

## LeClerc unit and Rustlers Gulch Units

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## Summary Sheet

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<b>Meeting dates:</b>	May 15, 2015
<b>Agenda item:</b>	Forest Restoration Thinning on the Rustler's Gulch and LeClerc Units of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area in Pend Oreille County
<b>Presenter(s):</b>	Paul Dahmer and Clay Sprague, Lands Division, Wildlife Program

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### Background:

In 2007 WDFW negotiated an option to exchange 24.2 million board feet of timber located on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area for the perpetual timber rights on 23,919 acres of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area (Aug 3, 2007 commission meeting, Item #3). To date WDFW has met all but 4.3 million board feet of its timber volume obligation to Boise Cascade Timber Company. WDFW has concluded that the full agreement amount of timber that was committed in the exchange can't be harvested on the Sherman Creek Unit alone. Therefore, WDFW proposes to fulfill the remainder of its timber volume obligation by doing restoration thinning on the Rustler's Gulch (900 acres) and LeClerc (160 Acres) Units of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area in Pend Oreille County. Restoration on three areas is proposed.

- Rustler's Gulch East – 500 acres in the summer of 2015
- LeClerc – 160 acres in the winter of 2015/2016
- Rustler's Gulch West – 400 acres in the summer of 2016

The Rustler's Gulch Unit prescription includes the following key criteria:

- 1) thinning to leave 12 of the larger trees (8 trees > 14" diameter at breast height (dbh) plus 4 trees > 10" dbh where available per acre, and where possible, retaining 100 smaller trees per acre to accelerate growth of desired species,
- 2) clumping of leave trees to reflect natural forest mosaic patterns associated with naturally recurring low intensity fire and insect outbreaks,
- 3) creating small openings consistent with the historic range of forest variability that will increase forage for moose and provide habitat for other wildlife.

On the LeClerc Units dense lodgepole pine and dense pockets of shade tolerant species coming in from below will be cut to encourage the development of increasingly rare larch savannah with large, fire resilient trees and a diverse understory.

The following protections will be maintained. Harvest will be limited to slopes no greater than 45%. All trees over 26" dbh will be left standing, unless specifically marked by WDFW to address safety hazards. Likewise, stream and wetland buffers will be protected. Buffer widths will be as follows:

- Type Ns (non-fish seasonal) 30 feet Equipment Limitation Zone (ELZ)
- Type Np (non-fish perennial) 50 feet No Entry Riparian Management Zone (RMZ)
- Type S (Shoreline of the State) 200 feet No Entry RMZ

As steep slopes will be avoided, ground-based harvest systems will be used. It is anticipated that harvest on the Rustler's Gulch projects will occur in the late spring, summer and early fall when soil conditions are dry, using feller-bunchers and rubber tired skidders. Weather and scheduling permitting, work on the LeClerc Unit will primarily occur on snow and/or frozen ground to minimize disturbance to soil and vegetation.

The wildlife area units contain numerous roads so only minimal temporary road construction will be needed. Upon completion of harvest operations, approximately one mile of road will be abandoned on the Rustler's Gulch Unit, resulting in a net reduction in roads.

All riparian buffers, leave trees, and harvest prescriptions meet or exceed State Forest Practice Regulations. The Forest Practices Application has been submitted to DNR for approval. State Environmental Policy Act review is currently under way.

The Commission maintains authority to approve forest harvest projects equal to or exceeding one million board feet. The Department recommends and is seeking Commission approval of these projects.

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**Policy Issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:**

- Responsible land stewardship through appropriate forest management and meeting contractual obligations.

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

WDFW will follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process.

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**Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):**

Approval of the proposed commercial thinning projects.

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**Draft motion language:**

I move to approve the Thinning on the Rustler's Gulch and LeClerc Units of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area in Pend Oreille County as proposed.

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**Justification for Commission action:**

This action will 1) improve wildlife habitat quality for moose and other wildlife, 2) fulfill an existing contractual obligation associated with the acquisition of perpetual timber rights, 3) address forest health concerns, and 4) reduce wildfire risks related to public safety and habitat quality.

