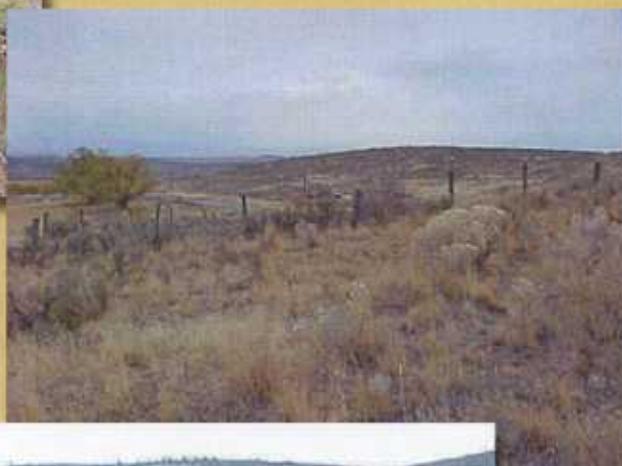


WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK PROGRAM

**Final Mitigation Recommendations
BLM Vale District
Richland/Sparta Assessment Area**



**Order No.: NAD010208
Contract No.: GS-10F-0085J
April 2002**



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**FINAL
WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE, COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK
MITIGATION RECOMENDATIONS**

**VALE DISTRICT
RICHLAND-SPARTA ASSESSMENT AREA**

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Date Prepared: April 2002**



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ACRONYM LIST

amsl	Above mean sea level
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FERC	Federal Regulatory Commission
GPS	Global Positioning System
MRLA	Major Land Resource Area
NAD	North American Datum
ODF	Oregon Department of Forestry
RFD	Rural Fire Department
SOW	Statement of Work
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
UTM	Universal Transverse Mercator
WRCC	Western Regional Climate Center

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2000 fire season more than 6.8 million acres of public and private lands were burned by wildfire, resulting in loss of property, damage to resources, and disruption of community services. Many of these fires occurred in wildland-urban interface areas and exceeded fire suppression capabilities. To reduce the risk of fire in the wildland-urban interface, the President of the United States directed the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to increase federal investments in projects to reduce the risk of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Vale District, together with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is currently in the process of forming partnerships with local governments to plan fuels reduction treatments and other mitigation measures targeted at the wildland-urban interface in the vicinity of public lands. These partnerships are indicative of a shared responsibility to reduce wildland fire risks to communities.

The wildland-urban interface occurs where manmade structures meet or intermix with wildland vegetation. In certain situations, specific actions such as fuels reduction around communities, forest and rangeland restoration, infrastructure improvements, and public education and outreach may reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in the wildland-urban interface. To this end, federal agencies have implemented the Communities-at-Risk, Wildland-Urban Interface Program. The program seeks to reduce the hazard of wildland fires to communities through public outreach, the reduction or prevention of fuel build-up, and increasing the fire protection capabilities of communities. The Richland-Sparta community was selected to assess the hazard of wildland fire and to identify specific actions that may reduce the risk.

Dynamac Corporation was contracted to support the BLM in their assessment of wildfire risk to the Richland-Sparta community in the wildland-urban interface. Dynamac scientists conducted fuel surveys by categorizing the vegetation, slope, and aspect of the land in the Richland-Sparta assessment area. The risk of wildland fire to homes, structures, and cultural resources on private land was also evaluated according to building materials, the presence of survivable space, road access, and the response time of the local fire department. Dynamac assessed the adequacy of the community's service infrastructure (including roads, water supplies, and fire fighting equipment) by systematic observation, and by interviewing community officials and fire prevention personnel. A community open house was held to disseminate information about the Communities-at-Risk, Wildland-Urban Interface Program to citizens, to afford them the

opportunity to identify resources that are of value to the community, and to have them identify actions that may reduce the risk of wildland fire. The information gathered from the fuel surveys, structural surveys, interviews, infrastructure assessments, and community profile was integrated into two reports: a hazard assessment report and mitigation recommendations. The following action items were identified to reduce the wildfire threat in the Richland-Sparta assessment:

- Conduct fuels reduction activities in the wooded areas in the eastern portion of the assessment area. These efforts should be coordinated with state and federal agencies and private landowners as appropriate;
- Develop an ongoing education and outreach program to encourage firewise practices by the residents of Richland-Sparta and Baker County; and
- Provide assistance to the Rural Fire Departments (RFD) in obtaining needed training and equipment such as additional tender pumper.

2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Richland-Sparta wildfire hazard assessment and mitigation recommendation processes are to evaluate the hazards of wildland fire within the assessment area and then identify specific actions that could reduce the risks. The objectives are to decrease the chances of wildfire spreading from public lands onto private lands, while concurrently decreasing the risk of wildfire spreading from private lands onto public lands.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Wildland fire is an integral component of many forest and rangeland ecosystems. In the conterminous United States before European settlement, an estimated 145 million acres were annually scorched by wildfire. In comparison, only about 14 million acres are currently burned annually due to increased agriculture, urbanization, habitat fragmentation, and fire suppression programs. This change from the historical fire regime to the present day has caused a shift in the native vegetation composition and structure of fire-prone ecosystems such as some forests and rangelands, resulting in a dangerously high accumulation of fuels. As a result, when wildland fires do occur, they may burn larger and hotter than those in the past and pose an increased risk to human welfare and ecological integrity.

The hazard of wildland fires is compounded by the increasing occurrence of human structures and activities in fire-prone ecosystems. The wildland-urban interface occurs where human structures meet or intermix with wildland vegetation. In certain situations, specific actions such as fuels reduction around communities, forest and rangeland restoration, infrastructure improvements, and public outreach may reduce the risk of losses to catastrophic fire in the wildland-urban interface. The Vale BLM implemented the Communities-at-Risk, Wildland-Urban Interface Program to determine what these specific actions may be, and where they are needed. The program seeks to reduce the hazard of wildland fires to communities through public education and outreach, the reduction or prevention of fuel build-up, and increasing the fire protection capabilities of communities. The Richland-Sparta community was selected to assess the threat of wildland fire and to identify specific actions that may reduce the risk of loss.

