



File Code: 1950

Date: February 13, 2006

Subject: Horseshoe Project Scoping Letter

Dear Forest Neighbor:

The Wayah Ranger District is beginning an interdisciplinary analysis of a proposed project, called the "Horseshoe Project", in the western and northwestern part of Macon County, North Carolina. This project focuses on vegetative management activities designed to improve and maintain a healthy forest ecosystem. The project may include tree harvesting through commercial timber sale, road construction and/or reconstruction, site preparation for forest regeneration, timber stand improvement, prescribed burning, and wildlife habitat improvement activities. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to comment on this proposed project and help identify issues, concerns, or opportunities associated with this project. Your comments could result in new alternatives, the identification of potential effects from proposed actions, or mitigation measures.

The Horseshoe Project Scoping Record, associated maps, and a list of proposed actions can be accessed at the following internet address: <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>. If you wish to receive a hard copy (paper) version of these materials or if you have any questions regarding the project, please contact Joan Brown, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at the Wayah Ranger District, 90 Sloan Road, Franklin, NC 28734 (Telephone: 828-524-6441).

Alternatives to the proposed action will be developed during the next few months; therefore, we ask that you provide comments on the proposed actions by March 15, 2006 to Joan Brown at the above address or via email (comments-southern-north-carolina-nantahala-wayah@fs.fed.us). All responses received (including names and addresses) will become part of the public file. This information will be made available to the public upon request.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael L. Wilkins
MICHAEL L. WILKINS
District Ranger



HORSESHOE PROJECT SCOPING RECORD
FEBRUARY 2006

The Wayah Ranger District is beginning an interdisciplinary analysis of a proposed project, called the "Horseshoe Project", in the western and northwestern part of Macon County.

INTRODUCTION:

The project may include tree harvesting through commercial timber sale, road construction and/or reconstruction, site preparation for forest regeneration, timber stand improvements, prescribed burning, and wildlife habitat improvement activities located in Compartments 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 43, 44, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 79, 80, 82, 97, and 98. This project is planned to begin implementation sometime between 2009 and 2011. If fully funded, implementation would occur over a 2 to 8 year period.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposal is designed to improve or maintain the health of our forest ecosystem through a variety of vegetative management activities. The project would implement direction set forth in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) 1986-2000 for the Nantahala/Pisgah National Forests (USDA, March 1987) as amended in 1994, in a manner which moves the existing natural resources toward desired future conditions.

EXISTING CONDITION:

Forest types are predominantly upland and cove hardwoods, with some northern hardwoods, mixed hardwood-yellow pine stands, and some mixed white pine-upland hardwood plantations.

Various activities would occur in Management Areas (MAs) 2A, 2C, 3B, 4A, 4C, and 4D. Embedded within these is management area 18 (riparian areas around perennial water bodies).

The last harvest entries into the compartments were the Cliff Ridge, Wine Springs Creek, Split Whiteoak, Jarrett Creek, Wine Spring-White Oak, Jarrett Bald, Younce Creek, and Cold Springs timber sales, ranging from 1984-1997. All regenerated stands have been certified as successfully reforested. Currently there are 95 acres of early successional habitat (stands aged 0-10 years) spread across the compartments listed above. Access is provided by several state and Forest Service (FS) roads.

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:

Descriptions of desired conditions for each management area are contained in the LRMP. A brief summary of desired conditions for the management areas contained in this area is as follows:

MA 2A: Open roads through a scenic forest. The land is classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period; wildlife species are favored which can tolerate some human disturbance.

MA 2C: Open roads through a scenic forest. The land is classified as unsuitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period; wildlife species are favored which prefer older forest conditions while tolerating some human disturbance.

MA 3B: A regulated forest which provides for a sustainable supply of timber and for the habitat needs of wildlife species (particularly wild turkey) which benefit from a managed forest with limited motorized access (closed roads).

MA 4A: Limited motorized access (closed roads), with an emphasis on visually pleasing scenery and wildlife habitat with older vegetation and limited disturbance. This land is classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period.

MA 4C: Limited motorized access (closed roads), with an emphasis on visually pleasing scenery and habitats for wildlife requiring older forests. This land is not classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period.