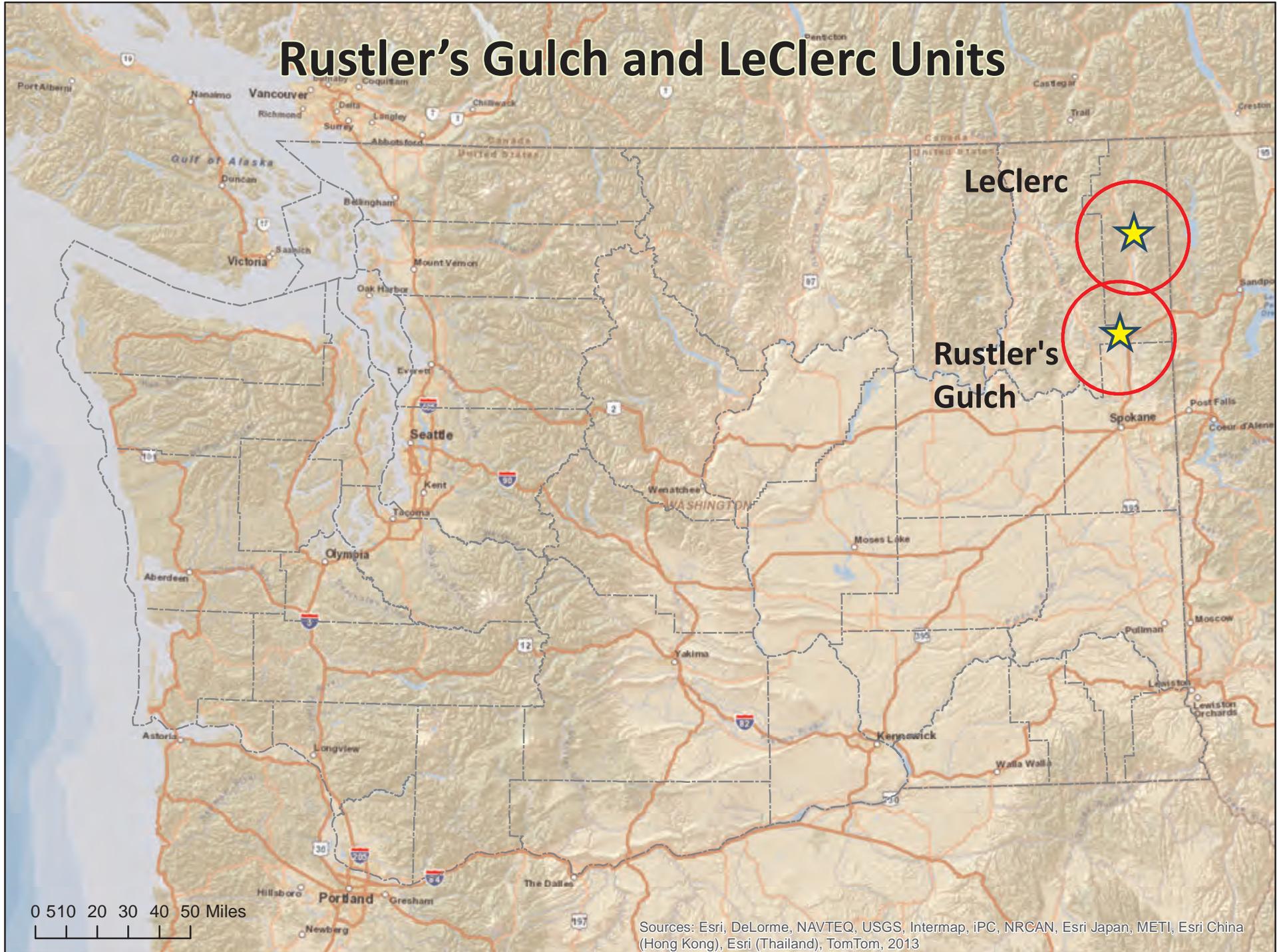
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**Communications plan:**

