

STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

September 19, 2023

Regular Agenda

Subject

Dry Sky Ton Timber Sale with clearcut harvest units exceeding 100 contiguous acres.

Questions Presented

Shall the Land Board approve the Dry Sky Ton Timber Sale with clearcut harvest exceeding 100 contiguous acres?

Background

At its December 15, 2015 meeting, the State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) adopted a timber sale governance structure whereby the Idaho Department of Lands (Department) would only present individual proposed timber sales for Land Board approval that fall outside of established Land Board policies. Timber sales with clearcut harvesting exceeding 100 contiguous acres is one type of sale to be submitted for approval.

Discussion

The Payette Lakes Supervisory Area has submitted a timber sale in the FY24 plan that has two adjacent clearcut harvest units that exceed 100 contiguous acres. Unit 7 (88 acres) and unit 8 (129 acres) are within Department ownership. To the north of unit 8 lies a parcel that is privately owned. The sale area is located 10 air miles northwest of Council, Idaho (Attachments 1, 2 and 3).

The proposed clearcut harvest for this sale consists of two clearcut units. Both units are characterized by a dense shrub understory, which pose an obstacle when attempting to establish natural regeneration. This leads to significant delays in future harvests and underutilization of the site with poor stocking conditions, which are a detriment to the economic return to the Public School beneficiary. Clearcutting both units will be followed by a site prep spray to control the brush and planted with ponderosa pine. The success of clearcut plantations adjoining these units is proven and reinforces the Department's confidence in stand establishment using the clearcut prescription. Unit 7 will leave approximately two to three ponderosa pine per acre. This will be purely strategic, to facilitate cone collection, which will contribute to maintaining a healthy balance of seed for future regeneration needs. Additional information regarding the decision to clearcut can be found in Attachment 4.

The sale has been prepared to meet the Forest Practices Act. The proposed clearcut harvest units are silviculturally and economically justified and were approved by the Timber Management Bureau (Attachment 5). This sale, as proposed, meets the objectives of the Payette Lakes Forest Asset Management Plan.

