

STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

October 15, 2024

Consent Agenda

Subject

Authorization to purchase the Forest Legacy Program easement known as the International Selkirk Loop, comprising 10,847 acres of privately-owned forestland in Bonner and Boundary counties.

Question Presented

Shall the Land Board authorize the Department to accept the International Selkirk Loop project into Idaho's Forest Legacy Program?

Background

- The Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) authorizes the Idaho Department of Lands (Department) to acquire such interests by voluntary, cooperative means and to create a Forest Legacy easement pursuant to Idaho Code Title 55, Chapter 21.
- The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (the "Act") of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2101 et. seq.), as amended by Section 1217 and Title XII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation Trade Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 2103c), established the federal Forest Legacy Program to protect environmentally important forestlands threatened with conversion to non-forest use.
- The Forest Legacy Program is funded through congressional authorizations and offshore oil drilling royalties.

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a voluntary initiative. It empowers private landowners to safeguard their forestland for perpetual timber production. Under the program, they voluntarily sell their development rights at market value, but retain land ownership, management, and revenue from their land while continuing to pay property taxes. Federal grants allow Idaho's FLP to purchase the development rights, preventing the land being converted to non-forest uses. (Attachment 1–FLP Fact Sheet).

With a growing Idaho, many large tracts of forestland are threatened by subdivision and development. Forest Legacy helps prevent sprawl into the Wildland Urban Interface or WUI, while ensuring a steady, reliable sawlog and fiber supply for industry and future mill infrastructure investments.

All properties participating in the Forest Legacy Program have a Forest Stewardship Plan, keeping the forests healthy and managed, which helps mitigate wildfire risk.

The Forest Legacy projects are not funded through Idaho's General Fund. Funding stems from congressional authorizations and offshore oil drilling royalties. Idaho competes for the money in the form of grants that are passed through the U.S. Forest Service. Participating landowners contribute a 25% match, typically via tax-deductible donations.

The International Selkirk Loop project consists of multiple parcels under the ownership of the Stimson Lumber Company, comprising a total of 10,847 acres. Attachment 2 provides a vicinity map and three detail maps. Stimson Lumber Company wishes to convey the development rights of these properties by way of a conservation easement to the Department to conserve this forestland in perpetuity, thereby protecting the economic and environmental values while keeping the property in private ownership.

This project was bestowed a grant through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is funded by offshore drilling royalties. The project was awarded \$7 million dollars, but it appraised almost \$20 million more than expected. Stimson Lumber Company has generously agreed to exceed the 25% non-federal match requirement for this acquisition, in the form of donated easement value, to ensure the project's completion. The Department appreciates that substantial private commitment, and is requesting any additional funding that might be available for this project from the U.S. Forest Service. At this time, the additional grant funding request is for up to 10% of the grant award, or \$700,000, to help offset the funding deficit.

Landowner	Appraised CE Value	Landowner Donation	FLP Contribution
Stimson Lumber Company	\$26,268,750	\$19,268,750	\$7,000,000
If additional funds are awarded	\$26,268,750	At min: \$18,568,750	Up to \$7,700,000

The International Selkirk Loop acquisition is consistent with the goals and objectives of Idaho's FLP and will protect the following significant conservation values:

- **Timber:** Idaho's Forest Action Plan identifies the area where the project lands are located as one of the highest priority areas for forestland protection in the state. According to Boundary County's Comprehensive Plan, the harvest of timber and other products from forestland in Boundary County is essential to the local economy. Bonner County's Comprehensive Plan states that for the last two decades, over 50% of the timber harvested in Bonner County has come from private forestlands, while only 26% of the timberlands in the county are privately owned.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** Project lands contain and connect some of the most valuable wildlife habitat in Idaho, supporting an abundant assortment of game and non-game species including federally-listed threatened species such as Canada lynx.

- **Public Recreation:** The conservation easement terms ensure that these lands will remain accessible to the general public for non-commercial, non-motorized recreational uses including hunting, trapping, fishing, biking, hiking, cross-country skiing and wildlife viewing.
- **Landscape Scale Conservation Impact:** The International Selkirk Loop Project is located in a high priority area. This project connects over 50,000 acres of previously conserved land, Idaho Panhandle National Forest land, and endowment land.

