

STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

February 20, 2024

Regular Agenda

Subject

Swamp Witch Timber Sale with clearcut harvest units exceeding 100 acres

Questions Presented

Shall the Land Board approve the Swamp Witch Timber Sale with clearcut harvest units exceeding 100 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 harvest units exceeding 100 acres are one type of sale to be submitted for approval.

Discussion

The Ponderosa Supervisory Area has submitted a timber sale in the FY2024 plan that has clearcut harvest units exceeding 100 acres in size. The sale area is within other Department and industrial private ownership that has been previously managed (Attachment 1). The sale area is located 7.5 miles southeast of Elk River, Idaho (Attachment 2).

The proposed clearcut harvest in this sale totals 138 acres and is described in detail in Attachment 3. It is characterized by highly defective and overmature grand fir. A high rate of mortality is currently occurring in most of the stand and needs immediate treatment to capture the highest value. The preferred species are a minor component of the stand and are not expected to produce enough cones and seed for natural regeneration. The site will be planted with a mix of seral species, which will be more resilient to the current insect and disease problems. Stands in the vicinity, managed by the Department, have been successfully planted to adequate stocking to maximize return to the beneficiaries.

The sale has been prepared to meet or exceed the Forest Practices Act. The proposed clearcut harvest unit is silviculturally and economically justified and was approved by the Timber Management Bureau (Attachment 4). This sale, as proposed, meets the objectives of the Ponderosa Area Forest Asset Management Plan.

Recommendation

Approve the Swamp Witch Timber Sale.

