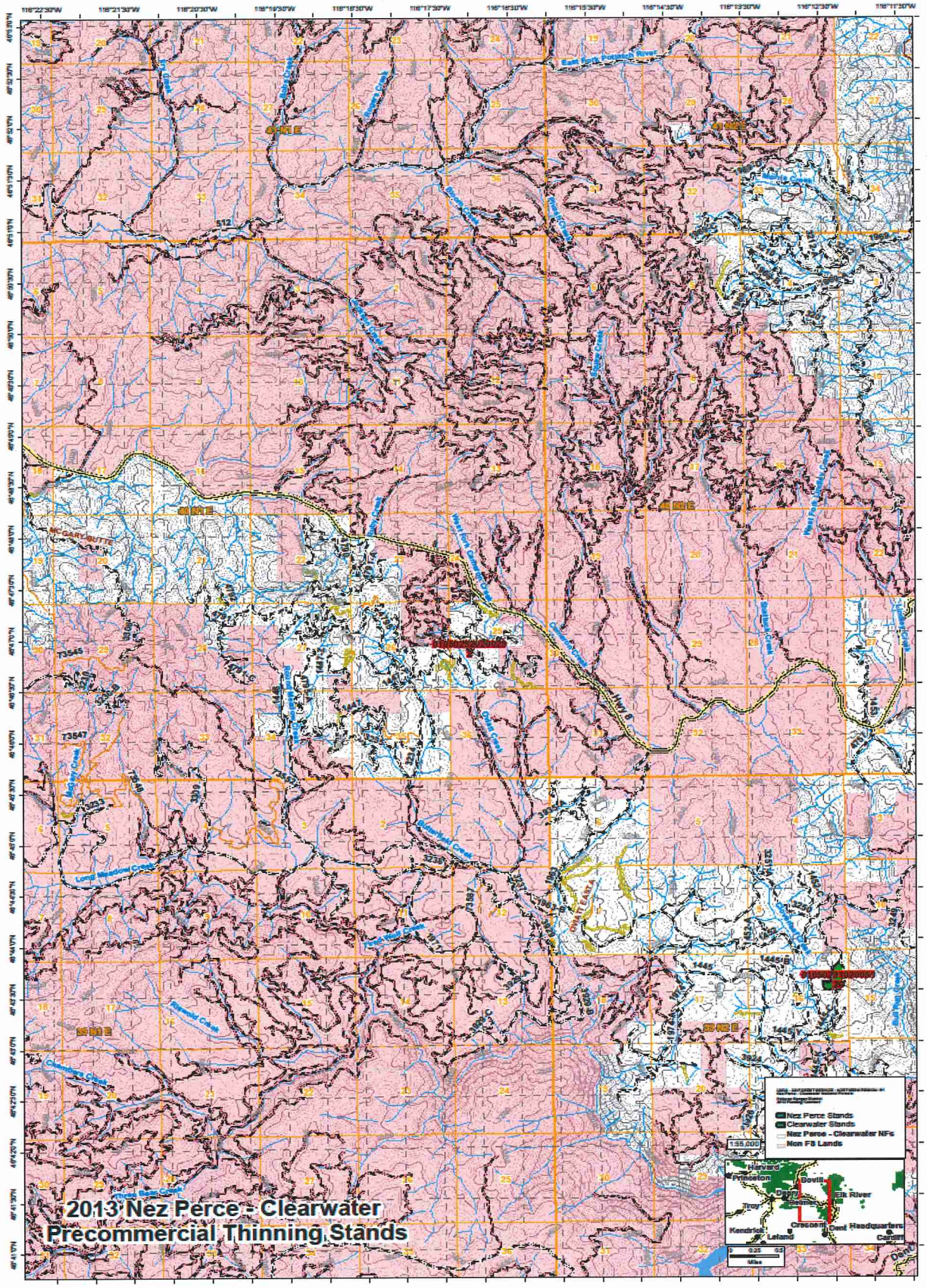
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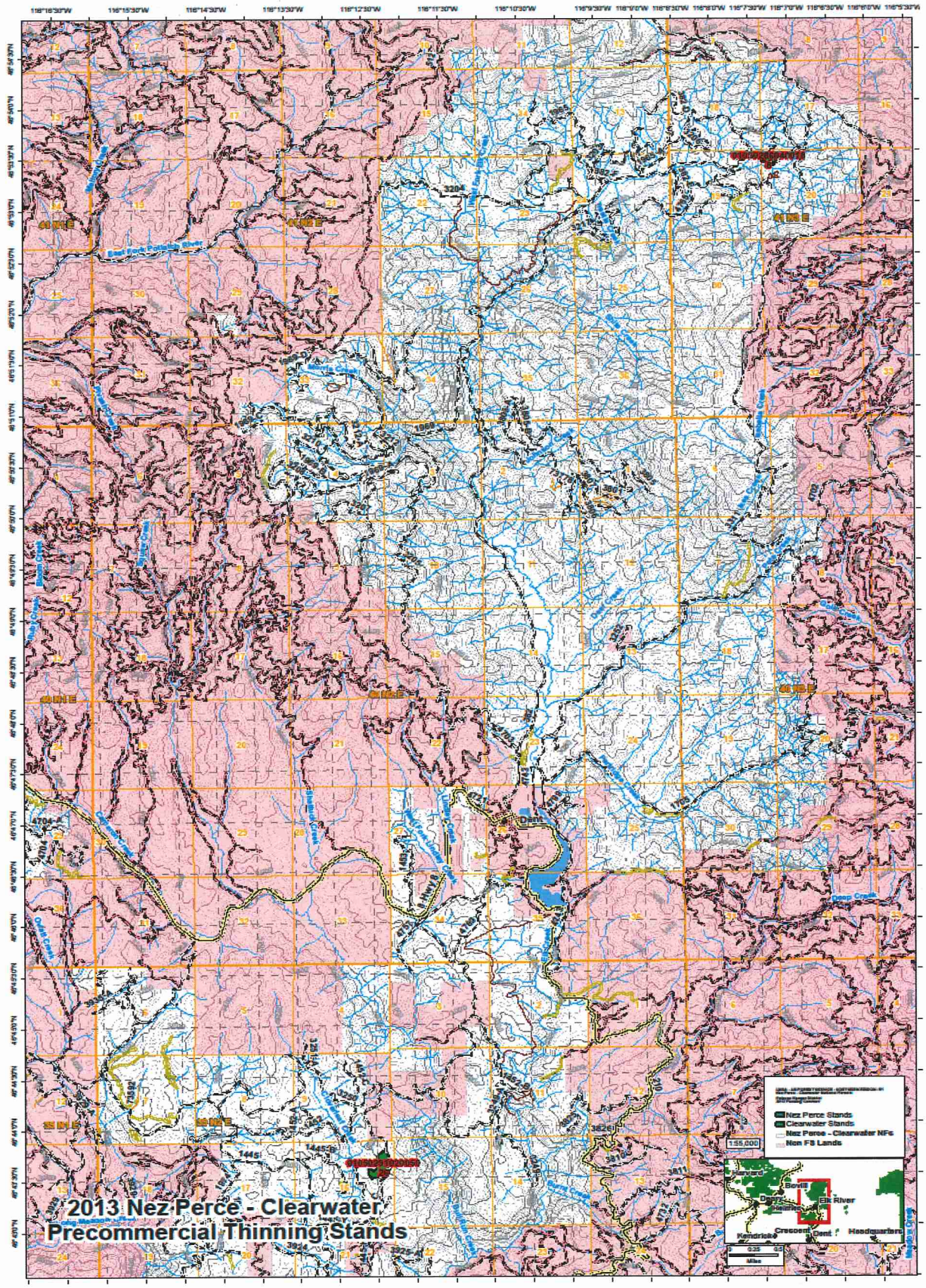
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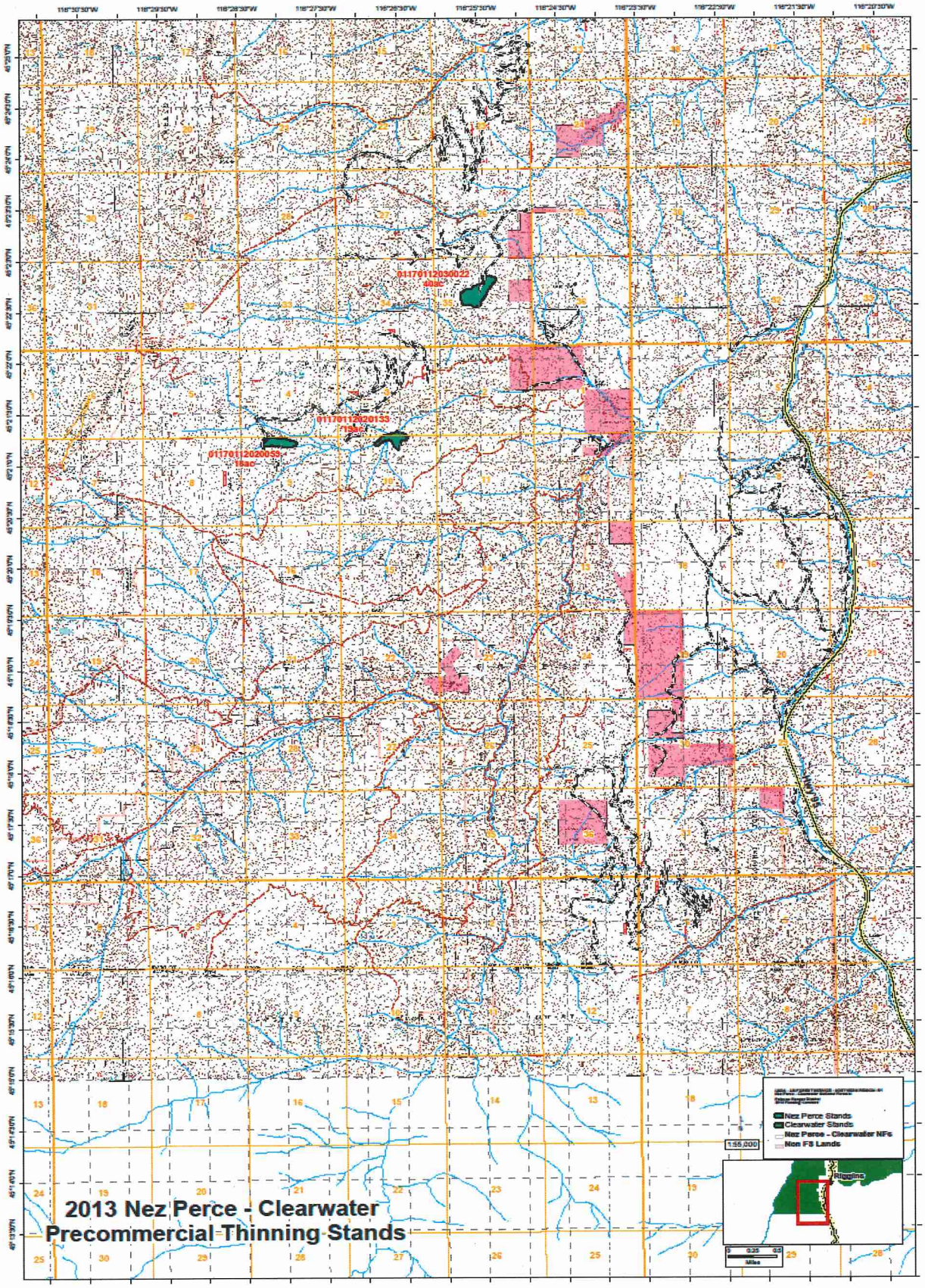
