



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Manti-La Sal
National Forest

Moab/Monticello Ranger District
P. O. Box 386
62 East 100 North
Moab, UT 84532
Phone: (435) 259-7155
Fax: (435) 259-7737

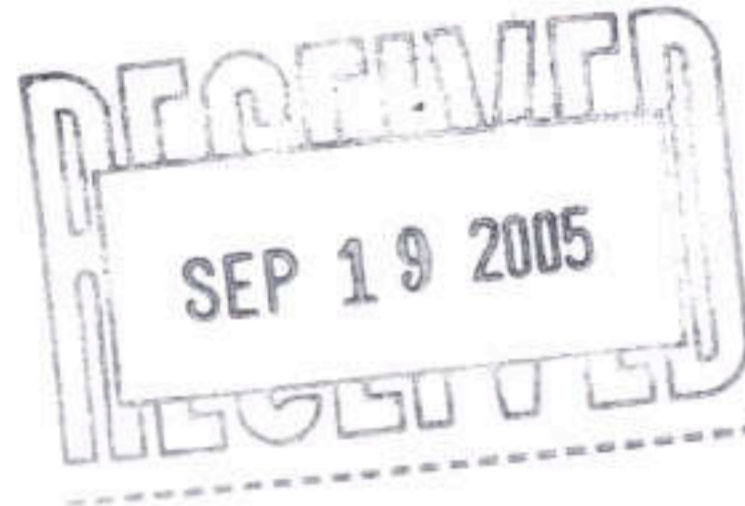
File Code:

Date: September 16, 2005

Route To:

Subject: Fire Prevention

To: Willow Basin Residents



Dear Stakeholder,

The Moab/Monticello Ranger District on the Manti-La Sal National Forest proposes to reduce fuel hazards within the Willow Basin area by reducing tree and deciduous shrub densities through weeding, thinning, and prescribed burning within approximately 1,185 acres.

The project area is located on National Forest System lands administered as the Moab Ranger District, Manti-La Sal National Forest (see enclosed maps). The Willow Basin Hazard Fuels project area is located approximately 16 air miles from Moab, Utah in the La Sal Mountains located in Grand County, Utah. It is located on the Castleton/Gateway Road or Forest Service Road 207 and along the Willow Basin Road or Forest Service Road 622. The project area encompasses areas where wildfire could threaten homes and the escape routes out of the area.

Table 1. Proposed treatments in Willow Basin treatment areas

Acres are approximate and slight adjustments could be made to ensure efficiency.

Treatment Type	Unit 1	Unit 2
Broadcast Burn	373 ac	
Mechanical Thin and Burn	229 ac	
Hand Thin and Pile Burn	137 ac	87 ac
Hand Thin and Burn		133 ac
Hand Thin Only		153 ac
Total treatment acres	1112 ac	
Total prescribed fire acres	959 ac	
Total mechanical thin acres	739 ac	



The following actions are proposed to be implemented through a combination of the following tools: 1) personal service contract, and/or 2) force account crews (Forest Service):

1. Eight inch DBH (diameter at breast height) and smaller ponderosa pine trees will be removed to create or maintain open, park-like forest structures and reduce susceptibility to stand-replacing fire. There will be no size limit on the pinyon and juniper trees to be cut; however, the larger healthier trees will be favored to stay.
2. Old (yellow-bark character) ponderosa pine trees will not be cut unless they are determined to pose a hazard to public safety along travel ways.
3. Conifer trees may also be removed from within or around the edge of aspen clones (within a distance of 1 ½ tree lengths of the clone) in order to retain aspen for its benefits for fire management, biodiversity, and aesthetic values (primarily in unit 2).
4. An area 30 to 40 feet in radius around yellow-bark character ponderosa pine, (individual trees or groups) will be cleared of smaller trees and deciduous shrubs (less than 6 inches DBH) to reduce ladder fuels and competition to these trees. This, combined with thinning treatments, will promote open, park-like stand structures and provide for the retention of these tree characteristics within this landscape.
5. Thinning treatments will follow Forest Plan recommendations for management of Abert squirrel and Northern goshawk, as well as other standards and guidelines applicable to this area.
6. Utilize existing roads, as much and possible, (classified and open, unclassified roads) for fireline.
7. Maintenance of National Forest System Roads (NFSR) utilized for fire control lines. This includes, but is not limited to, handline along old roads and driving ground based equipment to the work site.
8. Stump heights will be 6 inches or less within 200 feet of the primary roads. Stump heights in other areas will be 12 inches or less.
9. Slash depth of lopped materials will generally be 18 inches or less in height.
10. Design features will be incorporated in addition to the Forest Plan standards and guidelines, best management practices, and monitoring measures in order to reduce the impacts of fuels treatments.

