



## United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Battle Mountain Field Office  
50 Bastian Road  
Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820  
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<http://www.nv.blm.gov/battlemountain>  
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In Reply Refer To:  
4190 (NV060)

**AUG 28 2007**

**RECEIVED**

AUG 31 2007

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION

### PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR THE 2007 ELEPHANT FIRE BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Dear Interested Public:

During the spring of 2007, the Elephant Fire burned within the Battle Mountain Field Office (BMFO) and is in need of emergency stabilization and rehabilitation. This fire burned approximately 2,188 acres of public land including approximately 300 acres of the South Shoshone Herd Management Areas (HMAs) within the Carico Lake Allotment. Refer to attachment for a general location map.

An Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R) plan was developed through an interdisciplinary approach to determine needed treatments to minimize threats to life or property, and to stabilize and prevent further degradation to critical resources and to establish a healthy, stable ecosystem. The Elephant Fire impacted various natural resource values including wildlife habitat and forage for wild horses and livestock. This fire also increased the potential of wind and water erosion, and the spread of non-native invasive and/or noxious plant species, which could reduce ecological condition and rangeland health.

In order to promote the success of ES&R vegetation treatments and/or natural recovery of perennial vegetation, rest from livestock grazing is required. The BMFO Normal Fire Year Rehabilitation Plan Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record dated March 1994 and the Shoshone Eureka Resource Management Plan Amendment Record of Decision requires that burned areas be rested from livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons. In addition to closing burned areas to livestock grazing, the need to temporarily suspend active use was considered. To determine the need to temporarily suspend Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of active use, the interdisciplinary team considered the treatment type, the amount of use by livestock that the burn areas have received, and the suitability of the sites for livestock grazing.

The BMFO interdisciplinary ES&R team has determined that various treatments are required for stabilizing and rehabilitating resources impacted by the Elephant Fire. The following are the proposed treatments for the Elephant Fire:

- Aerial seed approximately 2,188 acres of the Elephant Fire with forage kochia. Due to the dominance of cheatgrass prior to the burn, it is expected that forage kochia would facilitate greater success for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation of this burn.
- Construct approximately 7 miles of temporary fence to protect the seeding treatment by deterring use by livestock and wild horses.
- Cultural resource inventories and Section 106 consultation as needed would be conducted on areas proposed for ground disturbance treatments (drill seeding, temporary fence construction, erosion control structures, etc.). These inventories would be conducted prior to implementation of the ES&R treatments in order to identify and avoid cultural resources determined by the BLM to be eligible for the National Register.
- In accordance with 43 CFR 4110.3-3(b), livestock grazing would be removed from burned areas for a minimum of two years or until vegetation establishment objectives are met. Livestock closure is required in order to provide adequate time for seeding establishment and vegetation re-establishment within the burned area. The closures would be re-opened once the establishment objectives in this decision have been met. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, would be determined based on monitoring, achievement of site-specific resource objectives, and coordination, cooperation, and consultation with the interested public. The BMFO will issue closure decisions to affected permittees prior to the 2008 grazing season.
- Monitoring would be completed to analyze the effectiveness and success of the ES&R treatments. Permanent representative monitoring sites would be established to monitor density, cover and production of the seeded species, native release, and noxious and/or invasive weed encroachment. Density, cover, and production measurements would be collected and analyzed in order to determine the effectiveness of ground and broadcast seeding treatments.

### Affected Permittee

The permittee affected by the Elephant Fire is Ellison Ranching Company. Use areas have been designated through the 2005 Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) for the Carico Lake Allotment. The Moss Fire use area was also affected by the 2006 Moon Valley fire. The permitted use for the Moss Fire use area is as follows:

Permittee	Livestock Type	Period of Use	Active AUMs
Ellison Ranching Company	Cattle	12/10 -- 04/30*	2,499
	Sheep	Must apply on annual basis; use dependent upon cheatgrass production	Not to exceed permitted active use for sheep

\*This period of use and active AUMs include additional use areas. This active use is attributed to the Moss Fire use area, Antelope Pasture, Cedars Pasture, Wood Canyon Pasture, Cedars North Pasture, and Cedars South Pasture.

