

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Temporary Wild Horse Trap and Holding Facilities within Wilderness Study Areas EA#-OR-010-2004-09

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Lakeview Resource Area, has analyzed a proposal and one alternative to place temporary traps and/or holding facilities for gathering wild horses within several wilderness study areas (WSAs). Both alternatives would meet the non-impairment standards for WSAs, and would be in compliance with FLPMA and the BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1). The exact location of traps sites and holding facilities would be determined on the ground at the time of the gather and would be dependent upon the location of the horses and the results of cultural and special status species surveys. The preferred alternative is considered the best alternative for the health and safety of young foals and wild horses. This project is in conformance with the goals and objectives of the Lakeview Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (RMP/ROD) and amends the existing wild horse gather plan.

There are no floodplains, wild and scenic rivers, known hazardous waste sites, areas of religious concern, low income or minority populations, or prime or unique farmlands in the project area. No adverse impacts are anticipated to fisheries, water quality, wetlands or riparian areas, energy or minerals, lands, wildlife, air quality, ACEC/RNAs, cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, or noxious weeds. Cultural and special status species surveys would be conducted prior to placement of the facilities on the ground. If any significant resources are located during surveys, the trap/holding facility would be moved to a different site, or if impacts can not otherwise be avoided or mitigated, a structure would not be placed there. Beneficial impacts are anticipated to vegetative resources and wilderness values.

On the basis of the analysis contained in the attached EA and all other available information, it is my determination that none of the alternatives analyzed constitute a major federal action that would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary and will not be prepared.



Thomas E. Rasmussen, Manager
Lakeview Resource Area



Date

EA NUMBER: OR-010-2004-09

PROJECT TITLE: Temporary Wild Horse Trap(s) and Holding Facilities Within Wilderness Study Areas

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project is located in and adjacent to the Beaty Butte and Paisley Desert wild horse Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in the Lakeview Resource Area. (See attached maps).

BLM OFFICE: Lakeview Resource Area, Lakeview District, 1301 South G Street, Lakeview, OR 97630

CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING PLANS AND NEPA DOCUMENTS:

The above project has been analyzed for and has been determined to be in conformance with the existing BLM plans and NEPA documents:

Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision (2003)
Proposed Jurisdictional Land Exchange Between Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management - Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan Amendment/EA (1998)
Oregon Wilderness FEIS and ROD (1989, 1991)
Wilderness Interim Management Policy (1995)
Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States FEIS and ROD (1991)
Supplement to the Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program FEIS and ROD (1987)
Integrated Noxious Weed Control Program EA #OR-013-93-03 (1994)
Lakeview District Wild Horse Gather EA #OR-010-95-10
Lakeview District Wild Horse Fertility Control EA #OR-010-2001-01
Rangeland Reform '94 FEIS and ROD (1995)
Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington (1997)
Standards for Land Health for Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington (1998)
Interior Columbia Basin Strategy (2004)

PURPOSE and NEED FOR ACTION:

Occasionally, when a wild horse gather is necessary (as described and analyzed in EAs OR-010-95-10 and OR-010-2000-01), weather conditions, the age and size of foals, and/or other factors require special considerations for the health and safety of the horses. Horse trap locations and holding facilities need to be a reasonable distance from the horses and in some instances may need to be placed within a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in order to effectively gather excess horses from the range and prevent resource damage. However, the current gather plan did not consider the placement of traps or holding facilities within WSAs. This has led to the need to amend the gather plan. BLM actions in areas under wilderness review are guided by Handbook H-8550-1, Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP; 1995). All projects proposed within WSA must be evaluated to determine if they meet the "non-impairment" criteria. Specific guidance requires a project to be temporary and create no "surface disturbance". "Surface disturbance" is defined on page 9 of the IMP as any new disruption of the soil or vegetation, including vegetative trampling, which would necessitate reclamation. The preferred and no action alternatives comply with the non-impairment standard.

ALTERNATIVES:

#1) NO ACTION - This alternative consists of continuing horse gathers, as necessary and described in EAs OR-010-95-10 and OR-010-2001-01. Horses would be removed from the range when numbers exceed "appropriate management levels" (AML) and funding is available. Temporary trap locations and holding corrals would be placed outside of WSAs. This would require horses to be moved more than ten miles to a trap in some instances.