MA 4D: Limited motorized access (closed roads), with an emphasis on visually pleasing scenery and habitats for wildlife requiring older forests, particularly for black bear. This land is classified as suitable for timber management during the current planning period; early successional habitat is provided for wildlife species that require it.

MA 18: Predominantly undisturbed riparian areas (adjacent to streams) with conditions strongly influenced by the accumulation of woody materials from mature trees, but with a diverse assemblage of species and stand structures.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project will be designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- 1) Provide for a range of early successional habitat through timber regeneration harvesting and wildlife brushy openings, while producing a minimum of 1 million board feet (MMBF) of sawtimber for the local economy. Objectives in the Land Resource Management Plan would result in a range of 435 to 2,318 acres of early successional habitat.
- 2) Maintain and/or enhance biological diversity by protecting population viability of rare species which occur in the compartments, by reproducing existing forest species, especially oaks for hard mast production, and yellow pines to perpetuate mixed hardwood-pine communities;
- 3) Create new road access where needed to access the proposed activities;

- 4) Create new grass/forb openings and create/enhance additional wildlife habitat where practical;
- 5) Improve habitat for the golden winged warbler where possible.

Most of the project activities, and all proposed timber management, will occur in the MA 2A, 3B, 4A, and 4D parts of the area. Some activities, such as wildlife, fisheries habitat, or fuels management, may occur in MAs 2C or 4C. Road construction or reconstruction, if necessary, may need to cross through other management areas, such as at stream crossings (MA 18).

PROPOSED ACTION:

This scoping record includes maps and a spreadsheet of the proposed actions for this project. This "Proposed Action" and alternatives will be analyzed in the project Environmental Assessment (EA), to be developed later in 2006.

ISSUES:

Alternatives for implementation will be analyzed for effects on the following issues and/or resources:

- 1) Soil and water quality;
- 2) Air quality;
- 3) Aquatic resources;
- 4) Botanical resources;
- 5) Wildlife resources;
- 6) Heritage resources;
- 7) Recreation resources;
- 8) Scenery;
- 9) Road management;
- 10) Social and economic resources;
- 11) Health and safety; and
- 12) Silvicultural systems/regeneration methods/vegetation management.

PLANNING TEAM DESIGNATION:

District Ranger Michael Wilkins is the responsible official who will decide on a course of action based on the alternatives and analyses presented by the interdisciplinary planning team. The team will consist of:

Joan Brown, Wayah RD Silviculturist (Team leader)
Doreen Miller, Nantahala NF Wildlife Biologist
Tim Southard, Wayah RD Timber Management Assistant
Jason Farmer, Nantahala NF Fisheries Biologist
Duke Rankin, Nantahala NF Botanist
Andy Baker, Wayah RD Forester Trainee

Specialist input will be obtained from Sally Browning, Wayah RD Other Resources Assistant (recreation) and Mike Bell, Wayah RD Technician, and others as necessary.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION:

The scoping record is posted on the NFsNC web page, and a notice of this scoping record will be sent to interested parties, planning team members/consultants, and Forest Supervisor's Office staff. Their comments will be used to identify other issues and further shape the environmental analyses to be conducted. Planning information on this project will be reported in NFsNC Schedule of Proposed Actions (distributed by the Forest Supervisor's Office, Asheville, NC).

The scoping record with accompanying maps and spreadsheet is posted at **<http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>**. If you would like hard copies, please notify Joan Brown or Andy Baker at the Wayah Ranger District office, 828-524-6441. Please provide your comments to team leader Joan Brown by the close of business on March 15, 2006.