The Elephant Fire occurred within elevations ranging from 4,900 to 5,400 feet. Cheatgrass and tumble mustard dominated the site with evidence that Sandberg's bluegrass and bottlebrush squirreltail were scattered within the understory.

Through the 2005 FMUD, appropriate stocking levels were determined for the use areas listed in the above table. The 2005 Carico Lake Evaluation and Rangeland Health Assessment determined that a minimal perennial grass component existed within the area burned in the Elephant Fire. Due to the dominance of cheatgrass within the burn area and since grazing preference and permitted active AUMs are not based upon annuals such as cheatgrass, no reduction in active use is recommended. Beginning December 10, 2007, the Elephant Fire would be closed to livestock grazing and will remain closed until vegetation objectives specified below are achieved.

## **ES&R VEGETATION OBJECTIVES AND CRITERION FOR REINTRODUCTION OF LIVESTOCK**

In accordance with 43 CFR 4110.3-3(b) and the Normal Fire Year Rehabilitation Plan and the Shoshone Eureka Resource Management Plan Amendment Record of Decision for the Battle Mountain District, burned areas will be closed to livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons or until vegetation objectives are met. Rest from grazing is required in order to provide adequate time for seeding establishment and re-establishment of existing perennial vegetation within the burned areas.

### **ES&R Vegetation Objectives**

#### **1. Aerial Seeding**

Achieve a minimum of two plants per square meter along the 100' transect for the lower elevation range sites (R024XY002NV, R024XY005NV) and four plants per square meter along the 100' transect on upper elevation range sites (R024XY023NV).

Achieve a minimum of 75% of the vegetative cover (basal and canopy) for perennial species relative to the site potential as indicated by the appropriate ecological site description.

#### **2. Native Release**

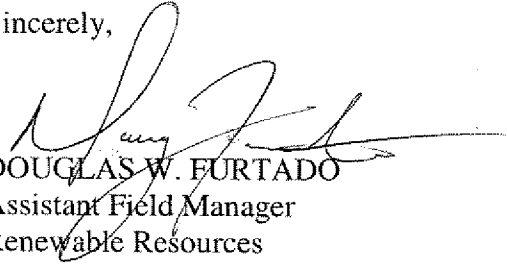
Total dry weight production of perennial herbaceous species in burned areas must equal or exceed the herbaceous production on nearby unburned areas in the same or similar ecological site.

If the establishment criteria are not met by the end of the second growing season of the closure, these burned areas will be evaluated for the potential to meet the criteria. Some of the factors to be considered in this evaluation will be: the relationship between the native release of pre-existing plants and seeded species as it pertains to site stability, the amount of total precipitation, amount of growing season precipitation, how close to meeting the establishment criteria is at the end of the first and second growing seasons, what benefits, if any, an additional growing season of rest might provide.

The permittees and interested public are being informed that prior to the start of the 2008 grazing season, the BMFO will issue a decision and notice of closure which will temporarily close a portion of the Carico Lake Allotment burned in the Elephant Fire. This closure would continue in effect until conditions outlined above are met. Decisions temporarily closing areas to livestock grazing and suspending active use would be issued as final decisions, in full force and effect pursuant to Title 43, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subparts 4110.3-3(b)(1) and (2), and 4160.3(c).

In accordance with the grazing regulations, this letter serves as the opportunity for the interested public to provide input and comment on the proposed ES&R projects and grazing closures described above. Please submit any comments to the above address within 15 days of the date posted on this letter. If you have any questions, please contact Cliff Merriman, Rangeland Management Specialist at (775)635-4059.