#2) ALTERNATIVE 2 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE) - In addition to using sites outside

of WSAs, as described under the No Action Alternative, temporary trap(s) or holding facilities could be placed within a WSA; if no reasonable location is available outside the WSA within 10 miles of the horses under normal conditions, or within 5 miles under extreme weather conditions, and/or if foals are young and/or other factors warrant the need. Traps and holding facilities would not be located in RNA/ACECs. The exact location would be determined at the time of a gather and would depend on horse locations.

In most instances temporary traps and holding facilities would be used for one week or less. Sites would be placed near or adjacent existing boundary roads or water sites. Traps and holding facilities would be built with portable panels and all materials would be removed from the site immediately after the gather. Estimated trap size would be 800 square feet and holding facilities would be approximately 1800 square feet. The actual size would depend on the number of horses the facilities would hold. Burlap wings would extend from the ends of the trap for up to ½ mile. Mitigating measures included in the project design include; limiting structures to the smallest functional size, limiting vehicle traffic to existing roads or ways, and minimal use adjacent to roads, ways, and structures. Certified weed seed free hay would be fed. No surface disturbance would occur as described in the Wilderness IMP, 1995. New project locations would be surveyed for cultural resources and threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species and appropriate mitigation actions would be taken if these resources are found.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: Two wild horse herd management areas (HMAs) exist in the Lakeview Resource Area: Beaty Butte and Paisley (see Maps 1, 2, and 3). The affected environment within these HMAs, including wildlife, threatened and endangered species, recreation, vegetation, soils, climate, cultural resources, WSA values, and noxious weeds is described in EAs OR-010-95-10 and 2001-01. The affected environment within the Beaty Butte HMA is also described within the Beaty Butte Allotment Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (1998). WSAs located within the Beaty Butte HMA and surrounding area include Spaulding (#1-139), Hawk Mountain (#1-146A), Sage Hen Hills (#1-146B), Rincon (#2-82) and Basque Hills (#2-84). The Paisley HMA and surrounding area includes the Diablo Mountain WSA (#1-58). The affected environment and wilderness characteristics of these WSAs are described in detail within the Oregon Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement (1989).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: The potential environmental impacts resulting from the alternatives relative to the following critical resource values were evaluated. The following is a summary of the results:

Critical Element/ Resource Value	Affected		Critical Element/ Resource Value	Affected	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality		X	T & E Species		X
ACEC/RNAs		X	Wilderness		X
Cultural Resources		X	Wild & Scenic Rivers		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Hazardous Wastes		X
Floodplains		X	Water Quality		X
Native American Cultural/ Religious Concerns		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Low Income/ Minority Populations		X	Noxious Weeds		X

DESCRIPTION of OTHER IMPACTS: The impacts likely to result from wild horse gather projects on other resource values, specifically wildlife, threatened and endangered species, recreation, vegetation, soils, climate, cultural resources, wild horses, and noxious weeds have previously been analyzed in EAs OR-010-95-10 and OR-010-2001-01. These previous analyses are incorporated by reference and will not be repeated here. The only difference in the impacts evaluated under the previous documents (No Action Alternative) and those associated with Preferred Alternative are described below.

Wilderness

Both the preferred and no action alternative meet the non-impairment criteria and would be substantially unnoticeable as required by the Wilderness IMP (1995). Under the preferred alternative, temporary traps or holding facilities would only be noticeable for the short period of time they are in use. All materials used in trap construction would be removed from the site immediately after the gather. Management to a non-impairment standard is described as temporary uses that create no surface disturbance, nor involve permanent placement of structures. The temporary, short term use of a trap or holding facility would not disrupt the soil or vegetation to a level that would require reclamation. WSAs would receive a beneficial overall impact by maintaining horses within appropriate management levels (AMLs) and reducing horse impacts on WSA values.

Cultural, Historical and Paleontological Resources

New project locations would be surveyed for cultural and paleontological resources. Management of cultural values becomes a priority where sites are identified. Mitigating measures may be necessary if resources are found and would take one of the following forms; avoidance of the site, surface collection of artifacts, and/or subsurface testing and salvage of data contained within the deposits of the site. Mitigating measures would be implemented on as needed basis; therefore, no impacts are expected from either the No Action or Preferred Alternatives.

Vegetation

Sensitive, Threatened and Endangered Plant surveys would be conducted prior to placement of project facilities. If such species are found during the survey,

other areas would be selected for use, thus no impacts to such species would occur.

Mitigating measures included in the preferred alternative would reduce the risk of new noxious weed infestations.