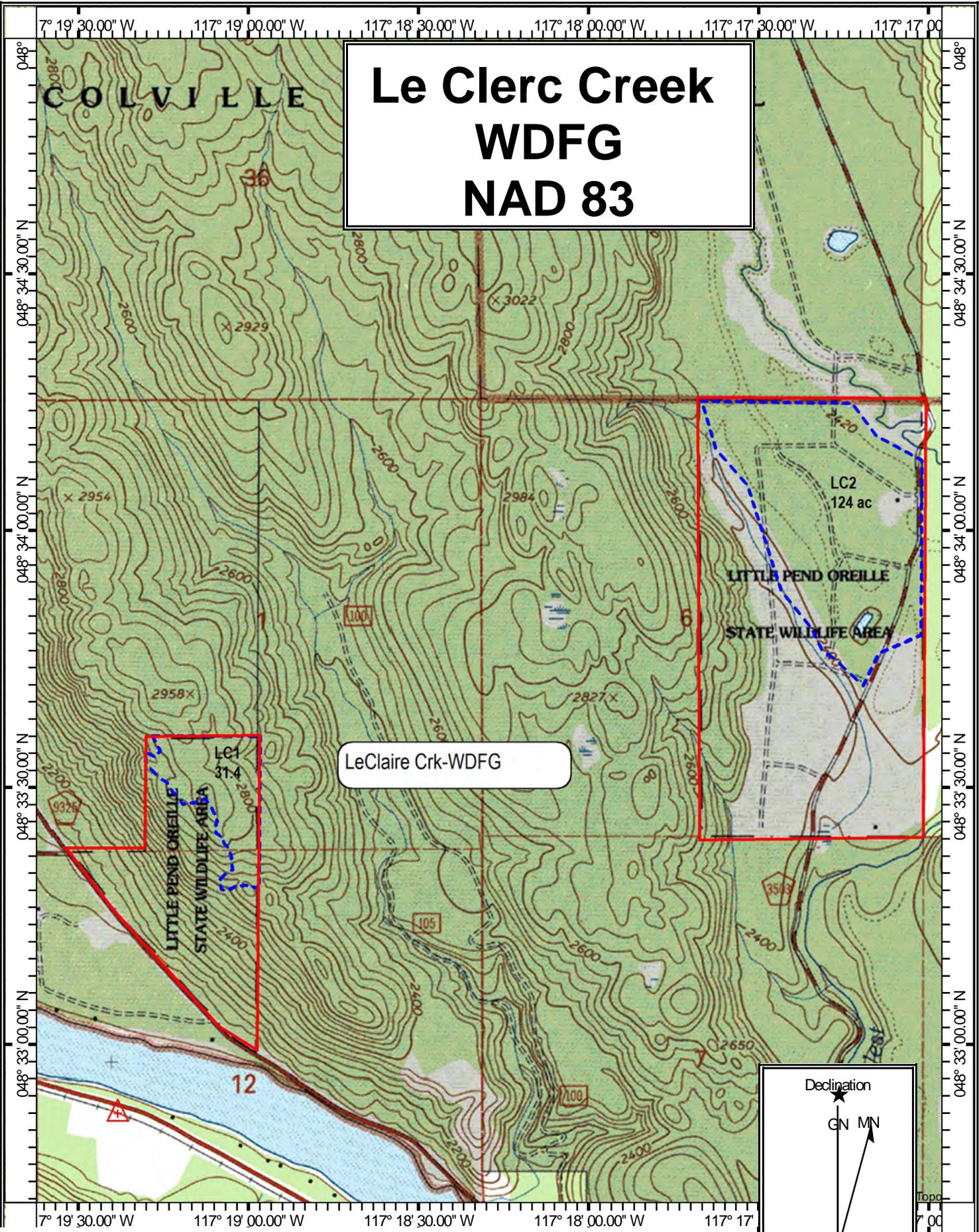
WDFW Website  
News Releases

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# Rustler's Gulch and LeClerc Units