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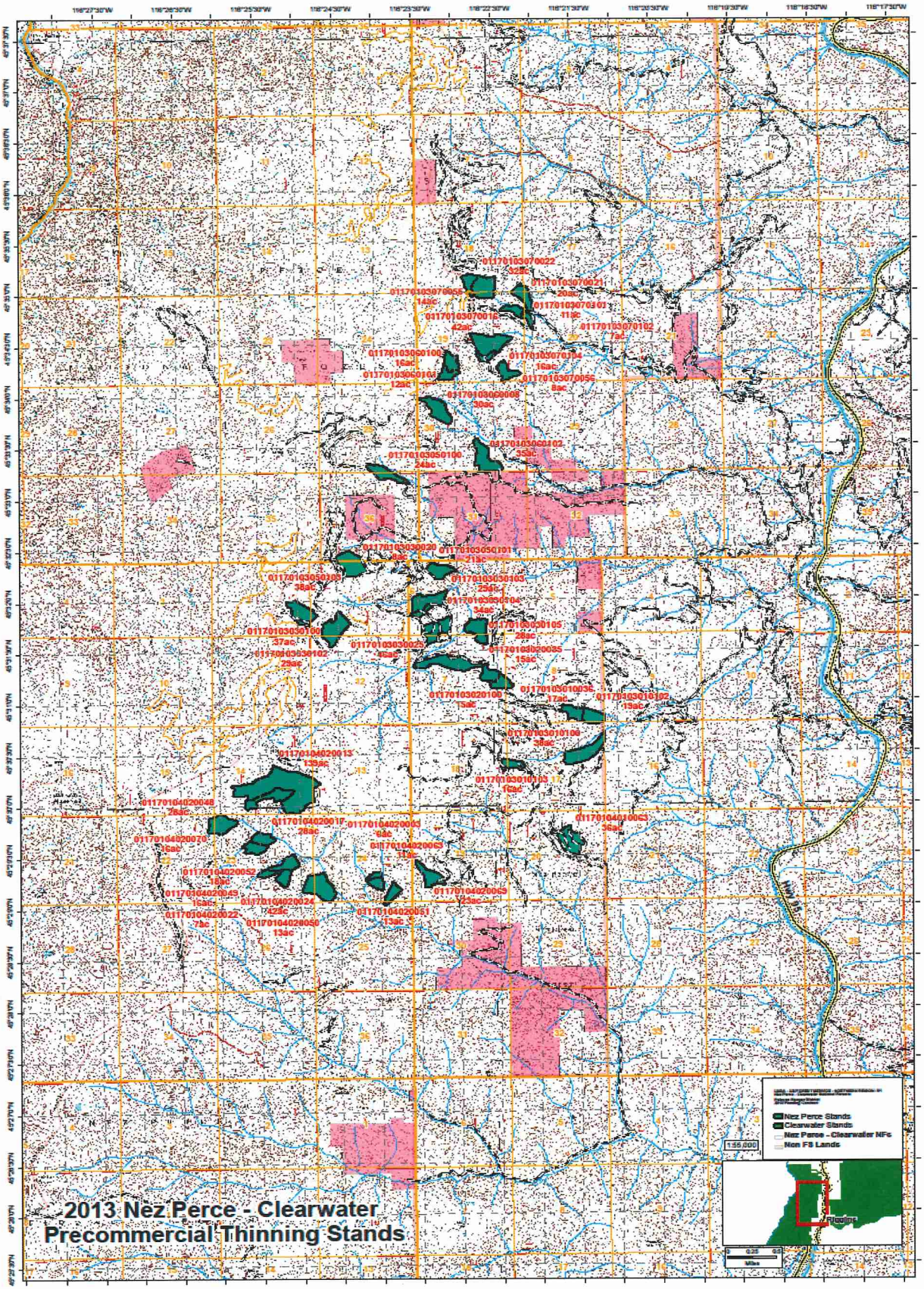
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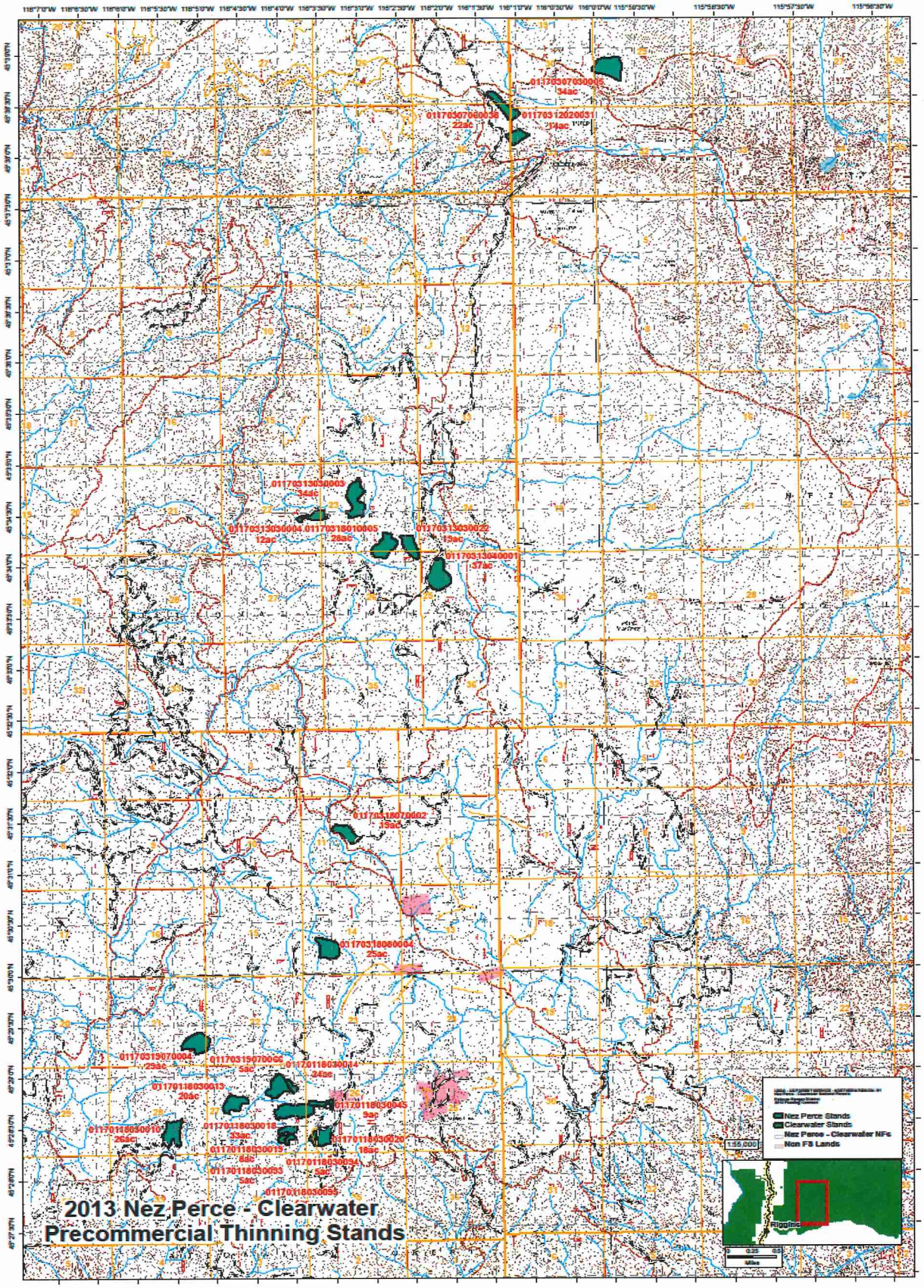