Wild Horses

Under the No Action Alternative, adult wild horses and foals would suffer higher stress levels from traveling longer distances to a trap site compared to the preferred alternative. The horses' health and safety would be protected under preferred alternative.

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Burns District Bureau of Land Management
Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge

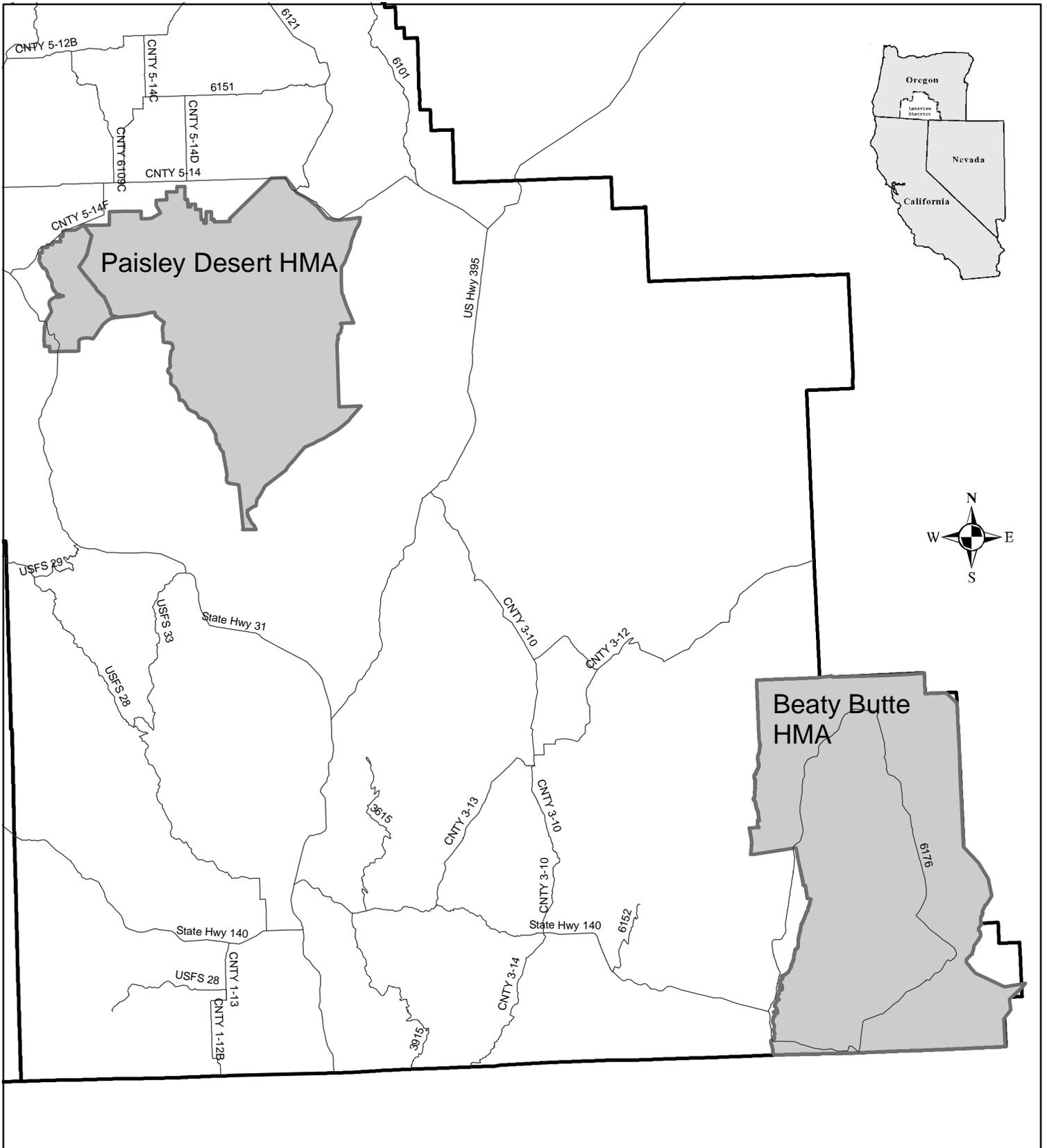
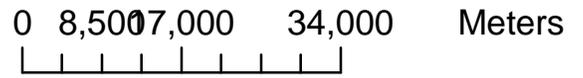
PREPARER(S):

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Paul Whitman-Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Map 1 - Herd Management Areas

Legend

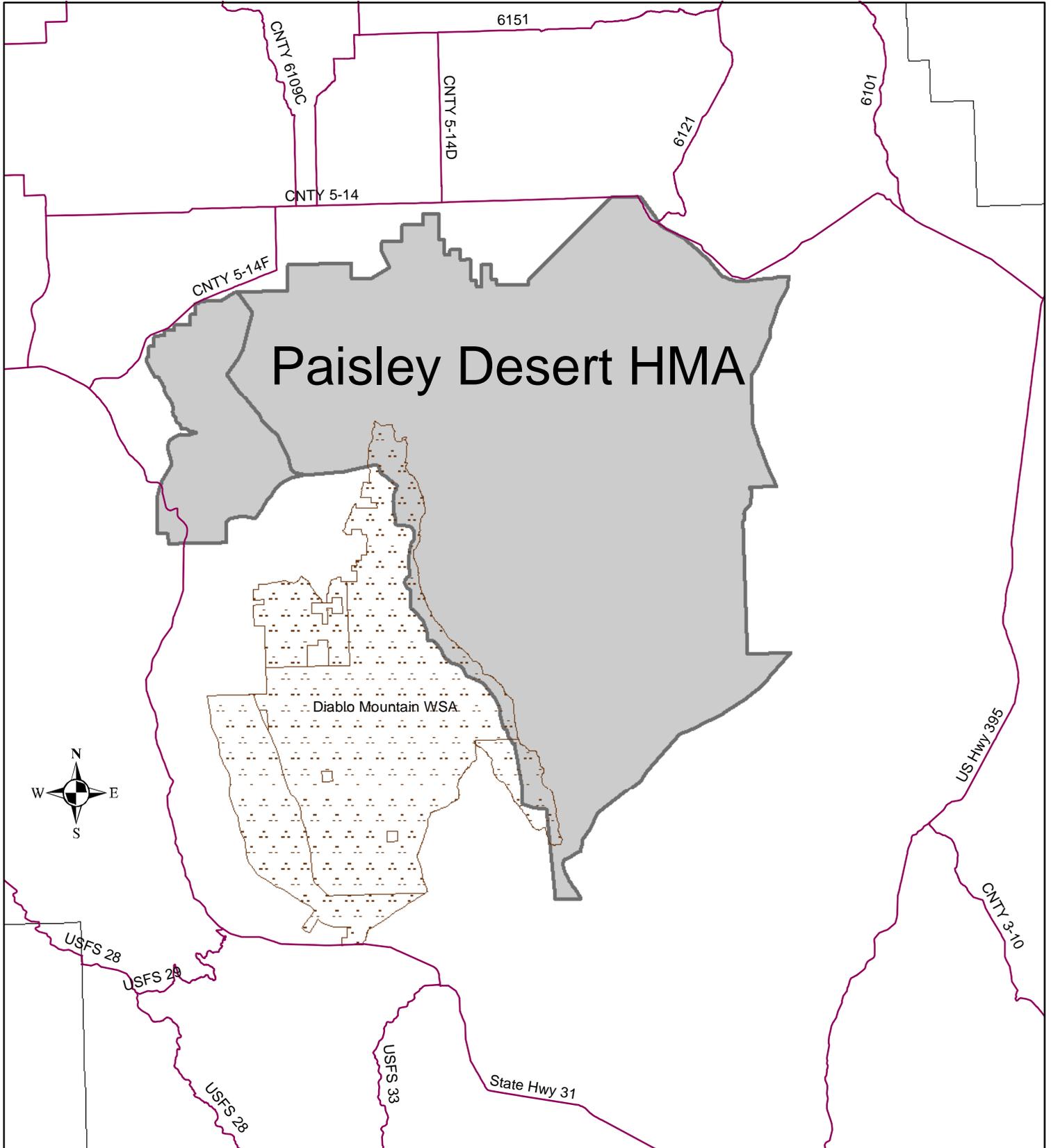
- Major Roads
- Herd Management Area
- Lakeview Resource Area Boundary



Map 2 - Wilderness Study Areas in Relation to Paisley Herd Management Area

Legend

- Major Roads
- WSAs
- Herd Management Area
- Lakeview Resource Area Boundary



Map 3 - Wilderness Study Areas in Relation to the Beaty Butte Herd Management Area

Legend

- Major Roads
- WSAs
- Herd Management Area