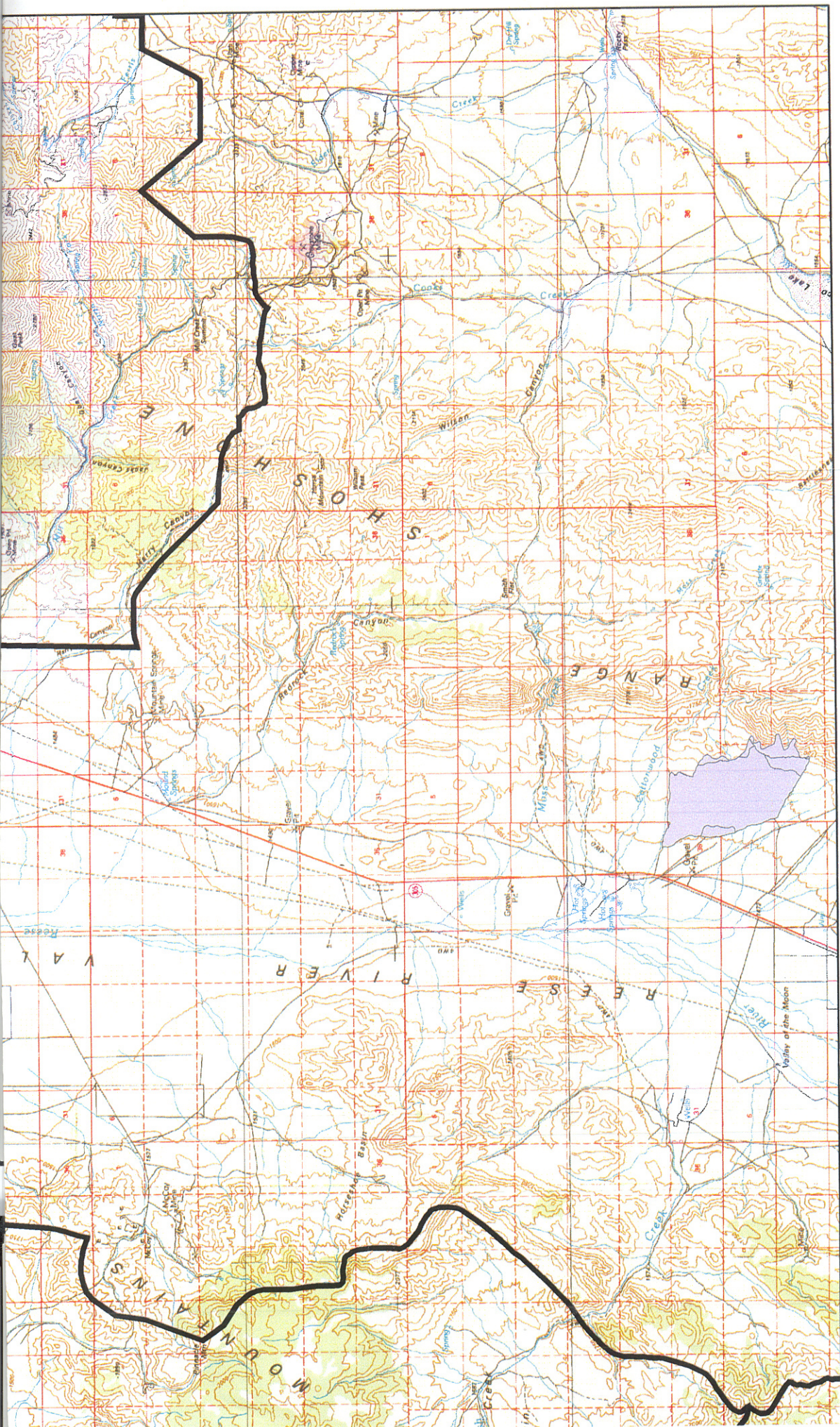
Sincerely,



DOUGLAS W. FURTADO  
Assistant Field Manager  
Renewable Resources

cc: Interested publics  
Doby George, LLC  
Eureka County Commissioners  
Filippini Ranching Company  
Gandolfo Ranch  
Lander County Commissioners  
Joint Ventured Co-Partnership  
Natural Resources Advisory Commission  
Nevada Cattlemens Association  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Nevada Department of Wildlife Eastern Region  
Nevada State Clearing House  
Nye County Commissioners  
O'Toole Ranches  
Stone Cabin LTD  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Western Watersheds Project  
Joe B. Fallini, JR.  
Cindy MacDonald  
Charles W. Parsons  
Naman K Sharp  
Carl Slagowski

Pete Tomera  
C Ranches Inc  
Ellison Ranching Co.  
Silver Creek Ranch Inc.  
Wild Horses Organized Assistance  
Plant Science Services  
Animal Welfare Institute  
American Horse Protection Assoc.  
National Mustang Association  
Battle Mountain Band Council  
Lovelock Paiute Tribe  
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe  
Te-Moak Tribal Council