The project has garnered broad public support by various public and private entities (Attachment 3-Public Support). These forestlands have substantial and significant conservation and economic values that are of great importance to the people of Idaho. The protection of these values will yield a significant public benefit.

Recommendation

Authorize the Department to accept International Selkirk Loop into the Forest Legacy Program by way of conservation easement.

Board Action

Attachments

1. Forest Legacy Program Fact Sheet
2. Maps
3. Public Support

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM (FLP)

Helping private landowners keep their working forests working.

FLP, a voluntary initiative, enables landowners to safeguard their forestland for perpetual timber production, offering financial incentives similar to selling for development. Owners retain their land, pay property taxes, and manage timber harvesting.



FOREST LEGACY
CONSERVATION LAND

What land qualifies for the Forest Legacy Program?

Eligible properties must be privately owned, over 5 acres, 75% forested, and within Idaho's priority landscape areas, as per the Idaho Forest Action Plan. Funding is awarded through a competitive, nationwide process.

Are Forest Legacy projects funded by Idaho's General Fund?

No. Funding stems from congressional authorizations and offshore oil drilling royalties. Participating landowners contribute a 25% match, typically via tax-deductible donations.

Will there be more working forestlands enrolled in Forest Legacy in the future?

Yes. Idaho's industrial forestland owners are eager to expand private land enrollment in FLP. Idaho is ready to compete for a share of the \$700 million national fund allocated for FLP projects.

How would a property owner start the process?

Reach out to your local land trust, a non-profit specializing in land acquisition for public benefit, as all FLP applications need a land trust sponsor.

Why is Forest Legacy important?

FLP ensures a steady supply of industry sawlogs and fiber, mitigates wildfire risks, and prevents sprawl in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). It bolsters local economies by safeguarding rural jobs and enhancing recreational access, while preserving wildlife habitat, water quality, and scenic landscapes.

How does FLP safeguard the supply of fiber for industry?

FLP keeps working forests working, helping to ensure a reliable fiber supply for industry and future mill infrastructure investments. Together with endowment forestland, FLP helps sustain long-term fiber availability for mill operations, as well as sustaining jobs within our communities.

How does Forest Legacy work?

Under FLP, forestland owners sell their development rights but retain ownership, management, and profits from their land, while reducing development in the WUI. Idaho holds these rights in trust and counties still receive tax revenues from these lands.

What does FLP do to help sustain wildlife habitat?

Priority areas in FLP often overlap with crucial habitats for threatened species. Maintaining forested land supports wildlife habitats and creates corridors for movement, aiding in the recovery of species like the Bull Trout. Fewer residential structures in these areas also minimize wildlife-human conflicts.

What does FLP have to do with mitigating fire risk?

FLP requires a Forest Stewardship Plan and sustainable management per Idaho's Forest Practices Act, which reduces vulnerability to catastrophic fires. By limiting WUI expansion, it helps ensure fire protection can be provided with fewer resources.