The purpose of the project is to reduce fuel loading, stand and crown/canopy density, and resultant fire hazard to vegetation, the public, and private property within this Wildland Urban Interface area.

Due to the exclusion of fire, forested stands (primarily mountain brush species) within the project area have fuel loadings, densities, ladder fuels (shrubs and young trees), and continuous crown canopies that predispose the stands to excessive damage from large fires. Private and public users and developments adjacent to the project area (wildland/urban interface) are also potentially at risk from fire. The exclusion of fire has also allowed conifers to encroach upon shrub/grassland and aspen clones, which has begun to reduce the vegetative diversity and wildlife habitat values of these areas.

Dense, layered ponderosa pine stands have proven susceptible to fire due to heavy down dead and live fuel layers (gambel oak and other shrub species) that have increased with lack of natural fire activity. This project is in an area where shrubs and ponderosa pine are common and representative of Fire Regime I and are in Condition Class 3; descriptive of an area of frequent historic fire return interval, with a significant departure from the historic condition, and a corresponding high risk of ecosystem damage as well as a serious risk to public safety attached to fires started or burning under extreme fuel and weather conditions. A risk of loss of key ecosystem components and high risk of damage to private property or interior improvements exists in Condition Class 3 lands.

The project area encompasses about 1,000 acres. Under the current Forest Plan, the project area emphasis is allocated to provide utilization (Management Unit RNG – Range Management emphasis).

The expected outcome of this project would be that forested stands within the project area would be less susceptible to excessive damage from wildfire. Also, public and private users and developments within and adjacent to the project area would have a reduced risk of adverse affects from wildfire, and shrub/grassland and aspen communities would be maintained or enhanced. Small aspen patches, and shrub/grassland openings, within the project area would be free of much of the current conifer encroachment that exists today.

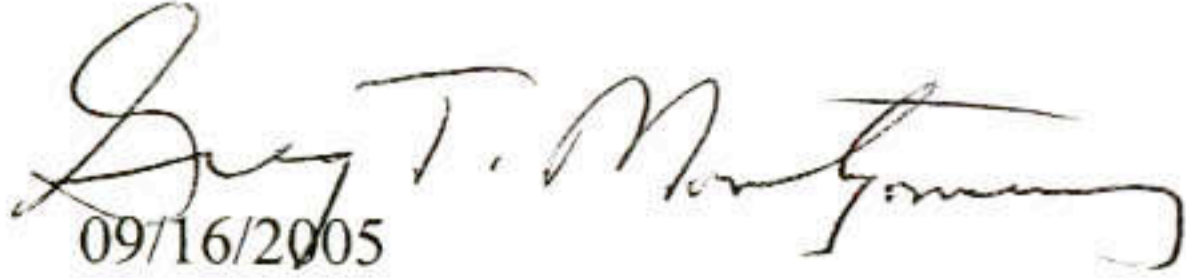
No new permanent road construction would occur as part of this project.

Unless unresolved extraordinary circumstances are shown or arise during public scoping and/or during the analysis of this project, I anticipate this project to be categorically excluded from the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under authorities defined under the Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI) Category 10, FSH 1909.15, 30.3, and 31.2. The Healthy Forest Initiative expedites administrative procedures for hazardous fuel reduction and ecosystem restoration projects on Federal land.

Comments should be mailed to Randy Chappell, Monticello Ranger District, Manti-La Sal National Forest, P.O.Box 820, Monticello, Utah 84535, phone: 435-587-2041, fax 435-587-2637. Comments should be received by October 17, 2005. To be most useful comments should contain specific information you feel is important to reach a decision on this proposal. Please note that all comments become a part of a public record and can be released to others upon request.

If you have any questions regarding this proposal please contact Randy Chappell (Acting District Fuels Specialist) and/or Lee Johnson (District Ranger) at 435-587-2041. Thank you for your interest and participation in the management of the Manti-La Sal National Forest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg T. Montgomery".