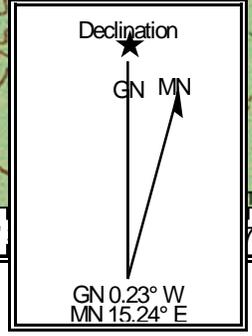
# Le Clerc Creek WDFG NAD 83



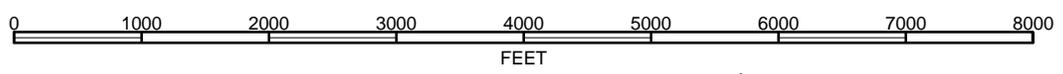
LeClaire Crk-WDFG

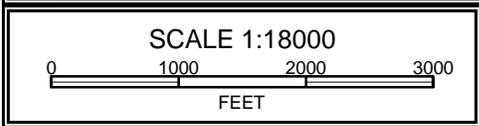
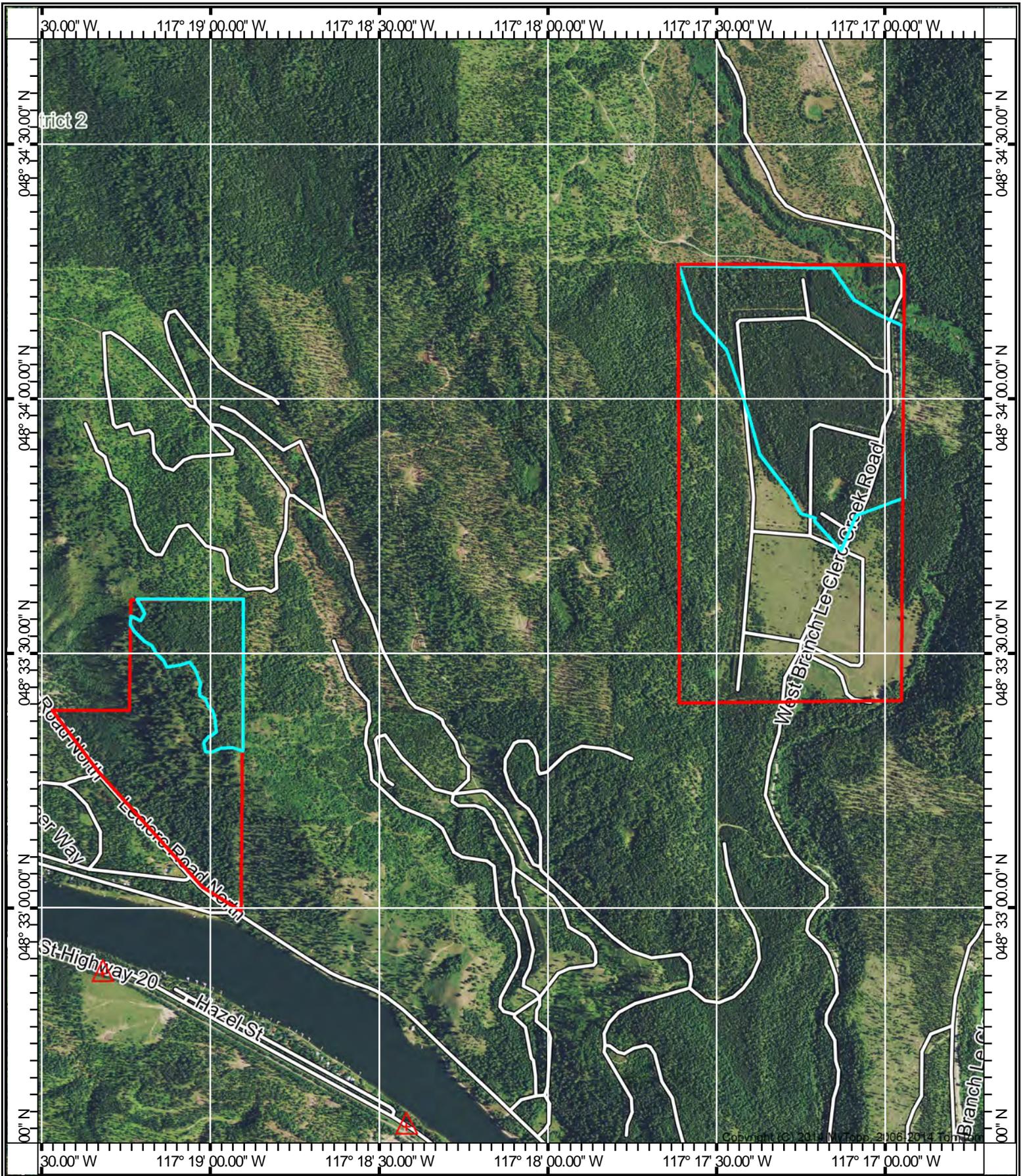
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STATE WILDLIFE AREA