The BLM Vale District intends to use the mitigation measures identified in this document as a guide and prioritization tool in implementing the Communities-at-Risk program. The District is committed to working with any partners (private, local government, state, and federal) in order to accomplish mutual goals and objectives identified in the recommendations. The recommendations that the District chooses to implement will go through the NEPA process and will be accomplished as funding, policy and regulations permit.

4.0 EXISTING SITUATION

Richland is a small picturesque town situated among the mountains in northeastern Oregon. The assessment area is located approximately 160 miles northwest of Ontario, Oregon, and 40 miles east of Baker City, Oregon, in Baker County. Sparta, a busy mining community of 500 residents in the early twentieth century, is now a ghost town. The assessment area was defined as encompassing a 15-mile radius of Richland and included the towns of Richland, Sparta, and Halfway, covering portions of townships T07S R44E; T08S R43E; T08S R44E; T08S R45E; T09S R43E; T09S R44E; T09S R45E; T09S R46E; T10S R43E; T10S R44E; T10S R45E; and T10S R46E. The northeastern section of the area, including territory northeast of Eagle Creek, is covered by a separate report on Halfway, Brownlee, and Oxbow.

The climate of the Richland area is characterized by warm, dry summers with average daily high temperatures reaching 84° Fahrenheit (F) in July and August, and an average daily summertime low of 44-48°F. Winter months are typically cool, with average daily temperatures from November to March ranging from the mid 40s to the low 20s. Precipitation is typically moderate

with an average annual precipitation of 22 inches. Most precipitation arrives from November to January as snowfall and from March through June as rain (WRCC, 2001).

According to the NRCS *Soil Survey of Baker County Area Oregon*, the Richland-Sparta assessment area is classified as a shrub grassland steppe, once dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass on south facing slopes and Idaho fescue on north facing slopes, with Wyoming big sagebrush and basin big sagebrush. Rangeland accounts for 70 percent of the land in Baker County. Forested areas consist of principally Douglas fir with some ponderosa pine, grand fir, and lodgepole pine. Repeated fires in the area once favored ponderosa pine, but fire control over the past 50 years has allowed the pine stands to be replaced by Douglas fir. The ponderosa pine-type forest supports high quality bunch grasses for livestock and wildlife.

There are over 300 species of wildlife in Baker County, including the bald eagle and numerous other bird species, elk, mule deer, bobcat, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. Open water in the assessment area includes the Powder River, Burnt River, Eagle Creek, and Brownlee Reservoir. Fish found in the area include rainbow trout, brook trout, bluegill, crappie, perch, carp, catfish, and bass. Public lands include the Whitman-Wallowa National Forest (USFS) and land managed by BLM, which together account for approximately 150 square miles. There are more than 10,000 acres of high-hazard fuels (dense, multistoried stands) surrounding the community.

Dynamac Corporation conducted evaluations of the flammable fuels hazards near the wildland interface in the Richland-Sparta assessment area. Details of the methods used in the fuels survey are presented in Section 7.0 of this document. In brief, locations on or near public land were categorized as to fuels (vegetation), and other characteristics associated with the spread of wildfire. In choosing fuel survey points, emphasis was placed on land near the urban interface that is representative of the features in the surrounding area. The results have been reported in a hazard assessment report for the Richland-Sparta assessment area.

The Hazard Assessment Report for the Richland-Sparta assessment area characterizes six fuel and terrain conditions as Class A (low hazard), Class B (moderate hazard), or Class C (high hazard). The data from the fuels hazard assessment are also graphically depicted in **Figures 1 and 2**. The charts depict the percentage of assessment points, based on a total of 55 points surveyed, that received a high, moderate, or low hazard ranking. Those data are summarized as follows:

- **Slope:**

Class A: 20% of the points occurred on low slopes (<10% slope).

Class B: 38% of the points were on moderate slopes (10-30%).

Class C: 42% of the points were on steep slopes (>30% grade).

- **Aspect:**

Class A: 22% of the points had a northern aspect.

Class B: 38% of the points faced east or were flat.

Class C: 40% of the points faced south, west or southwest.

- **Elevation:**

Class A: 0% of the points were above 5,500 feet above mean sea level (amsl).

Class B: 13% of the points were between 3,500 and 5,500 feet amsl.

Class C: 87% of the points were below 3,500 feet amsl.

- **Fuel Type:**

Class A: 9% of the points had light fuels (grasses).

Class B: 84% of the points had intermediate fuels (shrubs).

Class C: 7% of the points had heavy fuels (trees).

- **Fuel Density:**

Class A: 4% of the points had discontinuous (<30%) fuel cover.

Class B: 55% of points exhibited intermediate cover (30-60%).

Class C: 51% had heavy, continuous fuel cover (60% or more).

- **Fuel Bed Depth:**

Class A: 7% of the points had low fuel depth (<1 foot).

Class B: 84% of the points were at intermediate fuel depth (1-3 feet).

Class C: 9% of the points were in areas with >3 feet fuel depth.

A second component of the hazard assessment was to observe the features of structures such as dwellings and other structures of value that can categorize fire resistance. For this survey, Dynamac assessed one-square-mile sections of the assessment area that were within one mile of the wildland interface near public land. The data that were gathered for each square mile section

characterized structure density, building materials, proximity to fuels, presence of a survivable space, and roads/accessibility. Structure density assessed the number of structures within a section throughout the assessment area. Sections that contain a high density of structures are more likely to be defended from wildfire because of improved infrastructure such as wide roads and water sources than opposed to low-density areas; and as such, were considered a low risk. Dynamac surveyed a total of 309 sections, and structures were found in 61 sections. Results of the structure survey are summarized as follows:

- **Structure Density:**

- Class A: 2% of sections had one structure per 5-10 acres.

- Class B: 2% of sections had at least one structure per 5 acres.

- Class C: 96% of sections had fewer than one structure per 10 acres.

The remaining parameters were analyzed based on only the 61 sections that contained structures.

- **Proximity to Structures:**

- Class A: 84% of sections had flammable wildland fuels greater than 100 feet from the majority of structures.