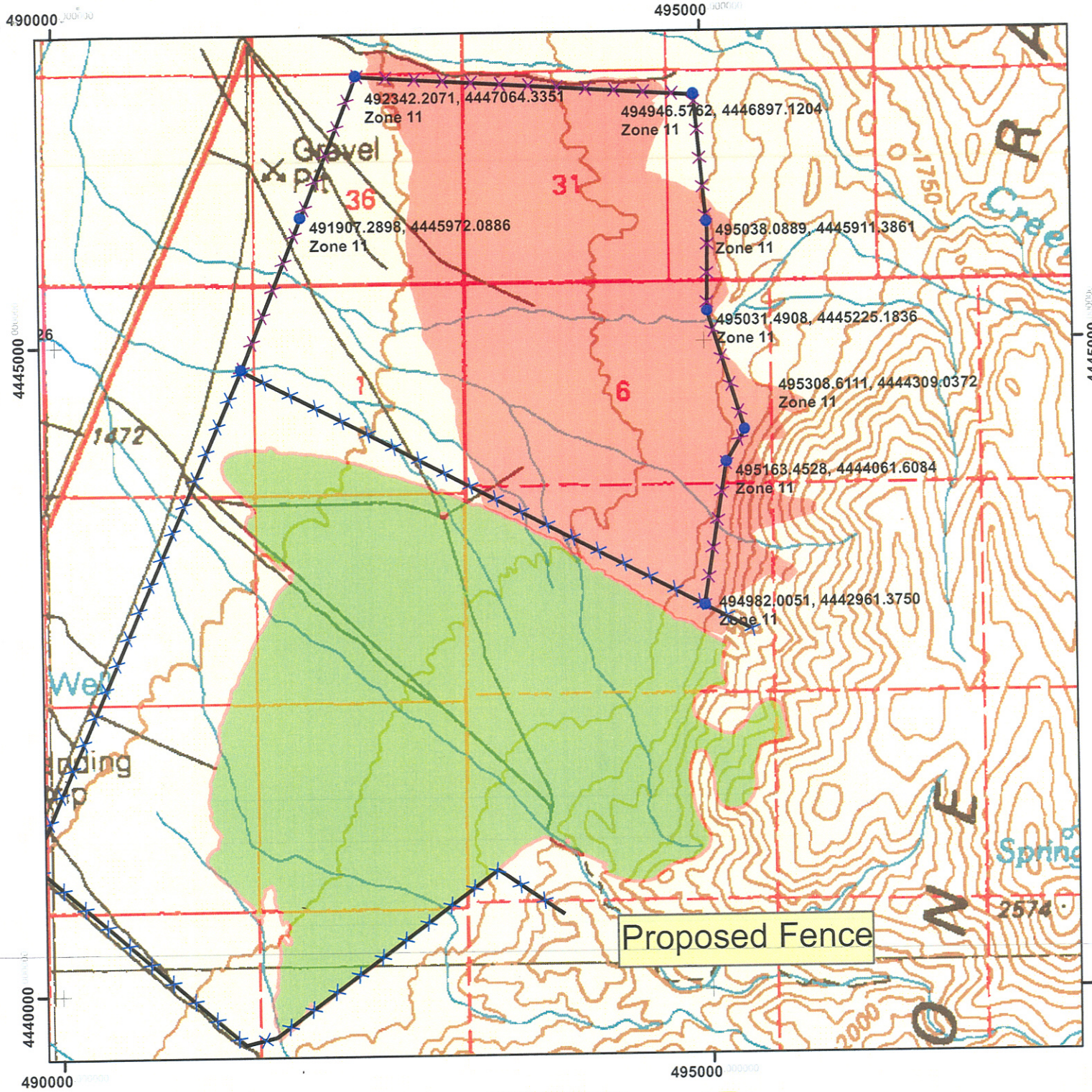
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 Battle Mountain Field Office  
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 Battle Mountain, NV 89820

- Public (Administered by BLM)
- Private
- Elephant Fire Boundary

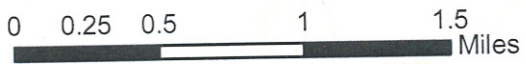
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Data is published in the  
 North American Datum 1983  
 (NAD83) UTM, Zone 11, Meters  
 3/05/2007 - Merriman