LITTLE PEND ORELLE  
STATE WILDLIFE AREA

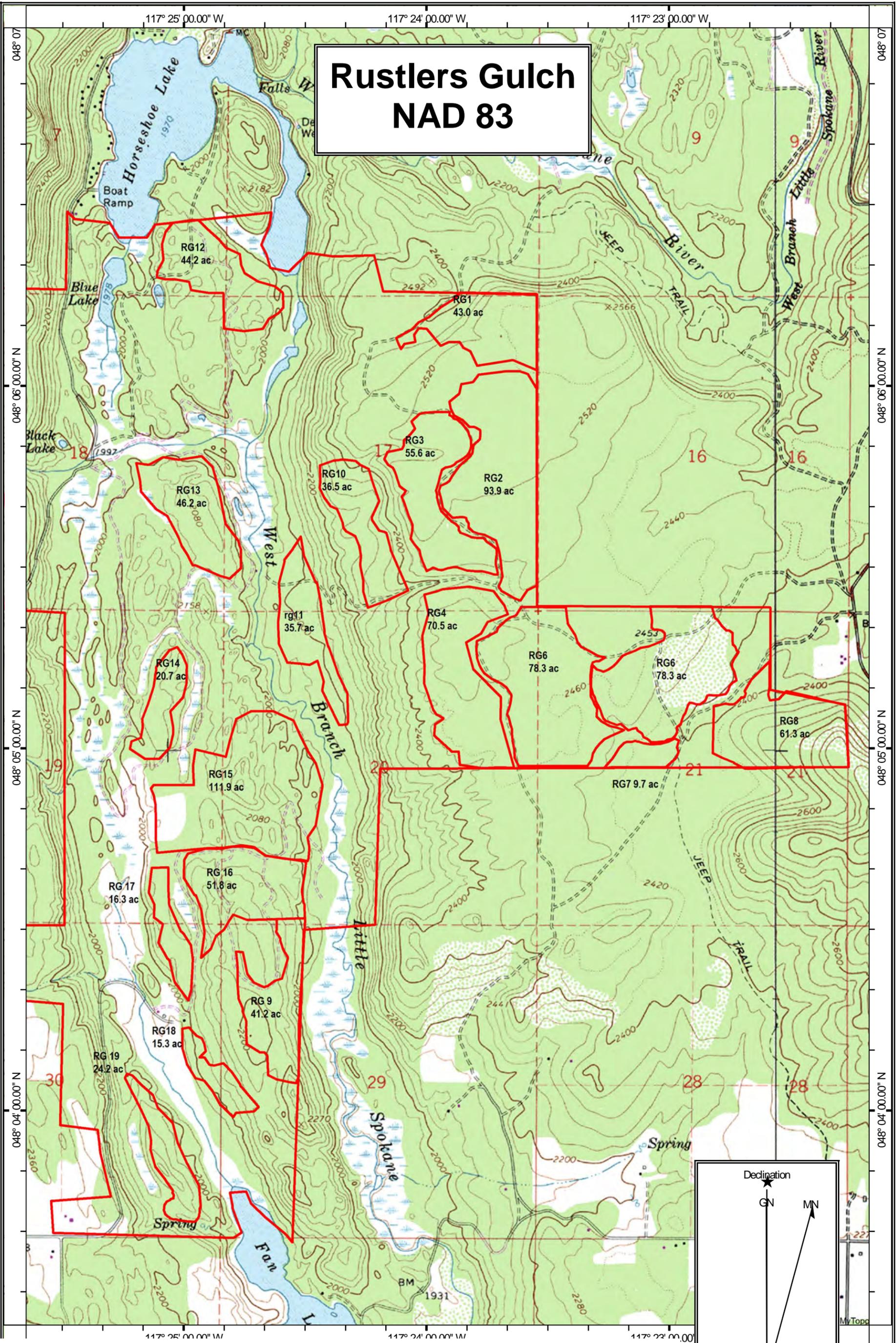


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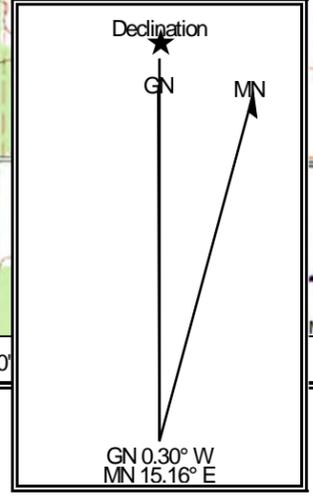