Board Action

Attachments

1. Ortho Map
2. Vicinity Map
3. Clearcut Justification
4. Timber Bureau Approval

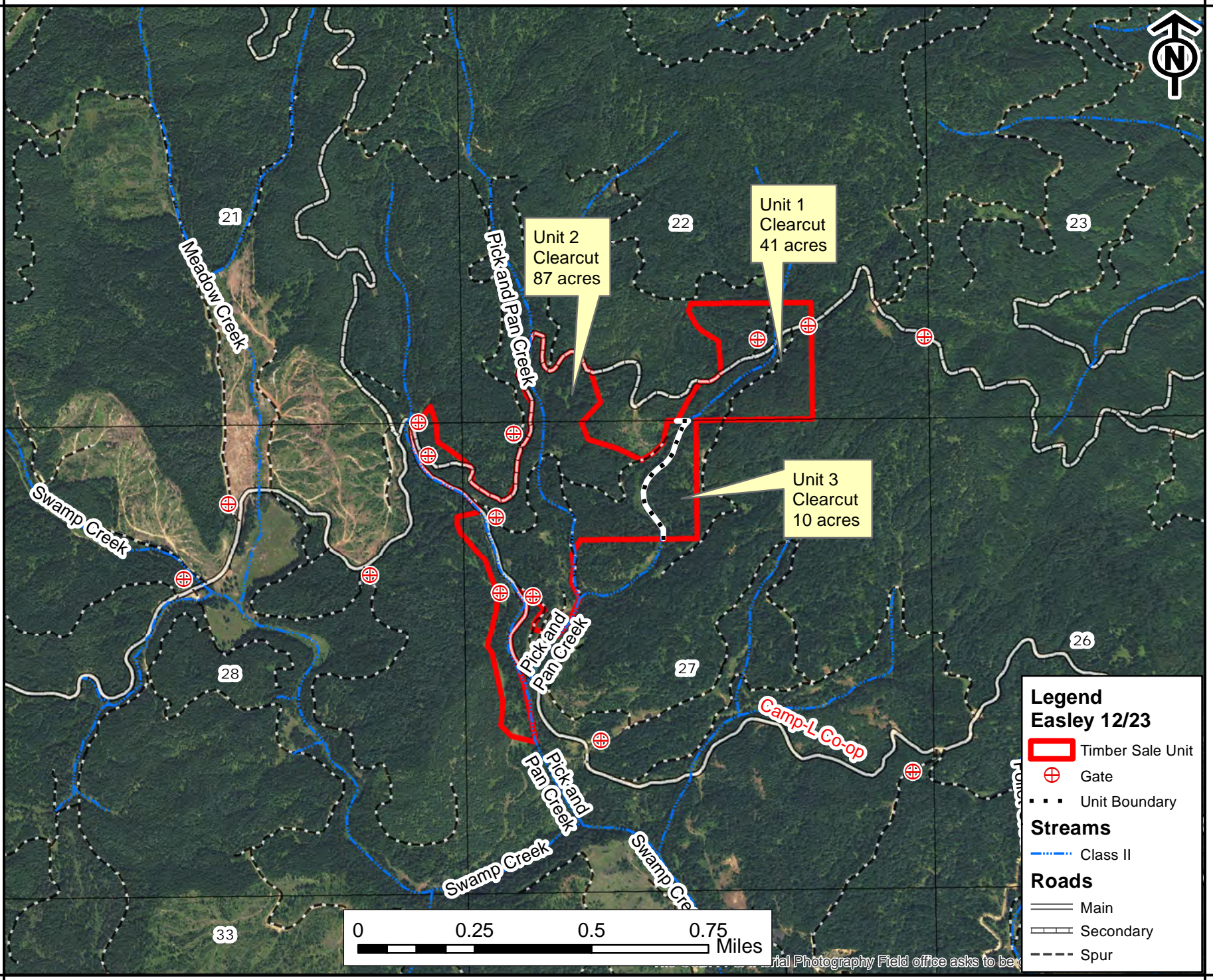
R 03 E



CR410151
Swamp Witch

N 63 J
Sale Map

T 39 N



Unit 2
Clearcut
87 acres

Unit 1
Clearcut
41 acres

Unit 3
Clearcut
10 acres

**Legend
Easley 12/23**

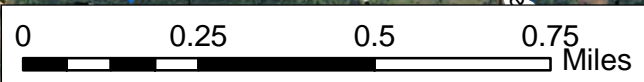
- Timber Sale Unit
- ⊕ Gate
- Unit Boundary

Streams

- ⋯ Class II

Roads

- Main
- Secondary
- Spur



R 03 E

ATTACHMENT 1

Exhibit C
Page 1 of 1

erial Photography Field office asks to be

R 02 W R 01 W R 01 E R 02 E R 03 E R 04 E

N 14 T

N 40 T

N 39 T

N 38 T

N 37 T

T 41 N

T 40 N

T 39 N

T 38 N

T 37 N



Vicinity Map

Legend
Easley 12/23

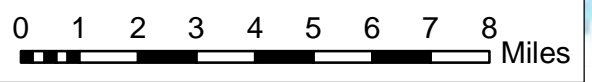
- Timber Sale Unit

Transportation

- Highway
- County
- Main
- Secondary

Ownership

- State
- USFS
- ARMY CORPS



Swamp Witch Clearcut Justification

1. Treatment Description:

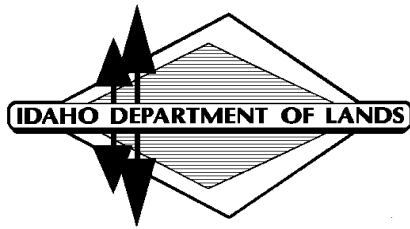
(a) All three stands are comprised predominantly of overmature grand fir (78% of the standing volume). Western redcedar, Douglas-fir, western larch, and white pine comprise minor components of the stands. These stands will be clearcut and planted following harvest.

(b) Clearcut Justification:

Clearcuts in this sale will help the Ponderosa Area achieve the desired future conditions outlined in the Ponderosa Area's Forest Asset Management Plan. The clearcuts in units 1 (41 acres), 2 (87 acres) and 3 (10 acres) are silviculturally and economically justified and were planned to comply with the Idaho Forest Practices Act. A clearcut prescription will be used to harvest the existing stands and re-establish seral species on the site. This prescription will be used for following reasons:

1. The evidence of Indian paint fungus, Douglas-fir bark beetle, and a variety of root rots have reduced the availability of preferred species to be utilized as seed trees. The number of healthy trees of seral species is insufficient to naturally regenerate the stand to desired stocking levels post-harvest.
2. Clearcutting will minimize the number of entries into the area, reducing harvest costs and maximizing revenue to the Endowments. Reducing the number of entries into the stand is also expected to reduce disturbance and erosion, minimize the spread of disease, and expedite regeneration by planting genetically superior western larch and white pine.