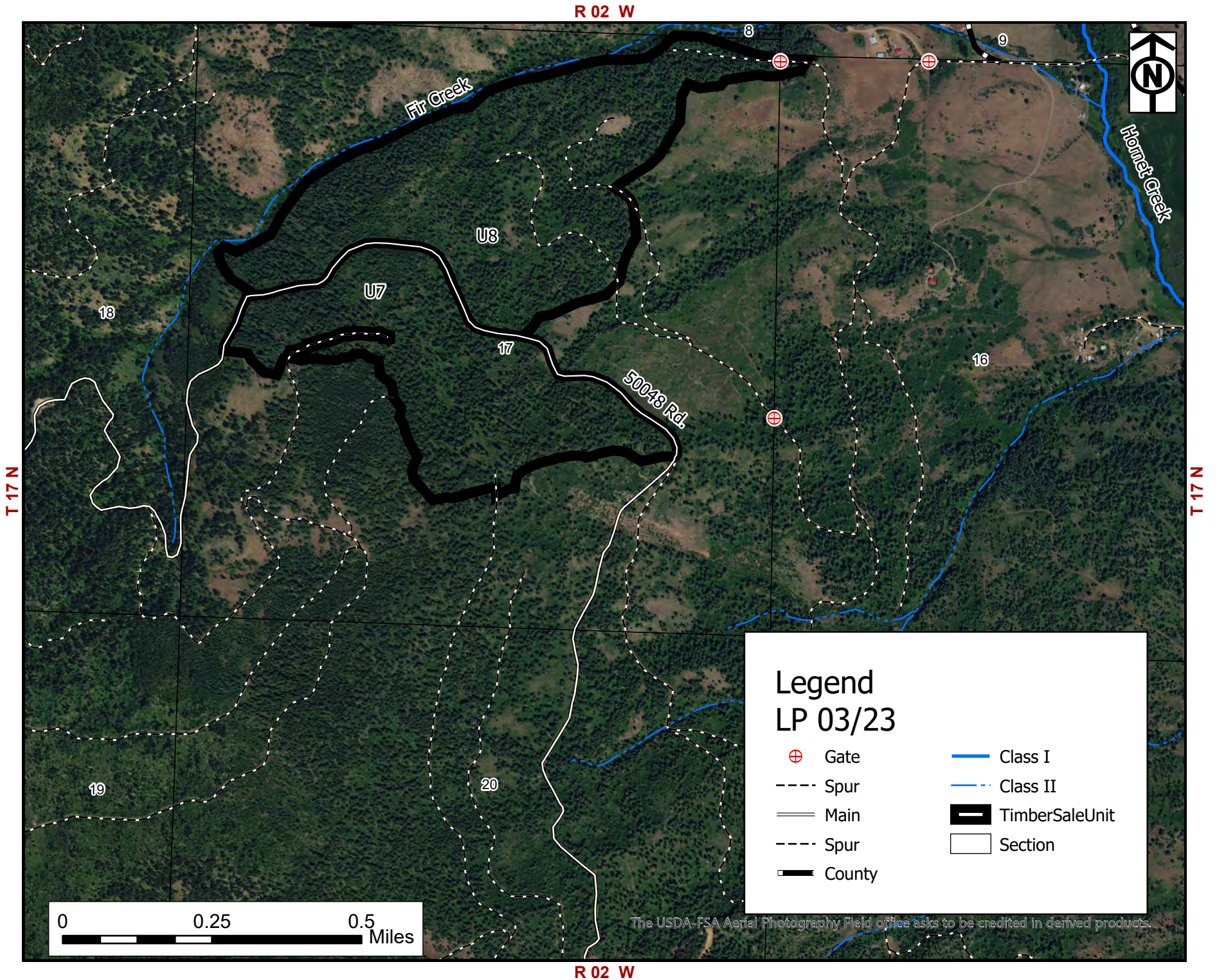
Recommendation

Approve the Dry Sky Ton Timber Sale.