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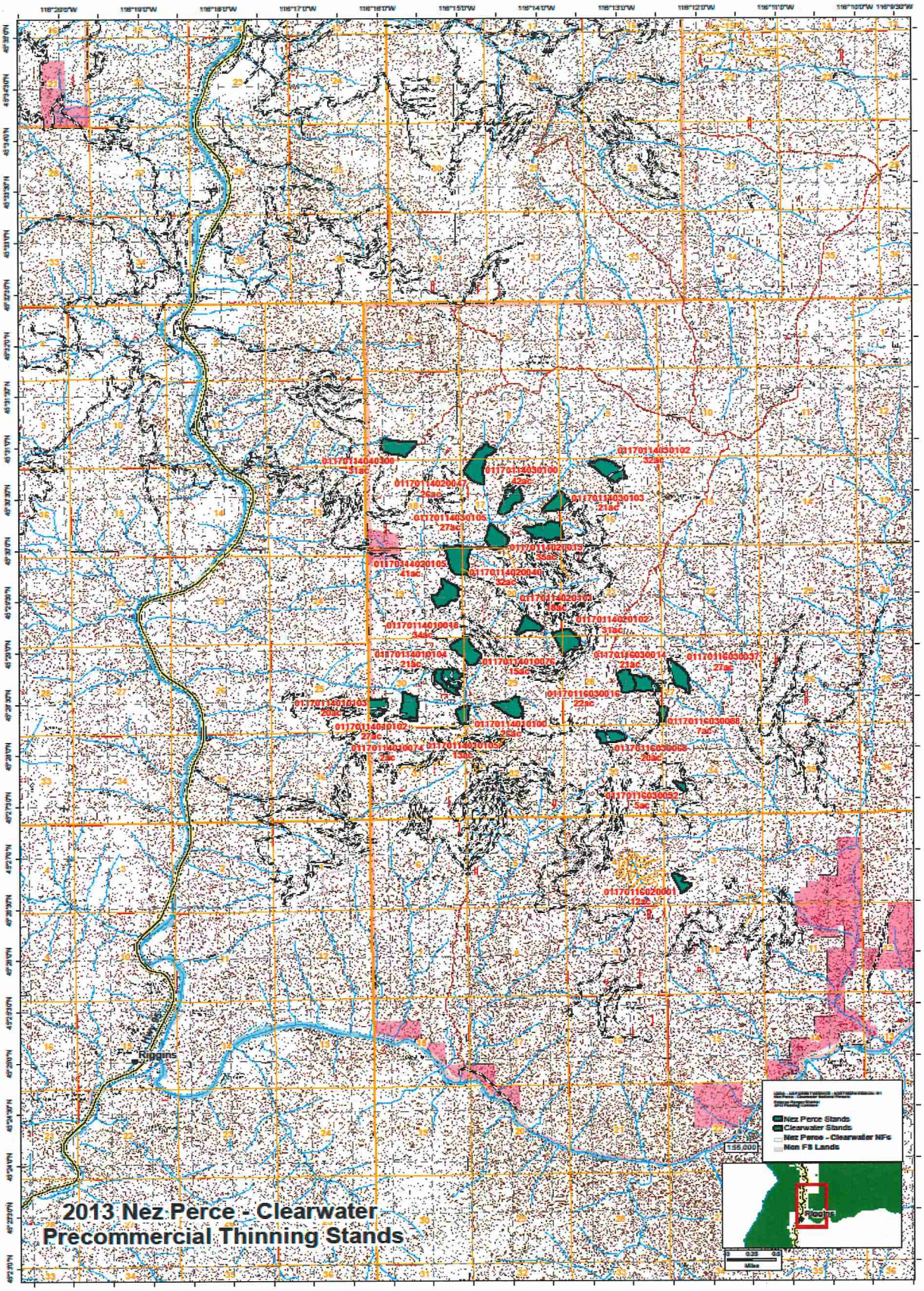
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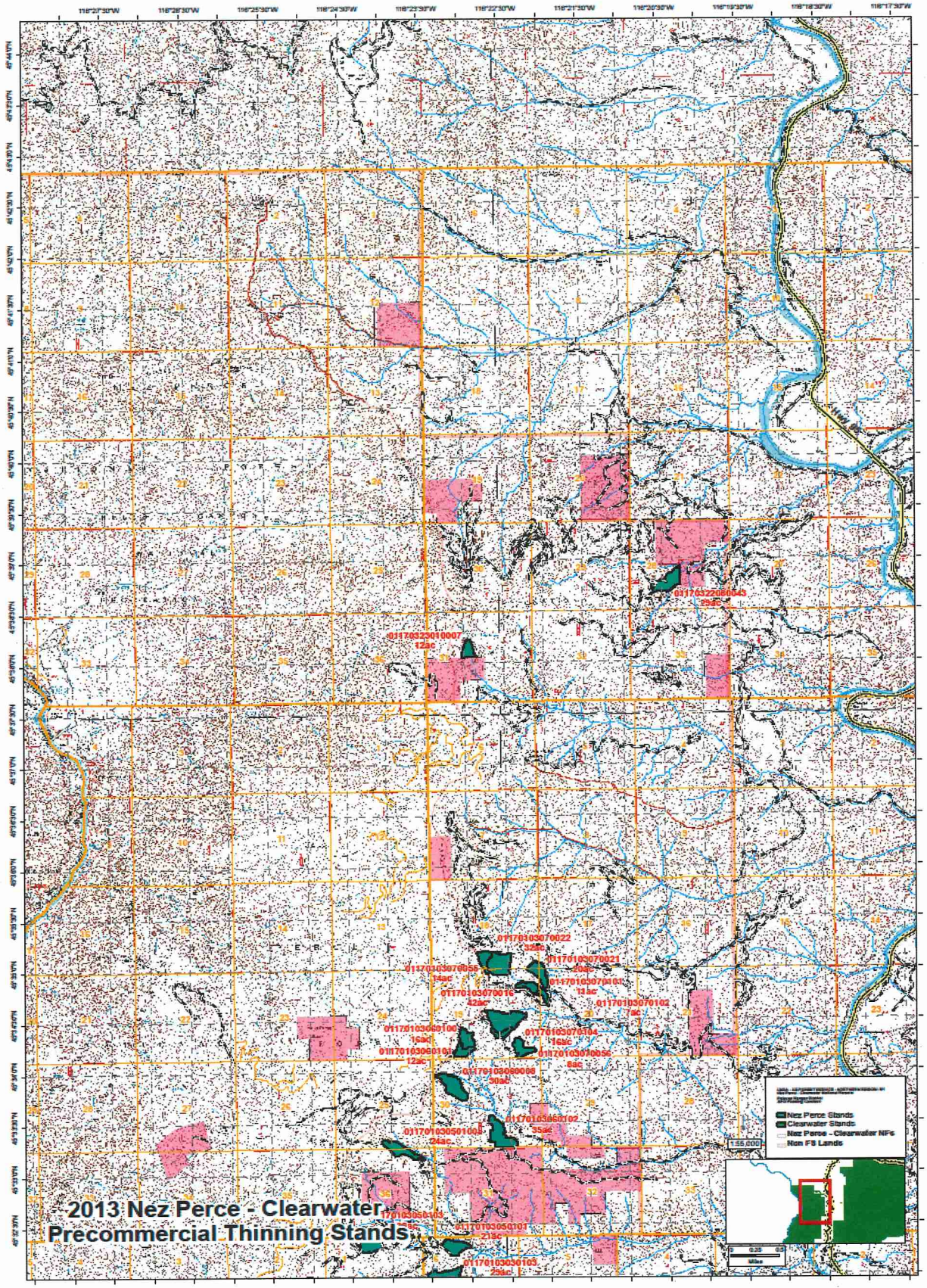
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