- Public (Administered by BLM)
- Elephant Fire
- Moon Valley Fire
- Private
- Moon Valley Fence
- Proposed Fence



Data is published in the North American Datum 1983 (NAD83) UTM, Zone 11, Met 3/05/2007 - Merriman

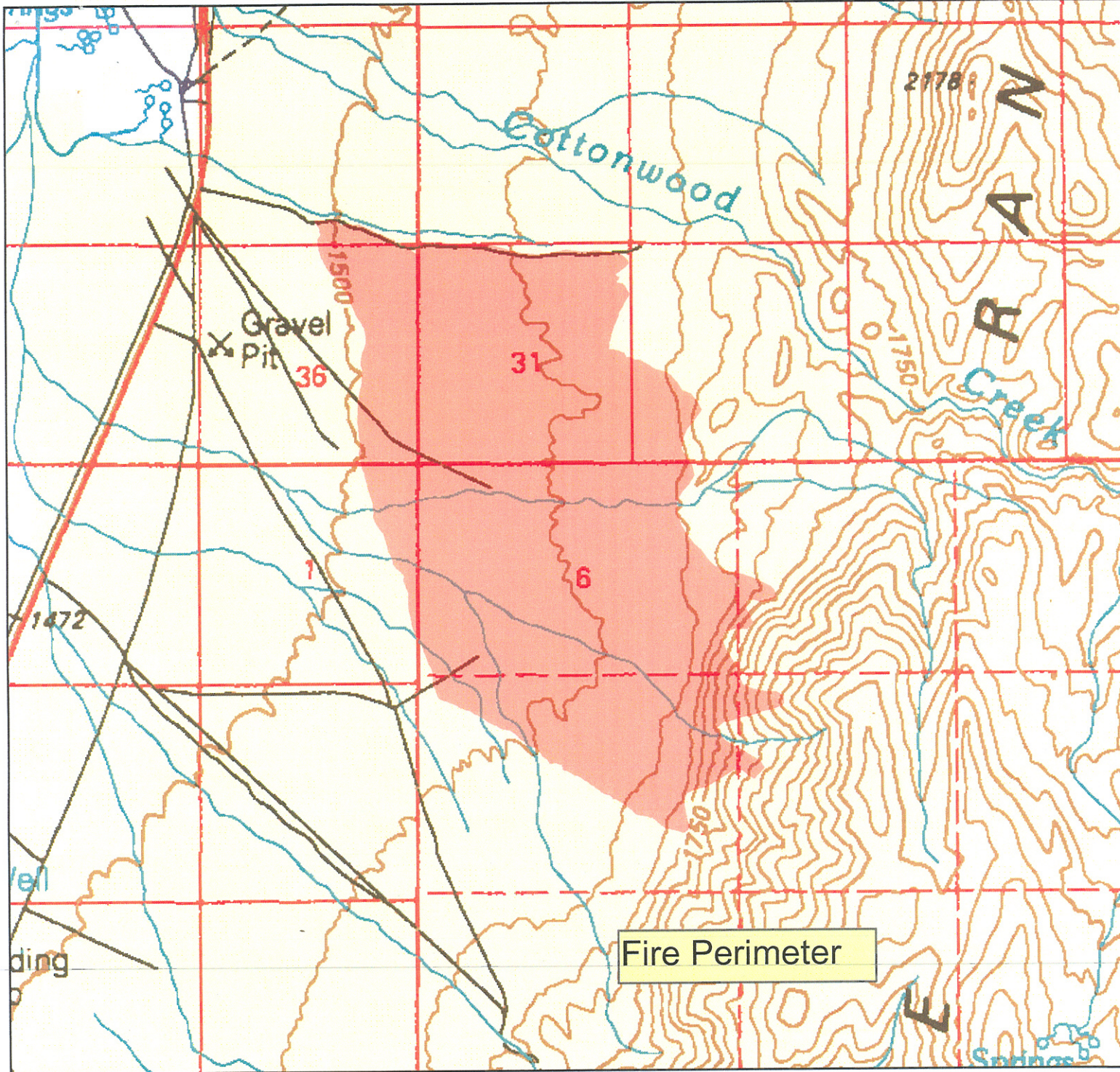
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Public (Administered by BLM)  
 Fire Perimeter  
 Private