Horseshoe Project - List of Proposed Actions

2-age ground	
<u>Compartment-Stand #</u>	<u>Acres</u>
34-37	25
34-36	24
34-35	13
33-30	25
32-20	21
31-34	20
31-35	15
58-28	10
61-6	27
61-17	25
61-30	31
62-14	30
58-27	21
80-33	19
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	307
2-age cable	
35-40	11
34-35	10
33-12	17
32-22	15
61-28	21
	<hr/>
	74
Thin	
61-36	4
33-31	4
34-34	22
31-33	16
44-32	12
59-38	7
59-26	9
59-39	3
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	77
Total harvest	458
Total roads	8
Total Wildlife	132
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Total	598 acres of treatment
+ Rx burning	1664
	<hr/>
	2262 acres of treatment

Horseshoe Roads

New Road Construction

<u>FSR</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Acreage*</u>
711O1	0.29	1.06
711O3	0.25	0.91
7042	0.79	2.89
Total	1.34	4.86

Road Reconstruction

<u>FSR</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Acreage*</u>
7058	0.50	1.81
714A	0.36	1.32
Total	0.86	3.13

Grand Total **2.20** **7.99**

* based on 30-ft. road right of way

Horseshoe Brushy Openings (cut and leave)

<u>Compart</u>	<u>Stand</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
58	29	8.4
82	44	1
97	25	0.7
82	46	4.4
82	45	1.6
82	43	0.8
57	29	1.3
57	28	2.1
80	36	2.5
80	37	4.8
80	35	8.3
31	36	1
31	37	2.5
80	38	5.6
80	39	2.5
total		47.5

Existing grass/forb rehab (disc, herb, reseed, 100 ft brushy buffer)

<u>Compart</u>	<u>Stand</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Buffer ac.</u>	<u>total ac.</u>
32	31	0.7	2.20	2.90
34	39	0.4	0.70	1.10
34	40	0.7	0.25	0.95
43	50	0.4	3.10	3.50
43	51	0.6	0.50	1.10
43	52	0.6	2.20	2.80
59	40	0.3	1.70	2.00
59	41	0.5	0.70	1.20
59	42	0.6	1.70	2.30
57	25	0.3	2.20	2.50
62	15	0.6	1.40	2.00
61	31	0.9	2.60	3.50
61	32	0.2	1.70	1.90
61	33	0.3	1.40	1.70
61	34	1	3.10	4.10
80	34	0.5	1.70	2.20
82	39	0.3	1.90	2.20
82	40	0.7	1.50	2.20
82	41	1	2.90	3.90
98	36	0.4	2.60	3.00
82	42	0.5	1.40	1.90
98	39	0.5	2.60	3.10
44	34	0.7	1.80	2.50
totals		12.7	41.85	54.55

Horseshoe Rx Burns

<u>Name</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Fireline mileage.</u>
Ben Creek	189	0.50
Hurricane Creek	1475	0.74
total	1664	1.25

Linear wildo's/daylight (disc, herb, reseed, 30ft thinning along roadbanks)

<u>FSR</u>	<u>mileage</u>	<u>acreage</u>
711D1	0.6	1.02
711A	0.9	1.53
711I	0.3	0.51
711J	0.5	0.85
711P	1.3	2.21
7042	1.1	1.87
7040	2.55	4.33
7040A	1.23	2.09
714	5	8.48
total	13.48	22.88

New grass/forb construction (Cut and remove, grade, seed, 100 ft brushy buffer)

<u>Compart</u>	<u>Stand</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Buffer ac.</u>	<u>total ac.</u>
31	38	0.5	1.2	1.7
59	43	0.5	n/a	0.5
59	44	1.2	n/a	1.2
59	45	1.5	n/a	1.5
59	46	1	n/a	1
61	35	0.4	1	1.4
total		5.1	2.2	7.3