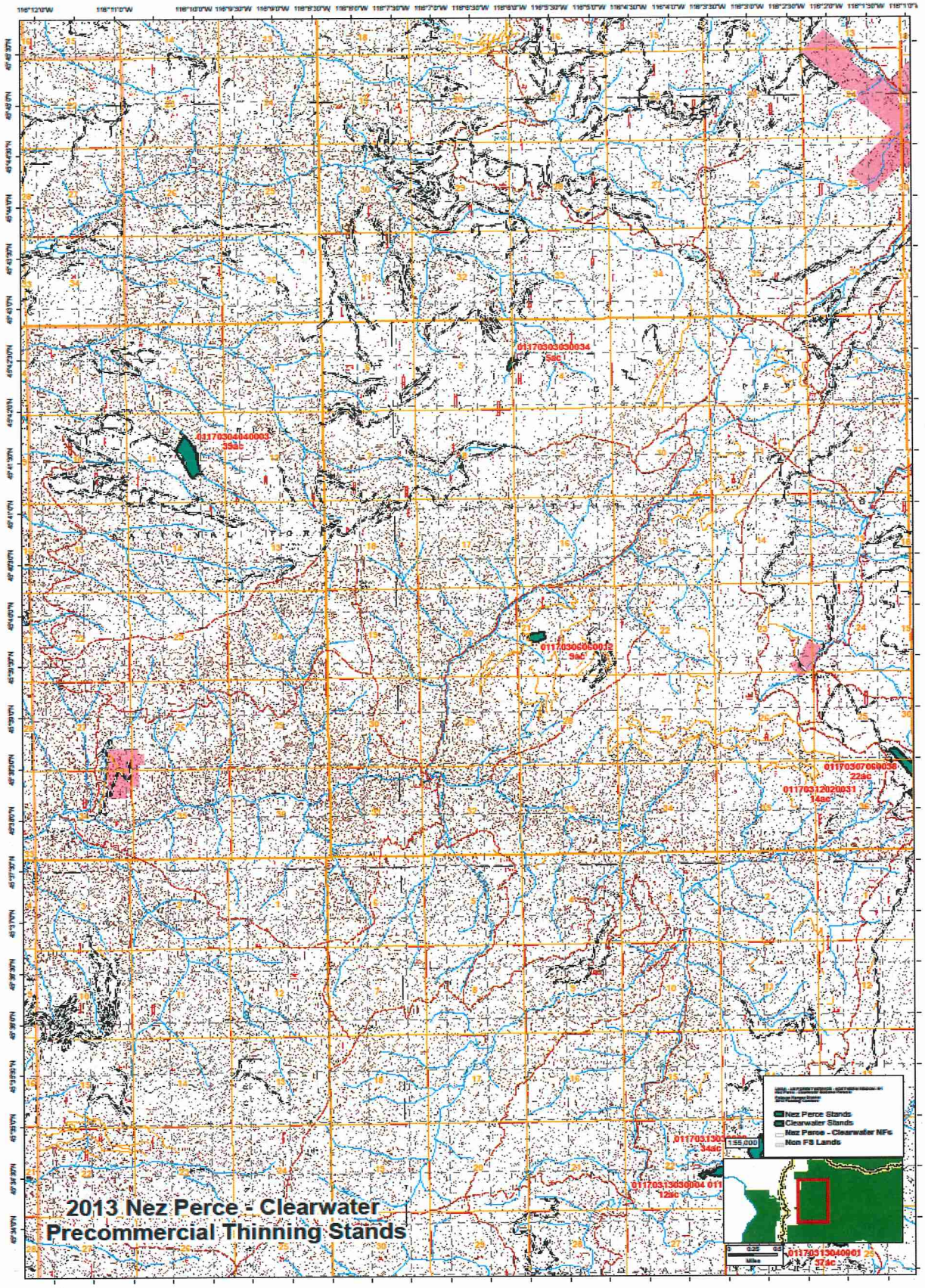
Nez Perce - Clearwater NFs
Non FS Lands


2013 Nez Perce - Clearwater
Precommercial Thinning Stands
Nez Perce Stands
Clearwater Stands
Nez Perce - Clearwater NFs
Non FS Lands