- Class B: In 12% of sections with structures, fuels were 40 to 100 feet away from the majority of structures.

- Class C: 4% of sections with structures had fuels less than 40 feet from most structures.

- **Predominant Building Materials:**

- Class A: In 65% of sections, the majority of homes had fire resistant roofs and/or siding.

- Class B: In 35% of sections, 10 to 50% of structures had fire resistant roofs and/or siding.

- Class C: In none of the sections were less than 10% of structures constructed of fire resistant materials.

- **Survivable Space:**

Class A: 73% of the sections featured improved survivable space around the majority of homes.

Class B: 20% of the sections were rated with 10-50% of homes with survivable space.

Class C: In 7% of sections, less than 10% of structures had improved survivable space.

- **Roads:**

Class A: 33% of the sections featured wide looped roads that were maintained, paved or solid, and surfaced, with shoulders.

Class B: 55% had maintained two lane roads with no shoulders.

Class C: 12% of sections had mostly narrow, steep or rutted roads.

- **Response Time:**

Class A: 37% of the area (primarily that covered by the Eagle Valley RFD) had response times of less than 20 minutes.

Class B: 2% of sections had response times of 20-40 minutes.

Class C: 61% had response times of more than 40 minutes.

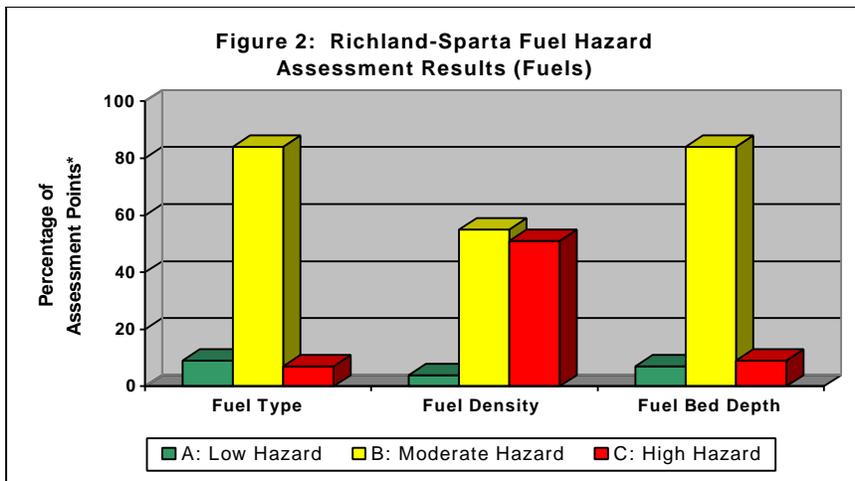
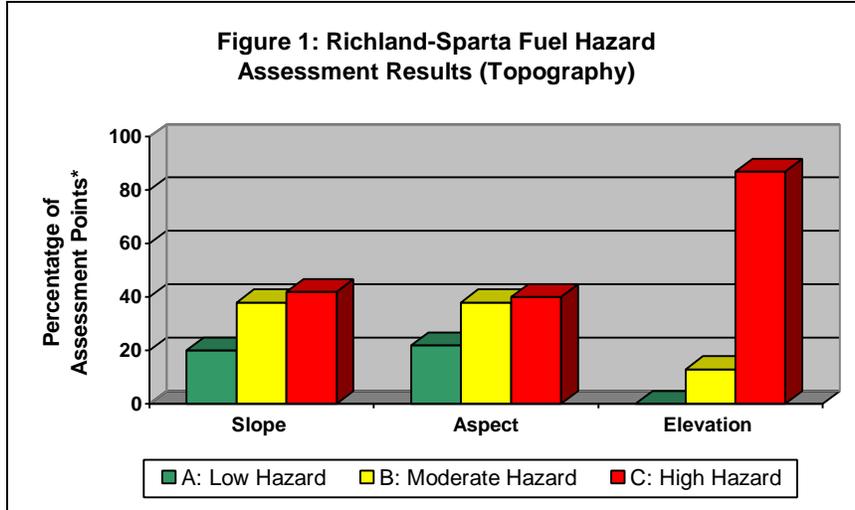
- **Access:**

Class A: In 29% of sections, most roads had multiple entrances and exits that were suitable for truck turnarounds.

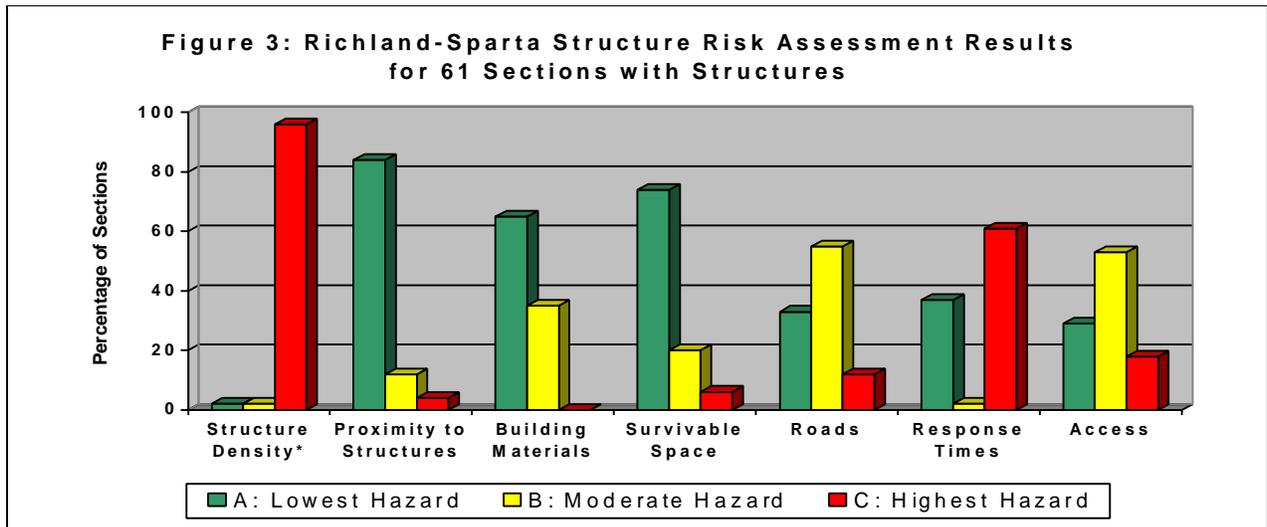
Class B: In 53% of sections, access was limited.