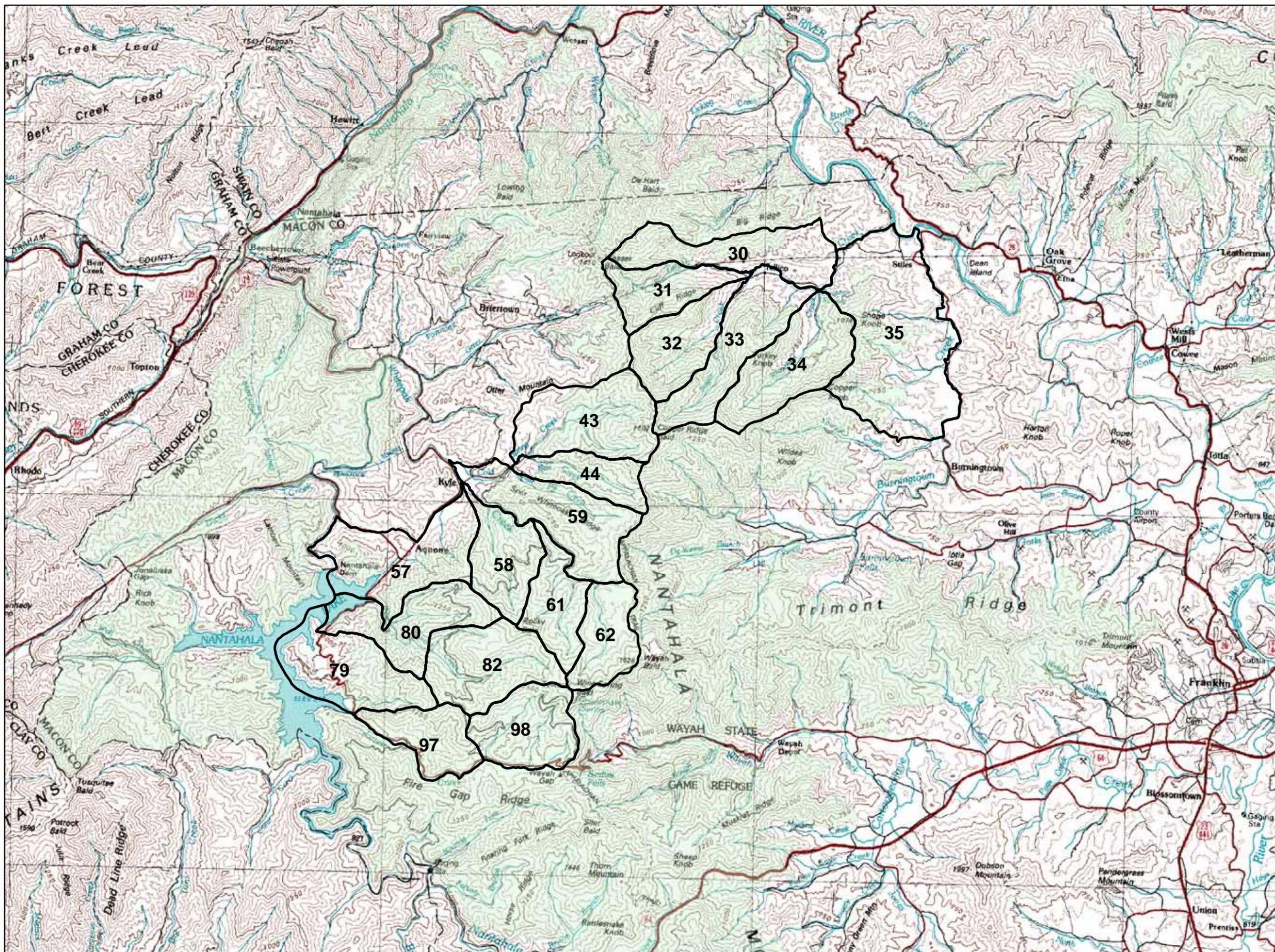
25 vernal pools



Horseshoe Vicinity Map

-  compartment
-  USFS ownership

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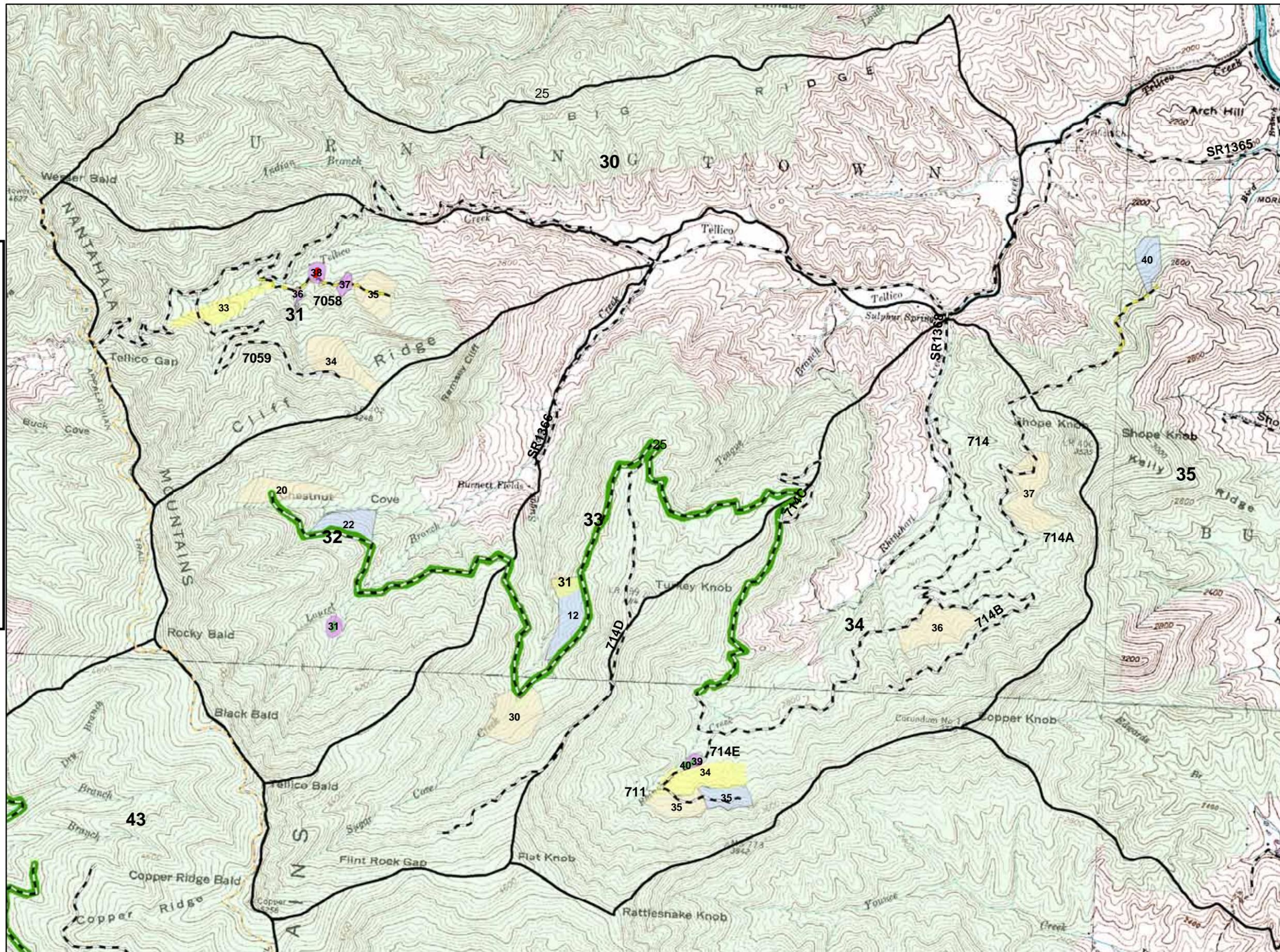




Horseshoe Proposed Action North

-  Dirty John shooting range
-  Wine Springs Horse Camp
-  existing grass/forb opening
-  proposed grass/forb opening
-  brushy openings
-  foot trail
-  Reconstruct Rd
-  New Road
-  Existing road
-  Linear wildlife opening/daylighting
-  horse trail
-  Thinning
-  2age ground
-  2age skyline
-  compartment
-  USFS ownership
-  Rx burn