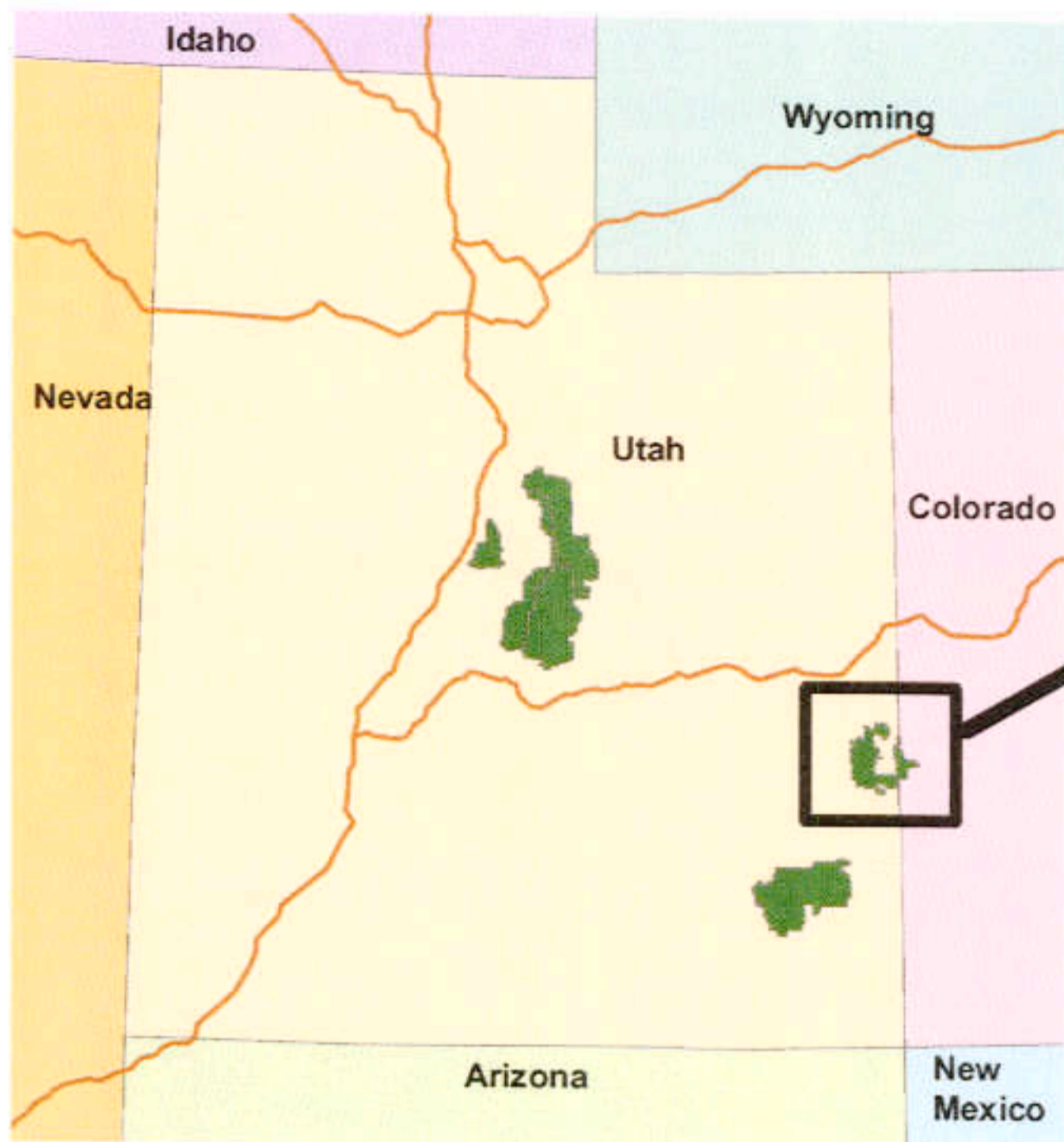
09/16/2005

For LEE JOHNSON
District Ranger