0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 Miles

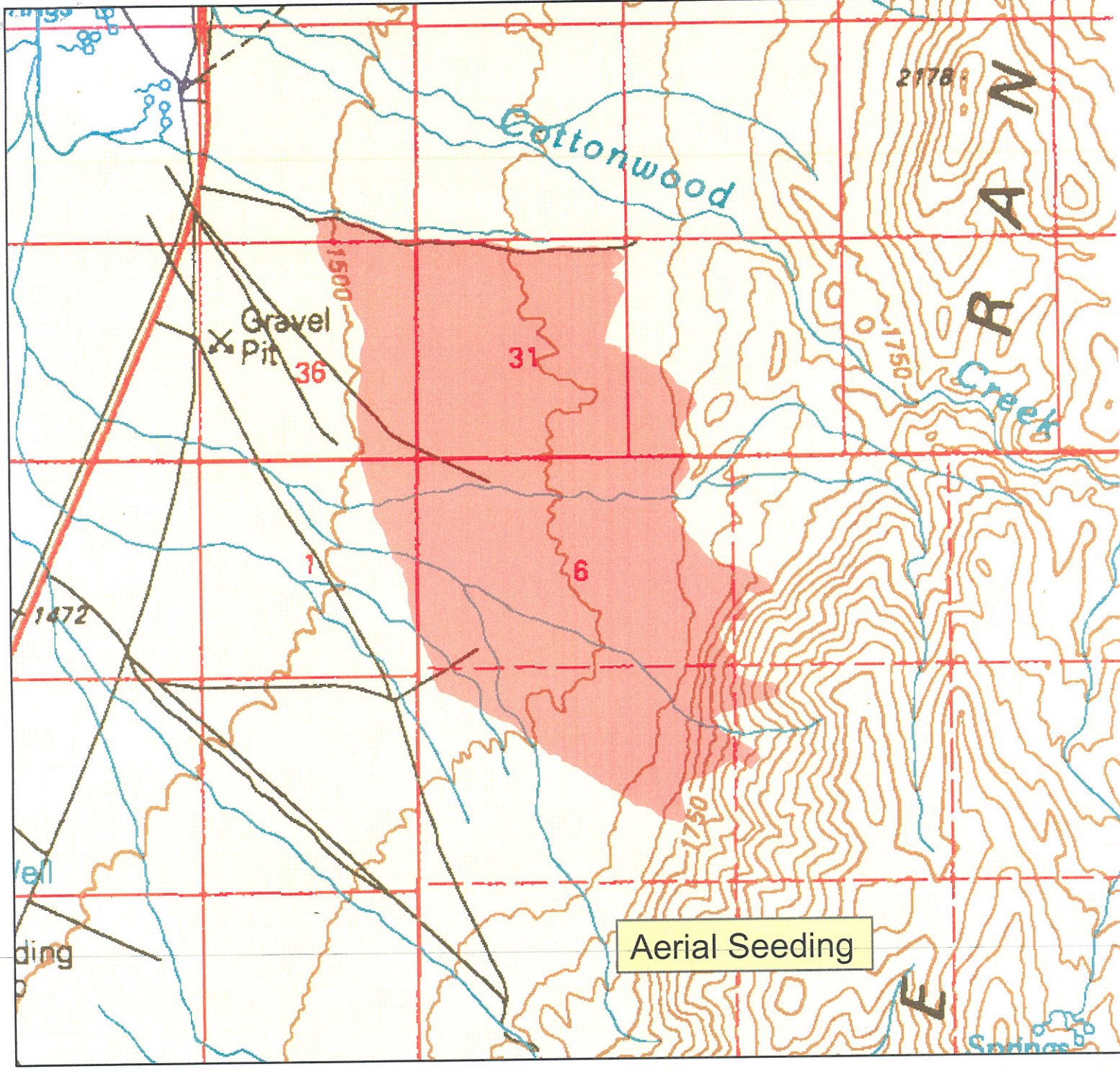
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Public (Administered by BLM)
  Aerial Seeding  
 Private



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