Class C: 18% of sections had poor road access.

The percentages of sections that received a high, moderate, or low hazard ranking for the risk to structures in the assessment area are graphically depicted in **Figure 3**. It should be noted that, with the exception of structure density, these percentages are based on the 61 sections *with* structures in the assessment area and not on all 309 sections surveyed (248 of which had no structures).



* Percentages for Figures 1 and 2 are based on 55 points surveyed within the assessment area.



* Percentages for structure density are based on all 309 sections within the assessment area.

In Baker County, there are several town and rural fire departments that can respond to and fight structural fires: the Baker RFD, the Haines RFD, the Keating RFD, and the Eagle Valley RFD, which serves the area around Richland. According to Baker County Rural Fire Chief, mutual aid agreements exist among all of the departments in the county. Some but not all of these departments have adequate training and equipment to combat wildfires. The USFS Pine Ranger District responds to wildfires on public land.

5.0 PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

Dynamac collected comments regarding the wildfire hazard in the Richland-Sparta assessment area through discussions with community leaders, fire officials, disaster coordinators, and residents of Richland, Sparta, the Eagle Valley area, Baker County, and the surrounding wildland-urban interface lands. The public provided comments through written surveys and at an open house held on November 28, 2001. The following comments and concerns were expressed:

1. Comments on questionnaires recommended that more educational material should be provided to residents so they can better protect themselves and their property from wildland fires. Informational articles in local newspapers and free pamphlets were requested.
2. Several citizens requested that residents be allowed to clear dead trees from forested land for use as firewood. Some recommended selective thinning of forested land while instituting a forest management policy that was more lenient but still worked to maintain healthy forests. Some residents are interested in reducing fuels around their homes. Controlled burns and brush piling with winter burns were also recommended. Additionally, grazing was recommended as a method of reducing fuels.
3. Some residents recommended forming partnering agreements between homeowners and government agencies (BLM, USFS, and/or ODF). The agreements would help ensure that homeowners were maintaining fuel reductions on their property.
4. Some residents requested that when the BLM plans operations on land that is leased by citizens for grazing purposes, the BLM needs to contact all permit holders and not just the major permit holder. By contacting all permit holders; the BLM would be assured that all parties involved have a chance to respond to the requests.
5. Information gained during interviews suggests that BLM, USFS, and ODF should form a partnership agreement to reduce wildland fire risks on their respective lands.

Each agency is currently working on similar projects in the Richland-Sparta area. The agencies should share information and strategies to best reduce the threat of wildland fire in the community.

6. Local officials expressed a keen interest in forming additional partnerships between the government agencies and the rural fire departments. Specifically, the rural departments would like to form a mutual aid agreement with the BLM and other agencies. Mutual aid is recommended and necessary for the Sparta area in particular because they do not currently have a fire department. The local departments are willing to provide their skills in the event of a wildland fire on BLM property; it was noted that BLM does not actively seek support from local departments. As a result, wildland fires can spread significantly before BLM fire fighters can respond, while in some cases, local fire departments can respond faster than BLM.

7. Radio communications were reported to be troublesome. The repeater system needs to be improved to enhance communications between the fire departments, BLM, and the USFS, during a fire event.

8. Some of the rural fire departments are in need of wildland fire fighting training, wildland fire personal protective equipment, hoses, brush trucks, and tankers. The majority of the current trucks consist of pick-up trucks with slip-in water tanks.

A second community meeting was held on March 6, 2001 at the same location in Richland. The community concerns voiced at the second meeting were essentially the same as those that came from the first meeting and community survey. At the March 6 meeting, a spokesperson for a citizens group, the United Community Partners, presented its agenda; a summary of his discussion follows:

The United Community Partners is applying for a grant to receive money for fire mitigation actions on private land that adjoins federal and state property. The budget [for these mitigation actions] will depend on the amount of acreage to be treated and the number of homeowners participating. The Eagle Valley district and the Sparta area will be included in the grant proposal. There will be money available to complete a feasibility study to determine how marketable available biomass will be for composting and chipping. [This spokesperson] stated that jobs would be created due to fuels reduction activities. A second phase of the application process will provide money through FEMA or the Rural Fire Department Assistance Program for training and equipment, including vehicles. A list of private landowners who are interested in participating in the program is being developed.

6.0 NEED FOR ACTION

Wildfires in the Richland-Sparta assessment area have both natural and human origins. At risk are dwellings and other structures on private land near the wildland interface, natural resources, wildlife habitat, and recreational areas. USFS and ODF have initiated public outreach aimed at identifying public and private lands for fuels reduction and promoting firewise landscaping and construction practices under the National Fire Plan. The goal is to develop a comprehensive fire plan that addresses issues of structure vulnerability and citizen and firefighter safety in the wildland-urban interface. BLM's input is essential to maximize and expedite the availability of federal funds to the Richland-Sparta assessment area. The recommendations presented in this report will assist BLM in joining in the ongoing UFSF and ODF effort. These recommendations will augment and enhance community outreach and fuels reduction planning and will add a component focused on firefighter safety and rural assistance in obtaining equipment grants. Preliminary assessments and NEPA compliance must precede fuels reduction activities. As the need for action is immediate in the Richland-Sparta assessment area, preliminary assessment and NEPA compliance activities should begin as soon as possible.

7.0 METHODOLOGY

The mitigation actions proposed herein for the Richland-Sparta assessment area are based on information acquired from wildland fuel and structure surveys, a public meeting, interviews of community officials, and surveys filled out and submitted by residents of Richland-Sparta and Baker County. The majority of information presented in this report was gathered during November 26 through December 5, 2001. A Final Hazard Assessment Report has been completed for the area and is available by request from BLM's Vale District Office.