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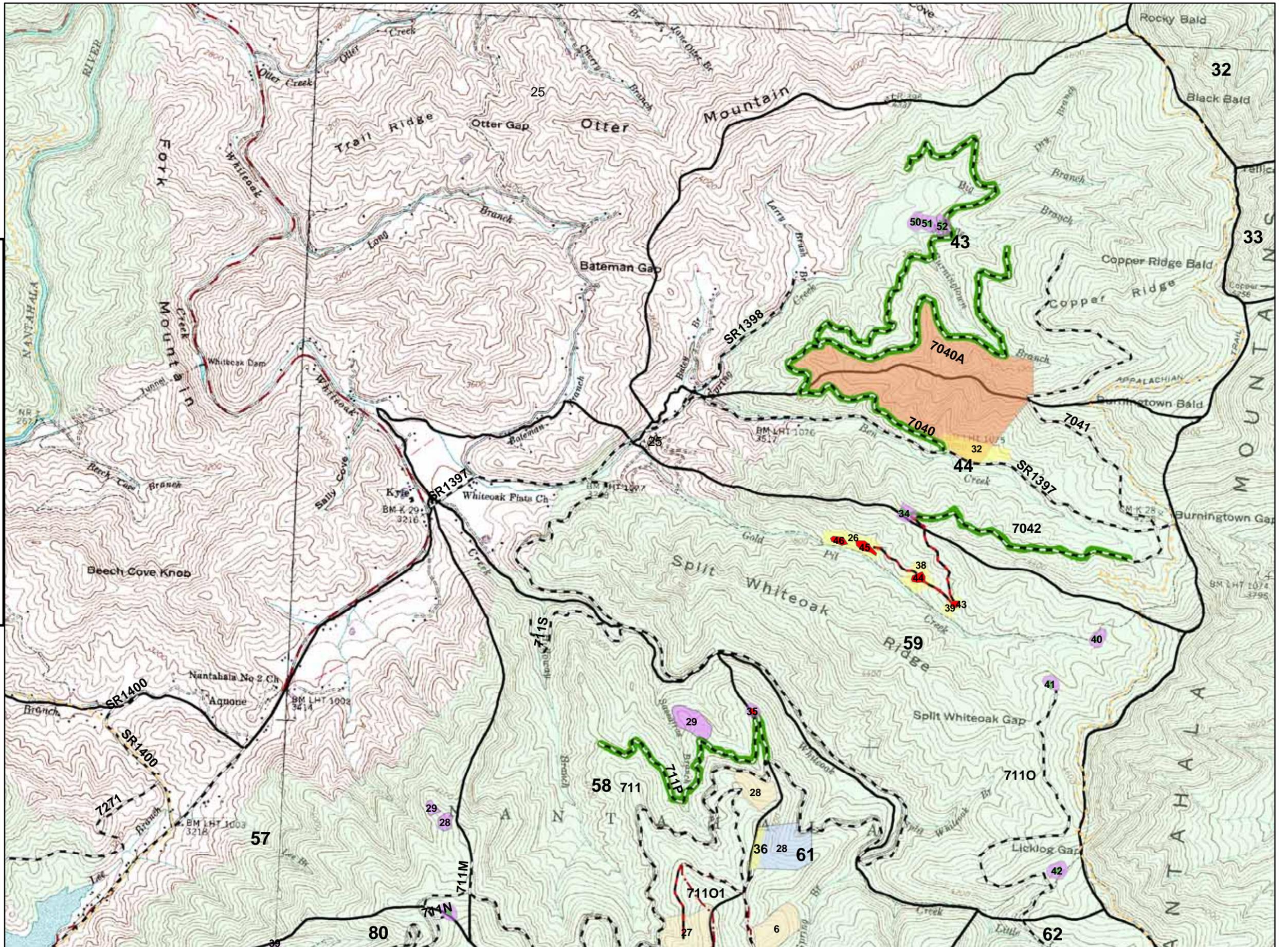




Horseshoe Proposed Action Central

-  Dirty John shooting range
-  Wine Springs Horse Camp
-  existing grass/forb opening
-  proposed grass/forb opening
-  brushy openings
-  foot trail
-  Reconstruct Rd
-  New Road
-  Existing road
-  Linear wildlife opening/daylighting
-  horse trail
-  Thinning
-  2age ground
-  2age skyline
-  compartment
-  USFS ownership
-  Rx burn

1:24,000





Horseshoe Proposed Action South

-  Dirty John shooting range
-  Wine Springs Horse Camp
-  existing grass/forb opening
-  proposed grass/forb opening
-  brushy openings
-  foot trail
-  Reconstruct Rd
-  New Road
-  Existing road
-  Linear wildlife opening/daylighting
-  horse trail
-  Thinning
-  2age ground
-  2age skyline
-  compartment
-  USFS ownership
-  Rx burn

1:24,000