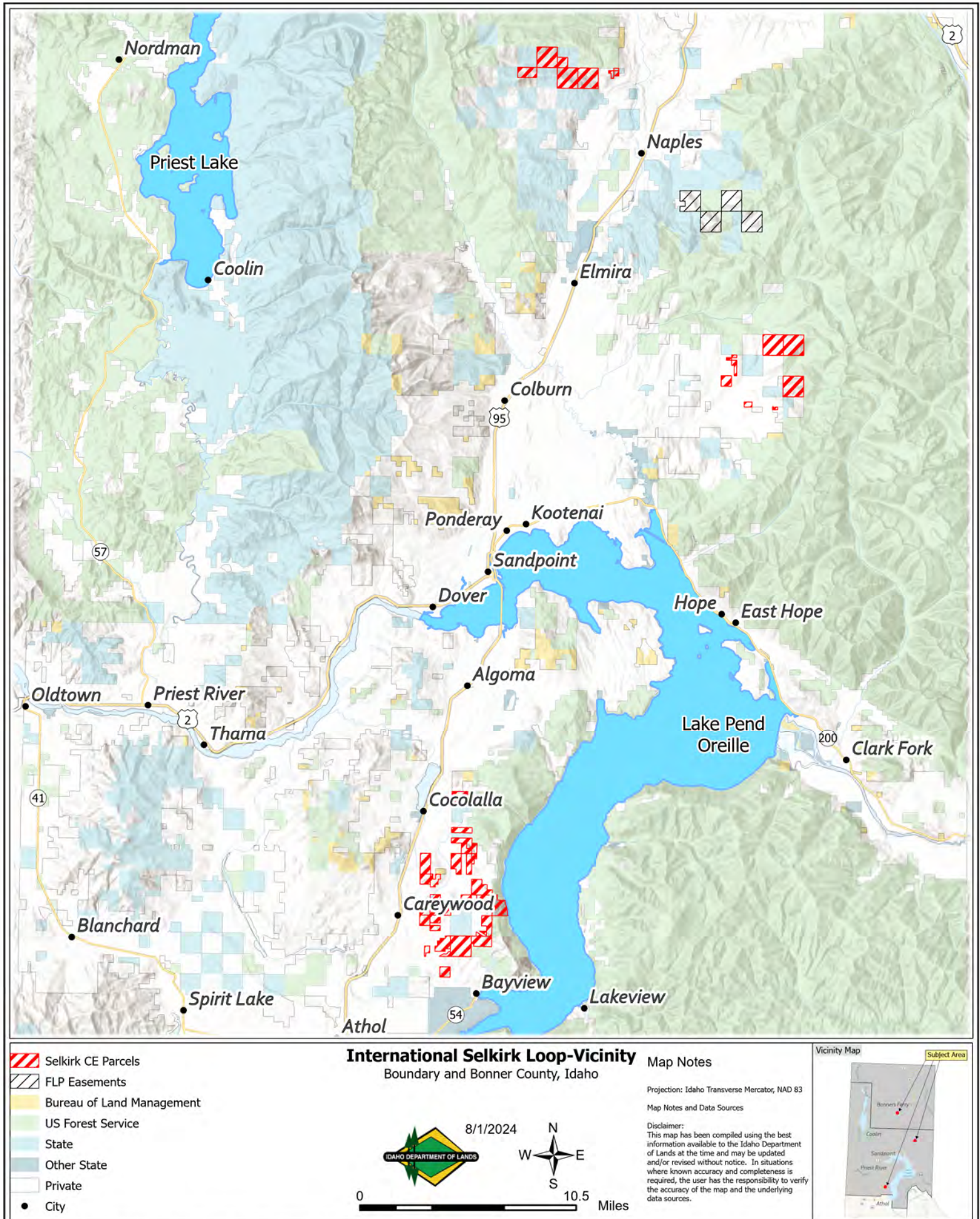
How does FLP improve recreational access?