Dynamac characterized land and fuels at 55 points on or near public land within a 15-mile radius of Richland-Sparta, concentrating on sections of land near inhabited areas. As not all sections of public land were accessible, Dynamac endeavored to choose fuel survey points that were representative of surrounding sections. The rating elements included slope, aspect, elevation, fuel type, fuel density, and fuel bed depth, and were assigned to a hazard category of low, medium, or high (See Hazard Assessment Report, Table 3, and Appendix B). At each survey point, the field crew recorded the location in UTM coordinates using a Trimble hand-held global positioning system unit (GPS), and photographed the surrounding area in the four cardinal

directions. Also, a wildland fuels fire hazard assessment form (Form 1) was completed which rated the characteristics of the land features and fuel sources.

Dynamac staff also collected information on the flammability and defensibility of structures on private land from approximately 300 sections located within one mile of public lands, within the assessment area. The structural hazard assessment rated the structures based on the resistance of building materials to fire, and the distance of flammable fuels to the structures located within a section. The rating elements included structure density, proximity of flammable fuels to the structures, building materials, survivable space, types of roads, response times, and accessibility. Each element was assigned a rating of low, medium, or high hazard category (See Hazard Assessment Report, Table 4, and Appendix C).

Public open houses were convened on November 27, 2001, and March 6, 2002 at the Eagle Valley Grange in Richland, Oregon. The community was invited to attend through direct mailings, which were sent to 313 residences in the area; a newspaper article in the local paper; and announcements posted in public places such as grocery stores and the post office. Dynamac, BLM, USFS, and ODF staff attended the public meetings, and representatives of each gave a short presentation on their roles in the overall National Fire Plan in general and on the current BLM initiative. The government and Dynamac staff provided firewise informational materials, obtained information from the community on hazardous fire situations and desired conditions, and served as informational resources to those attending the meeting. At the March 6 meeting, Dynamac presented the results of the fuel hazard, structure hazard, and community profile surveys. Residents attending the meetings were asked to fill out a survey form regarding their perceptions and concerns about wildland fire in their communities. Several of these were also received later from individuals who did not attend the meetings. (See Hazard Assessment Report, Appendices D and F.)

The Dynamac Community Relations Specialist conducted interviews with local public officials and residents. Individuals or groups interviewed included County officials, BLM, ODF, USFS, the chief of the Eagle Valley RFD, and the Sheriff's office (See Hazard Assessment Report, Appendix E).

8.0 PROPOSED PROJECTS AND PRIORITY

The projects proposed are based on information obtained from the fuel and structure surveys, community meeting, and interviews. The following specific action items were identified to reduce the hazard of wildfire in the Richland-Sparta assessment area:

- Establish a fuels reduction plan for areas of public and private land that is focused on interface areas in the eastern portions of the assessment area;
- Develop an ongoing education and outreach program throughout the assessment area to encourage private landowners to adopt firewise landscaping and building practices;
- Assist the residents of the Sparta area, where there is no rural fire department coverage, to develop and enhance their capabilities for fighting wildfire;
- Provide assistance to the Eagle Valley RFD in obtaining funding for wildfire training and equipment, possibly including personal protective equipment and a 2,000-gallon capacity fire truck.

8.1 Fuels Reduction Recommendations

Purpose of Fuels Reduction: The hazard to the community from wildfire on public lands near Richland and Sparta is high. Recent fuels assessments revealed high risks in several categories, including fuel height, density, and elevation. Moreover, dead vegetation and multiple understory layers in some areas could serve as ladder fuels, spreading fire rapidly and increasing the chances of canopy fires. Fuels reduction has been shown to be effective around communities to reduce the risk of fire in the wildland-urban interface. This assessment of specific hazards and threats to a community has identified problems and solutions for both public and private landowners, and opportunities for partnerships and agreements to mitigate the risk have emerged as a result. Treatments will aid in reducing the wildfire threat and risks of loss to existing homes in the vicinity of the most hazardous fuels.

Types of Fuels Treatments: The USFS and ODF have planned extensive, ongoing fuels reductions projects in Baker County. For example, in the fall of 2000, the USFS conducted prescribed burns on 5,000 acres near the Sparta area, and mechanically thinned fuels on 500 acres. Based on risks identified by this assessment, it is recommended that BLM plan fuels reduction measures that are compatible with the other agencies' projects on contiguous land. Mitigation measures appropriate to reduce forest crown fire risk include commercial and non-

commercial mechanical fuel removal, and maintenance of treated areas. Fuel removal could be effected through timber sales, opening of firewood-clearing areas on public land, and removal of dead and insect-infested wood. Residential homeowners are encouraged to coordinate individual fuels reduction efforts with those of the public and commercial landowners in their respective areas.

BLM has conducted fuels reduction efforts in the area south of Richland. The areas covered include northern sections of T10S R45E, which are dominated by brush and grasses. Chemical, mechanical, and biological controls have been employed.

Locations of Fuel Treatments: Map 2 shows the locations of the proposed high-priority areas for fuels reduction. In the northern half of T08S R44E, north and south of Sparta Road, public land is forested, with areas of laddered fuels and piles of dead material that could generate crown fires. Individual BLM parcels are small and interspersed with USFS and private land; BLM land amounts to between 400 and 1,000 acres in this region, around Sparta. Another region of more extensive BLM holdings is in the Eagle Creek area, north of Richland in T08S R45E. Fuel surveys indicated heavy or moderate fuels, south or west aspect, and/or medium to high-density vegetation, characteristics that pose a relatively high wildfire risk.

Because fuels reduction is already underway by the USFS, it would be prudent for BLM to plan its fuels reduction projects so that vegetation management is consistent with that on adjacent public land.

Priority and Justification: Reducing the threat of wildfire in the area around Sparta is given the highest priority of all the mitigation actions recommended herein, owing to a heavy fuel load, and because the residents in this area are not protected by the Eagle Valley RFD or any other rural fire department. Furthermore, there are historical resources such as old mine structures and buildings dating back to the years when Sparta was an active mining community in this area, which would be destroyed by fire. Finally, the area is active for recreation, including snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and hunting.