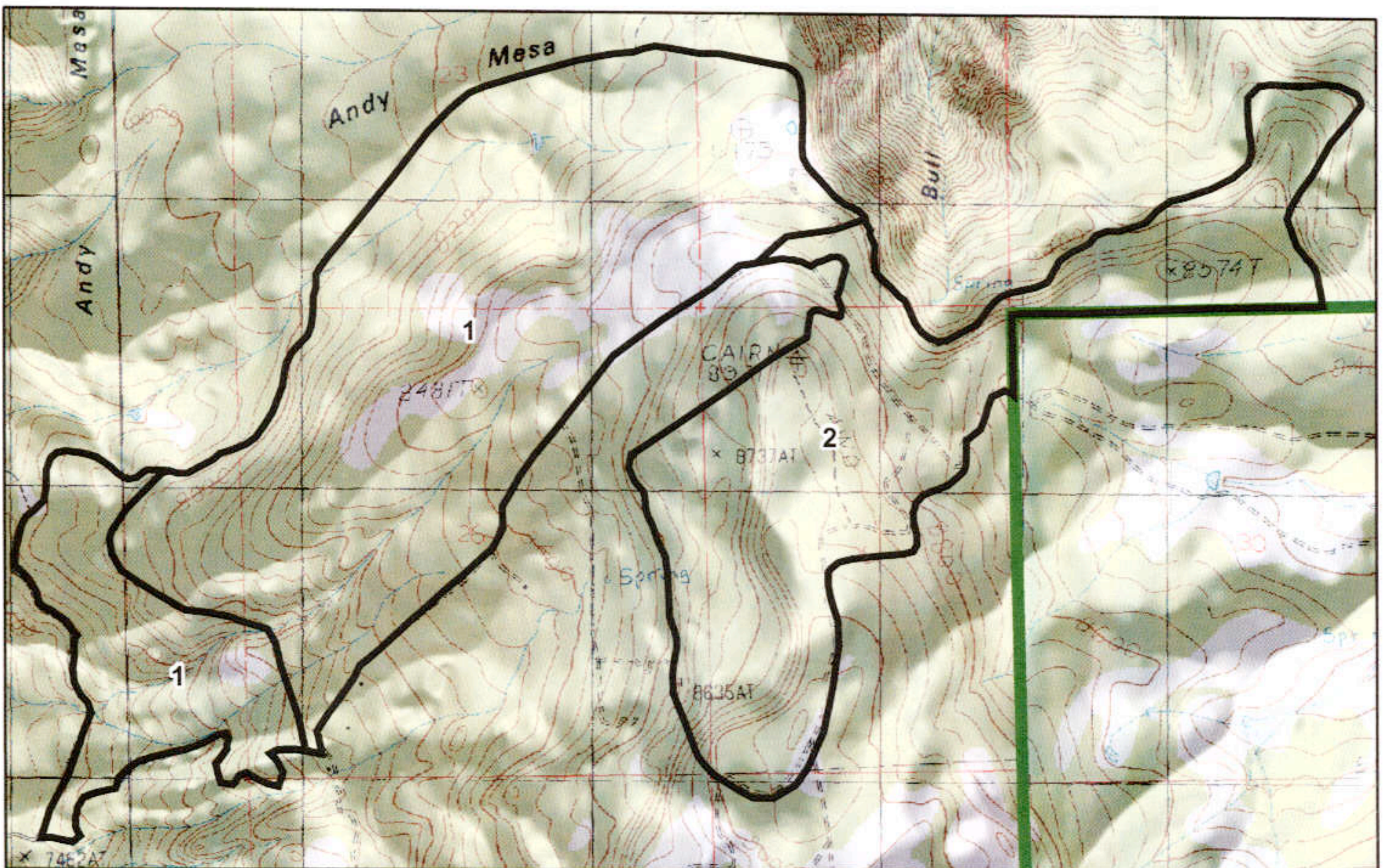
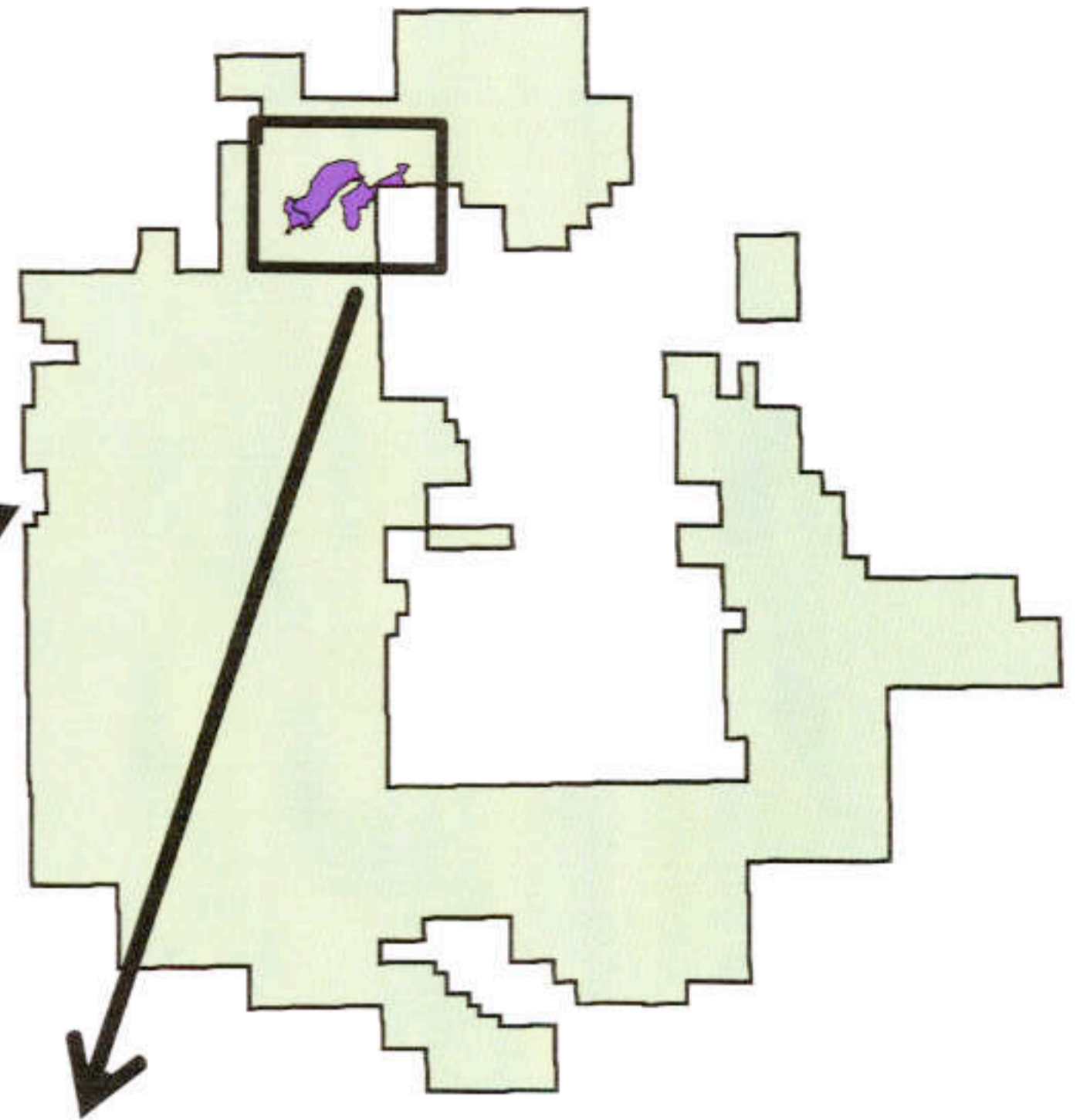
Attachment: maps of approximate unit boundaries and implementation methods to be used.