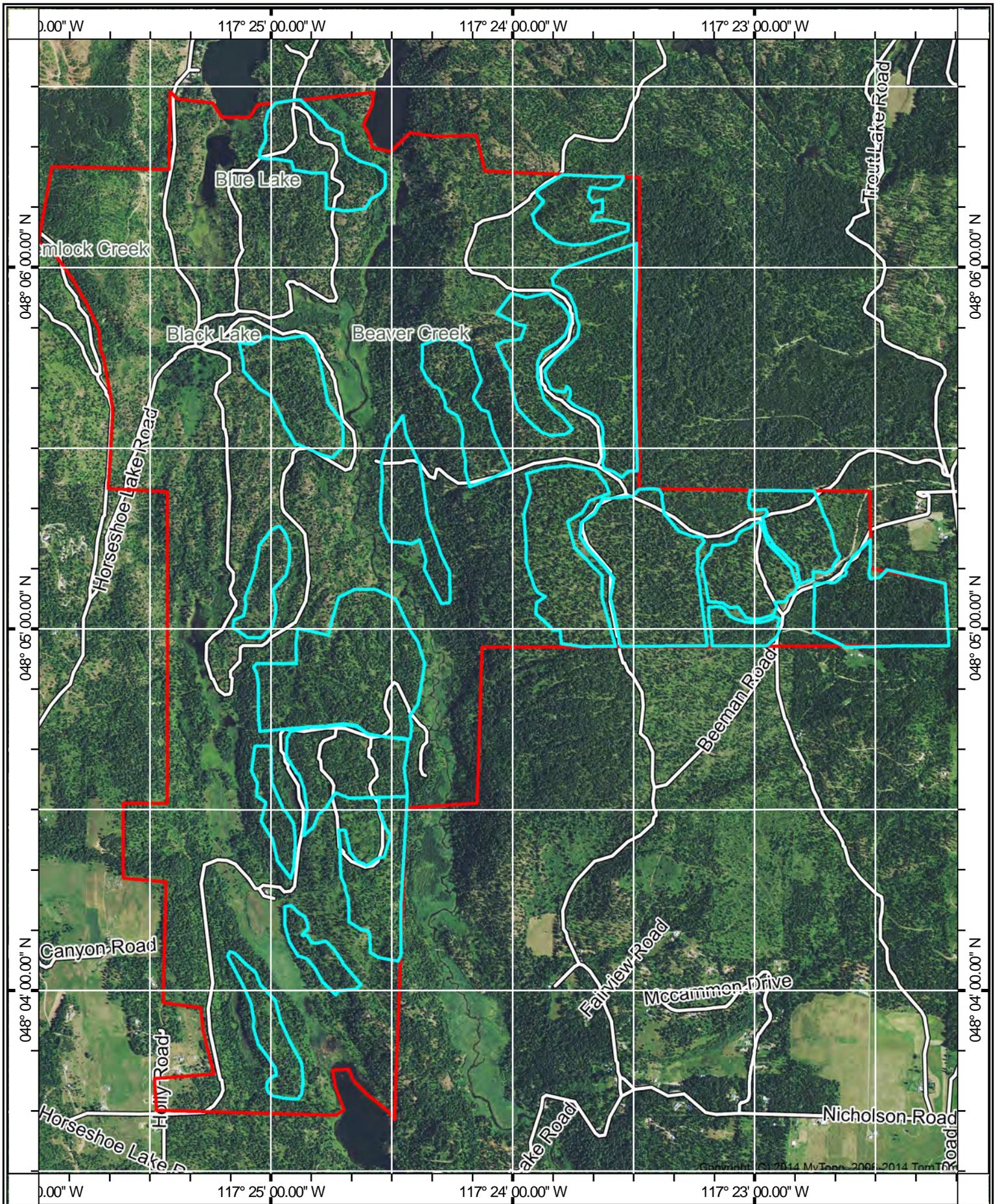


# Rustlers Gulch NAD 83



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