Project Timing: Because the USFS and ODF have already embarked upon planning and carrying out fuels reduction projects, BLM could coordinate its own projects with those already underway, especially on contiguous parcels. To the extent possible, the public agencies will share resources and synchronize their evaluations and treatments. Specific fuel treatment

measures, e.g. prescribed burning and commercial thinning, will be consistent among agencies' contiguous land. Within this cooperative framework, BLM may schedule project phases in the following typical manner: In Year One, hazard identification and justification of projects occurs, and treatment objectives are determined. Field surveys begin. In Year Two, projects that require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are planned, analyzed, and designed. Fuels reduction projects such as those recommended here fall into this category. In Year Three, NEPA projects begin implementation. All steps are contingent on available funding. In Year Four, post-treatment monitoring begins. These could include fuels reduction projects on private property.

Desired Result: USFS, ODF, BLM, and private landowners' complimentary fuel treatment projects will reduce wildfire risk to human life and property, and will enhance the quality of the natural resources. The expected end result of fuels reduction efforts is to decrease wildfire risk to the residents of the Sparta area and their property, by thinning flammable vegetation and removal of multistoried successional plant species that can promote crown fires. The containment of naturally occurring wildfires would reduce the likelihood of fire encroaching into the urban interface. Also expected is improvement in the age structure of the forested land and an eventual restoration of some of the area to ponderosa pine forests, which will support an understory of native bunchgrasses. The high quality grasses will provide forage for livestock and wildlife. Furthermore these efforts will contribute toward preservation or restoration of the beauty of the region, the desirability for recreation, and the quality of wildlife habitat. A secondary result would be an enhancement of the local economy.

8.2 Community Education and Outreach Recommendations

Purpose of Public Education and Outreach: The purpose of the community-wide education program is to 1) educate the public of the dangers of wildfire in the area, 2) urge residents to take responsibility in reducing the risk of wildfire and to create defensible space around their residence, and 3) increase awareness of the natural role of fire in forest and rangeland ecosystems, and the benefits of prescribed burning or occasionally managing natural wildland fires to achieve ecological benefits, while maintaining firefighter and public safety as the top priority. BLM should join the public education and outreach program already co-sponsored by the USFS, ODF, and private landowners through partnership agreements.

Outreach Occurrence: An annual “Firewise Clean-Up Day” is one tool that is recommended to encourage residents to create defensible/survivable space around their residences. In conjunction with the Firewise Clean-Up Day, specific demonstration projects may be designed and utilized to educate residents about longer-term investments they could make to increase fire safety. The clean-up day would occur in conjunction with public demonstrations, education programs, and speakers on wildfire and firewise practices.

Outreach Timing: Within the general guidelines set forth above, the annual “Firewise Clean-Up Day,” education program, and public demonstrations would be most effective in the spring, to remind people to prepare their properties for the coming fire season.

Outreach Necessity: Citizen involvement in wildfire mitigation in and around communities is a necessary element for success. Public education and outreach is an effective means of engaging the public in the process of reducing risks to a community. Such education and outreach has been shown to motivate homeowners to take measures around their individual property, thereby contributing to the reduction of wildfire hazards in a community. Further, a community education and outreach program will help identify problems and solutions for both public and private landowners, and offer opportunities for partnerships and agreements. Implementation of the program, and appropriate action by homeowners, will reduce fire risk to structures in the Richland-Sparta assessment area.

8.3 Local Fire Department Assistance

Purpose of Assistance: The overall purpose of rural assistance programs within the National Fire Plan is to help fire departments and citizens prevent and combat wildfires on private and public property. The existing Eagle Valley RFD is very interested in being able to respond immediately to wildfires on public land, as they could arrive at a fire faster than government firefighters. In order to develop the mutual aid agreements necessary, volunteers of the Eagle Valley RFD require government-sponsored training courses. A program to hold training courses in the immediate Richland-Sparta area would benefit the greatest number of firefighters. In addition, there is a need for additional personal safety equipment for the Eagle Valley RFD, and there has been a desire expressed for additional equipment such as trucks suitable for wildfire response.

At the community meeting on November 27, 2001, residents expressed the desire to have some organized wildfire fighting capability for the Sparta area, which currently does not have any fire department of its own, and is not protected by any other rural fire department. State and federal agencies can advise the residents of Sparta on the process for forming a rural fire department and the requirements for establishing a mutual aid agreement, and can provide information regarding training and grants available for equipment.

All the RFDs surveyed in Baker County have expressed the need for additional equipment. State and federal agencies can greatly enhance the probability for a community to apply successfully for funding by advising the community and by adding their positive recommendations to a community's proposals.

Project Timing: The timing for obtaining funding is dependent upon the availability of government funds and the community's understanding of the funding process and their perseverance. Citizens, local public officials, and RFDs must educate themselves as to the available funding sources and the system through which they must work. BLM, the USFS, and ODF are available to provide advice to those who request it.

Desired Result: The desired outcome of government assistance to communities, directly through firefighter training and indirectly, through advice and assistance in forming RFDs, mutual aid agreements, and obtaining grant monies, is a greater level of safety from wildfire damage to citizens and their property. This will be manifested through rural fire departments' ability to quickly and effectively respond to wildfires on public and private land in their area(s) and to assist state and federal agency firefighters in mitigating wildfire risks.

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Video: Firewise Landscaping, Part 2-Design and Installation.