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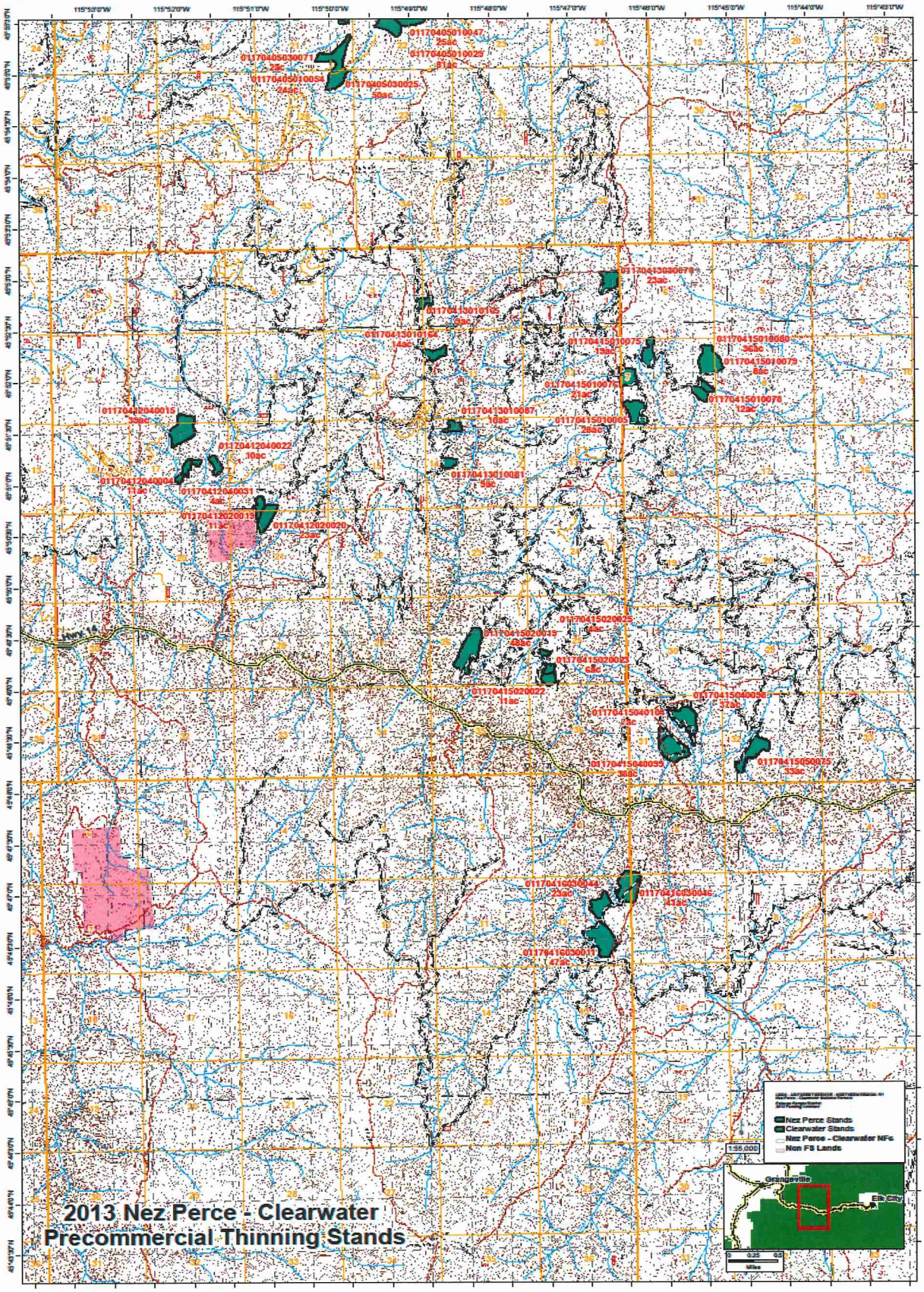
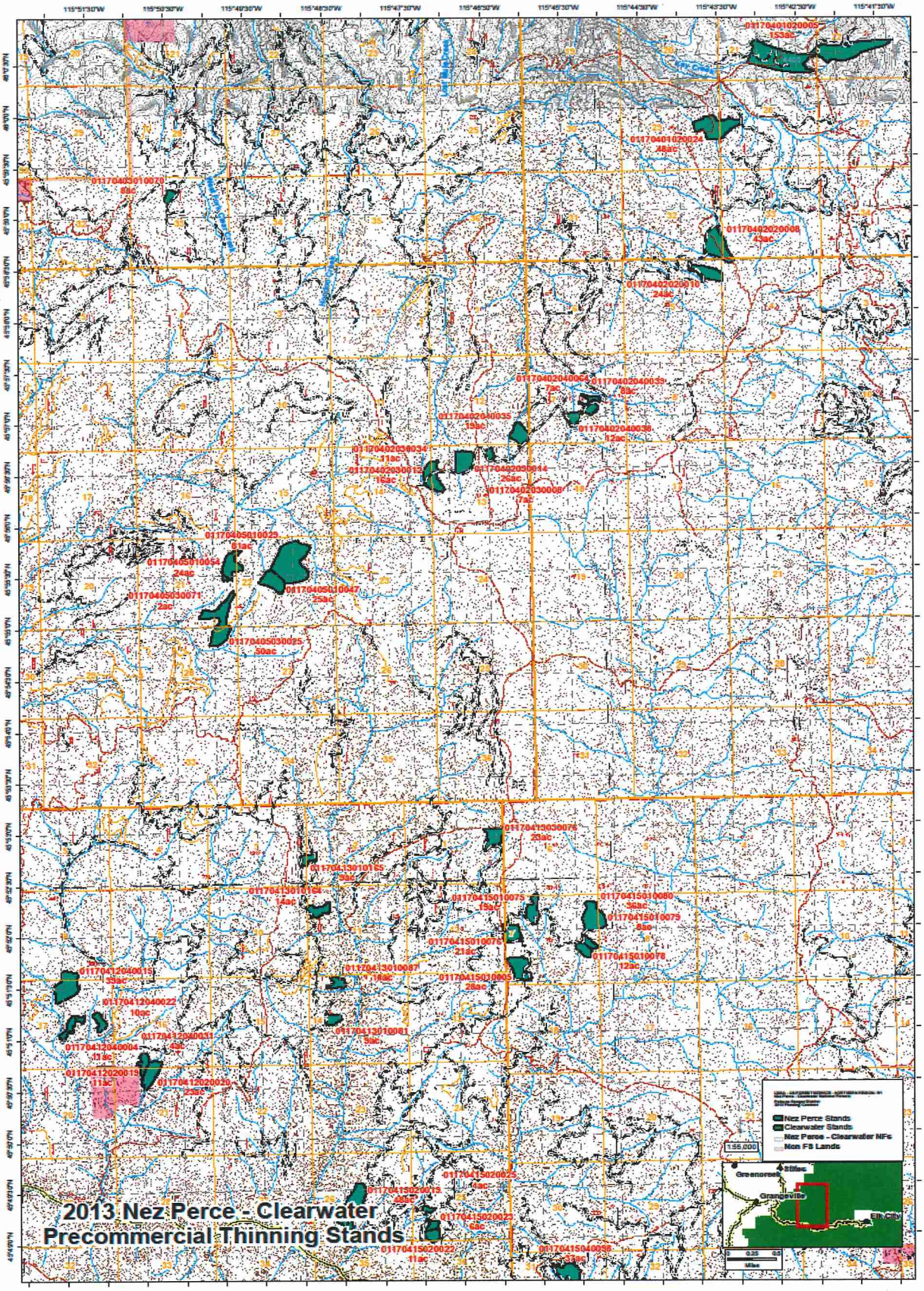
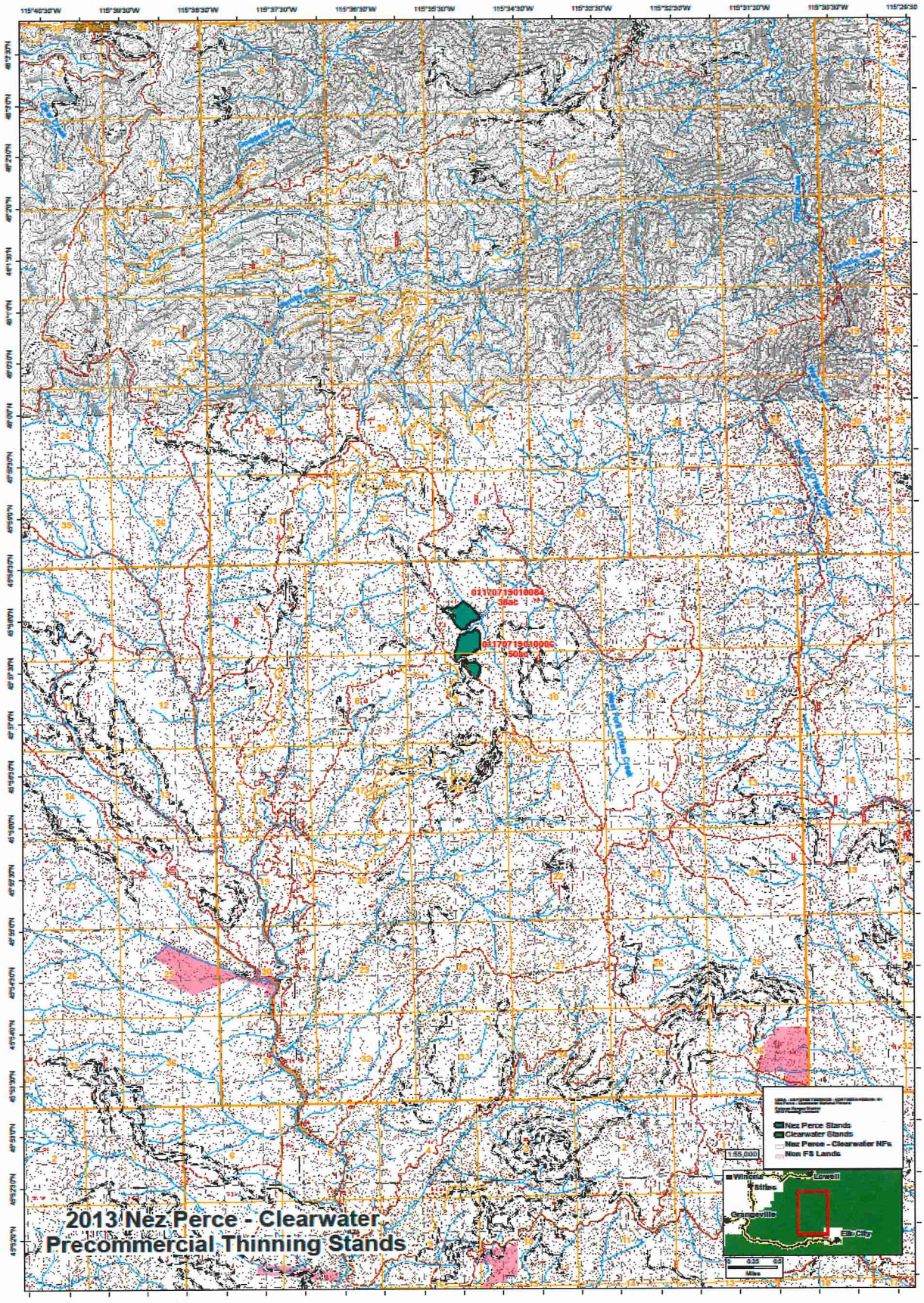
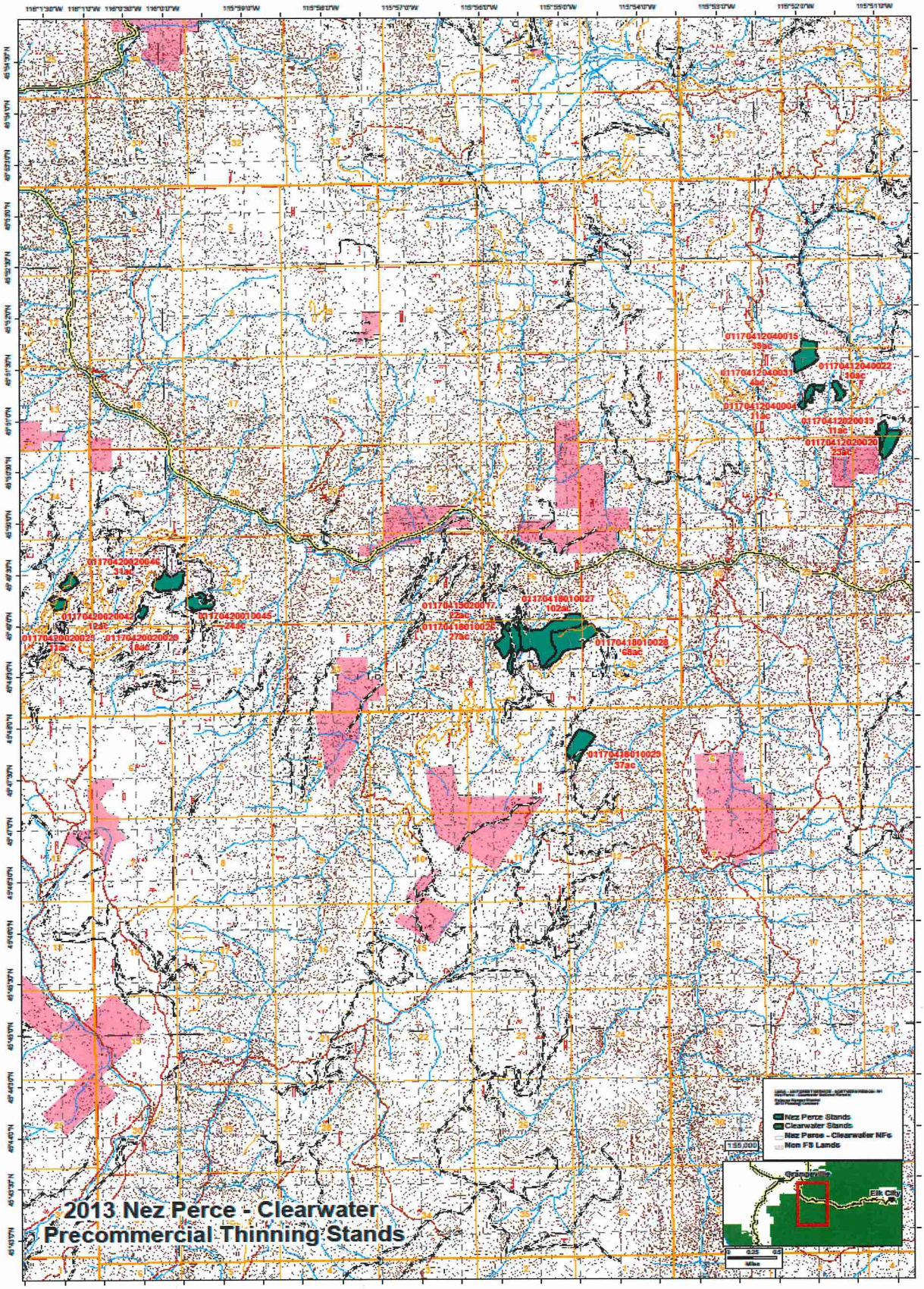
Miles


2013 Nez Perce - Clearwater
Precommercial Thinning Stands
Nez Perce Stands
Clearwater Stands
Nez Perce - Clearwater NFs
Non FS Lands
Grangeville
Elk City


2013 Nez Perce - Clearwater
Precommercial Thinning Stands
Nez Perce Stands
Clearwater Stands
Nez Perce - Clearwater NFs
Non FS Lands
Greenorcas
Stites
Grangeville
Elk City


2013 Nez Perce - Clearwater
Precommercial Thinning Stands
Nez Perce Stands
Clearwater Stands
Nez Perce - Clearwater NFs
Non FS Lands
Lowell
Grangeville
Elk City


2013 Nez Perce - Clearwater
Precommercial Thinning Stands
Nez Perce Stands
Clearwater Stands
Nez Perce - Clearwater NFs
Non FS Lands
Grangeville
Elk City