Board Action

Attachments

1. Aerial Photo Map
2. Ownership Map
3. Vicinity Map
4. Clearcut Justification
5. Timber Bureau Approval Memo

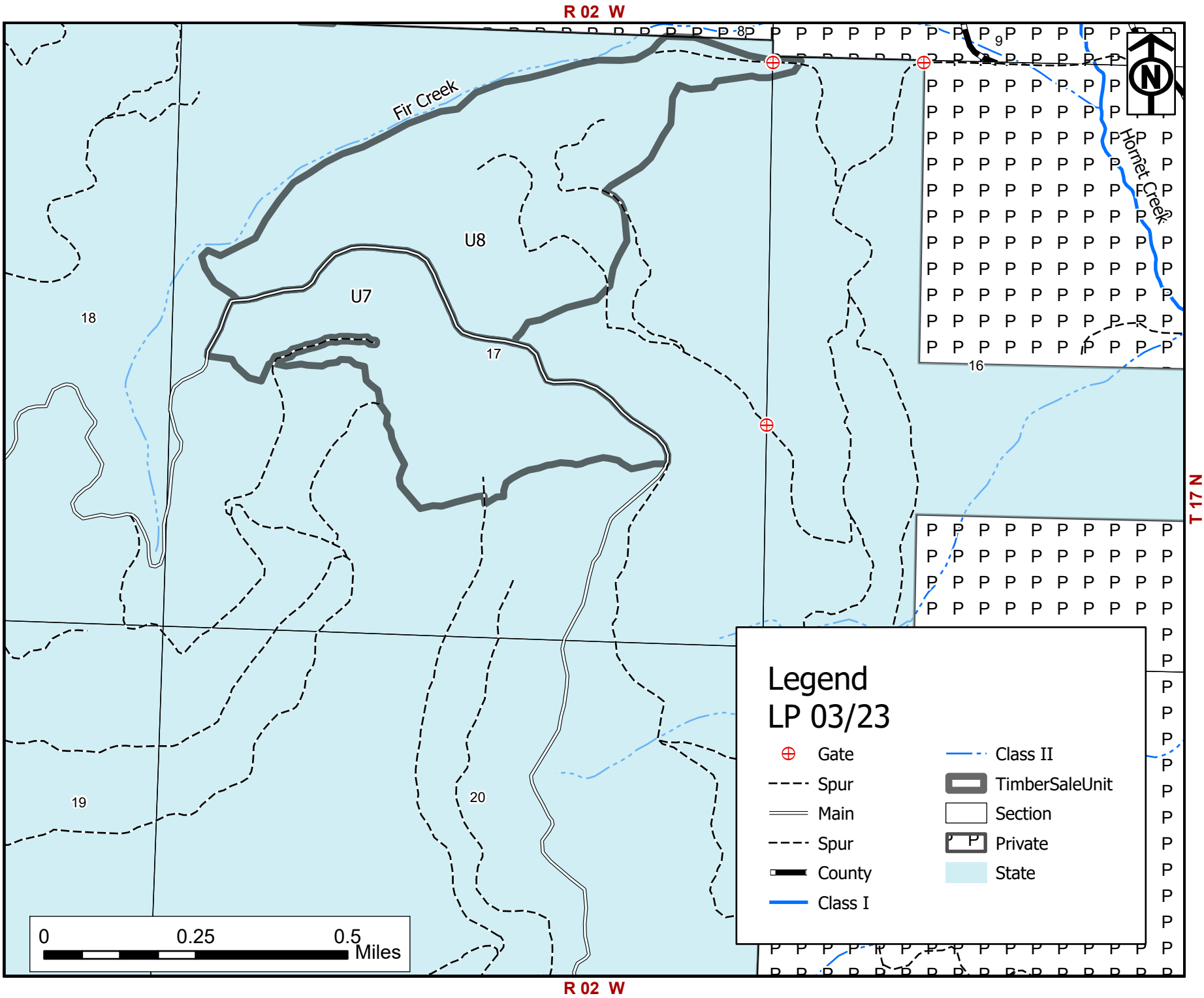


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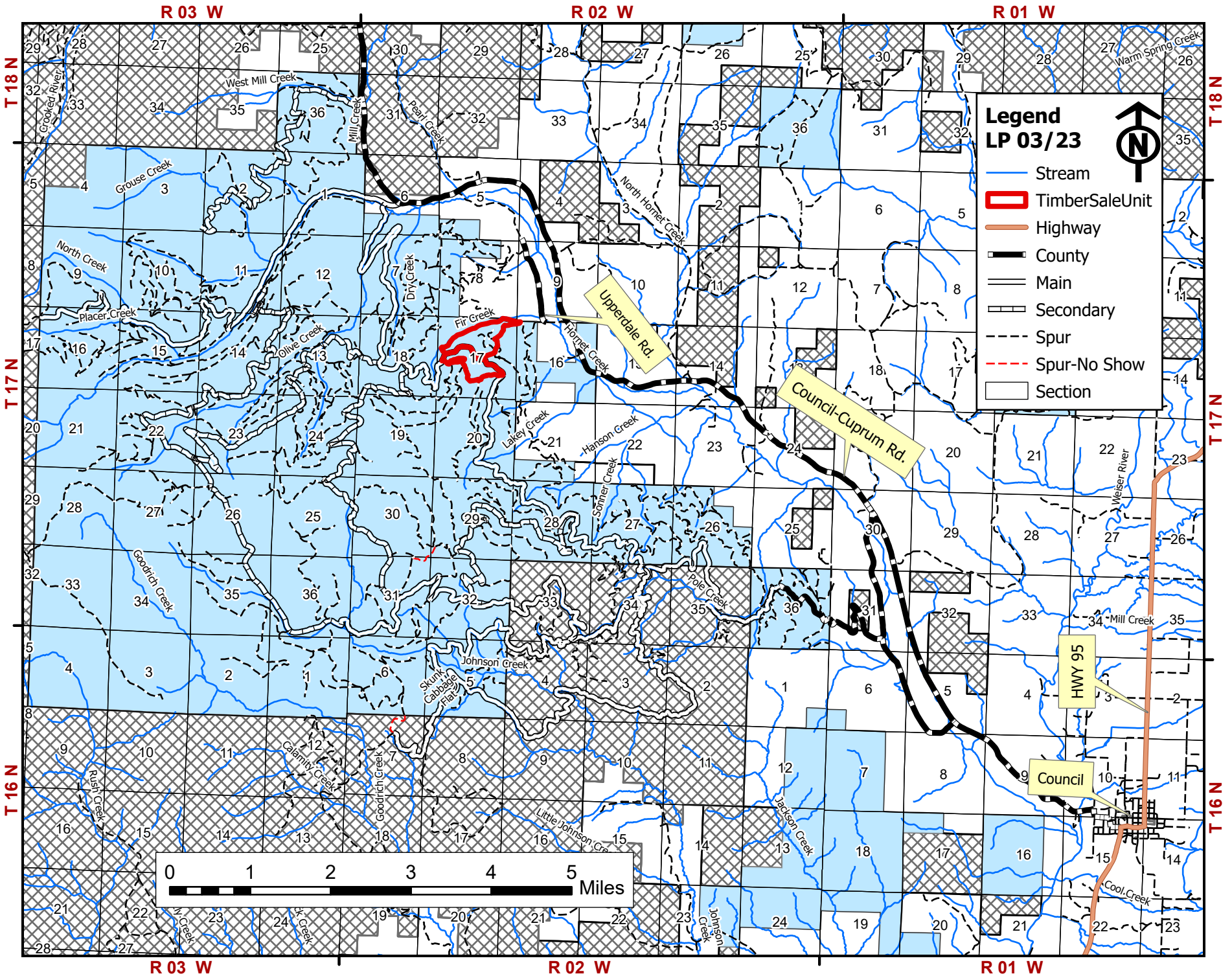


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Legend
LP 03/23

- Stream
- TimberSaleUnit
- Highway
- County
- Main
- Secondary
- Spur
- Spur-No Show
- Section



Dry Sky Clearcut Justification

1. Treatment Description:

a) The stands are primarily composed of mature Douglas-fir with a minor component of ponderosa pine and grand fir. The stands will be clearcut and planted following harvest.