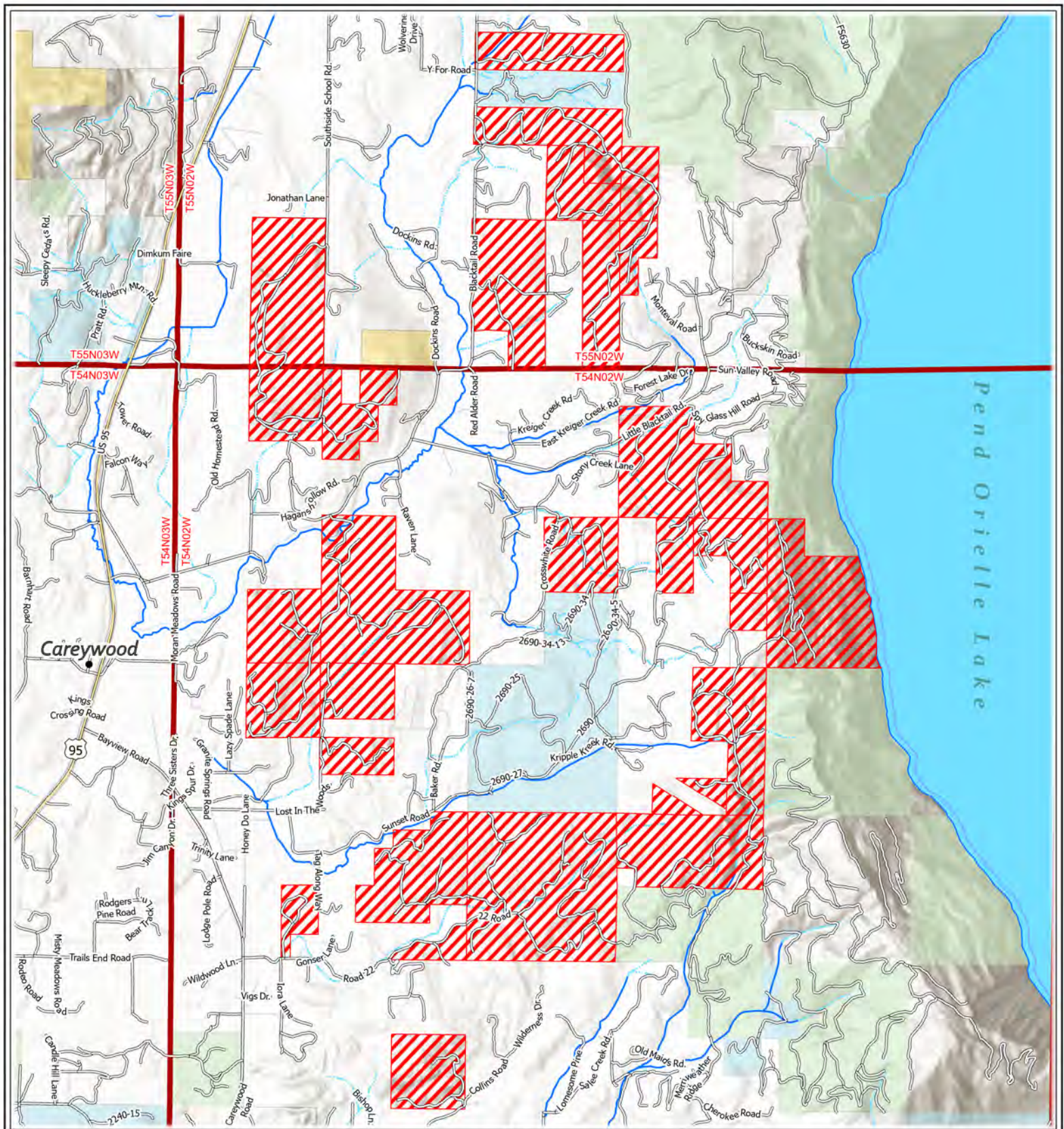
Since 2003, FLP has made 93,339 of its 103,252 timberland acres (90%) available for public recreation. As Idaho grows and demand for recreation access increases, FLP incentivizes private landowners to offer public access in line with their forest management goals.



For more info scan the code or visit

<https://www.idl.idaho.gov/about-forestry/forest-legacy-program/>





- Selkirk CE Parcels
- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- State
- Private
- City
- Local Roads

International Selkirk Loop-Detail 1
 Town 54,55N- Range 02W
 Bonner County, Idaho