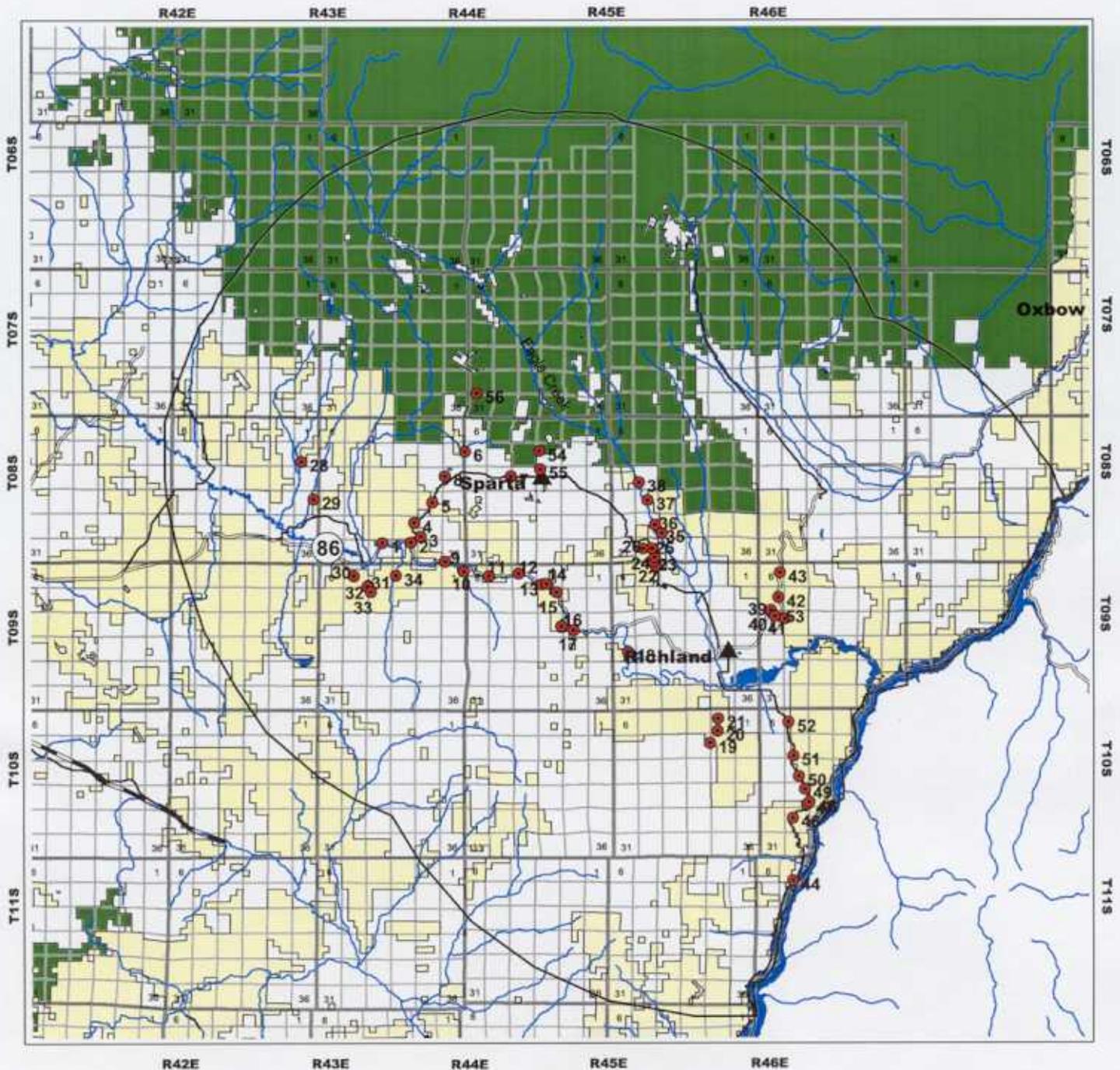
Video: Firewise Landscaping, Part 3-Maintenance.

Video: Wildfire Control--An Introduction for Rural and Volunteer Fire Departments.

Video: The Meeting: Fire Protection Planning in the Wildland/Urban Interface (1991).

Appendix: Maps

Map 1: Richland-Sparta Assessment Area and Fuel Survey Points



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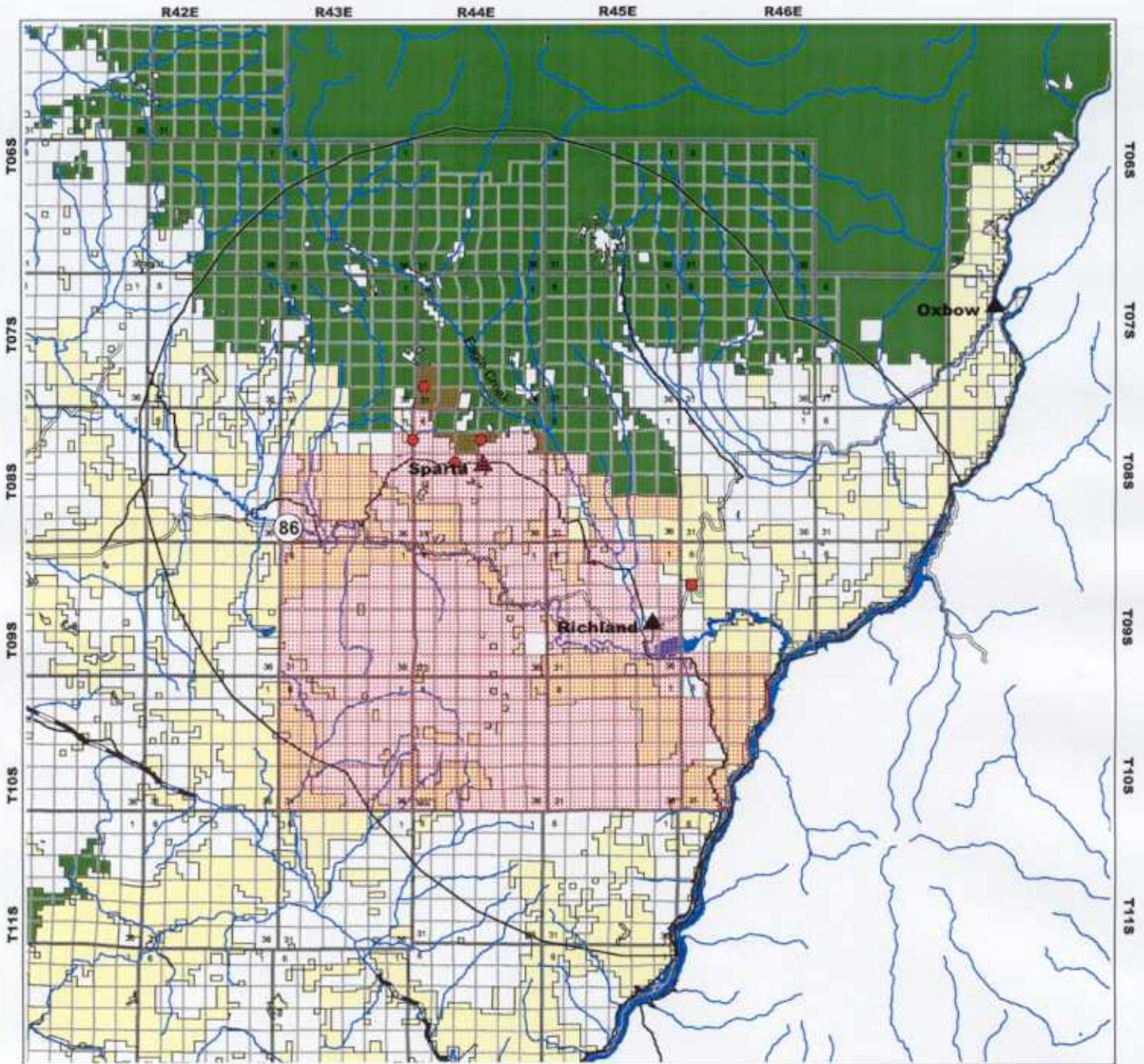
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- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife
- Bureau of Reclamation
- FERC
- Private
- State of Oregon
- Federal Aviation
- Assessment Area
- Interstates
- Major Routes
- Stream
- Surface Water