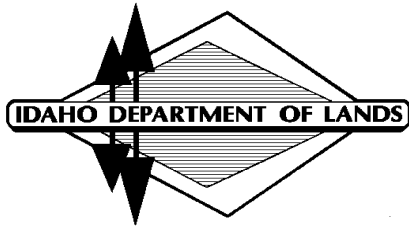
b) Clearcut Justification:

Clearcuts will help achieve Desired Future Conditions outlined in the Payette Lakes Supervisory Area's Forest Asset Management Plan. Clearcutting U7 (88 acres) and U8 (129 acres) is silviculturally and economically justified and complies with the Idaho Forest Practices Act. The two units are adjacent to each other and total 217 contiguous acres. A clearcut prescription will be used to harvest existing stands and re-establish seral species on the site. This prescription will be used for the following reasons:

- 1) A dense shrub layer already exists in the understory and is likely impede the establishment of natural regeneration. Following a natural pathway is likely to add 20 or more years to the stands' rotation and would result in underutilized sites with a low relative stocking index.
- 2) The age of the dominant trees ranges from 70 to 180 years old, with an average age of 110 years old. Both stands exhibit high levels of defect.
- 3) Endemic levels of dwarf mistletoe are present within the Douglas-fir.
- 4) Clearcutting will minimize the number of entries into the area, reduce disturbance and erosion, minimize the spread of disease, and expedite regeneration by planting ponderosa pine.

c) Forest Improvement Activity:

Both units will require a waving wand herbicide application prior to planting. Once sprayed, the units will be planted with 303 ponderosa pine trees per acre. The plantations adjacent to the proposed clearcut units are currently successful.



FOREST MANAGEMENT BUREAU
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Lucas Pate, Lands Resource Supervisor

FROM: Jeremy Shawver, Lands Section Manager Timber Sales and Contract Admin

DATE: July 25, 2023

SUBJECT: Dry Sky Ton (CR500213) Timber Sale

On July 18th, 2023, the timber bureau visited the Payette Lakes Supervisory Area for the annual bureau tour. The focus of the tour on Tuesday was the field review of a proposed clearcut for the Dry Sky Ton timber sale that exceeds IDL Policy for a clearcut exceeding 100 acres. The tour occurred prior to harvesting to discuss the proposal of the fiscal year 2024 timber sale. The sale consists of ten (10) units across 611 acres of endowment lands. Sale units 7 (88 acres) and 8 (129 acres) are proposed to be harvested using a clearcut silviculture system. Attendance also included Payette Lakes timber management personnel.

The two units of Dry Sky Ton Timber Sale are located in sections 16 and 17 of T17N R02W. The public school endowment owns these two sections of the sale area.

The tour started by hiking into the northern portion of unit 8 in section 17. The group walked in an old road near the northern boundary. The sale area was harvested in the early 2000s as a commercial thin which removed mostly grand fir. Currently, the stand has an overstory consisting primarily of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine (93%). The stand has an established brush understory of oceanspray, ninebark with pockets of Mountain Maple (image 1). With the presence of the heavy vegetative competition in the understory, natural regeneration is not a viable option for this Douglas-fir/ninebark (PSME/PHMA) habitat type.

The group took a quick stop by an adjacent ponderosa pine plantation that was approximately 6-7 years old (image 2). The group noted that the trees are free to grow and starting to put on at least a foot of annual growth. This plantation was a successful outcome from a previous IDL clearcut silviculture system.

The group travelled up the Hornet Slope Road. The road is the unit boundary between the upper end of unit 8 and the lower end of unit 7. The stand composition of unit 7 is similar to unit 8 with Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine in the overstory and a heavy brush component in the understory (image 3). Unit 7 was proposed as a seed tree silviculture system. The group discussed both stands and their similar characteristics. With the well-established understory of brush, natural regeneration is likely to take 20 to 25 plus years to become established. The Bureau recommends applying a clearcut silviculture system to unit 7 as well as unit 8.

The preferred silviculture treatments of clearcutting, site preparation, and planting best suits these stands. Economically, the clearcuts will provide more returns to the endowment by capturing the value of the stands now and quickly establishing seedlings due to the foreseen time delay of establishing natural regeneration.

The Timber Management Bureau recommends that the Area proceed with the two clearcuts, unit 7 (88 acres) and unit 8 (129 acres) that constitute a 217 acre contiguous clearcut prescription.



Image 1 – Current stand structure of unit 8.



Image 2 – Nearby ponderosa pine plantation.



Image 3 – Stand composition of unit 7.