Willow Basin Vicinity Map

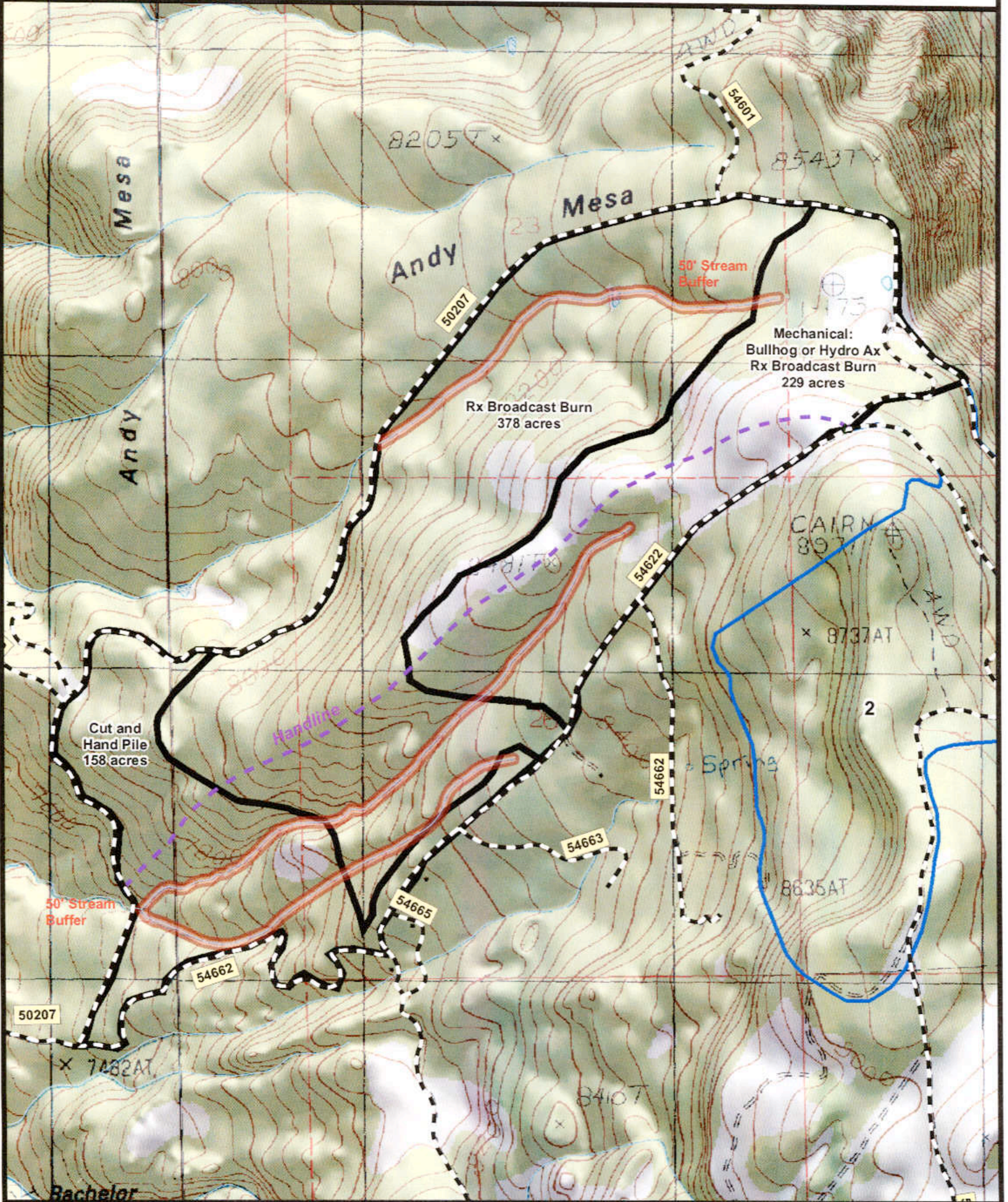
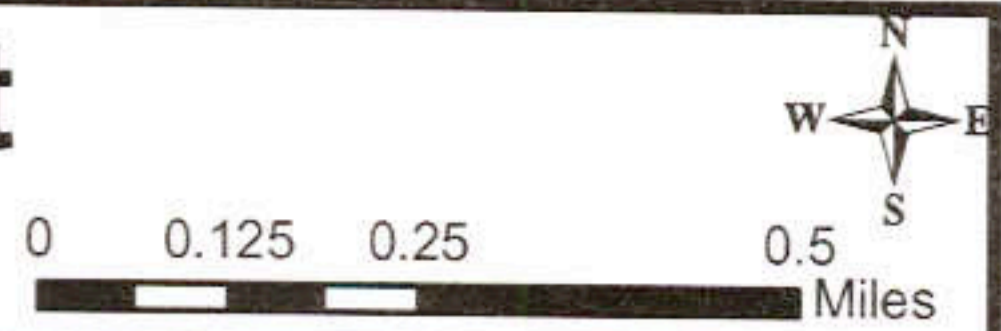
State of Utah



Moab District



Willow Basin Fuel Treatment Unit 1



Willow Basin Fuels Treatment Unit 2