Actual Assessment Point

Map 2: Highest Risk Areas for Fuels and Fire Suppression within the Richland-Sparta Assessment Area



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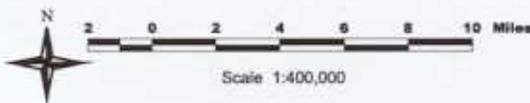
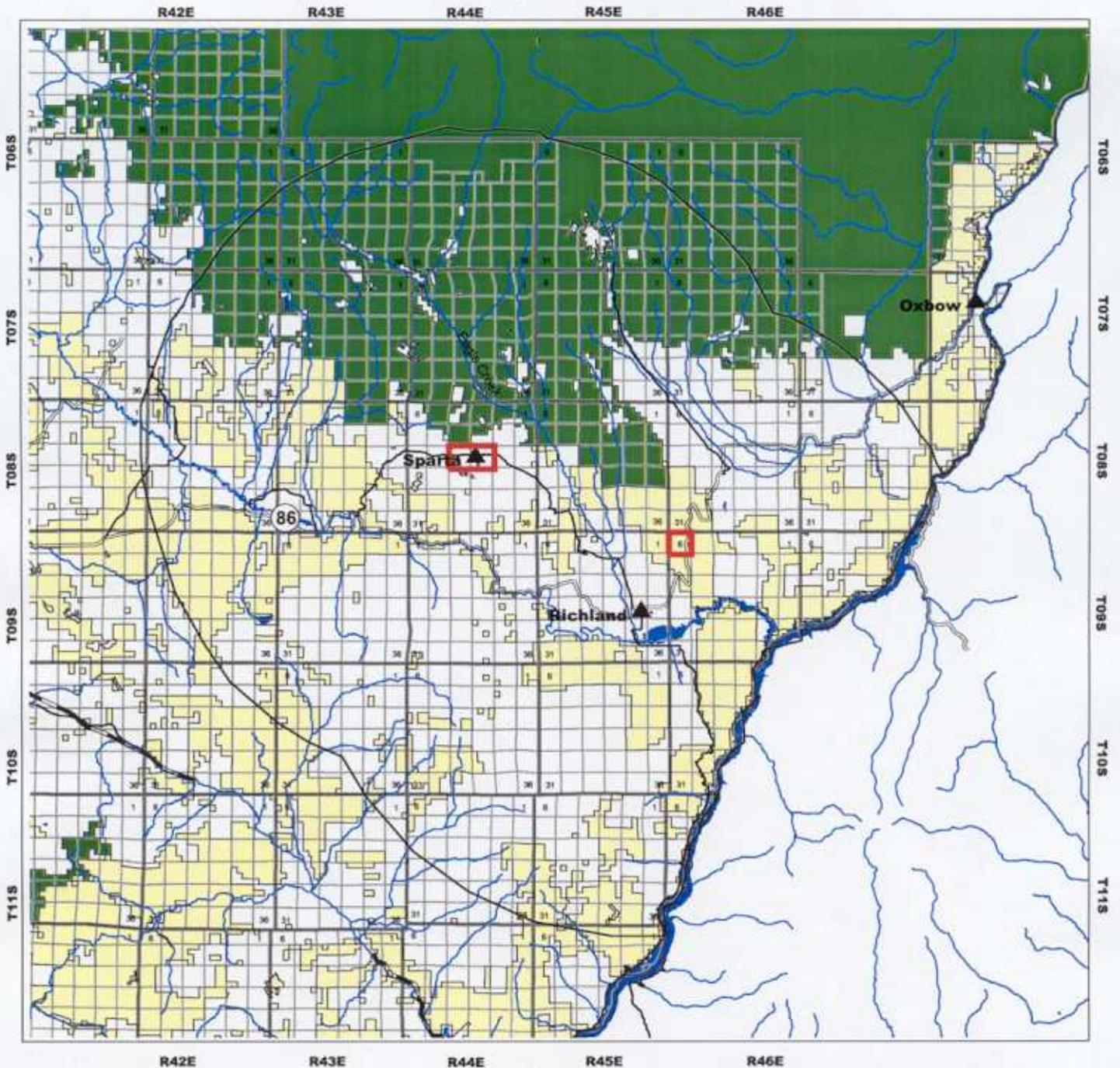
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- Private
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- Federal Aviation

- Assessment Area
- Interstates
- Major Routes
- Stream
- Surface Water

- Highest Risk To Fire Suppression Areas (Low Structure Density) within the Assessment Area
- Highest Risk Fuel Areas within the Assessment Area
- High Risk Fuel Areas within the Assessment Area

Map 3: Proposed Mitigation Recommendations in the Richland-Sparta Assessment Area



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Proposed Fuels Reduction Areas