8/1/2024

1.65 Miles

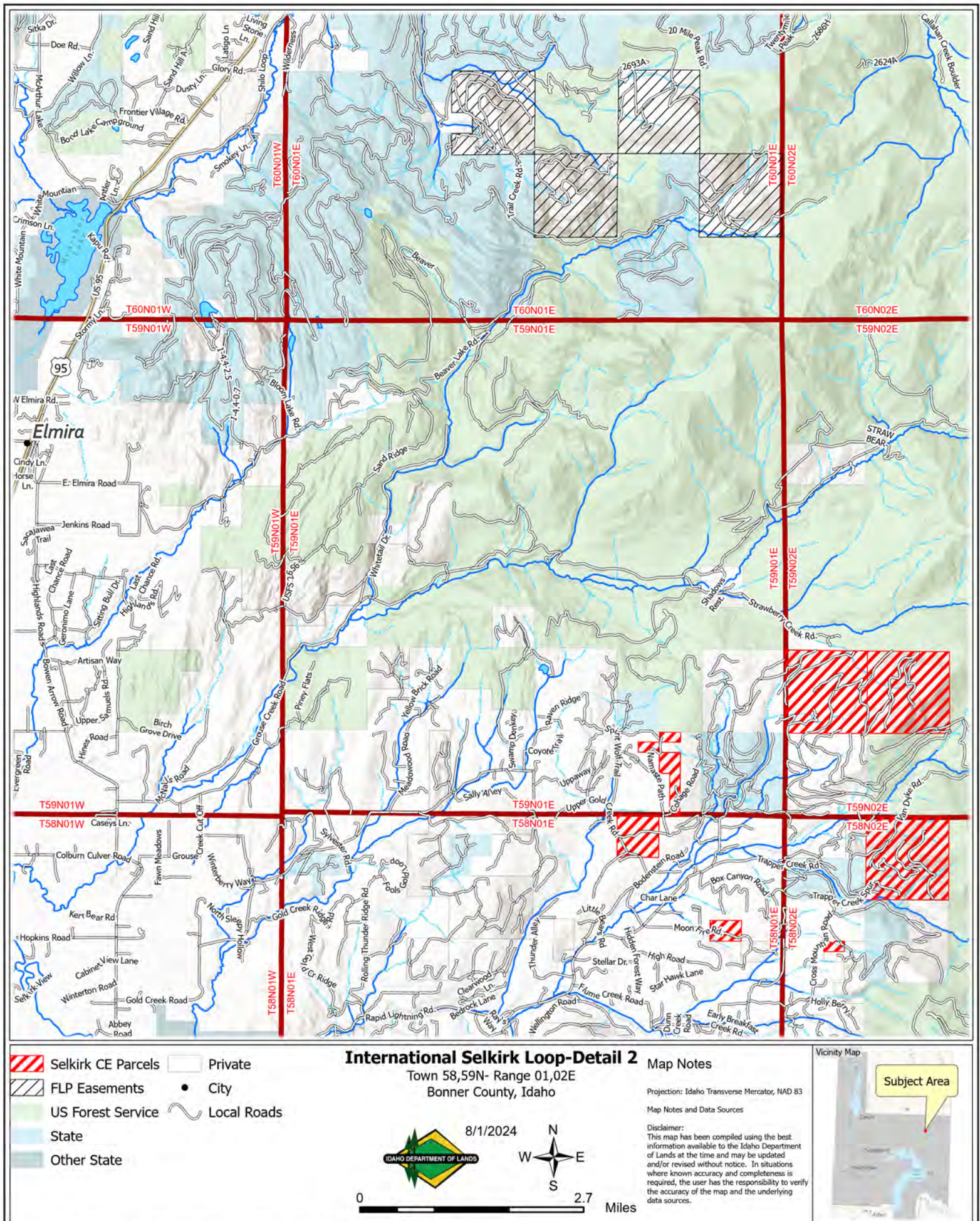
Map Notes

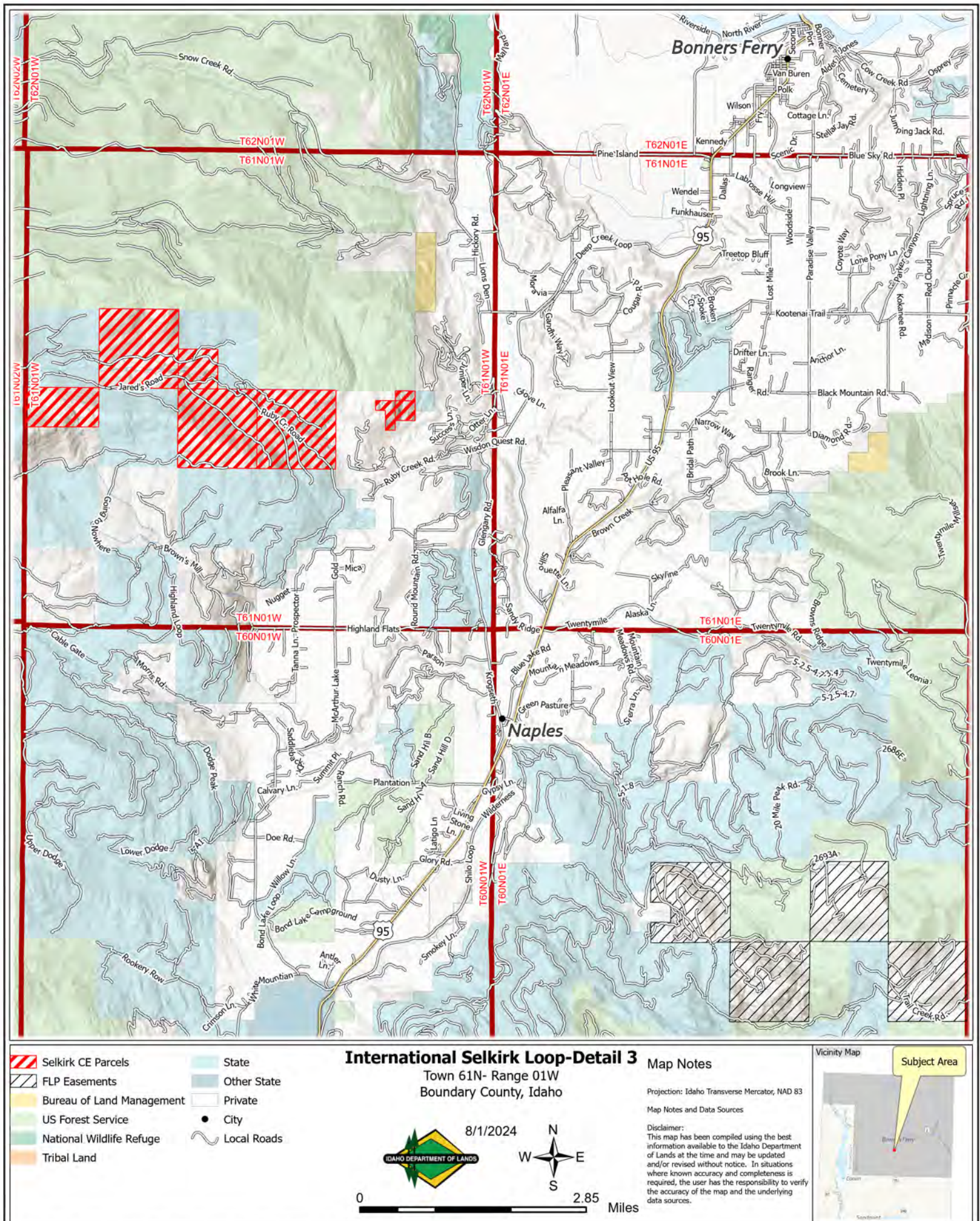
Projection: Idaho Transverse Mercator, NAD 83

Map Notes and Data Sources

Disclaimer:
 This map has been compiled using the best information available to the Idaho Department of Lands at the time and may be updated and/or revised without notice. In situations where known accuracy and completeness is required, the user has the responsibility to verify the accuracy of the map and the underlying data sources.







Public Support of the FY2023 International Selkirk Loop Project in Boundary and Bonner Counties

The following local, state, and federal governmental agencies, conservation organizations, and recreation organizations have provided written letters in support of the purchase of the development rights, by way of conservation easement, on the International Selkirk Loop Project:

- Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
- Bonner County Board of Commissioners
- Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Headwaters Economics
- Idaho Conservation League
- Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Forest Group
- Idaho Panhandle Mountain Bike Alliance
- Idaho Wildlife Federation
- Inland Northwest Land Conservancy
- Kaniksu Land Trust
- Molpus Woodlands Group
- Panhandle Forest Collaborative
- The Nature Conservancy
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
- Vital Ground Foundation
- Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative