

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

for

JOSEPHINE COUNTY FORESTRY'S
Road Use permit Application and Road Construction

(Pollard Creek / Comet 80 Timber Sale)

EA# OR-110-00-009

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

February 2000

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: Grants Pass

EA Number OR-110-00-009

ACTION/TITLE: Josephine County Road Use Permit Application and Road Construction
(Pollard Creek Timber Sale)

LOCATION: T.37 S., R. 7 W., Section 10, Josephine Co., Oregon, Willamette Meridian
T.39 S., R. 7 W., Sections 3 &10, Josephine Co., Oregon, Willamette Meridian

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Dave Maurer	Soil Scientist	Floodplains and Wetlands, Soils, and Water	
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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

***Josephine County Road Use Permit R/W Permit Application
(For Road Construction and Timber Haul)***

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Chapter 1
Purpose and Need for Action and Alternatives

A. Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) tiers to the following documents: a) the Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan/EIS dated April, 1995 and b) the EIS and the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated April, 1994 and the Standard and Guidelines for Late-Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. These documents are available for review in the Medford District Office.

The purpose of this EA is to assist in the decision making process by assessing the environmental and human impacts resulting from implementing the proposed action. The EA will also assist in determining if an EIS needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact beyond those addressed in the above noted EISs/RODs is appropriate.

B. Need for the Proposal

Josephine County has requested a permit for hauling forest products using existing BLM roads and to construct a road across BLM administered land to access County land. This will allow Josephine County to access and manage their lands through harvesting timber and other forest management projects. (See location map - Attachment A). The Josephine County parcel's are isolated parcels surrounded by BLM and private lands.

C. Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

1. Alternative 1: No Action

Deny the permit application thereby denying Josephine County permission to (a) construct a road on BLM land and (b) to use certain existing BLM roads to haul timber from county lands.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action is to grant the permit to allow Josephine County to:

a) construct 935 feet of road across BLM lands (approximately 325' in T39S,R7W, Sec 3 and 610' in T39S,R7W, Sec. 10) as outlined in Attachment B;

b) to use the following roads for the purpose of hauling forest products from county lands:

<u>Road #</u>	<u>Surface Type</u>	<u>Length (miles)</u>
37-7-4	NAT	1.00
39-7-9.1	ASC	1.50
39-7-21	BST	3.35

a. Project Design Features for the proposed action

Project design features (PDFs) are included for the purpose of reducing anticipated adverse environmental impacts which might stem from the implementation of the proposed action. The following PDF's are included:

- 1) Construction and hauling activities would be seasonally restricted to allow use on natural road surfaces only between May 15th and October 15th and/or when weather and road surface permits. This is to preclude wet season hauling when road damage and sedimentation damage would otherwise occur. The BLM's Authorized Officer will make the final determination on appropriate weather conditions for hauling.

- 2) The new road would be constructed to minimal standards (12' running surface, 5' clearing limits on each side of road, natural surface) on BLM land. It would be blocked at the junction with road #39-7-3.6 after use. The road would be located to avoid the three populations of *Dendroica striata*, a survey and manage species, that have been identified adjacent to the proposed roadway on BLM land.

Chapter 2 Environmental Consequences

A. Introduction

Only substantive site specific environmental changes caused by implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialist have considered affects to that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no effects. In addition, unless addressed specifically the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC), cultural, historical resources, Native American religious sites, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, endangered, threatened or sensitive plant, animal or fish species, water quality, wetlands/riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers and wilderness areas.

General affects from "typical" actions of this nature have been previously described in the Medford District Resources Management Plan or the Final Supplemental EIS on the Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.

B. Site Specific and Cumulative Beneficial or Adverse Effects of the Alternatives

1. Alternative 1: No Action

Denial of the permit application would result in the applicant possibly finding an alternate access route. The applicant has not identified an alternative route for access. No impacts would occur to the public lands involved in the present proposal.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

a. Botany

1) Affected Environment

Most of the proposed road corridor passes through a late-seral stage forest with large Douglas-fir and a high dominance of canyon live oak and chinquapin. The Douglas-fir provide moist microsites for late-successional lichen and bryophyte species to exist on the hardwoods beneath them. The canyon live oak tends to grow in clusters under the Douglas-fir which also helps to retain moist microsites. The understory is sparse with the shrub layer thickening in openings. Dominant shrubs include green leaf manzanita, silk tassel and bitter cherry.

A total of fourteen populations of *Dendriscoaulon intricatum* have been found adjacent to the road corridor. Three of these were found on the BLM portion and eleven were found on the county portion. The species is extremely rare. Only 20 other populations outside of the Medford District are known within its range that extends from Alaska to northern California. It is found on hardwoods where moist conditions are being provided by the surrounding Douglas-fir forests. It is highly

dependent on intact forest to protect its moisture requirements. It is also a cyanolichen which means it is susceptible to air pollution such as smoke from fires.

For Federal lands, management recommendations are that its habitat/microclimate not be disturbed. This species has a Survey Strategy 1 designation in the Northwest Forest Plan.

2) Environmental Effects

Construction of the road corridor upslope on county land could indirectly disturb the habitat of the populations on BLM land. It could dry out the microsite for the populations and could reduce connectivity of the oaks, thereby reducing population expansion opportunities. Actual cutting of host trees would directly affect these populations by changing their microsite position and chances to survive. This has already occurred where canyon live oaks were cut to mark the road route.

3) Cumulative Effects

Medford District lands, especially those in the Grants Pass Resource Area, harbors possibly the highest quality of habitat found within the range of *Dendriscoaulon intricatum*. This is due to the large hardwood component found in the Douglas-fir forests in the area. Reasonable foreseeable future actions will include more timber harvest activity on both BLM, other federal lands, county and private lands in the region. The practice of commercial thinning, while protecting older trees, could dry out moist site conditions (which are conducive to other late successional species). It also could fragment important dispersal habitat for non-vascular plants which, although growing on hardwoods, are dependent upon the surrounding conifer canopy for habitat protection.

References -

Management recommendations have been based on the Record of Decision (ROD) Northwest Forest Plan, the Medford District Resource Management Plan, the BLM Manual 6840, Medford District botanist advisement and professional knowledge.

Harris, Larry D. The Fragmented Forest, Island Biogeography Theory and the Preservation of Biotic Diversity. The University of Chicago Press, 1984,

b. Wildlife

No effects are anticipated to any known northern spotted owl sites on BLM lands as a result of issuance of the permit.

On private land, 55 acres of suitable spotted owl habitat would be modified to a condition at or near dispersal habitat and 105 acres of dispersal habitat would be removed. In that issuance of the permit would be an enabling action, the BLM has formally consulted with the USFWS. The USFWS have concluded that there would not be a take of the owl because habitat being removed is not within the provincial home-range of any known owl territories and because there are no known nesting spotted owls within 1/4 mile of the proposed haul road. (BA dated 6/24/99, BO #1-7-99-F-332 dated Sept. 2, 1999).

Chapter 3

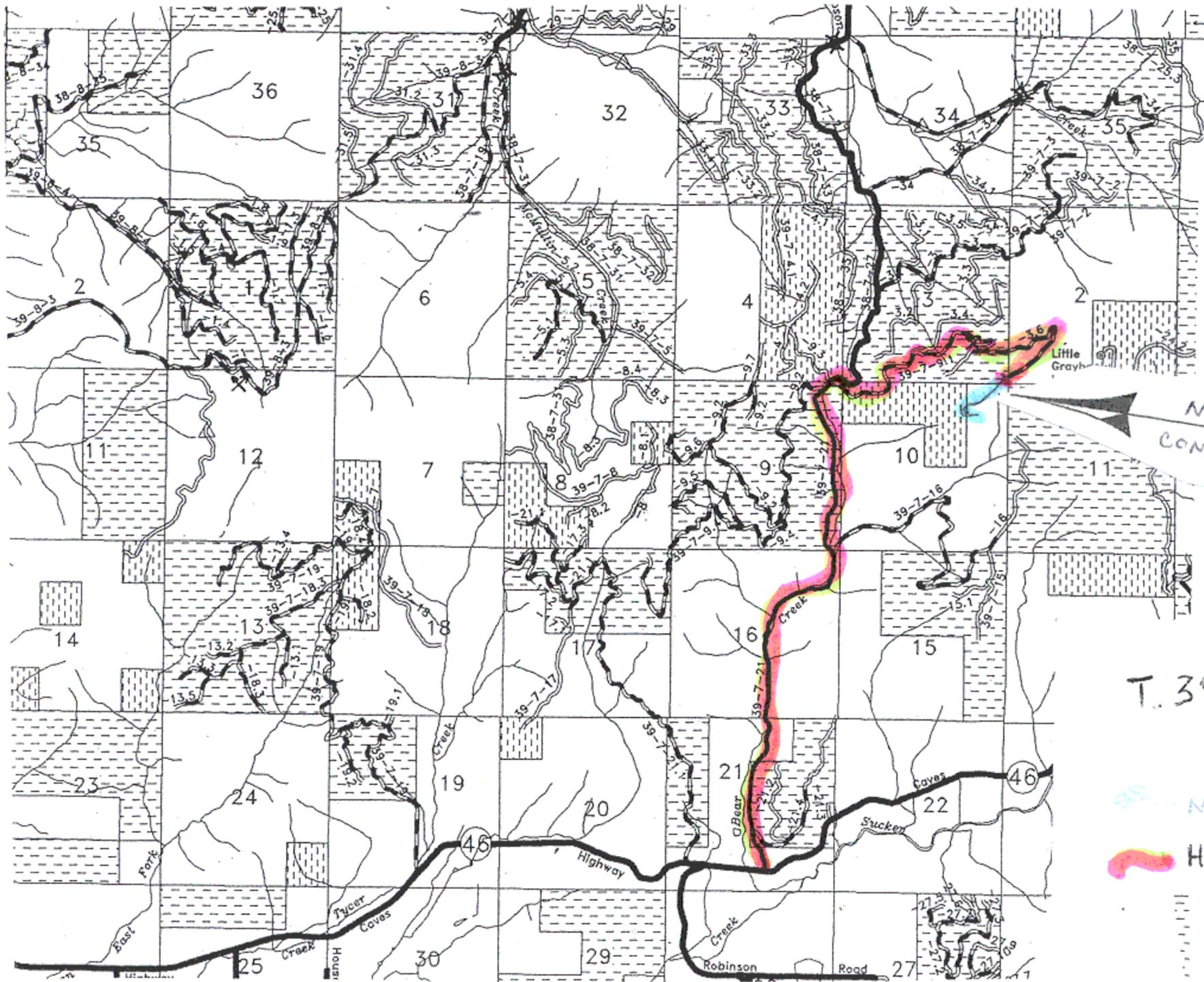
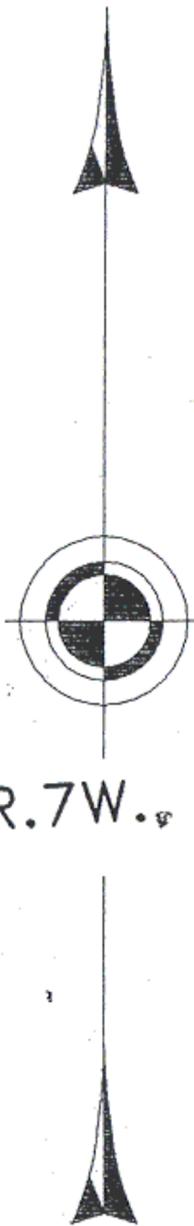
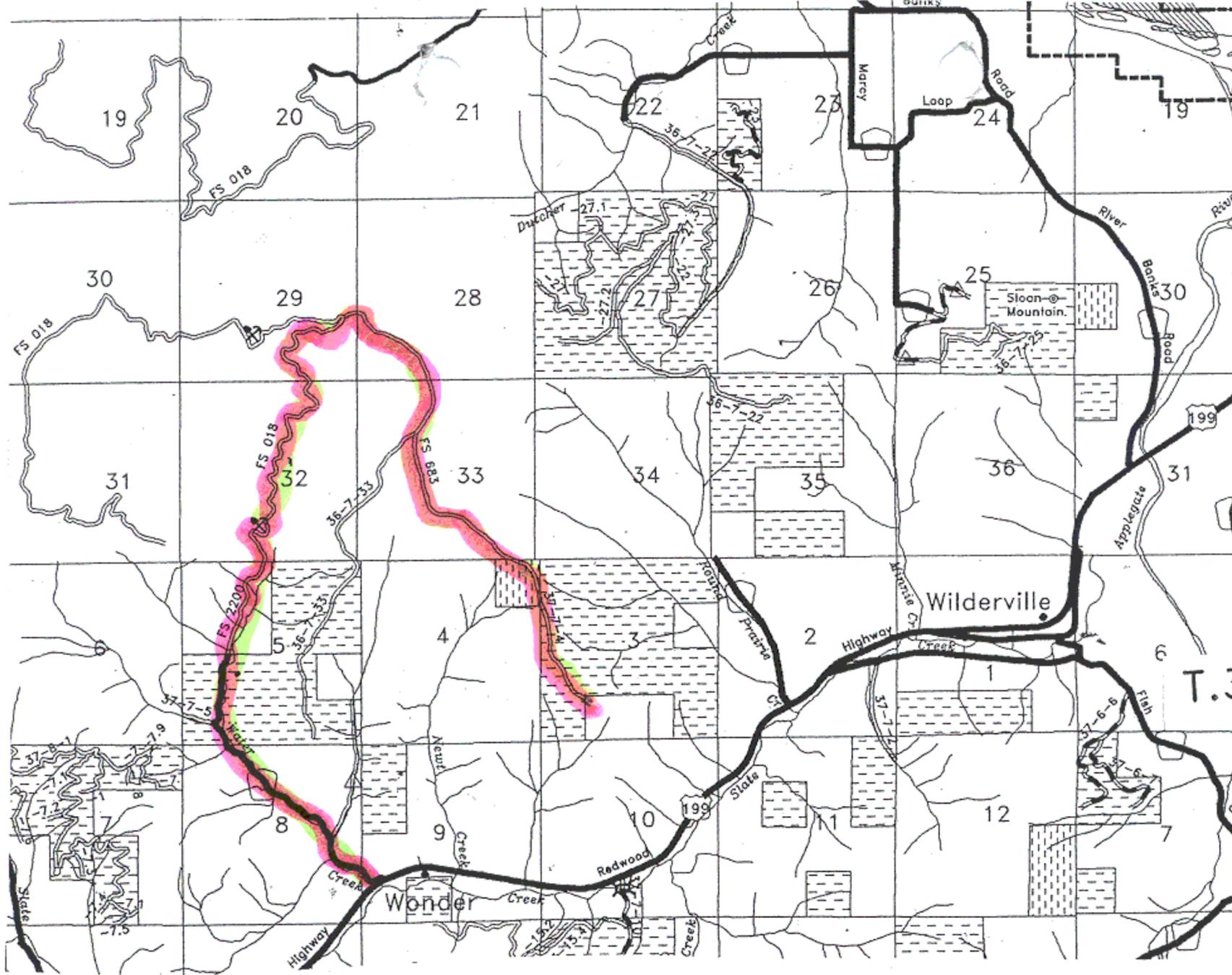
Agencies and Persons Consulted

A. Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

A formal 15 day public comment period will be held. Copies of the EA document will be available to the public at the Medford District Office and sent to parties known to have an interest in this type of project.

B. Agencies Consulted

This project proposal has been submitted for formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This was based on the possibility that granting of the requested permit could potentially result in adverse impacts to the northern spotted owl due to the actions on Josephine County lands (interrelated and interdependent effects).



NEW CONSTRUCTION

New construction
Haul Routes

MAP 1

T39S, R7W, W.M.

BLM

Begin New Construction

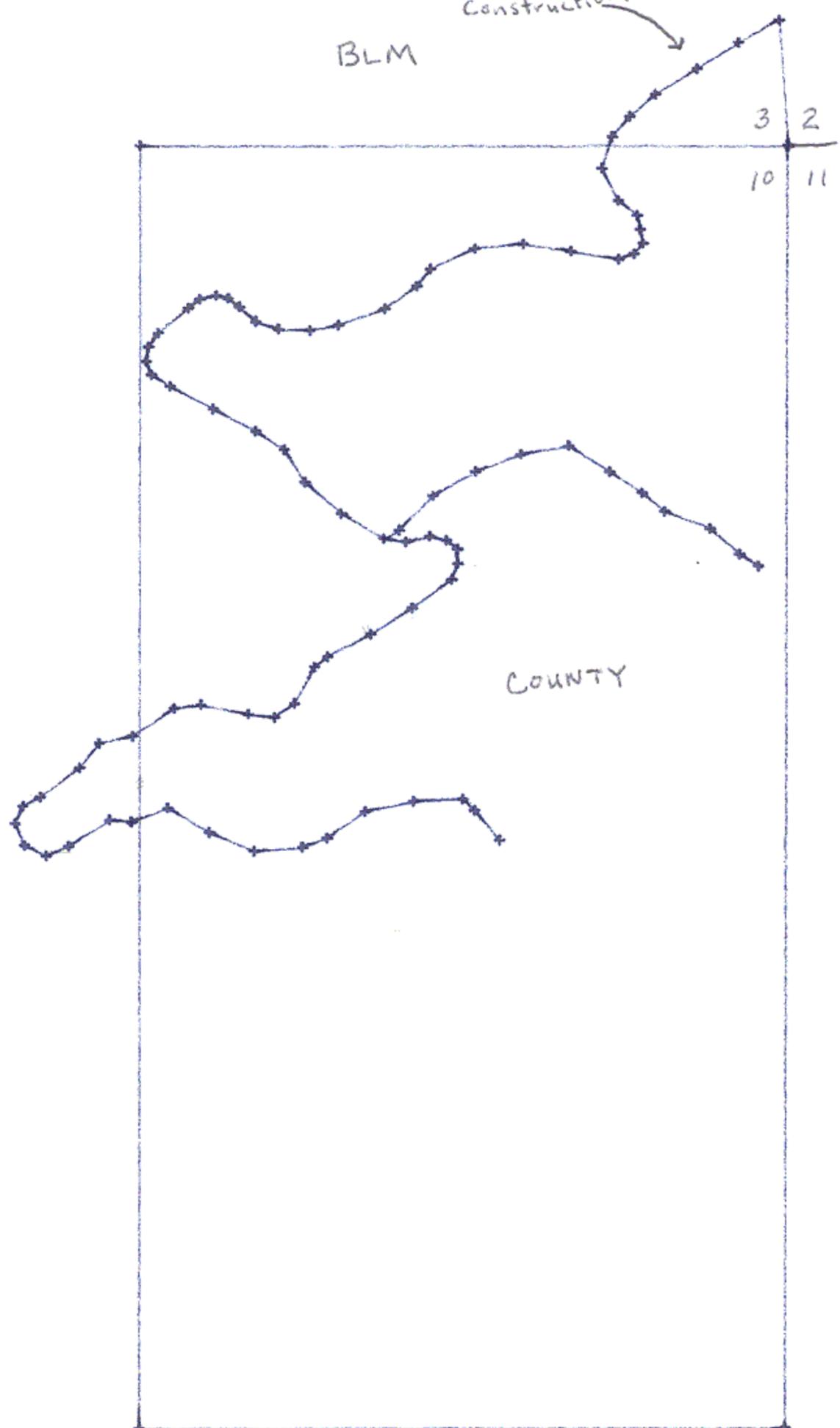
3 2

10 11

BLM

COUNTY

BLM



COMET 80 / POLLARD CREEK

SCALE: 400 ft/in 13.20in/mi

MAP 2

POLLARD CK / COMET 80 TIMBER SALE
ROAD TRAVERSE

TOWNSHIP 39 SOUTH, RANGE 7 WEST W.M.

BLM

STA 0+00

PVT.

STA 3+25

3

2

10

11

SECTION CORNER

350'



BLM

COUNTY

BLM

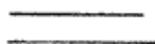
STA 33+88

STA 39+98

NORTH
SCALE 1"=400'

LEGEND

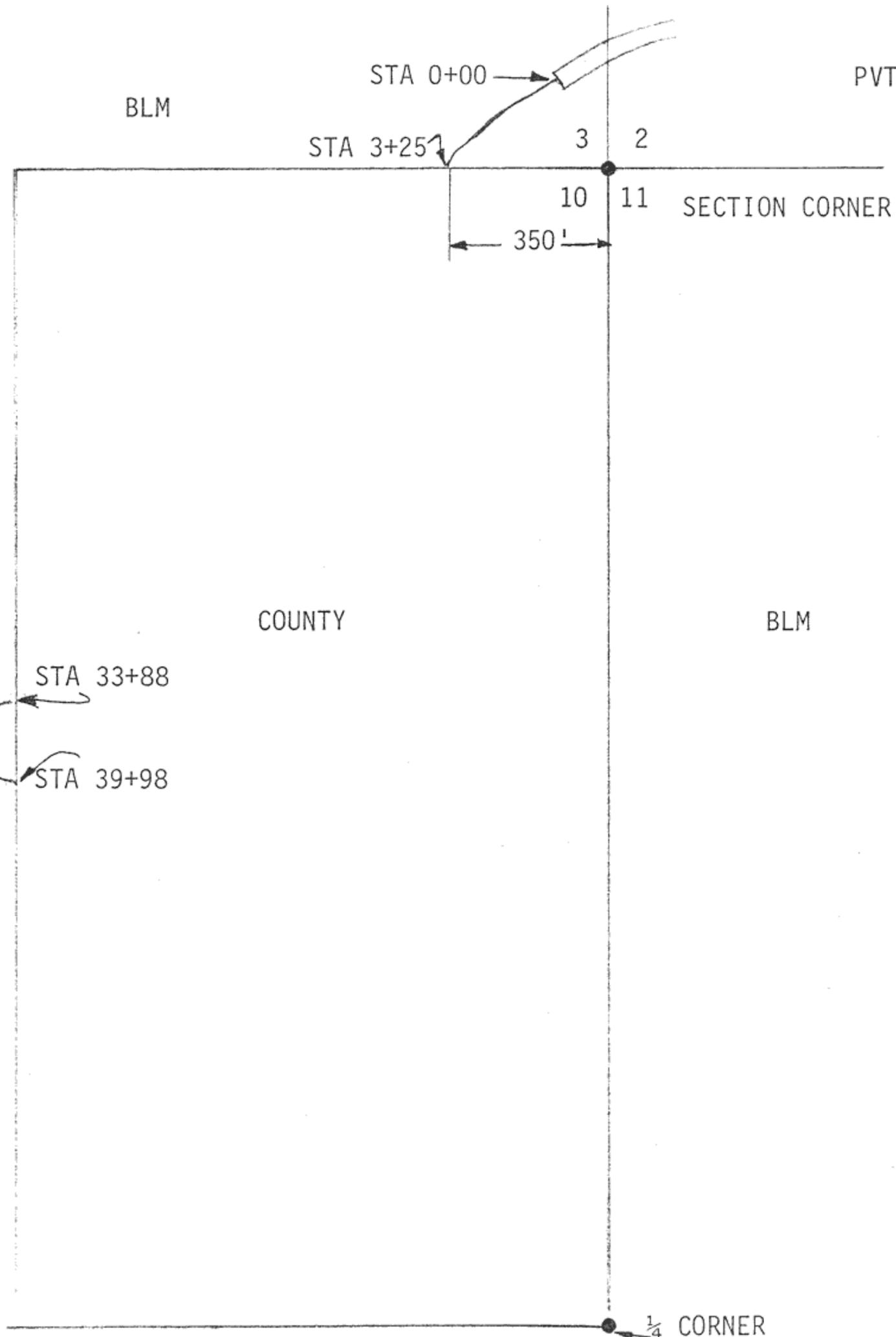
EXISTING ROADS:



NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION:



FOUND CORNERS:



1/4 CORNER

6-10-96

BLM

12

OR-96-MED

19-1



25/201 30/1/96
SYN 7/00 03/96

1501

39-7W.10

47E Josephine gl 20-35%