(c) Forest Improvement Activity: Units 1, 2 and 3 will receive a site prep herbicide treatment if needed and will be planted to seral species as soon as practicable following harvest. Post planting surveys will be conducted immediately following planting at 1 and 5-year intervals, to determine seedling success, ensure the stand meets stocking level targets, and evaluate the need for follow up pesticide treatments. The sites adjacent to the proposed sale have been successfully regenerated with seral species through clearcut, site preparation, and planting operations similar to the proposed plan for this sale.



TIMBER MANAGEMENT BUREAU
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Derrick Reeves, Lands Resource Supervisor

FROM: Kyle Seigley, Section Manager – FM Project & Inventory

DATE: November 15, 2023

SUBJECT: Swamp Witch (CR410151) Timber Sale

On November 6, 2023, David Greenwood, Kyle Seigley and Jeremy Shawver, held a field site visit for the Swamp Witch Timber Sale on the Ponderosa Supervisory area. This occurred prior to harvesting to discuss the proposed harvest units due to the silviculture prescriptions creating a contiguous clearcut exceeding 100 acres. Attendance also included Derrick Reeves, Alisa Schotzko and Robbie Easley from the Ponderosa Supervisory area.

The Swamp Witch Timber Sale resides in sections 21, 22, 27 and 28 of T39N R03E. Public school endowment owns approximately 71% of the acres while school of science endowment owns the other 29% of the sale area.

The group started discussing the proposed clearcuts of 41 acres unit 1 and 87 acres unit 2. The area representatives discussed the species composition of the units with grand fir comprising 62 percent and 88 percent of the volume respectively (Image 1). The desired future conditions of the stand require a species transition to white pine and western larch. There are 18-72 trees per acre of Douglas-fir present in these units. Douglas-fir is typically a desirable crop tree, however not in root rot areas. Therefore, a species conversion to western larch and white pine is more desirable due to reduced susceptibility. A minor component of lodgepole pine and or Engelmann spruce will be planted in draws and cold air drainages.

The preferred method of clearcutting, site preparation, and planting best suits the stand. There is a scattering of root disease, and the grand fir is over 80 years old which increases the risk of fir engraver (*Scolytus ventralis*) insect damage to the residual stand thus lowering the odds of the seed tree to be successful. Economically, the clearcut will provide more returns to the endowments by capturing the value of the stand now and planting due to the foreseen issues of desired natural regeneration.

The group hiked to look at unit 3, a 10-acre overstory removal (OSR) sandwiched between units 1 and 2. Unit 3 resides on a 40 acre parcel acquired from the US Forest Service in the 1980's. Prior to state-IDL acquisition the stand was partial harvested, with the intent of the harvest being unknown. As a result of the entry a second cohort of grand fir established in the understory (Image 2). Due to a lack of sufficient sunlight the regeneration has become stagnated and suppressed with height growth rates less than 5 inches a year. To maximize site potential, the existing unmerchantable saplings should be slashed and a new vigorous stand of artificial regeneration established. Due to the existing regeneration being suppressed and undesirable, and a harvest prescription that will not leave any seed trees to establish desirable regeneration, it's the Timber Bureau's recommendation that the stand be considered a clearcut based off intent.

The Timber Management Bureau recommends that the FIC proceed with the 138 acres to be clearcut. The lack of quality leave trees and reducing vigor in the stand justify the clearcut prescription. The Bureau supports this activity considering maximizing revenue to the public school and school of science endowments.



Image 1. Stand composition of unit 1, note the high percentage of grand fir.



Image 2. Suppressed sapling regeneration in unit 3.